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University of Huddersfield

Identity,
Representation
and Transcultural
Adaptation in
Delius's Koanga

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Research in Music

Richard Bramwell Fox
9-20-2016

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Abstract

Frederick Delius's opera *Koanga* remains to this day a problematic work in many ways. It focuses upon the story of an enslaved African prince, who is taken to work as a labourer on a plantation in Louisiana. Adapted from a tale found in George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes: a Story of Creole Life*, Delius's work trades the atmosphere of the local-colourist literary style in which Cable writes, for one of high poetry and Wagnerian drama.

This thesis aims to investigate the way in which the swing in ideological stance which occurs during a transcultural adaptive process is palpable through the way in which the racial and social identities of the characters within the opera are represented through both musical and extra-musical means. The complex entanglement of racial identity encased in the plot of the work is (re)constructed by Delius through reference to Eurocentric and imperialistic notions concerned with race and racialism, and this study shows through an application of a postcolonial theoretical frameworks the extent to which this is detectable within the musical text of the work itself.

The two protagonists in *Koanga* are both figures of social ambiguity, and hence binary nonconformity, and a further principle aim of this study is to demonstrate the way in which this is reflected by complex compositional processes, which draw on both the models of musical blackness and whiteness used within the opera in order to create a mode of hybrid musical representation befitting of these characters.

By examining the power structures upheld by the social hierarchy, the driving force behind the plot of the opera itself is revealed as a combination of the facets of imperialist and colonialist discourse, which attempts to control and manipulate the principle characters, whose transgressions of social (and musical) norms pose them as a threat which in the end must be controlled, or eliminated.

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Introduction

Frederick Delius's opera *Koanga*, the 1st version of which was completed between the years of 1895 and 1897 (Anderson, 2016), remains to this day a problematic work. Its narrative is entrenched within imperialist racist discourse, telling the tragic story of an enslaved African prince and the lover whom he finds after being transported to America, to work on a plantation. Though recently performed at the Wexford Opera Festival (in 2015), this is a work which remains unknown to many, and an obscurity even to those who have encountered it.

Delius's life and music have been the focus of a wide range of writers, with new scholarship adding to a large and varied corpus of literature. Eric Fenby's well-known *Delius as I Knew Him* (Fenby, 1966), first published in 1936, is an early book dedicated to the memory of the composer. For the most part, it is an account of the final few years of Delius's life, during which Fenby served as the composer's amanuensis. Whilst there are musical examples throughout, their main purpose is to illustrate Delius's compositional process, and the main focus of the book is biographical in nature. This allows for an interesting and valuable insight into Delius's personal life, as well as his approach to composition, but the book makes no attempt to engage critically with the music itself. In fact, there is an abundance of similar – that is, biographical – literature, with other figures associated closely with the composer committing their own memories and experiences to print. Clare Delius, the composer's sister, authored a book entitled *Frederick Delius: Memories of my Brother* (Delius C. , 1935) which takes a similar approach; the blurb for Sir Thomas Beecham's book *Frederick Delius* tells us that the biography inside 'makes clear the facts of the composer's life, disentangling them from the ambiguity and legend that previous biographers – and Delius himself, when in a playful mood – have surrounded them' (Beecham, 1959). Delius's friend the renowned music critic and composer Philip Heseltine (otherwise known as Peter Warlock) wrote his book, *Frederick Delius*, during the composer's lifetime, publishing it in 1923. Again, a large portion of this book is concerned with issues of biography. Whilst the rest is left for a discussion of the composer's works, the content is little more than descriptive and fails to deal critically with the music (Heseltine, 1923). These books, when placed alongside each other, help to place Delius within a historical context, and to place his works within the context of his life, although the objectivity of the accounts given in each should be placed under scrutiny due to the close relationships between the authors and composer in each case.

Other examples of early literature on Delius begin to deal with his music from a more scholarly perspective. Arthur Hutchings's study of the composer is organised into two parts – the first entitled 'Biographical', and the second 'A Critical Appreciation of Delius's Music' (1949). The general

approach taken here is to divide Delius's compositions according to their genre, and to discuss the characteristics and biographical context, and to analyse each work. Hutchings also begins to address cultural influences on the composer and their impact upon the music itself – for example 'Chapter 8: Delius and Nietzsche' (Hutchings, 1949, pp. 61-79) examines the extent to which Delius's firmly Nietzschean views are expounded in his compositions *A Mass of Life* and *Requiem*. But this study is isolated, and for the most part the examination of music in Hutchings's other chapters does not attempt to discuss broader cultural forces and their influence across Delius's oeuvre. A contrasting methodology to Hutchings's is found in Christopher Palmer's book *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan* (1976). The chapters here are organised not in terms of genre, but by geographical location, ordered chronologically according to Delius's travels across the globe. This serves not only as an effective way of dividing up Delius's life into significant portions for the purposes of a biography, but implicitly paves the way for an investigation into the ways in which various national schools and styles of compositional practice became imprinted upon Delius's own particular musical language, and indeed such influences are examined throughout.

The notion of Delius's individual compositional style as a sort of 'melting pot' of seemingly disparate elements from around the world has meant that historically a major scholarly concern is its analysis, as exemplified by Palmer's work. At the start of the 6th chapter of his book on the composer, Alan Jefferson begins just such an examination of Delius's external musical influences, citing ways in which Delius's encounters with other musicians and cultures had imprinted themselves into his own musical, particularly harmonic, language (1972, pp. 93-95). Despite this seemingly inexhaustible and cosmopolitan list of people and styles, Jefferson confusingly insists that Delius's 'harmonies are original, entirely English in idiom and in no way connected with any other school of composition' (1972, p. 94).

This summarises perfectly an issue which has been central to discussions surrounding Delius in the past – that of the composer's national identity. Assessments such as Jefferson's have sought to provide a place for Delius amongst the ranks of the English composers who were attached to or surrounded the cultural phenomenon of the 19th and early 20th centuries known as the 'English Musical renaissance'.¹ Whilst Delius's music did enjoy the attention of English audiences in various ways, the assumption that Delius's style holds a purely English national identity seems to defy the considerable amount of evidence which points to the contrary. This is an issue that is confronted by Robert Stradling in his chapter 'On Shearing the Black Sheep in Spring: The Repatriation of Frederick

¹ Hughes and Stradling's *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Composing a National Music* (2001) provides an detailed and critical account of this phenomenon, discussing in depth the political and cultural motivations behind the professionalization and expansion of English musical horizons during this time.

Delius' found in Christopher Norris's collection of essays *Music and the Politics of Culture*. Here, Stradling argues that Delius's English identity was deliberately constructed by both the composer himself and his associates (particularly Beecham) in order to ensure the survival of Delius's artistic legacy (Stradling, 1989).²

Noticeably, some of this early literature focuses quite heavily on Delius's dramatic works. This is not an emphasis which we feel today; Delius's operatic output is largely unknown by today's musical public. The general perception of Delius as a pseudo-impressionist composer of English nature-music indicates that the efforts of figures like Beecham to link Delius's output with England were largely a success (Anderson, 2016). But the subject matter of Delius's six operas is as varied and disjunctive as his musical influences, and it is surprising that such works, by a composer with such a complex and ambiguous personal identity, have not been given more thought by modern-day musicologists. The usual paradox concerning Delius's compositional style is evident in *Koanga*; this work was composed during a formative period in his career as a musician, and as we might expect melds together many strands of different musical styles, whilst simultaneously offering aspects of the unique musical language associated with Delius's mature style. Many of the most conspicuous models which Delius draws from, such as the music-drama style of Wagner or the grand dramatic operatic style of Verdi (Saylor, 2012, p. 79), have received ample attention from scholars, perhaps because their works remain comfortably within performance canons to this day. Delius's operas were of great significance to him, and for this reason alone they are important objects in the context of his wider output. And yet the operas in particular are nowadays a little recognised or discussed segment of his work by comparison to his other music. *Koanga* was the first of Delius's operatic works to achieve any kind of success, though even that has been extremely limited. The combination of diverse musical styles with a powerful story centred on the (still now) difficult historical context of imperialism and slavery make *Koanga* an interesting work, even on the surface.

This study sits at an intersection between three intellectual discourses: opera studies, the trends of the 'New Musicology', and postcolonial theory. These threads are central to the approach taken in this dissertation, and it is obvious even from the titles of some of the texts which I refer to throughout that there is already a great deal of crossover in these fields of study. Nevertheless it is only in recent decades that cultural criticism has begun to permeate musicological discourse, bringing to light a wide array of perspectives from which the established, canonically centred, musicological tradition has begun to be deconstructed and diversified. Landmark collections such as

² The quotation from the blurb of Beecham's book on Delius, which was discussed on page 9, may seem deeply ironic when considered in light of Stradling's discussion of the conductor's central role in the posthumous Anglicization of Delius's legacy.

Ruth Solie's *Musicology and Difference* (1993) and McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) were amongst the first volumes which began to tackle musicology from a critical feminist angle. This new direction critiqued the latent phallogentrism of the Western musical tradition, in the musicological and academic canons, performance and compositional practice, and (perhaps most radically) in works of music themselves. A certain amount emphasis was placed early on in the development of the 'New Musicology' on the study of gender and sexual difference, but more recently scholars have recognised the need for more in-depth research into music and its relationship with different forms of 'Otherness', such as race, or queer sexualities. Inspired by the work of scholars such as Edward Said and his notion of orientalism, collections such as *Western Music and Its Others* (Born & Hesmondhalgh, 2000) and *Musical Exoticism* (Locke, 2009) have addressed representations of race in western musical practice in light of intellectual discourses such as postcolonial theory. Eric Saylor, Karen Bryan and Naomi André's *Blackness in Opera* (2012) cross-examines the issue of black identity in opera through a distinctly interdisciplinary methodology, bringing together the work of scholars from a wide range of academic disciplines. What all of these disciplinary expansions have in common, broadly, is a concern for identity. Opera scholarship in particular has become the site of a great expansion in terms of interdisciplinary approaches, lending itself naturally, due to the composite nature of the art form, to interrogation from many different critical or theoretical perspectives. Given the drought of scholarship on this aspect of Delius's music, it is within this discipline that this dissertation will be contextualised.

Research of this kind which looks critically at Delius's music is rare, and his operas in particular have fallen into obscurity with academic and public audiences alike; Eric Saylor's chapter in *Blackness in Opera* (2012, pp. 78-100) is seemingly unique in being the first piece of scholarship to attempt a culturally situated musicological critique of *Koanga*. This recent contribution towards an understanding of how race is constructed and represented in the work in question is highly illuminating, but potentially leaves room for both a wider *and* deeper interrogation of themes such as difference and Otherness in the opera. Because of its novelty as the only substantial piece of work published on *Koanga*, the ideas put forward in Saylor's chapter will be touched upon regularly throughout the coming chapters, and in fact some of the main contentions of this thesis draw on and explore Saylor's ideas in various ways, as will be made clear momentarily.

Two of Saylor's main points of argument in his chapter relate to the ideas of fate, and musical style. The notion of fate is highlighted by Saylor as the driving force by behind the momentum of the narrative, which pushes *Koanga* and *Palmyra* – the protagonists – towards the work's tragic conclusion. The non-white identities of these characters is highlighted as the root cause of this process, as Saylor demonstrates that the way in which non-white racial identities are constructed in

the opera leans on prevailing ideas of racial inferiority which were in circulation at the time of the opera's genesis (Saylor, 2012, p. 95). On the subject of musical style, Saylor discusses the general lack of exotic signifiers in the music of the protagonists, which he asserts 'avoids the stereotypical hallmarks of African-American folk music assigned to the other slaves' and is identical in style to the music of the white characters (Saylor, 2012, p. 88).

Whilst Saylor of course recognises the importance of cultural factors such as exoticism, imperialism, and colonialism on the way in which racial and social identity is constructed in *Koanga*, my own argument differs in emphasis. As Saylor points out, Koanga and Palmyra occupy a 'social no-man's-land, a separate sphere from everyone else on the plantation' (Saylor, 2012, p. 91). It for this reason – the exceptional circumstances of these characters – that my own study initially takes a broader view of racial representation in *Koanga*, dealing in depth with the way in which the identities of both the slaves and the white characters is constructed musically in the work, before discussing the protagonists in relation to those findings.

Chapter 1 begins by discussing the genesis of *Koanga*, contextualising it within Delius's life as well as those of the librettist(s) and subsequent adaptors of the work in order to give a rounded picture of the work and its various versions. Simultaneously, this chapter introduces the notion of transcultural adaptation, and focusses on Delius's appropriation of an American literary text for the European operatic stage, and the implications this might have in terms of changes both to the content of the work, but also to the ideological stance taken towards that content by both Delius and prospective European audiences.

The explicitly racially charged content of the opera is a prime example of the kind of issue which would be affected by this swing in viewpoint. This paves the way for Chapter 2, which initially examines the ways in which European culture has constructed, understood, and represented the identities of non-white individuals in the past, and exposes some of the deeply situated and damaging binarisms which perpetuated notions of racial difference and European superiority throughout society at the time *Koanga* was conceived. The final section of this chapter draws on these binarisms in order to examine in detail how Delius is able to create a complex and multifaceted representation of black racial identity for the slaves on the plantation, not only utilizing tried-and-tested means of musical encodings of exoticism, but through sophisticated and immersive musical devices which are woven into the texture of the opera.

The first issue tackled in Chapter 3 corresponds with the ones examined in Chapter 2, and seeks to address how the same cultural processes which are used to create a model of blackness in *Koanga* are used in an inverted form to create a distinct musical identity for the white characters. An

examination of the power structures in place in the plantation, headed by the owner Don José, reveals the motives and drives behind the actions of the white characters. This demonstrates, at a deeper level, the influence of imperialistic and colonialist discourse in the opera, leading to a reevaluation of Saylor's notions of 'fate' as the main impetus behind the narrative. Following this, the characters of Koanga and Palmyra are discussed in relation to the musical and cultural binarisms which are used to connote racial and social difference amongst the rest of the characters. This challenges Saylor's argument that the two central characters are musically inseparable from the white characters, showing instead how their musical identities are caught in a state of flux between both the upper and lower classes of the social system, matching their social ambiguity.

As suggested, there are in fact several existing versions of *Koanga*, all of which are shown alongside some supplementary information in Table 1 below, and it is in this format that different versions of *Koanga* will be named throughout this study (1st, 2nd, etc.). Attempting a comprehensive and detailed exploration of *Koanga* in all its stages of adaptation is a complex if not impossible task, and is not the main purpose of this thesis; the size of that task would require more space than is available here, and the lack of access to a manuscript for the 1st version of the opera is limiting. As indicated in Table 1, the music of the opera remains largely unchanged from its 2nd version, heard at Elberfeld. For clarity, musical examples in later sections of this essay will be given with reference to the score for the 4th version, revised by Craig and Page (1974), which contains an accurate and faithful reproduction of Delius's original music as he left it in the second version, other than the retention of the Act III prelude. At times, where it is illuminating or appropriate, the musical text from this edition will be supplemented with extracts from the various versions of the libretto, to which there is fuller access than the music manuscripts. Despite the lack of access to the 1st version of *Koanga*, which we know differs from its successors in numerous ways, insight can be gained into its contents through a programme book, which survives from the 1899 concert in St. James Hall, London, at which excerpts from *Koanga* were given their first public performance. This booklet contains not only a synopsis of the opera as it was at that time, but also a brief transcript of the libretto, and so for comparative purposes is a useful source. Nonetheless, the main focus of this dissertation will be upon the music as it was left after Delius's revision of the work in 1904, the work's 2nd version, because this was the last version which he revised himself.

| <i>Versions of Koanga</i> | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Version Number</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Language</i> | <i>Notes</i> |
| 1 st | 1897 | English | Manuscript held in Jacksonville University Library, where it was received as a gift from the Delius trust in 1962 (Randel, 1971, p. 153). This version received a private performance in the house of Adela Maddison in 1899 (Simeone, 2000, p. 59), and excerpts were premiered at a London concert in the same year (Bennett, 1899). |
| 2 nd | 1904 | German | Translated into German for a production in Elberfeld, Germany conducted by Fritz Cassirer. Numerous insertions of new sections of music, and some revision of the contents of the libretto (Randel, 1971, pp. 152-154). |
| 3 rd | 1935 | English | Retranslated from the German into English for a staging at Covent Garden, conducted by Thomas Beecham on the 23 rd of September 1935. Further interpolation of an extract from <i>Irmelin</i> as a prelude to Act III (Randel, 1971, p. 154). |
| 4 th | 1974 | English | Revised edition by Douglas Craig and Andrew Page, made with the assistance of Eric Fenby. Alterations to most of the libretto (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. iii-viii) |

Table 1 - information relating to the various versions of *Koanga* which have been created since its original composition in 1897.

This opera is marked out as a work which readily invites this kind of criticism found both in this dissertation, and Saylor's chapter in *Blackness in Opera*, being saturated with features which would have made it remarkably exotic to audiences at the time of its reception at the turn of the twentieth century. It is through the application of a culturally critical and theoretical approach that these surface-level exoticisms can be factored in and understood as just one element within a much more powerful system, in which the portrayal and treatment of non-white characters can be seen as perpetuating and reflecting the values of European imperialism.

1. *Koanga* as an Adaptation

Born in 1862 to German parents in Bradford, England, Delius grew up in a typical Victorian business-class household. Though musical culture was a central part of his childhood, Delius's father never considered a career in music appropriate for his young son, who was expected to join the running of the family textile business after he came of age. After leaving school, Delius was apprenticed in the industry as his family wished, and worked in England, Germany, France and Sweden (Hutchings, 1949, pp. 9-13). Eventually, in 1884, Delius's father Julius came to accept the fact that his son was not suited to helping him in this line of work, and allowed him (after much persuasion) to travel to Jacksonville Florida, where the 22 year old was to manage an orange plantation (Jefferson, 1972, p. 13). It was whilst Delius was there, managing a plantation named Solano Grove, that he set his sights on a career as a professional composer. Delius was delighted by the music of the African-American family who worked as caretakers at Solano Grove, remarking to Fenby that it was hearing them sing which first urged him to express himself through serious composition (Fenby, 1966, p. 25). He took composition lessons with Thomas F. Ward, an organist who he met by chance in a piano shop (Palmer, 1976, p. 2), whose instruction Delius described as being the most crucial he ever received (Fenby, 1966, pp. 168-169). Eventually Julius Delius was convinced to allow his son to travel to Leipzig in order to obtain a full musical education, where he would study from 1886 until 1888, and it was here that Delius came into contact with Edward Grieg (Palmer, 1976, p. 44), who was to become a lifelong friend and influence. On completion of his studies, Delius relocated once more to Paris, where he immersed himself within a wide circle of artistic friends, including other musicians (notably figures such as Fauré, Ravel and Schmitt), as well as writers and painters (Palmer, 1976, pp. 126-127).

It was in this environment that Delius turned to writing his operas, beginning with *Irmelin* – a fairy-tale story, in 1890 – and *The Magic Fountain* in 1893-5, which centred on a Spanish conquistador and his encounter with Native Americans whilst searching for a mythical fountain with the power to grant eternal life. *Koanga* followed, written between 1895 and 1897 and, like its predecessor, is set in America. It tells the tale of Koanga, a captive African prince and voodoo priest, who is taken as a slave to work on a Louisiana plantation, based loosely on a section from George Washington Cable's book *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (Cable, 1880).³ It is clear that *Koanga* was the product

³ Appendix A, a transcript of a synopsis from a programme book made for a public performance of the 1st version of *Koanga* (Bennett, 1899), gives a full account of the plot as it stood at that time. This is supplemented by Appendix B, which contains an excerpt from the preface to the revised edition of the opera (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974), explaining the changes which were made to the work's plot during the several

of a change of approach to operatic composition by the composer, who described it as ‘more of an opera than the last one’ (Delius F. , Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, letter dated 25th February 1896, 1983, p. 99).

Unlike *Irmelin* and *The Magic Fountain*, Delius did not approach the composition of *Koanga* with the intention of devising both his own plot and libretto. Attempts at this were abandoned fairly early on, with Delius’s own admission that his capacity to write literature was not on par with his compositional abilities (Delius F. , Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, letter dated 25th February 1896, 1983, p. 99). Following this, Delius turned to his acquaintance Jutta Bell for assistance. Bell had been a neighbour in Florida, and her friendship with the composer was renewed when she moved to Paris, where she had contributed towards the libretto for *The Magic Fountain* (Carley, 1983, p. 78). At this point Delius had already drafted out a libretto for Act I, and part of Act II, but was deeply unhappy with it. He was unsure of the final structure of the piece, even in terms of the amounts of acts, but hinted at several possibilities, such as the prelude and postlude sections, and the Wagnerian *Liebestod* model as an ending (Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, letter dated 25th February 1896, 1983, p. 99). It transpired that Jutta Bell was unwilling to collaborate on the project with Delius, and so he began searching for a librettist elsewhere, eventually settling on Charles F. Keary – a strange choice, considering he was inexperienced in writing for the stage and not without his critics. Whilst he was admired as a scholar, Keary’s novels were described as ‘never rising about the commonplace’ (Randel, 1971, p. 143). Regardless, Delius was clearly fond of his work, describing him in a letter to Jutta Bell as ‘An English writer of much merit; and also a new friend who I value much’ (Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, Letter dated 15th July 1896, 1983). Delius was likely to have been impressed by Keary’s credentials as a novelist, scholar and philosopher, and Keary’s lack of knowledge regarding Cable’s literary style and use of vernacular Louisianan dialects clearly was not off-putting to Delius, whose respect for Keary, coupled with a disregard for ‘realism’ in opera, would have meant Keary’s bold changes to the narrative were a non-issue (Carley , 1988, p. 99).⁴

1.1 Cable’s *The Grandissimes* and Delius’s Adaptive Process

G. W. Cable (1844-1925) was a novelist, essayist, and columnist often credited as a forerunner of the ‘local colourist’ literary style that grew out of the southern states of America (Birch , 2016). A white man, born in New Orleans, Cable is regarded as being among the first writers to tackle the

revisions and translations which the work saw over the years after the 1st version just discussed. The exact timeline and details of these alterations will be discussed in detail later.

⁴ Delius’s thoughts on ‘realism’ in opera will be discussed in more depth later.

racial and social issues which loomed over the American south, and particularly his native city, at that time. Cable's fictional works often focussed upon creole characters, and used stories set in the then relatively recent past as canvases upon which he could tackle the complexities of contemporary politics (Nagel, 2014, p. 22). Cable's *The Grandissimes, a Story of Creole Life* was originally published as a serial in *Scribner's Monthly* over the period spanning 1879-80,⁵ and is formed around the story of the slave Bras-Coupé,⁶ which in its entirety takes up only two chapters of Cable's book. The narrative is an adaptation of an orally circulated story indigenous to the area, which tells the tale of an escaped fugitive and his clashes with the New Orleans police force – a story which was manipulated and exaggerated by the State in order to justify the police's right to exercise extreme and often fatal brutality.⁷ Bras-Coupé became infamous, and even after his death he gained such notoriety that he began to be associated with the supernatural – a figure of terrible power who terrorised New Orleans society from the outlying swamps (Wagner, 2005, pp. 117-122). Cable's alterations consolidated the many-sided mythologies surrounding Bras-Coupé and cemented them into a fixed narrative form. The changes made in the process effectively severed the link between the legend itself and the way in which was used by the State. The partial degree of autonomy which this granted made it possible for Cable to recast the story for his own purposes.

The Grandissimes as a whole frames an account of the Bras-Coupé legend, which is found in chapters 28 and 29, and is set eight years after Bras-Coupé's death. After being sold as a slave to the plantation owner Don José Martinez, Bras-Coupé is eventually contracted into servitude by the promise of marriage to Palmyre – the maidservant of Martinez's fiancée, who is known in the book only as Mademoiselle. On the night of their wedding, becoming drunk after drinking alcohol for the first time, Bras-Coupé assaults his master, forfeiting his life under the Code Noir which was enforced in Louisiana at that time.⁸ The slave flees into the swamps, uttering a curse against Martinez which soon claims his life. Emerging from hiding, Bras-Coupé demands that Palmyre is brought forward, but his terms are not met, and so he lays down another curse and flees once again (Cable, 1880, pp. 219-252).

⁵ A Literary Journal which was founded in 1870 and ran until 1881, publishing the works of many notable American writers (Hart & Leininger, 2016).

⁶ The name he gives himself is in the Jalloff tongue and literally means 'Arm-cut-off', but he adopts the Congolese translation Mioko-Koanga, which is subsequently translated into the French Bras-Coupé (Cable & Kreyling, 1989, pp. 170-171). It is from the Congolese that Delius takes the name of his protagonist, and title of his opera.

⁷ Bryan Wagner offers an in depth exploration of the relationship between the original tale (and its development), the police state, and Cable's version found in *The Grandissimes* (2005).

⁸ The *Code Noir de Louisiane* was a set of laws passed by the government of Louisiana in 1724 which, amongst other, things granted power to the Catholic Church and enforced prejudicial rulings which controlled the rights and treatment of black people in the area (Aubert, 2013, pp. 21-23).

Several significant elaborations on the usual details of the myth are present in Cable's version. For instance, where Bras-Coupé was typically an outlaw, often described as mulatto or creole, in *The Grandissimes* he is depicted as an African Prince. In the legend Bras-Coupé ('Arm-cut-off' in English – see footnote 6) gained his name in a confrontation with the civil guards, where an injury caused him to lose a limb. In Cable's story, the name refers to the loss felt by Bras-Coupé's tribe after he was enslaved.

The endings too vary significantly: the legend has Bras-Coupé, finally caught by the police after a reign of terror, hung in a local square as an example to any others who would consider rebelling against the State. Displaying his body in this way consolidates the colour of his skin and his reputation as an outlaw in order to make a powerful statement in support of capital punishment under the Code Noir. Cable's reimagining takes place on 'Congo Square', where Bras-Coupé surfaces from the crowd to join in with slaves who have gathered to dance, and impresses everyone with his abilities. At this point he is captured and sentenced to horrendous physical torture and finally capital punishment for his crimes. On his death bed, Bras-Coupé's humanity is restored by the touch of an innocent child, and he dies with tears in his eyes, consumed by a vision of Africa. Integral to Cable's version is the love story between Bras-Coupé and Palmyre, and this is potentially a by-product of the adaptation into a literary form; the novel is generally well suited to developing such themes effectively (Wagner, 2005, p. 128). This thematic addition animates Bras-Coupé's character by implying a capacity for real human emotion – yet another contrast to the pre-existing myth which was designed by the State to dehumanise the outlaw.

Cable had clearly identified the Bras-Coupé legend as something with cultural weight, which could be manipulated in a way that would give it new meaning and allow it to act as a vessel for his own views on racial politics. In the same sense, Delius must have found something in Cable's work which he saw as suitable for transforming into an opera. It is unlikely that Delius shared Cable's passion for battling the social injustice rife in 19th-century Louisiana.⁹ Instead, it is probable that Delius's main points of engagement with the story were its setting, which would allow him to experiment with the use of African-American folk-music, and the exotic romance between the protagonist and the maid Palmyre. The issue of racial identity which forms the basis of Cable's own version may have been recognised by Delius as forming the kind of social or cultural tension which was central to the romantic operatic tradition.

⁹ Eric Saylor points out that Delius was likely to have a total disregard for these issues, emphasising a distinction between 'racial enlightenment' and 'professional interest'. Delius's curiosity regarding black music is linked (probably exclusively) to the second category (Saylor, 2012, p. 87).

In her book *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) Linda Hutcheon discusses and critiques the complexities of adaptation as both a *process* (adapting something) and as a *product* (the product of the process of adaptation). Integral to her work are the notions of genre and audience. These two factors are tightly intertwined, and are central to the understanding of the way in which the object of an adaptation works within any given cultural setting. If we examine *Koanga* in these terms, we see that the process of adaptation takes Cable's work, a proto-Southern-realist novel, and transforms it into an opera, an intrinsically European genre. This move engenders not only a change in genre, but also a change in audience, and mode of engagement. Here, the switch from a literary genre to a staged work translates as a switch from the 'telling' mode of engagement to 'showing'. This is a useful way of describing the way in which the content of a particular work is disseminated to its audience, and is linked closely to the genre of the work in question. So, a novel is accessed by 'telling': when a reader engages with it, they are 'told' of its contents by the words on the page – by the narrator. In a staged work, such as an opera, the audience are 'shown' the details – the events unfurl onstage – the information is given by sound and image (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 38-46).

Many of the changes which were necessary in order to allow the story of *Bras-Coupé* to effectively cross over from one medium to the other are derived from the inherent advantages and disadvantages which are characteristic of novels and operas, in general terms. For instance, a characteristic element of operatic performance, which is not present in a written text, is a fixed temporal framework. This has an important effect on the way in which adaptations which cross these genres are devised. When we read literature, there is of course a temporal element; we read the pages and this takes time, but effectively we construct the narrative at our own pace. However, the nature of a staged work means that the pace at which we engage with the work is set *for us* – because a performance only lasts a certain amount of time.

In opera, this rigid temporal element has a particular effect. Singing a line of words takes far longer than just speaking them, and this is only exaggerated by the presence of an instrumental accompaniment. This limits the amount of information which can be communicated within a given period of time. For this reason, an operatic adaptation of a pre-existing literary text is highly condensed in quality. The limitation on *what* and *how much* is actually sung means that an opera cannot hope to provide the rich density of detail that literature is capable of carrying (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 38), meaning that characters and plots are typically defined directly, with little perceivable textual depth (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 44-45).

And yet the presence of these temporally restrictive components in an opera – broadly speaking, the musical elements – can provide us with a wealth of purely sonic information about characters and

narratives. This can have a compensatory effect because the musical dimension of opera has the potential to offer depth in its own ways, allowing us to glimpse the inner lives, thoughts, and feelings of the characters onstage. Hutcheon points out that, by convention, operatic characters are unable to actually *hear* the music through which their stories are told (except when partaking in meta-performative/meta-textual moments).¹⁰ This implies that only the spectators of the performance are granted full access to the informative power of the musical setting. Operatic music can provide listeners with such information through an arsenal of compositional devices. A leitmotif, which can be associated with a certain character, a theme, an emotion, or an event, is a way of linking the musical accompaniment directly with the visual or emotional elements of the work. Arias, which by convention halt the dramatic momentum of the work, allow the character to indulge in a direct expression of interiority (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 60). Specific examples of such features in *Koanga* will be discussed in detail later.

As discussed, adaptation across genres causes a change in audience, and the adaptation of Cable's novel for the European operatic stage would have caused a drastic shift in this respect. Central to Hutcheon's theorisation of the adaptive process is the concept of 'palimpsestuous intertextuality', which describes the way in which audiences compare the *product* of an adaptation against the *original source* (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 21). The audience at St James Hall in London, on the 30th May 1899, witnessed what was advertised as a 'Delius Orchestral Concert' (Bennett, 1899), where extracts from *Koanga* received their public premier.¹¹ It seems unlikely that the average audience member would be intimately familiar with *The Grandissimes*, or Cable's other works. The Bras-Coupé legend is not likely to have been known either, nor should it be assumed that the audience had much knowledge of or concern for the racial and political injustices specific to Louisiana at the time of Cable's writing, or indeed of Cable's own stance on these issues. The transcultural nature of this adaptation means that most audience members would have been unable to engage with *Koanga* as a palimpsest, to use Hutcheon's terminology. Nevertheless, these same spectators would likely have experienced a different kind of intertextuality, even if unwittingly. Presuming that most audience members would have had some prior knowledge of other operas, they would be able to experience an intertextuality between *Koanga* and their own experiences of opera more generally. This allows audience members to navigate a new work, such as the excerpts from *Koanga*, by constant

¹⁰ Carolyn Abbate defines this phenomenon, which she terms 'phenomenal performance', as 'a musical or vocal performance which declares itself openly, singing that is heard by the singer, the auditors on stage, and understood as "music that they (too) hear" by us, the theatre audience' (Abbate, 1991, p. 5).

¹¹ The first *full* performance took place privately in Paris, in March of 1899 at the residency of Adela Maddison. The musicians included Gabriel Fauré, and audience members included notable figures from the musical circles of Paris, such as the Prince and Princess de Polignac (Delius F. , 1983, pp. 149-150).

reference to what they deem typical, or atypical, of operatic convention, or to specific details held in common with other works.

Transculturalism complicates matters further, as adaptation inevitably places the work within a new cultural space, geographically and ideologically. The transferral of content from one work into another genre, with a new audience, will unavoidably cause the content of the work itself to undergo a simultaneous shift in order for its contents to function effectively in its new context (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 122). The change from an American, Southern-State novel to English-language opera offers a fairly drastic example of this process. The change in audience which this engenders means that not only will the content of the new work be subject to scrutiny from a new cultural perspective, but that the content itself must undergo a simultaneous shift in order to maintain its relevance and appeal (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 122). This happens concurrently with the unavoidable shift in angle which occurs when the original material (Cable's novel) is retold through the lens of the adapter's/adapters' own ideological perspective(s).¹² With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter will in part be concerned with exploring ways in which the symbiotic relationship between the paradigms of 'change of audience' and 'change of genre' can be, to a large extent, seen as governing the (artistic) decisions made by Delius (and Keary) in their adaptation of Cable's story.

As discussed, Cable's use of the Bras-Coupé legend as a vessel for his views on southern racial politics was almost certainly not what would have attracted Delius to the story for use as the subject matter for his opera – in fact Palmer warns us against this specifically when he notes 'nothing could be more misleading than to envisage his work as a social document in anything more than an incidental sense' (Palmer, 1976, p. 4). Hutcheon explains that artists working within different genres are likely to be attracted to different elements of any given stimulus, implying that adaptations into different genres would be likely to focus on different themes from within the same source. (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 19). This shift in focus is palpable in Delius's adaptation, and enables the romance between the characters of Koanga and Palmyra to become the central thread of the narrative, setting the saturation of politically and racially charged content into the background. As Randel observes, this change of focus is one of the main reasons for Delius's decisions to change the ending of the story, which is based on the *Tristan and Isolde* 'Liebestod' model (1971, p. 148). Delius was clearly under the influence of Wagnerism at this point in his career – he was familiar with

¹² In the Bras-Coupé/*Koanga* adaptation, an example of such an issue is that of racial politics. This is an issue that forms such an integral part of Cable's story that it would be impossible (and presumably undesirable) to remove all traces of it in the adaptive process. The English concert goers who formed the audience for *Koanga* in 1899 would not have had the expectations, experience, or views on issues of race as the readers of Cable's book, and so the issues of racial politics which are embedded in Cable's story would inevitably be viewed from a new perspective.

several of Wagner's works – and was explicit in his approval of Wagner's compositional practice;¹³ he even went as far as to say that he believed he could improve upon it (Carley, 1983, p. 86). Saylor interprets this as meaning that Delius believed that through the 'dramatically effective unification of music and poetry', as sought after by Wagner, he would be able to infuse his own works with deep levels of emotional intensity (2012, p. 79).

In this sense, Delius's search for a suitably 'dramatic' ending to *Koanga* translates at least partly as a search for a suitably 'operatic' one. The *Liebested* ending which Delius settled for had evidently been in his mind for some time, as it was mentioned as a possibility in an earlier letter regarding his progress with the composition of the opera, again to Jutta Bell (Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, Letter dated 9th February 1896, 1983, p. 98). As well as being a tried and tested operatic conclusion, it is effective in the context of Delius's opera for several further reasons. In addition to suiting the intensity of the love story which underpins the opera's plot, Randel also notes that the inclusion of Cable's original ending would cause unnecessary confusion due to its complexity (Randel, 1971, p. 148). In one sense the reductive quality of Delius's chosen ending complies with Hutcheon's description of the process of simplification which occurs when literature is adapted for the operatic form, whilst in another it complies with the notion of the refocusing process which occurs when adaptations cross genres and cultures.

In a letter to Jutta Bell in 1896, when seeking her assistance with the genesis of a libretto, Delius wrote 'Do not fear being realistic – I don't believe in realism in opera – Fantasy & poetry' (Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, letter dated 25th February 1896, 1983, p. 99). This is a rather vague statement, but at the very least it shows that Delius had no real concern for recreating the exact atmosphere or effect conjured by Cable's writing, or indeed accurately portraying life on a plantation. The libretto which was finally produced, with the help of Charles Keary, displays this disregard for 'realism', and perhaps the most obvious deviance from Cable's literary style is to be found upon examining their choice of language. The naturalistic style of language employed in *The Grandissimes* is abandoned in *Koanga* in favour of a highly poetic one. It is quite possible that Keary may have completed the libretto based solely on Delius's own outline of the opera's storyline as he envisioned it (Randel, 1971, p. 144). Because Keary was 'unfamiliar with American literature and negro speech' (Randel, 1971, p. 143), it is no surprise that the result departed abruptly from Cable's original attempts at linguistic veracity.

¹³ In a letter to Jutta Bell in 1894 he mentions that he had seen *Parsifal* and *Tannhäuser* at Bayreuth, and planned to see *Tristan and Isolde*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* three times each (Delius F. , Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, Letter dated 12 August 1894, 1983, pp. 90-91).

A glance over Delius's other operas reveals that this high-brow poetic style of text is by no means confined to *Koanga*. Moreover, it seems to be a standard part of Delius's vision for his own operatic style, perhaps lending some definition to what he meant by 'Fantasy and poetry'. If we accept this, then the adaptation of the linguistic style found in *The Grandissimes* can be explained at least in part by the change of audience/genre paradigms which have been previously discussed. In bestowing the libretto of the opera with what Saylor refers to as 'the portentousness of a Wagnerian libretto' (Saylor, 2012, p. 82), Delius and Keary utilized a style of language which would have been familiar to opera-going audiences. Furthermore, the eradication of the phraseological diversity present in Cable's writing strips the text of one of the most conspicuous markers of racial identity and difference, and as a result ushers Cable's concern for racial politics further into the subtext of the opera.

A standard feature of operatic composition is the division of the work into acts. This is, in the broadest sense possible, a formal convention of the art-form, and one which must in some way be negated during the adaptive process. Delius's choice to divide the work into three acts could therefore be understood as a standard solution to a problem which occurs with the adaptation of a work across different artistic media, and so can be explained by the change of genre paradigm. It is evident that from an early point in his conception of *Koanga*, Delius planned to frame the main body of the work with the addition of a prologue and an epilogue (Fritz Delius to Jutta Bell, letter dated 25th February 1896, 1983, p. 99). Since this decision is not in fulfilment of any particular requirement of operatic writing, it is perhaps best labelled as an artistic, rather than practical, decision.

In these exterior sections, the character referred to as Uncle Joe (an 'old slave') is begged by a group of eight Planter's daughters to tell 'a story of long ago of grief and love' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 5-6). Uncle Joe responds by telling us the story of *Koanga* and Palmyra, which is acted out as a flashback across the inner sections of the work. The opera concludes by returning to these characters, where the young girls are saddened by Uncle Joe's story.

Framing the main body of the work with these outer sections creates a metatextual effect. This constructs a complex system of textual layers throughout the work. Starting from the innermost layer, they can be summarised as:

1. The main action of the work, found in the three central acts. These are the sections based on Cable's story.
2. The first effect of the pro/epilogue: the recognition that the central narrative is being told through the narrating figure of Uncle Joe.

3. The second effect of the pro/epilogue: the reaction of the privileged white characters – the Planter’s daughters – to Uncle Joe’s story.

The relationship between Uncle Joe (and his story) and the Planter’s daughters can be seen as an allegory for the European obsession with the exotic which permeated cultural practices at the time; the dynamic between the audience and the performance is echoed by the Planter’s daughters listening to Uncle Joe’s tale. So, in addition to the splitting of the dramatic action into three main sections, as encouraged by the tropes of operatic convention (‘change of genre’ paradigm), Delius’s inclusion of the pro/epilogue device further contributes to the positioning the work’s main body within the European discourse of exoticism (‘change of audience’ paradigm).

The overarching issues of narrative, formal structure, and language as discussed above highlight the ways in which the adaptive process is governed by a set of practical rules which can be described in part by the ‘change of genre/audience’ paradigms. However, this perspective cannot explain comprehensively any decision made during the adaptive process which is elective rather than pragmatic. Artistic choices are less directly linked to the canon of operatic convention or the expectations of any given audience, and may be more indicative of the artist’s own preferences, or even personal views and ideological stance. The broad alterations made to Cable’s story have a multitude of consequences when it comes to the finer detail of the work, and it is worth reiterating that the inevitable condensing of content which comes with an adaptation from novel to opera is also a cause of this. But this reduction in content allows the adapter(s) to make a choice about exactly what is left behind when this process is finished. The next section of this chapter will endeavour to examine in greater depth the ways in which the pragmatic and creative aspects of the adaptive process influenced Delius and Keary in their adaptation of Cable’s story, and stimulated changes later on, as the work was revised at various points across the 20th Century.

1.2 *Koanga*’s Development Throughout the 20th Century

Koanga was subject to several major revisions over the course of the twentieth century, making it a complex work to begin to assess in terms of adaptive process. The 1st version never received a full production for the public stage. The first fully realised performance was a 2nd version of the work, sung in German (translated by Jelka Delius), and staged at Elberfeld where it was conducted by Fritz Cassirer in 1904 (Threlfall, 1974, p. 8). The largest alterations made here (other than the change in language) were the sections of new music which were interpolated at various points throughout the work. Some of these were large, including a new aria for Palmyra in Act II, and new preludes to Acts I and III. Other significant changes, such as the erasure of Palmyra’s involvement in provoking *Koanga*

into violence at the end of Act II, or the deletion of all references to the Grapion family (whom we never meet), seem to have been made during the rehearsal period (Threlfall, 1974, p. 9). The effects of alterations such as these on the narrative will be discussed in more depth later on, but for now it is worth noting that many of these changes can be at least partly accounted for by the paradigms of adaptation mentioned earlier on.

This 2nd version of the opera was the only one which was performed publically before Delius died in 1934, and yet the composer's absence did not put an end to adaptations being made to *Koanga*. In 1935 Thomas Beecham and Edward Agate staged a new version at Covent Garden – the first complete English language production of the work, which they created with the assistance of Jelka Delius by retranslating the German language version back into English.¹⁴ Aside from the insertion of an interlude from Delius's earlier opera *Irmelin* before Act III, the changes made by Beecham and Agate are confined only to the libretto, and the music remained broadly unaltered from the 1904 (2nd) version, with the exception of some rhythmic changes in the voice parts to accommodate the speech patterns in the new libretto (André, Bryan, & Saylor, 2012, p. 83). Not long after the appearance of Randel's article 'Koanga' and its Libretto' (1971), in which the author concludes that *Koanga* would only achieve success if its libretto was revised and its style brought closer to that of Cable's novel, the opera was subject to its final revision by Douglas Craig and Andrew Page (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974). The main aims of this new version are summarised in the Preface to the vocal score as the removal of issues which arose from the confused adaptations, re-adaptations and translations which the opera had passed through over the years, and to 'make the plot more logical, sharpen the personalities of the characters and tauten the drama where necessary' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. v). The editors used as a basis the vocal score produced for the Elberfeld performance of the opera, and most of their efforts were directed towards achieving a compromise between Delius's original conception and bestowing the work, by extensively revising the libretto, with a level of period veracity which brings it closer in nature to Cable's original style (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. v-viii). The erasure of language contained within earlier versions of the libretto which would, by the time of the its final revision, have been deemed deeply offensive and inappropriate (such as the use of derogatory racial slurs), is another noticeable feature of the alterations made to the opera's text, and this, following suit, can be explained by the 'change of audience' paradigm.

¹⁴ Eric Saylor elaborates on the highly complex nature of this process: 'To make matters even more confusing, a fresh copy of the score was prepared by Delius's amanuensis, Eric Fenby, near the end of the composer's life that incorporated changes made to the original score for the German performance of 1904; it was with this new copy of the score that Jelka Delius, Beecham, and Agate worked' (André, Bryan, & Saylor, 2012, p. 83).

Understanding changes made to the text, the characters, and the plot of the opera, to name a few examples, in terms of the 'change of audience/change of genre' paradigm highlights the complexity and importance of the work's shifts in focus and ideological stance. This paves the way for the chapters ahead, which will begin to focus in more detail on the ways in which the opera is shaped by these processes. More specifically, attention will be paid to the way which Delius – working within these paradigms – is able to construct the ideological content of the opera, and the identities of the characters themselves, by both musical and extra-musical means.

2. Constructing Difference – Culturally and Musically

The previous chapter discussed at length both the process of *Koanga's* adaptation from Cable's novel, and the adaptation of *Koanga* itself across its numerous revisions. The former of the two processes – the transcultural aspect of the adaptation – was highlighted in particular as the main cause of a reorientation of ideological viewpoint which occurred when Cable's narrative came to be viewed through a European gaze in the form of *Koanga*, and accentuation was also placed upon the effects of a transition between the genres of the novel and opera. Some space was also given to considering the pressures (cultural, more than personal) which may have affected Delius's (and Keary's) pragmatic and artistic decisions throughout their reworking of Cable's story.

It is this shift in ideological perspective which underpins the content of this chapter. As discussed, the concept of identity, particularly racial identity, is central to the plot of the opera, and so it is important to understand the way in which characters are defined and represented within the work, in these terms. Yet the notion of race, or the way in which racial identity is represented, exemplifies the kind of element which would be reconceived during the transcultural adaptive process. In the case of *Koanga*, the construction of racial identity must, in some sense, have been reconstructed from Cable's original in light of the personal views and preferences of Delius and Keary, as well as more general values shared within Victorian society at large. In order to expose this change, this chapter will begin by briefly outlining the theoretical notions of difference and identity in broad terms, before focusing on the ideas of race and racism as they would have been recognised at the time of *Koanga's* composition. This understanding of racial identity will then be utilized to demonstrate the techniques employed by Delius for the depiction of African (American) identity, as presented in *Koanga*.

2.1 Binarisms, Otherness, and Exoticism

The notion of binary opposition (or binarism) is one which is entrenched in the way that European culture has defined itself, both in terms of its internal structures, and in terms of its relationship to external ones. Whilst the term has differing implications within individual scholarly disciplines, its broad modern definition can be traced back to the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century and his understanding of the way in which language functions to convey meaning. Saussure recognised that the relationship between any given word (the signifier) and the object or concept to which it related (the signified) is arbitrary. From this he developed his idea that the way in which we draw meaning from words is by comparing them to others; words have a negative value

in the sense that they are meaningful precisely because they are *not* a different word (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000, p. 23).

The most concrete way in which this can be demonstrated is by the concept of binary opposition – the contrasting relationship between two opposing concepts, such as big/small or male/female, for example. A problematic feature of some binarisms in this sense is that they are by nature unequally weighted, so that one side of any given binary tends to form a hegemony over its opposing partner. In other words, it is possible to describe the relationship between the constituents of a binarism as normative/Other (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000, pp. 23-24).¹⁵ Ruth Solie identifies the process of Othering as a process by which individuals, or groups of people, are distinguished by comparison to the self, or the normative. This process is problematic, she notes, due to its pejorative nature – the tendency of Othering is to stigmatize the subject as inferior or out of place (Solie, 1993, p. 2).

The rationale of imperialism was based on a multitude of binarisms, which allowed for European cultural self-legitimation through the recognition of its own values as normative when compared against non-Western ones, which it hegemonized and Othered (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000, p. 24). Perhaps the most vicious and overarching binarism to be exploited by imperialist discourse is that of race. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note that the ‘opposition of black/brown/yellow/white is in fact a strategy to establish a binarism of white/non-white, which asserts a relation of dominance’ (2000, p. 26). It was this kind of self-imbued cultural superiority which became a means of justifying European imperialist activity, and can be held responsible for many of the physically and culturally violent acts which the West performed across the globe.

These concepts and their implications are relevant to a study of Delius’s *Koanga* in multiple ways. The content of the opera is obviously saturated with references to European imperial conquest and colonisation, being set on an American plantation populated with characters such as slave owners and victims of the transatlantic slave trade. Furthermore, the act of appropriating the content of Cable’s novel, in an indigenous literary style, for use in a European opera, is in effect an act of Westernisation, in itself a distinctly imperialist move. This encourages us to expect a change in perspective between Cable’s and Delius’s/Keary’s versions of the story, where the assumptions and views about social and personal identity are shifted as a result.

¹⁵ The binarism of male/female provides an example of this kind of imbalance. It has been the subject of much critique by post-structuralist feminist thinkers, who have exposed the now obvious domination and suppression of the female by the male throughout European history.

Musicological practice which aims to understand the ways in which such binarisms are detectable in all aspects of musical culture has gradually gained momentum over the last few decades. It may be prudent to briefly examine a few ways in which such notions have been applied in various strands of musicological enquiry in order to elucidate some methods by which identity can be constructed through music.

Feminist theory first began to influence musicological thinking towards the end of the twentieth century, and the resulting movement in musical scholarship was arguably the first to address issues of identity in this context. Scholars such as Susan McClary demonstrated that even music in its 'absolute' forms can be understood as a gendered discourse, and exposed the often insidious effect of the cultural work that results from this. McClary's critique of the tonal system aligns classical sonata form against the process of Othering in order to demonstrate how it can be understood as gendered. McClary identifies the first subject (normally in the tonic key of the piece and typically described as 'masculine') as normative, and the second subject (grounded in a new key and contrastingly characterised as 'feminine') as the Other. When this is applied to the structure of sonata form – which pits the masculine and feminine against each other, concluding with a final repetition of the first and second subjects, this time *both in the tonic key* – we can see a direct link to a typical European narrative structure in which the Other is forced into conformity by the normative (McClary, 1991, pp. 13-16).

Whilst McClary writes with a focus on gender and sexuality, she notes that though the Other is identified as 'feminine', it is not necessarily identified as *female*. This implies that *any* identity which does not comply with the normative one is effectively 'feminised', whilst in a Western patriarchal context it is safe to assume that the normative position is inherently *male* (as well as 'masculine') (McClary, 1991, p. 16). The feminine Other then, may take the form of anything which is classed as a threat to the normative masculine position, and it is typical that distinguishing features such as 'gender, race, and class identity get mapped on to each other, and they seem to become the same threatening issue' (McClary, 1991, p. 65). So in addition to being male, the societal norm in the context of European society has historically been characterised as white, and middle-class (to use the examples named by McClary) as well as heterosexual and Christian.¹⁶ It is these values that are expressed musically, whether explicitly or implicitly, and it is against them that certain non-hegemonic groups are Othered.

¹⁶ It is interesting to note in the context of this study that Delius himself fits this description almost perfectly, aside from his explicit rejection of Christian faith.

Issues such as race, gender, sexuality, social class, and religious identity can be impossible to separate in practice, due in part to their conflation during the process of Othering. McClary elaborates on how this is manipulated in order to denote difference in the context of Bizet's *Carmen*. In the opera, Carmen's music is held in direct contrast to that of the protagonist, Don José, whose 'musical discourse is that of the "universal" tongue of Western classical music' (McClary, 1991, p. 59). Carmen's musical discourse, however, is one that speaks mainly through dance music styles, specifically pastiches of gypsy dance music, and is characterised by chromatic melodic lines, and rhythmic accompaniments. Don José then, McClary argues, represents through his music a figure of Eurocentric normativity with his music speaking in a language which is professed by the western musical tradition to be cerebral, controlled, and masculine. This forms a sharp contrast with Carmen, who is signified musically in a way which denotes the physical and exotic, and is bestowed with traits which have connoted femininity (McClary, 1991, pp. 57-59). Here we see the opposition of several binarisms: transcendental/bodily, European/foreign, masculine/feminine – in other words the criteria by which Carmen can be understood as Othered against the normative position of Don José.¹⁷ In this sense, the intersection of Carmen's Gypsy identity (Locke, 2009, pp. 160-161) – signified through non-European musical topics – with the inclusion of musical traits which have, in the context of Western art music, historically signified femininity, concretely positions her as a threat to the established white, middle-class privilege of Don José.

It is this conflation of aspects of identity which can allow for the construction of difference along any axis of identity, and its effects are often strengthened by the entanglement of Othering characteristics. A similar example can be found in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. The white characters are identified musically as normative through Puccini's use of styles recognised contingently by Italians as sounding 'Italian'. Contrastingly, Asian characters are differentiated through a mixture of musical references. The use of European musical styles from outside Italy, such as references to Debussyan harmonic language or Wagnerian *unendliche melodie* are coupled with quotations or pastiches of traditional Japanese melodies, in order to construct a musical identity for the Other, which sits in contrast to the Italian musical Self (Tsou, 2015, pp. 215-216). This works in much the same way as in the example by McClary, where the contrast between the normative and Othered musical languages implicitly forms a chain of binarisms, which are closely intermeshed.

¹⁷ McClary's reading of *Carmen* complicates the position of Don José in relation to 19th-century European patriarchy (McClary, 1991, pp. 59-67; McClary, 1992), but for the purposes of demonstrating difference as signified in music, the contrast between the musical languages of Carmen and Don José serves as an effective example nonetheless.

As discussed in Chapter One, *Koanga* is saturated with connotations of racial tension. There are an array of races and ethnicities represented within, and this allows for these tensions to play out dramatically. Opera, as with other Western art forms, has for centuries revealed and perpetuated the European fascination with the exotic or foreign, and in this sense *Koanga's* representation of plantation life in the American south can be seen to fit into a larger repertoire of musical works which present the non-European, to various extents and levels of subtlety. It is this repertoire which is the focus of Ralph Locke's *Musical Exoticism* (2009), in which the notion of exoticism in music is expounded in detail, as well as challenged and expanded. Locke's work outlines several major concepts which are applicable to the study of any work that deals with the representation of non-European cultures, making them valuable to consider in relation to *Koanga*.

Locke identifies a standard definition of musical exoticism which relates to particular uses of stylistic markers in European music. These markers typically borrow from, or at least resemble, stylistic features which are associated with the music of an exotic (non-European) locale (Locke, 2009, pp. 44-46). This understanding focusses primarily and intensely on a work in a purely musical sense, analysing it in terms of style; it is this concentrated, analytical approach which Locke names the 'Exotic Style only' Paradigm (Locke, 2009, pp. 48-59). Whilst Locke recognises that this investigative approach, which he labels as 'narrow bore' (2009, p. 48), provides a deep understanding of the way exotic references function to represent within music, he also emphasises the need for a broader definition and methodology. Locke suggests that the standard strategy might be expanded to include the study of extra-musical elements. These factors enable a work to function as exoticising even when the music itself contains no recognisable markers of otherness. This approach allows works which conjure up an image of a place other than the society within which it originated to be considered as exoticising, even if the music contains no references to foreign musical styles (Locke, 2009, pp. 46-47).

Locke names this broadened understanding of musical exoticism the 'All the Music in Full Context' paradigm, which he points out is particularly rewarding in the context of opera studies due to the genre's facility for the evocation of the exotic through extra-musical devices, such as costumes, sets, choreography, acting and lighting (Locke, 2009, p. 61). In *Koanga*, applying either of these paradigms yields a wealth of results. It is obviously important to look at the ways in which non-white characters are represented through the use of non-European musical styles, as they form an integral part of the opera. On the other hand, a large portion of the opera is written in a musical language far more typical of the western art music tradition, and to focus exclusively on the explicitly exotic musical contents would deprive us of a fuller understanding of the way in which the community within *Koanga* is portrayed by Delius, both through non-exotic music, and through extra-musical means.

Before examining how Locke's paradigms for musical exoticism might be applied to the music of *Koanga*, it is necessary to take a brief survey of some of the ideas concerning race, racism, and the Other which were circulated throughout white European culture around the time of Delius's composition of the opera. In order to understand how identity is constructed in Delius's opera these ideas must be given some consideration, because they would likely have informed not only the way in which Delius constructed racial identity, but also the way in which his representation would have been received by the European public.

As we have seen, it is often through reference to non-European musical idioms that identities are marked as Other, and this is certainly true in *Koanga*, where African-American folk music styles are set against a more typical European musical language. This Othering through audible racial difference is imbricated with a host of other aspects of identity found within the work, and to focus only on racial identity would deprive us of a fuller understanding of the ways in which difference operates in the work, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter. The complexity of the American plantation society which is portrayed in the opera has its roots in the source text which Delius and Keary used as its model; yet Cable's vivid depiction of plantation life has been mediated in its appropriation through the tastes and values of a European composer and librettist for use in a centuries-old high-brow European art form, suggesting that the values it accommodates may be far more an accurate representation of Eurocentric Victorian attitudes than of Cable's literary attempts at cultural veracity.

2.2 Victorian Attitudes to Race and Racism

Before looking in a detailed fashion at the way in which different levels of the social hierarchy are represented within the society in *Koanga*, it would be prudent to draw out some observations concerning contemporaneous ideas relating to the construction of the white/non-white binary which has been mentioned previously. Section 2.1 gave some demonstration of the ways in which binarisms have functioned to create Otherness or to exoticise, in both a general sense, and with relation to some existing musicological scholarship. As highlighted by Chapter One, the notion of race plays a strong role within the opera, being the main concern of Cable's novel, and seemingly forming the basis upon which most of the drama in the opera is predicated. For these reasons, and despite the idea that any given binarism in this context is practically inseparable from a vast network of binarisms formed on other aspects of identity, it is the construct of race which I will first focus on. This is not necessarily a claim that racial identity is more important than other factors of identification in any given context, but merely a suggestion that it would be a good place to start in

an investigation of social hierarchy in *Koanga* due to its constant and conspicuous presence. The racial binarism of white/non-white (in *Koanga* more specifically white/black) is by no means autonomous in the climate of *Koanga's* social structure, and so to imply that the compound exoticising-Othering effect which it has is the sole grounds on which power and agency are distributed would be disingenuous. That said, identifying contingent understandings of race and racism is a useful place to start because as we shall see, the growth of these concepts in Victorian culture is founded on many other factors, including the ones already highlighted.

As suggested, Victorian attitudes towards race and racism are complex and multifaceted, and it is important to remember that it is these views that will have informed Delius's and Keary's approach to representing the plantation society such as the one in *Koanga*. My intention here is not to provide an exhaustive or particularly in-depth account of the history of racism or the transatlantic slave trade. Instead, I aim to draw together some key ideas which would have been prominent at the time that Delius and Keary were working on the opera, and that would have influenced public thought at large.

Arguably, the link between race, particularly black African racial identity, and slavery does not, despite popular opinion, predate the exploitation of Africans by Europeans. Instead, as Gwendolyn Midlo Hall discusses, theories such as white racial supremacy, which were used for the justification of slavery, were largely the product of a

projection back in time of beliefs and ideologies that intensified during the four centuries of the Atlantic slave trade, the direct European occupation and colonization of Africa during the late nineteenth and into the second half of the twentieth, and the brutal exploitation of Africa's labour and natural resources ever since (Hall, 2005, p. 1).

Attempts to enforce these ideologies with scientific reasoning became common, with references to black Africans as holding the 'lowest position in the evolutionary scale' (Bolt, 1971, p. 133). Theories such as Darwinism led conspicuously towards the Victorian demand for progress, which was firmly engrained within capitalist ideology (Bolt, 1971, p. 24). The Victorian image of African identity in particular was one of offensive prejudice and criticism, with the darkest skinned peoples being the target of the most vicious distaste (Bolt, 1971, p. 132).

The notions of 'white' and 'black' came to be seen as a kind of blanket binarism which was readily applied to many concepts. 'Whiteness' was seen as the symbol of civilisation, sophistication, purity, Christianity – all traits associated with idealised European culture. Conversely, 'blackness' assumed

an opposite role, connoting savagery, heathenism, death, and evil (Bolt, 1971, p. 131). The web of associations which this created was wide and inclusive, but all in some way can be understood to relate back to European, or Victorian, ideological standards; and the effect of these associations on the ways in which people of dark skin were viewed by Europeans was (and still is) very damaging.

The way in which Africans were viewed in the 19th Century became one of stereotypes - stereotypes concerned with everything, from the way black people acted, to the way they dressed, or talked, or looked. These essentializing views on the cultures and appearances of black races were, as mentioned, held up against a European, white standard. Portrayals of Africans which focused on these derogatory stereotypes were common in all aspects of Western culture, and the arts were no exception. Popular forms of entertainment such as blackface minstrelsy were particularly deleterious and explicit in their manipulation and perpetuation of this kind of racism.¹⁸ This formed a problematic situation for the black performer. Whilst minstrel shows provided them with a rare place in which it was deemed appropriate for them to perform, it nonetheless required them to engage with the performance of extremely socially disfiguring stereotypes, and in doing so only strengthened their hold on the public's imagination (André, Bryan, & Saylor, 2012, p. 3).

Minstrelsy typically portrayed black people, and particularly black Americans, as 'lazy, violent, ignorant, hypersexualised, conniving buffoons' (André, Bryan, & Saylor, 2012, p. 2). It is worth reiterating that these labels can be understood as the binary oppositions to some of the core values held in Victorian society, where capitalist ideology and a broad emphasis on the value of the family unit (to name just two of many) meant that for many, conceptions of ideal behaviour would be polarised directly with the way in which blacks were stereotyped.

By providing the counterparts to the characteristics quoted above – lazy/hard-working, violent/self-controlled, ignorant/educated, hypersexualised/cerebral, and conniving/moral – we can see how convincingly this applies itself. In fact, white British culture and African (or African-American) culture were held to be so differentiated that they were literally regarded as antithetical (Lorimer, 1978, p. 11). In any case, this form of artistically disseminated prejudice was by no means confined to popular culture; performers in the minstrelsy circuit often found themselves performing simultaneously with black opera companies. In fact, black people were referenced and portrayed in a negative light consistently across the high-brow art forms as well, and this includes opera, as Naomi André and Eric Saylor's collection (2012) discusses at length.

¹⁸ For a detailed investigation into this particular phenomenon, see Pickering (2008).

As members of the Victorian upper-middle class, Delius and Keary would have been exposed to these ideas. Keary produced scholarship concerned with the analysis of non-white or primitive cultures, such as his book *Outlines of Primitive Belief Among the Indo-European Races* (1882), which discusses the religious practices of ‘un-developed’ racial groups or ancient and extinct religions. Delius had first-hand experience of dealing with people of African descent – the workers on the plantation which he managed in Florida were African-American. This places both the main creators of *Koanga* in a striking position when considering the opera in terms of its racially charged content; they were both people whose social position was comfortably towards the top of the Eurocentric hegemony which subjugated and oppressed individuals and cultures of African descent across the centuries.

Considering this alongside the process of transcultural adaptation which was described in Chapter One, it seems inevitable that Cable’s portrayal of such characters in his novel would be remoulded in *Koanga* to reflect the prejudices, assumptions and essentializing stereotypes which were perpetuated by the racist ideological mechanisms discussed above. With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to showing the various ways in which these issues are dealt with by Delius and Keary, and to demonstrating how their depiction of the plantation adheres to overarching racist and imperialist discourse.

2.3 (Musical) Representations of Black Identity

After reviewing some of the ways in which music can be understood to convey and construct identity, and considering some of the perspectives on race and racism which were influential on the way in which Victorian society perceived race and racism, I now turn my attention to *Koanga*. The African-American slaves who work on the plantation are given by far the most exotically charged music in the opera. For that reason, it is with them that I will start to focus on the way in which Delius uses music to construct identity within *Koanga*.

The devices which Delius employs to exoticize the music of the slave population is in many ways compliant with the common tropes of musical exoticism used by composers throughout history. Ralph Locke provides a table – which has been reproduced in Appendix C – that he labels ‘stylistic features within Western music that are often employed (especially in combination) to suggest an exotic locale or culture’ (Locke, 2009, p. 54) and a number of these attributes are easily detected in *Koanga*.¹⁹ One of the features which Locke lists concerns the use of foreign instruments, or the use

¹⁹ Locke notes that the study of ‘Orientalism’ which occurred in the wake of Edward Said’s volume of the same name (Said, 2003), has grown, in the humanities as well as in musicology (eventually), to encompass any

of western ones in a way which allows them to sound non-western (2009, p. 54), and there are two obvious cases of this in *Koanga*. Delius makes the addition of two banjos and a cowhorn to the orchestra, both of which are highly atypical in a standard European orchestra.

The cowhorn is only used in one scene, early on in the first act, where it is heard from offstage, gradually getting closer and louder each of the four times that it is played, as shown in Example 1. As it is sounded, Palmyra sings ‘That note resounding wakes the workers to their toil, Commands that they no longer sleep, however grateful their repose’ (Delius et al., 1935, p. 4), or ‘There sounds the horn that calls the workers from their beds, to face again another day of sweat and labour in the fields’ (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 11). The purpose of the cowhorn is to aid the foreman, Simon Perez, in rousing the slaves for their day of work, and it is employed by Delius for its striking and atmospheric timbre. This is aided by the jarring effect which it has on the harmony; the horn sounds on the note B \flat and introduced without preparation into a sustained chord of D \flat major (creating a B \flat minor 7th chord in 1st inversion). This use of the cowhorn enhances the atmosphere, bringing to mind bucolic imagery and emphasising the setting of the opera as such.²⁰

6 **Moderato**
Palmyra
pale and fade a-way There sounds the horn that calls the work-ers from their beds_ to face a-gain another
pp Cow Hn. (Heard from the distance) fp (somewhat nearer)

Example 1 – Figure 6 of Act I (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 11) – Introduction of the cowhorn to the orchestral accompaniment (shown in full sized notes).

The banjos are put to more frequent use, and in a more complex way. Most of their appearances are concentrated around the second act, where they are used mostly in the accompaniment of the chorus as they sing and dance in the build up to Koanga and Palmyra’s wedding ceremony. This

representation of a non-western (exotic) culture by western means, despite this not necessarily representing Said’s own views particularly well (Locke, 2009, pp. 34-39). The devices which Locke mentions in his table can be seen as tools, which when harnessed by a composer aid them in representing, in ‘overtly exotic’ terms, a particular culture. Most of the examples used by Locke throughout his book are of music which connotes imagery of the Middle East or Asia, but the same devices can easily be utilized in order to conjure up references to other locales/cultures in the same way.

²⁰ Whilst the cowhorn is a non-standard addition to the orchestra, it had already been used in several of Wagner’s (*Die Walküre*, *Götterdämmerung* (Baines, 2017)) which we know Delius had seen prior to or during the composition of *Koanga* (see footnote 13). This is further evidence of Wagner’s influence on *Koanga*.

particular choice of instrument would have been recognised by audiences as synonymous with African or African-American culture, and was linked inextricably to the popular western stereotypes of the 'plantation Negro' through its use in minstrel shows, which were popular with white audiences in both America and Europe (Parsonage, 2003, p. 318).

The link between the sound of the banjo and the general mood of frivolity in the build-up to the wedding scene helps to paint a picture of a group of slaves who are happy and content, despite their suffering, and this could be interpreted as what is regarded as a 'nostalgia for an imagined past', shown through images such as 'benevolent slave holders and peaceful plantations with happy workers' (André, Bryan, & Saylor, 2012, p. 3), which held a common appeal for white audiences as a means of reassurance in the face of the damage to other cultures caused by Western imperialism. The banjos are initially heard onstage from behind the curtain in the opening of the 2nd act, following a joyous song sung by the chorus, and continue to be heard concurrently with the chorus several times as the scene continues. Delius's orchestration allows the orchestra to amplify the effect of the banjos; his use of pizzicato strings and harps allows the orchestra to mirror, and hence reinforce and augment, their timbre. This establishes a link between the unique sound of the banjo and the celebratory mood created by the song, and in doing so acts as a marker of exoticism.

The fact that the standard orchestral instruments are used to embolden the sound of the banjos is not indicative of an integration of their timbre into the orchestral sound. On the contrary, this is an instance where the orchestra is utilized in a way which references a non-western timbre, as described in by feature 13 from Locke's table in Appendix C. The entire orchestrational device, banjos included, creates a distinct musical sound which is linked to the musical identity of the slaves. The opposition of devices such as this, designed to sound non-Western, against the more standard orchestration though the main body of the opera creates a musical contrast between the Western and the exotic. This binarism reinforces the way in which the slaves are marginalised within the community of the plantation. Understood in this manner, Delius's inclusion of racially charged instruments or instrumental timbres into the sound-world of the opera polarises the musical identities of the slaves against the standard orchestral sound in order to delineate racial difference.

In addition to the inclusion of non-standard instruments, the music assigned to the slaves in *Koanga* is characterized by additional features which serve as markers of racial, and hence social, difference. The chorus numbers which are dotted throughout the opera are the main sites of the slaves' musical expression, and they all share a number of characteristics, many of which are mentioned in Locke's table. For the most part, the slave choruses are homophonic in texture, with the melody in the highest voice (this is often the soprano line, though there are choruses which are for male voices

only). The melodic content itself is fairly simple, leaning generally towards pentatonicism or diatonicism, and harmonised in four or six parts. There are small fluctuations of chromaticism to be found in the harmonisation, perhaps a realisation of the ‘wonderful sense of musicianship’ demonstrated by the black workers who sang for him at his orange grove in Florida; specifically Delius admired their ‘harmonic resource and instinctive way in which they treated a melody’ (Fenby, 1966, p. 25). As Saylor points out, the inclusion of music of this kind, especially so conspicuously, is ‘contradistinctive to the post-Wagnerian idiom used by all the major white characters throughout the work’ (Saylor, 2012, p. 88). This emphasises yet again that racial difference is represented by the polarised musical styles present in *Koanga*.

One of these melodies in particular, heard in Act I, appears to be very closely modelled on some musical notation which is published alongside some verse as part of Cable’s *The Grandissimes* itself. A comparison of Examples 2 and 3, shown below, makes this clear. Whilst the very ending has been more heavily modified by Delius, the contour of the melody is strikingly similar to Cable’s overall. The source of other such melodies which are found throughout *Koanga* is unclear, and they could have been invented by the composer specifically for the opera. In some ways this is unimportant; more significant than their authenticity is the way in which they are juxtaposed against other musical styles in order to create contrast. The ability of these songs to connote racial otherness comes from their difference from the surrounding music – the ‘post-Wagnerian idiom’ to which Saylor refers.

Delius’s use of folk-style music, traditional or self-composed, has a similar effect to the one described by Richard Middleton in his discussion of Papageno in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*. Middleton shows how Mozart’s use of ‘folk music from above’ creates an image of Papageno as a simpleton in comparison to other characters whose music is associated with more high-brow styles. This manipulation of low-brow or popular styles from a culturally high-brow vantage point effectively Others Papageno along the axis of his social class (Middleton, 2000, p. 64). This Othering has no real compounding effect with regards to the way in which we perceive Papageno’s racial identity, and so he assumes the status of an internalised Other (He is an Other within his own culture, not Othered on racial grounds). This same phenomenon is handled by Delius in his representation of the slaves in *Koanga*, and through his manipulation of the ‘folk-song from above’, he is able to paint a picture of simplicity, contentment, and a love of the land. As with Papageno, the slaves are Othered due to their difference from other social groups within the wider community present on the plantation, both musically, and by the narrative. However, Delius’s addition of the exotic element to the slave’s musical idiom means that they are doubly Othered; they are marked by difference along both the axes of race and social class.



Example 2 – Melody Printed in Cable's *The Grandissimes* (Cable, 1880, p. 217).



Example 3 – Delius's appropriation of the melody printed in *The Grandissimes* (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 25).

| Version of Text for Melodies in Examples 2 & 3 | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cable's <i>Grandissimes</i> | 3rd Version of <i>Koanga</i> | 4th Version of <i>Koanga</i> |
| Dé zabs, dé zabs, dé counou ouaïe ouaïe, Dé zabs, dé zabs, dé counou ouaïe ouaïe, Counou ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe, Counou ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe, Counou ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe, momza, Momza, momza, momza, momza, Roza, roza, roza-et- momza. | Work, niggers, work, with sickle in hand, We live by our labour and worship the land For many a bundle of cane must be bound, In the meadows a-waving ere master comes round ; For many a bundle of cane must be bound, Ere the sun sinks low in the forest | John say you got to reap what you sow; To reap in the harvest, reap what you sow. You sow in the rain got to reap in the rain, You sow in the sun got to reap in the sun Whatever the weather, you reap what you sow, Oh, John say reap in the harvest! |

Table 2 – Changes to libretto for chorus number (Example 3) as adapted from melody published in Cable's *Grandissimes* (Example 2). Column 1 (Cable, 1880, pp. 217-218); Column 2 (Delius, Keary, Beecham, & Agate, 1935, pp. 6-7); Column 3 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 25-26).

As noted, the libretto for *Koanga* was changed several times each time the work was revised. This had a profound effect on the words sung by the chorus throughout. In the first three versions of *Koanga*, the songs sung by the slaves included language which would be considered by today's standards highly offensive and derogatory. In the 4th version, this was altered by eradicating racial slurs from the work, whilst attempting to 'naturalise' the style of the language by erasing the high-

brow poetics used previously in favour of a style which is more reflective of that used in Cable's novel.

Table 2 shows a comparison of the words which are set to the same melody shown in Example 3, along with the words which are originally published alongside the notation in Cable's book. The most obvious difference is between the words printed by Cable, and the other two settings, where the change of language into English disposes of Cable's linguistic approach by destroying the complex, multilingual/multifaceted portrayal of African-American and Creole culture found in *The Grandissimes*. The language found in the middle column is in no way a reflection of the way in which the plantation workers would have spoken, being written in the poetic English which is also found throughout Keary and Delius's original libretto.

Throughout the opera, Koanga makes references to several Voodoo deities, whose names were presumably invented for the opera by Delius and Keary, as Craig and Page claim in their preface to their 1974 edition – the 4th version of *Koanga* (1974, pp. vi-vii). Nevertheless these names functioned effectively, if inaccurately, because they would have sounded foreign to an English or European audience. This highlights the significance of the choice of language used in the chorus sections, which, as shown, were sung in typical high-brow poetic language. By eliminating the use of language which would be unfathomable to English-speaking audiences, Delius and Keary are able to use these choruses as vehicles through which to divulge more information about the slaves. The content of these songs may seem trivial, being concerned with things such as working in the fields, but the emphasis on agricultural labour contributes towards the Othering of the slaves by means of both their racial and social class identities by highlighting their roles as manual labourers.

Furthermore, words such as 'We live by our labour and worship the land' (see Table 2, column 2) go further by linking the black characters not only with physical work, but with the land itself. By these means, the slaves are cast not only as the bottom rung on the social ladder, but as an intrinsic part of the plantation itself, as though they are somehow a natural component, in their correct place. Placing the slaves in this conceptual position invites us to consider the presence of yet another denigrating binary – the relationship between the ideas of savage/civilised (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000, pp. 209-210). The slave population here is shown to be firmly rooted on the side of the savage, being portrayed as simple and undeveloped, even natural. The white characters, particularly Don José and Clotilda, are represented as the binary opposition to this, because their position at the head of the social order links them plainly to an image of sophistication.

The eradication of the use of foreign language in the slave choruses by Delius and Keary may in one sense seem counterintuitive to the construction of difference between the slaves and other

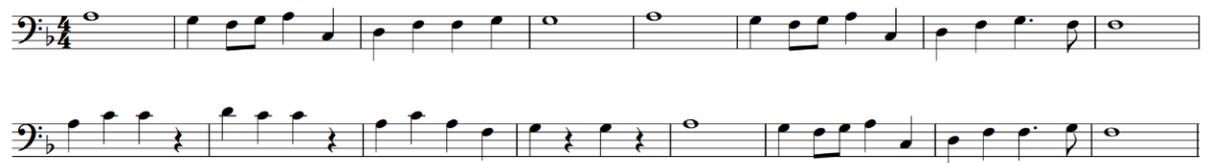
characters in the work, because the use of a non-European language in this context would serve as a powerful marker of racial Otherness. However, the linguistic equalisation of the slaves to the same style of English as the other characters, work allows the slaves to communicate discernible information to an English speaking (or German speaking in the case of the version for Elberfeld) audience; it is the information provided in these words which allows for a far more deeply situated form of Othering, in the ways just described.

In some instances the way in which Delius treats the work songs, such as the one shown in Example 3 and Table 2 above, provides further ways in which the slaves come to represent the plantation itself, and there are two particularly powerful examples of this in Act I. One of these examples involves the first song sung by the chorus, heard in its first full manifestation in Act I, in the eight bars leading up to Figure 9 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 15-17). In context, the song comes almost immediately after the slaves have been woken at dawn, and are on their way into the fields to work. The unharmonised melody, sung in unison by a mixed six-part choir, can be seen in Example 4, with the accompanying words from the 3rd and 4th versions of the opera shown in Table 3. The melody is built entirely around a pentatonic scale in the key of F major, and has an upbeat, syncopated quality. This is coupled with words which are optimistic, perhaps even cheerful, and so plays on common stereotypes concerning the portrayal of black characters, as discussed earlier. Through the content of this song the slaves are once again tied directly to agricultural labour and the land of the plantation, but this particular melody is put to a further, more immersive use in the opera.

The music which acts as the transition between the prologue and Act I presents the melody shown in Example 5 a total of three times between the key change to F major, eight bars before Figure 3 (p. 8), and Figure 4 (p. 9), just before the stage direction 'the clouds clear away gradually and disclose the garden of the plantation with slave-huts to the right' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974). A comparison of this melody with the one shown in Example 4 reveals that the material used in this transition is a rhythmically augmented and simplified version of the full work song which we later hear sung in full by the slaves. Heard in this fashion, the melody serves as an initial tie which links together the plantation itself (as it is used to introduce us to the setting) and the plantations workers (as it is the first real chorus we hear them sing).



Example 4 – Melody sung by chorus in Act I, (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974), pp. 15-17.



Example 5 – Melody played by orchestra in the introduction to Act I, (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974), pp. 8-9.

| Accompanying Text for the Melody Shown in Example 4 | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3rd Version of <i>Koanga</i> | 4th Version of <i>Koanga</i> |
| Come out, niggers, come out to cut the waving cane ; The moonlight shadows are faded and the day is back again. The humming bird is waking, good niggers don't complain; So come once more and hasten to the fields of sugar cane. | O Lawd, I'm goin' away And I won't be back 'til Fall; I'm goin' to bring so much money That your apron strings won't hold. Don't chatter 'bout it, 'bout it, For if you do I'll cry; Don't say you're goin' to leave me For you know that that's a lie. |

Table 3 – Words for melody shown in Example 4. Column 1 (Delius, Keary, Beecham, & Agate, 1935, p. 5); Column 2 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 15-17).

A further way in which Delius links the slaves and the plantation is found later in Act I. Following this initial usage of the chorus to introduce the setting of the opera, the slaves are heard several more times, singing a variety of different songs – though all in a similar style – **including the two shown in Examples 3 and 4**. But a significant difference between the very first chorus song, just discussed, and the ones heard thereafter in the act is that the rest are all heard from off-stage. The stage directions call for the slaves to be heard singing ‘in the fields’, and each time they form a musical backdrop over which the main characters, who are present on the stage, sing their individual lines, and this has a number of effects. To begin with, having the chorus heard but not seen gives them a kind of omnipresent quality; they are there in the background, doing their work, but they are not a part of the main dramatic action onstage. In this sense they are once again made analogous to the setting of

the plantation itself. Secondly, this feature means that the sound of the chorus becomes a part of the accompaniment, blending with the sound of orchestra to support the soloists' lines with a complex and immersive texture.

One particularly clear example of this is found in the 11 bars leading up to figure 10 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 19-21), shown in Example 6. Here, the overseer Simon Perez is singing on-stage, accompanied almost exclusively by the offstage chorus, except for a pedal F₂ held in the 'cellos and double basses. The absorption of the sound of the chorus into the sound-world of the opera itself again links the slaves in to the setting of the work. This is an intriguing moment in the sense that it offers a direct reversal of the usual mode of accompaniment throughout the opera; in a typical example, a chorus song in an African-American folk style is accompanied by the orchestra, which is made up of standard orchestral instruments. In this instance, Simon Perez's musical lines (not in the African-American folk style) are accompanied by the chorus's song, which is highly connotative of their racial – and social – identity. In manipulating the chorus in this way, Delius is effectively using them as a third exoticizing addition to the standard orchestral accompaniment (alongside the cowhorn and banjos), and uses them as an important feature in the narrative structure of the opera, and as an element in the text of the musical accompaniment.

A powerful consequence of the implied symbiosis between the slave and the land – of the portrayal of the slaves as 'natural' – is to be found in the effects of Koanga's curse, which he invokes as he flees the plantation at the end of the second act. As Act II closes, Koanga sings 'The triple curse on land, on air, on flood: From water ling'ring death, starvation on the earth, and tainted fevers to corrupt the air!' (the libretto here remains unchanged at least between the 3rd and 4th versions) (Delius, Keary, Beecham, & Agate, 1935, p. 17; Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 101-102). Koanga's words show an intention to affect the plantation itself, on a natural, physical level. Later, in Act III, we see that it is the slaves who are suffering, and not the white characters; the fact that the slaves are affected so forcefully by the curse yet again reinforces the sense that they are a 'natural' and intrinsic aspect of the plantation itself.

The Negroes are heard from the fields

The musical score is set in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It consists of three systems of music. The first system features Simon Perez (S.P.) with a solo line starting at measure 1, marked *mf*. The lyrics are: "and as the sun-shine warms the earth so your beau-ty warms my heart". The Chorus enters at measure 1 with a *p* dynamic, singing: "O Lawd I'm goin' a way and I won't be back 'til fall. I'm". The second system continues the Chorus lyrics: "goin' to bring so much mon-ey that your a-pron springs won't hold. Don'Chat-ter 'bout it, 'bout it, for". The third system continues the Chorus lyrics: "lake, or like a sin - gle to paz. gleam - ing" and "if you do I'll cry. Don't say you're go-in to leave me for I know that that's a lie." The Vc/Db part consists of a simple bass line with a few notes and rests.

Example 6 – Simon Perez sings a solo line, accompanied by the chorus who are heard from offstage – 11 bars before Figure 10 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 19-21).

In his discussion of Koanga's curse, Saylor posits two possibilities for explaining the curse's effect on the slaves, all of whom recognise Koanga's status and power. On the one hand, the adverse effect on Koanga's 'kin' may have been unintentional, suggesting on Koanga's part either a lack of control, or a lack of proper consideration prior to casting the curse. On the other hand, Saylor suggests that

Koanga may have intended the curse to affect his kin and not the white characters, which would dehumanise and criminalise Koanga (Saylor, 2012, p. 86). Whilst both of these possibilities are feasible, Koanga's specification that the curse damage the plantation itself means that the slaves would more than likely have suffered whether it was his intention or not, since the slaves are tied metonymically to the plantation in the ways described above.

Saylor also suggests that Koanga's curse was intended as a way of damaging the economic power of the white characters, and Don José in particular, since his power ultimately stems from his commercial success as the head of the social order. If Koanga intended his curse to affect the white characters, then perhaps there is even room to suggest that its failure to do so has roots in the Victorian notion of racial supremacy – a prevailing idea within the discourse of scientific and culturally situated understandings of race at that time (Brantlinger, 2011, p. 7).

These examples have all presented sophisticated ways in which the racial identity of the slaves is coded into the musical fabric of *Koanga*. Delius's use of African-American folk-music style functions in a way which is both exoticising and Othering, providing the slaves with a distinct musical language which would have been novel and exciting (because it was perceived as exotic) to contemporary audiences. This effect is emboldened by the way in which the low-brow position of folk style music is set against the high-brow operatic style – in which the music of the white characters is written – in order to Other the slaves on the grounds of their social position.

The compositional methods used by Delius to highlight the Otherness of the slaves in *Koanga* are merely the tools with which he was able to weave threads of contemporary thought concerning racial identity and supremacy into the musical texture and structure of the work. Commonly held perceptions of black people and black culture, including the ways in which they were portrayed in art and entertainment (such as minstrelsy), can be demonstrated to directly oppose the sets of ideals which were integral to Victorian society, such as the capitalist emphasis on productivity and progress, or Christian moral standards, as discussed earlier in this chapter. It is precisely through the use of these binarisms which Delius constructs and Others the identities of black characters in his opera. The ways in which Delius pulls together different musical styles and exotic influences, and draws from and recirculates stereotypes enables him to construct blackness in *Koanga* in a way which ties in with complex thought surrounding the issue of race from that time. He is able to highlight the tension and difference between the two main social groups present on the plantation – the white characters and the slaves – to create a background which facilitates the dramatic action of the narrative.

3. Racial Hegemony, Social Transgression, and Musical Discourse

The concept of 'binary opposition' was discussed at some length in Chapter 2 in order to show how blackness was conceived antithetically to the Victorian image of normative European identity, both in the contemporary social imagination, and in *Koanga*. But that chapter only discussed the construction of black identity in *Koanga*, and that is only one side of two. It is one of the aims of this chapter to analyse the flipside of that binary opposition, and to show the different ways in which Delius constructs other identities in the opera as distinctly 'white', through a range of methods which distinguish them from the slaves.

In this chapter, the white characters (Don José, Clotilda, and Simon Perez) are considered for their roles and positions within the plantation, and as members of the social hierarchy who possess more power and social agency than the slaves. Whilst the main characters of this opera – Koanga and Palmyra – are not white characters, the background tension which is created by the opposition of white/black racial identities is central to the main action of the work. These white characters form a periphery to the protagonists, whose romance forms the central theme which flows through the narrative. It is this pair of central characters and their relation to each other, and everybody else, which will be examined in the final segments of this chapter, as their peculiar circumstances place them in an ambiguous position with regards to their status within the social hierarchy, and the racial binarisms, of the plantation.

3.1 Hegemony and Whiteness

The musical language used throughout *Koanga* (with the exception of the music of the slaves, as discussed in Chapter 2) is palpably indebted to the Wagnerian legacy; the musical lines of the white characters in particular are characterised by the use of *unendliche Melodie*. The intense chromaticism associated with this style is enriched by Delius through his use of harmonic techniques – such as stacked chords, 'pentatonicism and chordal planning' – which are more readily linked with musical impressionism, as Saylor notes (2012, pp. 79-80), and indeed this mixture of compositional traditions is often linked to Delius's musical style in general (Jefferson, 1972). This combination of influences, no matter how complex or unique to the ear, has its roots firmly planted in European artistic traditions, and in high-brow musical culture. In the context of *Koanga*, this musical style envelopes the music which is sung by the slaves, in their own contrasting musical style. As with McClary's reading of polystylism in *Carmen* which was discussed in Chapter 2, this highlights the

Otherness of the African-American folk music style which Delius appropriates to signify the racial identity of the slaves; it quite conspicuously creates a binary opposition of the European (musical) Self against non-European (musical) Other.

The use of this European musical discourse is significant because, as with the late nineteenth-century notion of the black/white racial binarism, the European normative Self forms hegemony over its Other – in this instance, in both musical and social terms. In other words, the juxtaposition of European and non-European musical styles at once signifies and reinforces contingent understandings of white (over black) racial supremacy, as introduced in Chapter 2. This can be seen as a product of the change of audience/genre paradigms (discussed in Chapter 1), as it is the European context, in which the work was composed and performed, which induces the link between the musical self and musical Other, as the audience perceives the binarism from their own ideological position.

The use of contrasting musical styles in *Koanga* is just one way in which the difference between the white and black characters is highlighted and constructed. Chapter 2 showed how the slaves, who occupy the lowest position in the social hierarchy, are depicted as Other in several ways, not just merely in terms of their racial identities. The reverse of this is certainly true, and the white characters are shown to occupy different roles in the social order through signifiers other than just the European musical style which accompanies them.

Musical style aside, there are some obvious differences between the black and white characters in *Koanga*.²¹ In stark contrast to the slaves, who are presented as a homogeneous group, the white characters are all named soloists. They possess unique personalities, with individual desires and drives, whereas the slaves for the most part are heard singing only about labour. The slaves typically only sing as a chorus, where they work together in a homophonic texture, whereas the white characters are afforded the privilege of individual lines. Even when singing in an ensemble, such as the quartet found between Figures 24 and 25 of Act I (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 39-48), or the quintet which follows from Figure 29 to the end of the act (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 52-60), these characters are free to weave their own lines in an out of a dense polyphonic texture, expressing their own thoughts and feelings. In both of these instances the complexity is amplified by the chorus, who are simultaneously heard from offstage singing a work song in four-part harmony.

²¹ For the moment, I am excluding *Koanga* and *Palmyra* from this part of the discussion, because their roles and identities within the opera will be examined in far more detail later. For the time being, it is enough to point out that major elements of their identities mean that they can be considered as not being a part of the lowest level of social hierarchy, with the slaves – these features being royal heritage in *Koanga*'s case, and *Palmyra*'s mixed ethnicity and relationship to *Clotilda*.

The contrast between the group dynamic of the slaves against the freedom of the principal characters foregrounds the unequal distribution of power and agency present in the hierarchy.

When a slave within the work *is* named as an individual, or behaves in a way which marks them out from the rest, the balance of power is not disturbed. On the contrary, these instances mostly act as reinforcements for the general depiction of blackness in the work. For instance, a slave named Ned is mentioned early in Act I as the slaves are being woken for their day's work, in a line from the chorus who sing 'here's Ned, just got up, half un-dressed, they woke him with the whip, he always sleeps too long' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 14-15). This feature is not of any dramatic importance whatsoever, and his presence is purely colouristic. But aside from painting a picture for the audience of the commotion of a normal morning on the plantation, this snapshot of Ned's idleness ties in smoothly with widely distributed stereotypes of black people as lazy. Ned's mention, brief though it is, is emblematic of other such moments throughout the opera, where even if a member of the chorus has a similar role, it is dramatically insignificant, and often reinforces views about black people which would have been commonly held at the time of the work's original composition. By only allowing the chorus to be heard as a uniform whole – or through small instances which hint at pejorative stereotyping – Delius and Keary allow the entirety of the slave class in *Koanga* to be tarred with the same essentializing brush.

At several points in the opera the chorus are heard from offstage, such as in the quartet and quintet discussed above, or the instance discussed in Chapter 2 (see Example 6). The chorus is used in these circumstances not just as a feature in itself, but in conjunction with a soloist. In most cases this is a white character, normally Simon Perez or Don José. Overlapping the two styles of music which each social group sings in this way, with the individual Wagnerian style over the top of the African-American folk style, demonstrates quite clearly the power and agency of the white characters – they are not only given their own individual musical lines, but are able to project them over the top of the entire chorus, rendering the presence of the chorus nothing but an accompaniment.

The various examples above show how the music of the white characters constructs and upholds their social dominance over the slaves. The contrast between the music associated with the white and black characters is on its own a powerful signal of racial and social difference, but these effects are amplified by the way in which Delius uses them in context, such as the overlapping effect just described. By reserving the solo parts exclusively for the characters who are not members of the slave class, and granting his soloists freer lines in comparison to the homophony found in his representation of African-American musical style, Delius is able to add depth to his portrayal of the power system in place in the plantation's social order. These systems of difference enforce the

notion that the slaves, though heard (if not seen) ubiquitously, do not possess any real agency – even through strength in numbers.

3.2 Examining Peripheral Characters

Whilst the dynamic between the slaves and the white characters has been discussed at length, the structure of the hierarchy in place on the plantation has not yet been considered in much detail. Koanga's arrival part way through Act I has a profound effect on the balance of the social structure, and so, for now, Koanga will be excluded from consideration. As the owner of the plantation, Don José is indisputably the head of the plantation, and so he holds the most power and authority. Clotilda enjoys an elevated position in the society because of her marriage to Don José, but is unable to contend with her husband's power because he is the owner and commander of the family's wealth and influence. Simon Perez is the overseer, employed by Don José, and is responsible for organising and directing the slaves, as we see in the opening to Act 1. Despite being a non-white character, Palmyra is more closely affiliated with the white characters than the slaves, due to her personal relationship with Clotilda, for whom she serves as a personal maid. We find out in Act II of the opera that Palmyra and Clotilda are in fact half-sisters; Palmyra is Clotilda's father's daughter, making her mulatto by technicality.²² She occupies an ambiguous position in the hierarchy, which will be examined in depth later.

Don Jose Martinez

Being the owner of the plantation, Don José is the exact social antipode of the slaves. As the dominant authority in the social system, he enjoys a level of agency and social privilege that other characters on the plantation are not able to access. The exchange which Don José has with Perez immediately after his introduction to us in Act I reveals an underlying concern for financial issues. He questions Perez about his plans for the slaves, and where they should be working, and complains after Perez hints that the plantation is not yielding a great amount of profit and that the slaves that he has bought are not as productive as he would like (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 27). Following this, Perez informs Don José of a new slave who is due to arrive, namely Koanga, and describes him as 'the finest slave you've ever seen; a fierce Dahomey; already he has killed a driver with one

²² In the opera itself, the identity of Clotilda and Palmyra's father is never disclosed. However, the programme book for the 1899 concert at St. James Hall (where extracts from *Koanga* received their first public performance) describes Clotilda as 'Wife of Don José, of French descent, and daughter of De Grapion, formerly owner of a neighbouring plantation' – See Appendix A.

blow!'.²³ Don José replies 'we must find a way to render him of service!' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 28), making yet more transparent his concern for profit. He recognises from Perez's description that Koanga's physical strength would make him an extremely valuable asset to the workforce – if Koanga can be controlled, he will yield more profit. Perez persuades Don José that Koanga cannot be enslaved by force, and so Don José decides to attempt to buy Koanga's servitude by offering him Palmyra's hand in marriage. This is fiercely protested, especially by Clotilda, who aside from not wishing to lose her handmaiden, is also harbouring the secret of Palmyra's decent, and so resents the arrangement on a personal basis. In light of this, Don José's desire for wealth and success can be deemed the original cause of the dramatic action which takes place over the course of the work.

Because of Don José's power, which we can deduce stems from his wealth, his word is incontestable. When Clotilda expresses her unhappiness at the proposed marriage, her opinion is disregarded. In a confrontation with Perez, Palmyra exclaims 'I am not a slave, but much more free than you. I have nothing to do with you or your master' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 24), emphasising that she is disconnected from the chain of authority which runs down from Don José. This is irrelevant to Don José, who is able to force her into marriage because of his authority, and use her as a bargaining chip for his own financial gain.

Don José makes frequent references throughout the opera to the means by which he asserts his dominance – a monopoly on violence – and we see him wield this power on several occasions throughout the opera in order to maintain his authority.²⁴ It is worth noting that it is never Don José himself who physically applies the force when required. Instead, it is Perez who is tasked with carrying out any acts of violence which Don José deems necessary. This further separates Don José from acts of physical activity, emphasising his position at the polar end of the social spectrum to the slaves, who work as manual labourers.

²³ In the 1935 revision of the libretto by Beecham and Agate, this passage reads as follows – Simon Perez: 'A rare and Splendid prize, a noble warrior who comes of ancient race, a prince of his realm' (Delius, Keary, Beecham, & Agate, 1935), Don Jose's response remains the same. The specification of Koanga's Dahomey heritage is in fact an editorial alteration which was made in the preparation of the fourth version of the work in order to iron out a factual inconsistency present in the previous libretti. Craig and Page discuss in their preface that Koanga was until that point referred to as 'a Jaloff and a Voodoo priest', but point out that the Jaloff race were in fact an Islamic people, whereas the Dahomey practiced Vodun. It was on this basis that the change to Koanga's race was made (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. vi).

²⁴ Max Weber's definition of a state as a political organisation which 'upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order' (Allen, 2004, p. 98) is familiar here. Though Weber's own theories exclude slaves from the class system altogether because 'they did not live in a market economy' (Allen, 2004, p. 177), the basic idea that the hierarchical system of the state, or for our purposes Don Jose's plantation, is held in a condition of control by a monopoly on violence held at the top of the social order is nonetheless applicable.

At the very beginning of the first act, Simon Perez wakes the slaves with a threat: 'get out of bed you lazy lot, or else you'll get a taste of my whip' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 11). Not long after, Ned (the slave mentioned previously) appears, having fallen victim to Perez's punishment for laziness (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 15).²⁵ When Koanga is introduced later in the scene, described as 'chained, guarded by two Negroes' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 30), Don José's initial approach to controlling him is through torture. Offhand comments such as 'one thing you must learn, the slaves I buy from overseas repay me by their work' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 34) spoken directly to Koanga, or 'he's just a common slave, just like the rest! Make him worth the money I have paid, or else the sun shall bleach his bones' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 36) spoken to Simon Perez, again reveal the intensity of the connection between Don José's employment of violence and his obsession with monetary gain. The reference to capital punishment in the threat 'or else the sun shall bleach his bones' is particularly telling, as it demonstrates that Koanga's life is, in a very real sense, worth only the money Don José paid for it. This, along with Don José's refusal to recognise Koanga's elevated status within his original cultural context (as a Prince, and a religious leader), links Don José's views in with those which are associated with theories of racial superiority and other racist discourses which are bound to Victorian imperialist ideology.²⁶

Simon Perez

Simon Perez's authority over the slaves is an extension of Don José's; he has no real power over anyone in the plantation other than that which is granted to him by his employer, and he does not share Don José's profit-based motives. Rather, Perez's actions are largely reactions to José's orders, whether that means carrying them out, or disobeying them for personal gain, as we shall see. Most of the time, Perez obeys Don José, and is trusted in his role as the overseer to organise the running of the plantation. To a certain extent, there is even evidence that Don José is willing to follow Perez's guidance, as it is he who convinces Don José that Koanga cannot be forced into slavery through violence. Perez's position in the social order is a central one. Despite having no real influence of his own, his opinion and advice is valued by Don José when it comes to running the plantation.

²⁵ Presumably the reason for waking the slaves with such urgency at dawn is to maximise the amount of work they do, hence increasing the plantation's yield, linking this act of violence with Don José's concern for capital.

²⁶ Delius and Keary are also guilty here of representing a particular kind of racist essentialism. There is no evidence in the opera that the slaves who already worked on the plantation originate from the same locale on the African continent, and this applies to Koanga, who is the only black character in the work whose racial heritage is explained in any detail. This forms a paradox, as part of the threat which Koanga poses is that he is identified by Simon Perez as being a leader, with the implication throughout the opera that the other slaves look up to him in some way, despite a lack of evidence that the rest of the population would recognise his authority at all.

As noted, Perez does not share Don José's economic motives. Instead, Perez's actions throughout the work seem to be driven by his desire for Palmyra, as he makes several attempts to seduce her throughout the work.

We can see that Perez's attachment to Palmyra is not a sentimental one; each time she rejects him he responds scornfully, exemplified by remarks such as 'you stupid girl, must I remind you, you are a slave, I am free' or 'you silly child, when I ask you to marry me, you should be honoured' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 23). This reveals a level of prejudice which Perez is unable to mask, despite his attraction to her. Perez's unwillingness to recognise that Palmyra is not a slave, as she is actually Clotilda's maid, perhaps has roots in racial discrimination, whereby Perez cannot separate Palmyra's status as a non-white character from the notion of slavery.

The actual source of Perez's attraction to Palmyra is made clear in the many sickeningly poetic references to her physical appearance which he makes throughout the opera, such as 'You are like a golden lily upon the dark green lake, or like a topaz gleaming, on a band of burnished gold. Pale as moonlight your brow; Eyes that sparkle like stars, they set my heart on fire' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 21-22).²⁷ This sexual desire is characteristic of what Bell Hooks refers to as 'fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy' (Hooks, 1992, p. 22), and is a constituent in a broadly European nineteenth-century trend of projecting 'onto racial Others the erotic qualities they denied in themselves', as McClary wrote in reference to Carmen who, like Palmyra, is the subject of the fetishisms of a white character (McClary, 1991, p. 63).

Perez's overwhelming desire for Palmyra plays a large role in the dramatic action of *Koanga*. Don José's decision to marry Palmyra to Koanga is clearly an issue for Perez, because Koanga's presence would make Palmyra unavailable for Perez to pursue. This is the motive behind Perez's decision to conspire with Clotilda to prevent the union, though Clotilda's motivation is separate from Perez's, and will be discussed in due course. Perez agrees to help Clotilda disrupt the wedding, on the grounds that should he succeed, he would be allowed to marry her himself. Clotilda and Perez's plot is put into action over the climax of Act II. When the marriage is impeded, Koanga's violent reaction wreaks havoc in the plantation, and this is the beginning of Koanga and Palmyra's downfall – again, this will be discussed in more detail later. Complexities aside, Perez's rebellion against Don José's wishes is driven by his lust for Palmyra. This desire and fetishism of the Other, represented by

²⁷ In the 3rd version of *Koanga*, this section of the libretto reads 'You are like the tender lily growing, by the dark gleaming lake, Like the lonely clouds a'sailing through the radiant vault of heaven. Pale as moonlight your brow. Dark as night your hair, My soul is all on fire' (Delius, Keary, Beecham, & Agate, 1935, pp. 5-6).

Palmyra, is hence one of the root causes of the dramatic action which leads to Koanga and Palmyra's demise in Act III, as well as Perez's own death in the process.

Clotilda

Of the three white characters in *Koanga*, Clotilda is the smallest role. She is characterised by her passivity, and is consistently unable to affect the actions of other characters throughout the work. Clotilda is even unable to dissuade Palmyra, her own maid, from her forthcoming marriage to Koanga. Similarly, Clotilda's efforts are fruitless when trying to change Don José's mind on the matter. It is for this reason that Clotilda enlists the help of Simon Perez. As discussed above, Perez has his own motives for wanting to prevent the marriage, but the fact that Clotilda is powerless to conceive and carry out a plan on her own is telling in itself. Clotilda's desperation to prevent the marriage of Palmyra to Koanga leads her to defy her husband's wishes, but she is incapable of enacting any change on her own terms, and so must seek assistance.

The basis of Clotilda's actions differs again from those of her husband or Simon Perez; the truth of her intentions is revealed to us when she discloses her most closely guarded secret: that she and Palmyra share a father. Clotilda's concern is elucidated when she tells Palmyra 'the only gift Koanga brings is one of everlasting shame!' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 72). Clotilda, like Don José and Simon Perez, does not recognise Koanga's exceptional social standing; she sees him as nothing other than 'a common slave' – the phrase used by Simon Perez in his derision of Palmyra. Palmyra is not seen as a slave by Clotilda due to their relation by blood. So, Clotilda's distaste for the idea of her half-sister marrying a slave is based in racial and class prejudice; as a member of the upper echelons of society, Clotilda wants better for Palmyra than marriage to a slave. This is a fairly typical view – a marriage to a suitable candidate who is well matched in terms of their social position and prospects would obviously be desirable, issues of race aside. But the Victorian tendency to conflate the social markers of race and class (Back & Solomos, 2000, p. 14) comes into play here as a means of reinforcing this discrimination, though this level of complexity is typical of plantation society.

Clotilda's views, as with those of the other two white characters, can be interpreted as being influenced by a particular aspect of imperialist racially discriminatory discourse. Nevertheless, the contrasting desires and motives of these characters puts them at odds with each other, despite the common origins of their individual prejudices. As the head of the social order, Don José holds the most power to exact his wishes. His decision to marry Palmyra to Koanga for monetary gain is met with protest by Clotilda and Perez, but their views are discarded, leading them to conspire to thwart Don José's plans. This entanglement of separate, but nonetheless similarly imperialistically driven wills is highly paradoxical, and foregrounds the simultaneous abhorrence of and desire for the racial

Other. Seen in this way, it is apparent that the dramatic action of *Koanga* is pushed forwards by an unstable conglomerate comprised of several facets of European imperialism.

Saylor's ideas on the role of fate in the demise of Koanga and Palmyra are interesting to note here. Examining Delius's condensation of the 'Tristan' chord from *Tristan und Isolde* and the 'Fate' motif from *Der Ring des Nibelungen* into one single figure – which occurs at the height of the *Liebestod* in the finale of Act III of *Koanga* – and drawing parallels between the characters of Koanga and Palmyra, and Tristan and Isolde respectively, Saylor deduces that the plot of *Koanga*, which slowly marches its central characters toward their grave, is propelled forwards by the unescapable force of 'Fate' (Saylor, 2012, pp. 92-93). This is emboldened by Delius's use of the prologue and epilogue which, by constructing the main action of the opera as a flashback, 'reinforces the idea that the story has already been told and that the protagonists cannot – indeed, will not be able to – resist the events that fate has in store'; and by the narrative tendency to rely on 'supernatural plot devices' (Saylor, 2012, p. 85). These contentions are hard to refute, and it is certainly true that Palmyra and Koanga are not in control of their own destinies. But the two central characters are not just hostages of 'fate', but hostages of the slave trade, and of European imperialism. The white characters in the opera are the possessors of all the power, supernatural forces aside. It seems inevitable, then, that the protagonists, who refuse to adhere to the strict social binarisms which are suggested throughout the work, will succumb to the wrath of their captors. We have seen that the motives of the white characters throughout the narrative of the opera are driven by various desires and notions which are central to European colonialization, and so it seems reasonable to suggest that 'fate' and 'imperialism' are synonymous in this context.

3.3 Koanga and Palmyra: Subversion of Power and Class

Koanga and Palmyra, and their music, have not yet been subject to much consideration. The binarisms of race and social class which have been discussed in relation to the slaves and the white characters in this chapter, and the previous one, are unable to explain in clear terms the racial or social identities of these two characters. Rather, these two characters transgress the social boundaries enforced by these binarisms in ways which complicates their position in the social hierarchy of the plantation. Koanga is unique because, despite being a captive, his royal status and religious practice separates him from the other slaves. The white characters are reluctant to acknowledge this, and regard him as the same as the other black inhabitants of the plantation. Even so, he is clearly recognised as a threat, and the physical power which helps to mark him out from the other slaves is the very thing which makes him so desirable for Don José to subjugate. Palmyra is in a similar state of social ambiguity, due to her mixed ethnicity and relationship with Clotilda, which again separates her from the slaves (Saylor, 2012, p. 90). Even if the white characters in the work do

not recognise these binary nonconformities, Koanga and Palmyra are clearly marked out as individuals by Delius and Keary, and the musical and textual means by which this is achieved will be the central point of discussion from this point onwards.

Saylor comments 'the music for Koanga and Palmyra avoids the stereotypical hallmarks of African American folk music assigned to the other slaves', and adds that this makes their musical lines 'all but indistinguishable from those of the white characters' (Saylor, 2012, p. 88). This second point seems to me to be up for dispute. It is true that Koanga and Palmyra's music shares common features with that of the white characters, and they are in no way bound to singing only through folk styles, as the slaves are. However, there are also elements flecked throughout their music which point the other way, towards the music of the slave class, as well as features which are exclusively theirs.

Saylor's point that the music of Koanga and Palmyra avoids the overtly exoticizing 'stereotypical hallmarks' which are used in the musical language of the slaves is also somewhat misleading, as it does not discuss the ways in which their music functions to exoticize these characters through less obvious means. The use of leitmotifs is a commonplace feature in the Wagnerian idiom in which *Koanga* is written, and yet they are largely absent from the opera – in fact, Saylor comments that they are missing completely from the work (Saylor, 2012, pp. 79-80). But upon close inspection we can see that there is in fact a subtle usage, with two themes used throughout in association with Koanga and Palmyra. Leitmotifs are by no means necessarily exoticizing or Othering in function, but in *Koanga*, where they are used sparsely, they serve as a way of giving prominence to the two main characters in purely musical terms. Examples 7 and 8 show the first instances in which we hear these motifs, associated with Koanga and Palmyra respectively. These figures are found consistently throughout the work, and are an example of a feature which is found uniquely in the music of these two characters. Example 9 shows a particularly interesting usage, found at the only point in the work where the pair sing a duet. Here, the two motifs are interlocked, echoing the lovers' devotion to one another. This is a similar technique to the one used by Delius when he combines the two quotations from Wagner's operatic works, as previously discussed, and is an example of the kind of intricate ways in which the music belonging to Koanga and Palmyra is imbued with a deeper level of meaning.

15 KOANGA is brought in chained, guarded by two Negroes. He looks neither to the left nor to the right and advances to the front of the stage

Example 7 – Excerpt from the music which accompanies Koanga’s arrival at the plantation at Figure 15 of Act I, in which we here for the first time the leitmotif (shown in large note heads and marked as K) associated with him (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 30).

Example 8 – Orchestral accompaniment 4 bars before Figure 7 in Act I (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 12), in which we hear Palmyra’s leitmotif for the first time (shown in large note heads and marked as P).

28

Palmyra

I feel a strange for - bod - ing in my heart; this

Koanga

Have I real - ly won this love - ly girl's af - fec - - - tion?

mf *sfz* *p* *piu lento* *Vl. trem.* *P*

Vcl. & Fag.

K

Voo - doo Prince will bring me to my grave.

Is she now mine? Great Voo - doo Man - ian hear me now!

sfz *P* *Marcato* *K*

Example 9 – The beginning of Koanga and Palmyra’s duet, at Figure 28 of Act I (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 51). Koanga and Palmyra’s leitmotifs are interlocked, marked K or P as appropriate.

Constructing Koanga's Racial and Social Identity

As noted above, the music of Koanga and Palmyra shares with that of the white characters an intense chromaticism and freedom of line which is typical of the Wagnerian idiom in which Delius was composing. However, some subtle differences are present which add to the musical depiction of the two main characters. For instance, it is intriguing that Koanga and Palmyra sing the only real extended soloistic melodic passages in the work. The white characters, as discussed, do sing in a style reminiscent of Wagnerian *unendliche Melodie*, but their lines are almost exclusively conversational, sung either in tandem with other lines, or as short passages sung as part of an exchange with another. Koanga on the other hand, sings mostly as a soloist, in long melodic monologues. A few exceptions stand, such as his short duet with Palmyra found between Figures 28 and 29 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 51-52) part of which is shown in Example 9, the Quartet and Quintet sections towards the close of Act I, or the ritualistic ceremony which opens Act III in which he engages with other runaway slaves. Generally, Koanga's solo passages are addressed to either Palmyra, or the deities with whom he has a direct connection. His only direct exchange with a white character in the entire work comes at the climax of Act II, where he confronts and then assaults Don José in outrage after Palmyra is abducted from the wedding celebrations. This refusal to converse with the white characters segregates Koanga from the other principal characters and marks him out as different, in spite of their shared musical idiom.

In Chapter Two, the link which is established between the slaves and 'nature' is discussed at length, and is shown to be a way in which the slaves are marked as socially and racially Othered. This connection is also detectable in some of the text sung by Koanga, partly through frequent references in his solo passages to the natural beauty of his homeland, as shown by the text in Table 4 below. This links Koanga to the slave population by the common feature in the chorus numbers of references to the land and nature. Saylor uses the example of Koanga's initial entrance in the opera to demonstrate the protagonist's musical idiom throughout the work – 'his Straussian opening melody, nominally in C minor, quickly obscures a clear tonal centre with its wide leaps, extensive chromaticism and rapid tonicizations of distant keys' (Saylor, 2012, p. 89) – see Example 10.

f Moderato

Koanga

O Voo - doo Ma - nian, my fa - thers from your graves a -venge me, on my

Tr. Cor

vile be - tra - yers. You hosts a - rise a - gain and let the trai - tors'

Tr. Trbns

PALMYRA suddenly rouses herself and looks at KOANGA

16

blood in ri - vers flow! Let - them be burned o - ver a thou - sand fires! Yet more

B.C.

Example 10 – Koanga's first passage in Act I, beginning 6 bars before Figure 16 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 31).

| 3rd Version of <i>Koanga</i> | 4th Version of <i>Koanga</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>But I shall never, never see again the slow Inlanga river, Nor the wide and shady forest Where the serpent crawls at ease, And great beasts roam in search of prey; Nor the azure heights that harbour gods of air, And the woodland glade where the deer would drink at eve.</p> | <p>But I shall never, never see again the slow Ouémé river, Nor the wide and shadowy forest, Where the serpents hiss by day and great beasts hunt their prey by night; Nor the rocky heights where lofty eagles soar; Nor the water hole where deer would drink at dusk.</p> |

Table 4 – Versions of the libretto from the 3rd (Delius, Keary, Beecham, & Agate, 1935, p. 7) and 4th (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 32-33) versions of *Koanga*, which accompanies the music shown in Example 11.

These features are indeed commonplace in *Koanga*'s musical lines, and yet only 12 bars later, the tone of the music undergoes a distinct shift. It is at this point, shown in Example 11, that *Koanga* sings the words shown in Table 4 above, and the nature of the melodic line is altered to reflect their sentimentally. The chromatic, strident quality of the music in Example 10 is almost completely eschewed in favour of a flowing melody, based once again firmly in C minor. The with the exception of the C \flat in the penultimate bar of the phrase, the melodic line contains no chromatic inflection at all. Moments such as this are found throughout the opera, such *Koanga*'s solo passage beginning at Figure 12 in Act II, where he tells Palmyra of his home in Africa and sings in a strikingly similar melodic style.

Example 11 – Figure 17 of Act I (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 32).

In the wider context of the opera, the only comparable musical style is that of the slaves. Delius's use here of a relatively simplistic melodic line to express Koanga's attachment to the natural landscape of his homeland is a deliberate way of showing the parallel in racial identity between Koanga and the slaves on the plantation.

Koanga's relationship with nature is further underlined at the climax of the second Act II, after his altercation with Don José. At this point, Koanga flees the plantation uttering a curse, described as being 'seen, by occasional flashes of lightning, making his way through the dense forest' (Delius, Keary, Beecham, & Agate, 1935, p. 17) (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 102). This is a clear instance of pathetic fallacy, where the stormy weather and the darkness are a reflection of Koanga's anger. Furthermore, the curse which he invokes in the third act is intended to affect the earth, water, and air – again, all natural aspects of the plantation. These examples show Koanga's volatile relationship with the natural surroundings and with natural phenomena. This once again links Koanga back to the slaves, and marks him out as unique amongst them; not only is he tied to the land as they are, but he has influence over it.

The threat which Koanga poses to the social order of plantation is foreshadowed before his arrival by Simon Perez, when he describes Koanga as 'the finest slave you've ever seen; a fierce Dahomey; already he has killed a driver with one blow' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 28). This statement highlights Koanga's great physical strength and prowess, implying that he will be difficult to control. The music which accompanies his arrival, shown in part in Example 7 is abruptly contrasted against the folk song which precedes it, changing the atmosphere from jubilant to solemn. This is immediately followed by the music shown in Example 10, discussed above. The change in atmosphere which this engenders is hard to over-exaggerate, and as Saylor points out, matches the tone of Koanga's personality, linking him with 'the popular literary figure of the "noble savage"' (Saylor, 2012, p. 89). This passage, like many of the extended musical passages sung by Koanga, stands in direct contrast to the music of any other particular character, as dark and extremely powerful in tone, being scored very fully in the orchestra and making an especially explosive use of orchestral gesture. This dynamic relationship between Koanga and the orchestral accompaniment is unique in this work, and can be seen to represent in musical terms the power which Koanga possesses.

As we know, Koanga's willingness to wield his physical strength is the main thing which arrests Don José's attention, as it suggests a capacity for physical labour. But Koanga's reputation for using brute force is also problematic for Don José who, as we have seen, relies on his monopoly on violence, secured by wealth, as a cultural mechanism through which he is able to maintain his authority in the

plantation. Koanga threatens this system, as he is able to exercise brutality in a way which contradicts the normal flow of power in the plantation society.

Koanga's status as a 'Prince and Priest', the leader of a 'wild and savage race' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 35), is an obvious marker of social elevation. This is initially ignored by Don José, or at least is not recognised as a problem, until Simon Perez informs him that Koanga will not be tamed using physical violence because of his social rank. Perez believes that Koanga's royal status instils in him a resilience and stubbornness which would prevent him from submitting to the will of his captors, even in the face of death; in other words, Perez recognises the significance of Koanga's royal blood. Koanga's role as a leader clearly grants him the agency to act how he pleases, to contravene the will of Don José and Simon Perez. He is threatening to the existing social hierarchy because he is in many ways a similar figure to Don José, and for this reason Koanga must be brought under control and subjugated. The bargain which Don José strikes with Koanga in order to achieve this is that in return for a marriage to Palmyra (who is the object of Koanga's affections just as she is Simon Perez's), he must promise to slot quietly and smoothly into the hierarchy as Don José perceives that it should be. This would entail Koanga relinquishing his power and agency, and so would be an effective way of asserting control over him.

What happens later in the opera, is a realisation of these anxieties. Koanga's actions during the climax of Act II are loaded with dramatic and symbolic meaning. When he knocks Don José to the ground, Koanga is performing an act of both physical and cultural violence, as it is a direct assault on the person who represents most clearly the ideological and social standards of the hierarchy which is in place at that time. Following this, as the Act closes, Koanga flees from the plantation and into the swamps, where later, at the beginning of Act III, we witness a religious ceremony.²⁸ The ritual is conducted by Koanga and Rangwan, a priest, who together with a chorus of runaway slaves invoke the names of various deities. What we are seeing here is a highly subversive act. In organising this, Koanga and his associates have undermined, in a fundamental sense, the existing system of power by which the plantation is governed. Koanga's rank has enabled him to assume the role of leader, and in doing so, he sets himself in direct opposition to the established power of Don Jose and the hierarchy which stems from him.

²⁸ The fact that the chosen location for this ceremony is a swamp is in itself significant, as it suggests once again a link between blackness and the natural world.

The ceremony in the swamp is a relatively long scene, and is saturated with exoticizing musical devices. Many of these features are described in Locke’s table of overt musical exoticisms, as discussed in Chapter 2. Example 12, shown below, provides a short extract from near the beginning of this section. The orchestral accompaniment here is completely static, and is comprised of a c D \flat minor 7th chord, suspended over a pedal on the open 5th G \flat and D \flat .

The image shows a musical score for tenors and piano. The top staff is for Tenors (voices heard from afar) in 12/8 time, with a key signature of three flats (C minor). The vocal line consists of two phrases of 'Ah!' with long, curved melismas. The piano accompaniment is in the same key and time, featuring a static harmonic texture with a pedal point on G \flat and D \flat in the bass, and a sustained chord in the treble. The piano part is marked *pp* VI.

Example 12 – Figure 2 of Act III (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 105). The chorus are heard from offstage at the beginning of the ceremony scene which is about to take place.

This is held underneath the vocal lines of a male chorus, heard from offstage, singing a slow extended melisma on the vowel sound ‘Ah’. These melismatic lines are common exoticizing compositional features – again, see Locke’s table (2009, pp. 51-54) – which are used here by Delius to create an otherworldly, mystical atmosphere which is sharply contrasted against the musical idioms used throughout the rest of the opera. The music shown in this example gives a flavour of the harmonic and melodic style which Delius employs throughout the extended ritual scene. Similar vocal lines curve around each other, passed between different voices, gradually adding to the texture. The instrumental accompaniment too is changed as the ceremony progresses, incorporating twisting chromatic figures over increasingly complex chromatic chord progressions as the momentum builds. Koanga and Rangwan join texture after Figure 4 (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 110), leading the chorus towards the scene’s explosive climax, complete with raging flames, blood sacrifice, and a wild dance by the runaway slaves. Koanga’s involvement with this community of runaway slaves, in both musical and social terms, is the high point of his rebellion against the established power structures of the plantation. Through his involvement with these slaves, he is once again showing an ability to use another musical discourse other than the *unendliche Melodie* which marks him out as superior to the slaves, and in doing so, he is differentiating himself yet again from the white characters.

As the ritual scene concludes, Koanga sees a vision of the plantation, where the effects of his curse are taking hold; the slaves are ‘lying prostrate and almost dying on the ground’ (Delius, Craig, &

Page, 1974, p. 125). Amongst them is Palmyra, who similarly is facing death. This sight is enough to draw Koanga out of the swamp and back to the plantation, abandoning his comrades in order to be reunited with his lover. After a confrontation which leads to Koanga killing Simon Perez, who is once more attempting to seduce Palmyra, Koanga is hunted down and executed by Don José's men for his crimes. The physically and culturally violent acts against the established authority committed by Koanga in the face of enslavement inevitably led to his demise at the hands of Don José. The threat posed by Koanga to the plantation's power structure means that when Don José is unable to force the prince into servitude and strip him of his cultural agency by relegating him to the lowest social rank, he is left no choice but to kill him. Koanga's rebellion poses a danger to the very roots of Don José's own influence. Not only did Koanga establish a separate social order, parallel to that of the plantation, but Koanga's curse incapacitated Don José's slaves, and hence stunted his economic strength – which is the fundamental source of Don José's authority. So we see that the mechanisms of the white hegemony in *Koanga* systematically force non-white characters into thralldom, or eradicate them, allowing that same hegemony to persist.

Palmyra and her Crisis of Identity

Palmyra, as with Koanga, occupies a complex position within the plantation society, although for different reasons. As Clotilda's personal maid, and half-sister, she is afforded a particular 'level of trust and intimacy with the upper classes' which explains her ability comfortably to refuse the advances of Simon Perez throughout the opera (Saylor, 2012, p. 89). As discussed earlier, her mixed ethnicity is seemingly also the root of the prejudice against her by Perez and Don José. In the opening scene of Act I, we witness for the first time Simon Perez attempting to seduce Palmyra. His response to her firm declination is 'why put on all these haughty airs and try to make us think that it's you who's running the house, instead of the mistress Donna Clotilda? Remember this – you're just like this a common slave girl!' (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 23-24). By accusing her of being a slave, Simon Perez is refusing to recognise that Palmyra is not in fact a member of the slave class. He makes the assumption based on her non-white identity that she is 'just like the rest', and accuses her of class betrayal. Palmyra's racial – and hence social – identity is in a constant state of tension; she is caught between the comfort afforded to her by her relationship with Clotilda, and the racialized assumptions and accusations of characters higher up in the social order.

Whilst most of the ignorance and prejudice Palmyra faces comes from white, male characters who hold a higher social ranking than herself, there are frequent indicators that Palmyra is suffering from an additional inner conflict of identity. It is Palmyra's voice who we hear as the first act begins, singing a slow flowing melody. This section is given as an example by Saylor and is shown below in

Example 13. Saylor describes this Example as containing ‘long-breathed melodic lines and the subtle yet persistent chromatic inflections’, which he sees as typical of her musical language (2012, p. 89). Several features of this again match up with Locke’s work, for example the slow oscillating bass line (which is the main source of the subtle harmonic chromaticism which Saylor alludes to), and the drone notes of F and D \flat which are sustained throughout most of the passage (Locke, 2009, pp. 51-54).

5 **Lento tranquillo**

Palmyra

Ah! I ca-nnot sleep. My brain keeps turn-ing round and round

Cor.Ingl. (V.I.) (Cl.)

pp (V.I.)

5

How quiet it is; how hushed the world be-fore the dawn

Fl. (V.I.) Dolce

Example 13 – Figure 5 of Act I (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 10). Palmyra’s aria which is heard immediately at the beginning of the act.

The climax of this section underscores the words ‘How far removed my spirit seems, from that of master or of slave, and yet no other life I know’ (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, p. 10). This hints at the inner conflict which is the cause of Palmyra’s anxiety, a feeling of entrapment between the social classes, and a sense of displacement within the plantation society.

Palmyra’s true destiny is revealed when she accidentally falls in love with Koanga after Don José forces the pair into engagement, and from this point on Palmyra’s inner turmoil is seemingly resolved, replaced instead by her devotion to Koanga, and the culture which he represents. In the dramatic exchange with Clotilda near the beginning of Act II, where Clotilda tries to convince Palmyra not to marry, Palmyra explicitly rejects her privilege in favour of a life with Koanga. This has a great deal of cultural significance, displayed most vividly when Clotilda exclaims ‘Madness, it’s nothing but Madness! Would you renounce your faith and creed?’, to be answered with ‘Your faith! Your creed!’ (Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. 72-73). Although Palmyra’s feisty response is indicative of her unwavering devotion to Koanga and his cultural heritage, Clotilda’s desperation to control Palmyra shows that the external social pressures which surround Palmyra are nonetheless still potent.

As with Saylor's generalisation of Koanga's musical style – discussed on page 56 – the music just mentioned may not be representative of the full range of Palmyra's musical idioms. The lamenting melody shown in Example 13 is based around a pentatonic B \flat minor scale (with a raised 7th), and is distinctly lacking in chromatic inflection (not to be confused with the chromatic inflections in the accompanying harmony). The simplicity here seems comparable to the music in Example 11, and is contrasted in the same way against the freer chromatic lines used in the conversational music of the white characters. The musical style described above is in fact only accurately representative of a few of Palmyra's soloistic moments throughout the work. These instances tend towards solipsistic moments, where Palmyra sings largely to herself.

Unlike Koanga, Palmyra is an active member of the plantation's social system, and converses with the white characters where Koanga refuses to, as we have seen. In these exchanges, such as her confrontations with Simon Perez, where she repeatedly rejects his affections, or her argument with Clotilda, Palmyra is able to take on the same communicative style as the white characters with whom she is engaging. This flexibility is again an indicator of her ambiguous position in the plantation's society. Despite the barriers which face her, she is able to express herself both through the same broad melodic style – which she shares with Koanga, and which links her back to the explicit melodiousness of the slaves – and the Wagnerian, almost *Sprechgesang*, style in which the white characters sing.

Palmyra's ability to converse easily with the white characters in their own musical language is matched by her ability to engage with the slaves on the plantation. The build up to the wedding scene in Act II includes the section commonly referred to as *La Calinda*, which is based upon a section of music from the first movement of Delius's *Florida Suite* (see pages 19-47 of the revised edition (Delius F. , 1986)), originally composed in 1887 (Anderson, 2016). New vocal parts for the chorus and Palmyra are composed to fit in with the pre-existing orchestral music, which is largely unchanged from its original form. In this section, Palmyra joins in with the song and dance of the slaves, singing both solo lines and unison passages with the soprano chorus parts. The music of this section makes use of more typical Western tools for evoking the exotic, such as the use of repeated syncopated accompaniments, persistent use of the tambourine and banjo, and cries and melismas on the sounds 'ha' and 'ah' – again, see Locke's table in Appendix C. Scott notes that the music begins 'with a simple style that suggests innocence, then introduce[s] disturbing, even threatening, Orientalist signifiers' (Scott, 2003, p. 181). The mood and dance-like quality of the music here matches in tone the folk music heard from the chorus throughout the work. At this point in the plot, Palmyra is about to be married to Koanga, and to live, along with her new husband, as a slave on the

plantation. As we know, the marriage never happens, but what is significant here is Palmyra's ability and willingness, to engage with the culture of the slaves.

Another important aspect of the character of Palmyra is her sexual appeal, and in some ways this is highlighted by *La Calinda*. McClary's work on *Carmen* is once again applicable here, where Palmyra, as with Carmen, flaunts herself in front of the object of her desires, engaging with a folk-style dance topic that reminds the listener of her physicality (McClary, 1991, p. 57). Even so, this section of music comes part way into Act II, long after Koanga and Palmyra meet; Koanga falls in love with her from the moment he lays eyes on her, and in order to have her as his bride, he is willing to surrender his faith, status, and all of his values and principles (precisely what Palmyra is later prepared to do for him). But Palmyra is also the object of Simon Perez's affections. She seems to have no control over her feminine appeal – even though she openly despises Simon Perez, he is so infatuated that he is willing to disobey the wishes of Don José in order to ensure that he can have her for himself. This lines up with a historical fetishism for exotic women, especially women of mixed-ethnicity (like Palmyra), who were often the subject of colonial fantasy (Pastore, 2011, p. 43).

The music of Palmyra and Koanga shares a similar level of frequent but subtly embedded exotic musical devices, which casts them as societal Others, but without resorting to the absolute and essentialising power of the methods used to depict the slaves. Delius represents them musically in a way which allows for a depth of complexity, and yet is flexible enough to provide them with distinct musical voices. This musical construction places them in a kind of social limbo – more powerful and important than the slaves, but not as powerful as the white characters; more musically exoticised than the upper classes, yet more musically versatile than the lower.

The musical discourse through which these characters are represented does not adhere to the racial and social binarisms which is felt strongly throughout the opera. This suggests a kind of musical in-between-ness which is highly appropriate for these two characters who, like their music, cannot be pigeon-holed into either side of the binary oppositions which govern the social order of the plantation. Their non-conformity makes them complex – even threatening – individuals, whom the mechanisms of the social system, driven by various imperialistic urges, attempt to categorise and suppress.

Conclusion

The application of various theoretical principles throughout this dissertation has gradually, as each chapter has passed, become more and more focussed. Chapter 2, '*Koanga* as an Adaptation', not only mapped out biographical information relevant to this study and details of the adaptive processes through which *Koanga* passed over the course of almost a century, but simultaneously contextualised this within a broader understanding of transcultural adaptation. What this revealed was far more than just a string of changes which connect each version of the opera to the next; in fact this is perhaps the least important point. Rather, the most significant and all-encompassing issue lies in the movement which the narrative of *Koanga* undertook when it was appropriated and altered by Delius and Keary – a move not just from an American proto-southern-realist style novel to a European, high-brow art form: an opera. The implications which this point raises are considerable. During this process, the work underwent significant changes – a re-moulding which shifted the focus (form, style, the list could go on) of Cable's original and made it appropriate in various ways for the musical genre of opera, and this was expounded in some detail by a discussion of the paradigms of 'change of genre' and 'change of audience'. What this inevitably amounts to is something altogether more powerful and absolute, which can perhaps be adequately be summed up by another, overarching paradigm: 'change of ideology'. Due to the content of the work being saturated with racial discourse, it seems inescapable that this, which was such a prominent issue in the public sphere at the time this work was being composed (and still is), would come to be seen from a European perspective.

As the next chapter, 'Constructing Difference – Culturally and Musically', described, the European understanding of racial identity was based on centuries of imperialism; centuries of white global domination justified retrospectively with appeals to especially concocted racialist rhetoric concerned with notions such as 'white supremacy' and the naturally servile and inferior nature of non-white races. Africans, for the Victorians, represented the most extreme opposite to European civilisation, and it is with this point that the concept of binary oppositions can be applied to demonstrate the full extent of this pejorative and systematic domination over other cultures on the grounds of racial difference. Drawing this idea of binarism backwards and applying it to the findings of the first chapter, shows with lucidity the power of the 'change in ideology' paradigm. The 'self/Other' binarism, which is constructed by imperialist ideology, is put into place and enforced by the European context in which *Koanga* resides, as a result of the transcultural adaptive process. The racially charged narrative which was intended by Cable for an entirely different, even abolitionist, purpose became the site of vicious and denigrating racism as a result of the paradigm in question.

Following from this, the portrayal of blackness in *Koanga* follows a predictable, essentializing, European tradition which works through the use of common, negative stereotypes. The slaves are depicted as simple, naturally content in servitude, and even dim-witted, and are marked as exotic and Othered with extreme clarity by Delius's employment of African-American folk-music as the musical dialect through which they speak, limiting them almost exclusively to the singing of plantation work songs.

We see from the first few sections of the chapter 'Racial Hegemony, Social Transgression and Musical Discourse', that the white characters are portrayed in an opposite fashion, as individuals, carving their own musical lines in a normative Western musical discourse, familiar particularly from the music-drama style of Wagner, and this consolidates the binarism formed between the white and black characters. The music assigned to Koanga and Palmyra, however, is far more complex. Through a mixture of musical stimuli which mark them, each in different ways, as caught somehow between the power and agency normally reserved for the white characters, and the overtly exotic music which belongs to the slaves, the central pair are placed in a socially isolated space. But, as the rest of the chapter shows, it is possible to read the entire plot of the opera – Don José's efforts to force the pair into slavery, the refusal by Clotilda to allow upwards social mobility, the use of violence and deceit for manipulation – as an exercise in controlling the threat of two characters, non-white characters at that, who do not adhere to the system of social and racial binarisms which the power structure of the plantation upholds and perpetuates. It seems inexorable, then, that Koanga and Palmyra's refusal to conform to the expectations of their social superiors will lead to their demise.

It is certainly true that the details of the narrative in this problematic work bear fruit to all kinds of predictable racisms which are contingent with artistic or cultural portrayals of Africans and African-American people around the time that *Koanga* was composed. Analysing the way in which these notions, particularly racial binarisms, are put into place and reinforced musically in *Koanga* allows us to gain deeper insight into the ways that European imperialist ideologies are at work in the subtext of the opera. The five soloist roles who make up the principal cast of *Koanga* can all be understood as representing different aspects of the imperialist ideological system. Don José is emblematic of the greedy drive for capital, which was the origin of the slave trade. Clotilda, with her firm belief that her half-sister would be a disgrace for marrying Koanga in spite of his rank, is an example of the essentializing conflation of skin colour with all aspects of culture – especially class. Simon Perez, driven by lust and jealousy, stands for the European relationship with its external Others, characterised by a paradoxical concurrence of fear and desire. Koanga and Palmyra on the other side of the imperialist binarism, can be understood as representing the dangerous and sensuous aspects of the Eurocentric perception of the racial Other, respectively.

The findings of this dissertation seem to be quite specific to this work. The highly individual subject matter means that the application of Victorian attitudes towards racial identity, to give one example, are relevant to this particular study, but perhaps not to others. Nevertheless, this dissertation was intended as a close study of one of Delius's better known (though still relatively obscure) operas. This is a work that contains a richness and complexity of representation, a lamination of themes, and an intricate texture of cultural tensions which is difficult in practice to unpick. This raises the question of Delius's other operatic works which, similarly, are widely overlooked. These are pieces which, like *Koanga*, are yet to receive any real scholarly investigation. Eric Saylor's chapter in *Blackness in Opera*, along with research projects such as 'Delius, Modernism and the Sound of Place', based at the University of Oxford, are indicative of a resurgence of academic interest in Delius and his music, offering hope for the legacy of the composer, whose work remains underappreciated by wider audiences.

Appendices

Appendix A: Transcript of the Synopsis of *Koanga* from Programme booklet for 'Delius Orchestral Concert' Tuesday May 30th 1899ⁱ

Excerpts from *Koanga* – Opera in three acts, with a prologue and epilogue (Libretto by C.F. Keary)

1. – (a) Prelude to Act III
– (b) Quintet and Finale of Act I.
2. Act II

Soloists –

Madame **Ella Russell**, Miss **Tilly Koenen**, Mr **G. A. Vanderbeeck**, Mr. **WM. Llewellyn**
and Mr. **Andrew Black**

In its outline the story of this musical drama has been taken from Mr. George W. Cable's tale of "The Grandissimes." The Scene is laid in Louisiana.

The principle characters of the drama are: –

Don José Martinez (Bass), a Spaniard, the owner of the plantation.

Simon Perez (Tenor), the overseer, a free man not of Spanish decent

Koanga (Baritone), a newly purchased slave, in his own land a prince of the Jaloff line and a priest of the Voodoo.

Clothilde (contralto), Wife of Don José, of French descent, and daughter of De Grapion, formerly owner of a neighbouring plantation

Palmyre (soprano), a slave, quadroon, servant to Clothilde, of whom she is the unacknowledged half-sister.

The Chorus consists in most cases of Negroes on the plantation. They are generally off the stage, either in the fields or (in Act II) merrymaking in their tent at the back of the stage; and as a rule these choruses suggest an action which lies apart from that of the principle characters. In the second act there is another chorus of Creole dancers present at the fête of Don José. In the third act there is a chorus of escaped Negroes who have gone back to their tribal names and ancient worship.

Scene. – Acts I. and II. – The Plantation of Martinez.

Act III. – The Swamp and then again the Plantation.

When Palmyre first appears in Act I. she is still in love with a cousin of her mistress, and consequently of herself- a certain Honoré de Grapion, who with his uncle has sailed for Europe.

Simon Perez on his side is enamoured of Palmyre, and counted upon the power of his master to give her to him for his wife. But in the middle of the first act Koanga, the recently captured slave, is brought forward and his coming has the effect of changing the disposition of all the personages in the story.

Koanga, in his own country a prince of the Jaloff line, and consequently akin to Palmyre, is a priest of the Voodoo rights, and possessed of supernatural powers. On his first appearance he takes, in a solemn oath, his god Voodoo and his forefathers to witness that he will die rather than work for the white man. Simon Perez, in an unlucky moment for himself, expresses his belief that this oath is no empty threat; and Don José at first disposed to put the matter to the proof, bethinks him of the possible influence of Palmyre. The latter, brought face to face with the new slave, instinctively recognizes ties of kinship and of hereditary reverence for Koanga's greatness, while in spite of herself she is impressed by his beauty and his noble bearing. She ironically advises him to bow to the white man's yoke. Don José and Perez press the same advice seriously, and Koanga himself, stuck on his side by the beauty of Palmyre, abandons his oath and offers to work as a slave if Palmyre be given him for his wife.

To this Don José consents, despite the remonstrances of Clothilde, who now appears upon the scene, and of the half-uttered dissent of Simon Perez. Palmyre, on her side, is overborne by the instinct of her blood, which, as it were against her will, takes the side of the negro against the white man. In the play of these varied emotions expressed in a quintet (while all the time the plantation negroes are pursuing their work undisturbed) the first act comes to an end.

In Act II. the marriage of Koanga and Palmyre has been decreed by Don José. It is to take place that day, the fête-day of the master, and the act opens with the choruses which celebrate these two events. Clothilde, violently opposed to the notion of a marriage between the heathen Koanga (for so she regards him) and her Christian half-sister, discusses with Simon Perez the possibility of breaking through the arrangement; the chief difficulty in

their way lies now not with Don José, but with Palmyre herself, who, fascinated or overawed by Koanga, cannot be brought back to her old mind. Simon Perez awakes the memory of Honoré de Grapion, whom he represents as already on the way home, and last, with Palmyre's consent, he arranges a plan for cheating Koanga of his bride.

The fête goes forward. Koanga is bidden to the feast. Palmyre, at Simon's instigation, plies her lover with wine – a thing forbidden to a Voodoo priest. A ballet of Creole dancers takes place. Palmyre slips away while Koanga is drinking. The latter, much excited when he perceives her absence, and mocked by Simon and others, threatens his master unless his bride immediately be brought back. At the same time his own supernatural powers come into play, the stage grows dark with a thunderstorm, and many of the company escape. Thus Don José is for the moment left alone. He fights with Koanga, and is struck down by him. Then Koanga calls down a curse on the plantation and all its indwellers, and escapes to the swamp, singing at the end of the act a final Song of Freedom, renouncing love.

Act III. shows Koanga leader of a body of escaped negroes who have all gone back to their tribal names, and have formed a small free nation in the midst of the swamp. This night, sacred to Antoua, the goddess of the new moon, has been fixed upon as the occasion for a further migration in search of a lasting home. The preparatory rites are performed by Koanga and the sorcerer Rangwan. Suddenly there appears before the eyes of Koanga a vision of the plantation; a dirge is heard, by his ears alone, coming from the men and women on it, who are dying from fever – the effect of his curse. The sight of Palmyre among these sufferers, the sound of her voice, appeal too powerfully to be resisted; Koanga returns to the plantation to bring her away.

The second part of this act shows us the plantation. The chorus of negroes and their spokesman implore Don José to make peace with Koanga; the master, on his side, explains how he has sent out a party to capture the runaway slave. Simon Perez and Palmyre are then left alone upon the stage, and, at the moment when the overseer is attempting to force Palmyre's will, Koanga appears; he pursues Simon Perez off the stage and kills him, but immediately afterwards he is himself captured. After Palmyre has witnessed his torture, Koanga is brought on and flung at her feet to die. He sings a final song calling on his gods to avenge him and his race upon the white man; and Palmyre, over his death body, renounces all her part in the blood of the whites, and echoes his cries of vengeance. She then stabs herself and dies.

There are, so to say, three different planes of action and interest in this drama. The first place is taken by the true African negro, Koanga, who possesses undimmed and

undiminished the faith and magic power of an ancient heathendom. The creed of Koanga and his associates is by design given a heroic character in excess perhaps of what a strict realism would allow. With Koanga are grouped the escaped negroes of the third act, and Palmyre, when she finally throws in her lot with her African kinsfolk. The second plane is occupied by the whites, who, though actually the more powerful, have a place less important in the action of the drama, and an interest, for themselves or for the audience, far less keen than have the others. The third level is occupied by the plantation negroes, who have no longings after the savage life, and whose choruses, expressing peaceful industry and enjoyment, serve as a foil to the action of the principle personages.

ⁱ Extracted from Bennett (1899, pp. 22-25).

Appendix B: Extract from the Preface to the 1974 edition of *Koanga*

'...That then is the plot of the opera as it was originally conceived. It is uncertain if Keary read Cable's book or merely worked from the rough draft that Delius gave him. It is also uncertain if he in fact wrote all the libretto, because at some stage Delius fell out of love with him. Certainly the Liebestod ending was Delius's idea, of which *Tristan und Isolde* was the model. At all events this libretto was never performed on stage, though portions were given at Delius's London concert in 1899: for the first performance at Elberfeld in 1904, a German translation prepared by Jelka Delius was used. Also, for this performance, considerable changes were made in the text which completely altered the sense of the plot, the most significant of these being the removal of all mentions of Honoré. At whose instigation this was done is not known, as there seems to be no correspondence on this subject. But from the evidence in the manuscript full score and the copyist's vocal score, it would seem that the changes were made at an early stage in rehearsals at Elberfeld. Palmyra is transmuted from a quadroon to a mulatto, and instead of her dreaming about Honoré, she is made to utter vague things about her 'native land'! This, of course, is utter nonsense, which is further accentuated in the second act, where, instead of the references to Honoré coming home, which cools her ardour for Koanga, she is told that she is the half-sister of Clotilda, which has the opposite effect. This also suggests that Clotilda is much older, since she tells us that her father gave Palmyra into her care when she (Palmyra) was an infant; and one would hardly place an infant into the care of even a ten year old. (In the Cable, Palmyra and Clotilda are both about twenty-five.) This aging also effects Don José, who, in Cable's version is very much the young dilettante who knows nothing about farming, which probably accounts for the crop failures more than Koanga's curse! Also, for the Elberfeld production, Delius composed an aria for Palmyra in the second act in which not only does she talk about "Africa! Land of my fathers!" but also declares her wholehearted love and devotion for Koanga. So, instead of her getting Koanga drunk, she still dances for him, but is abducted by Simon Perez while Koanga's attention is temporarily distracted. The rest of the opera remains much the same except that the lines allocated to Don José in the second scene of Act III were sung by Perez.

The next thing to happen to the libretto was that in 1933 Jelka Delius began translating it back into English. By now it would appear that any thought of referring back to the original Keary, let alone Cable, was far from anybody's mind. Nor for that matter were Delius's original note-values given much thought. Great fistfuls of words were pushed into musical phrases with little or no regard for the flow of the vocal line, nor the vowels that the singer would have to cope with. Poetic idea followed inverted Poetic idea, often with no connecting link and nearly always out of character and/or context. What foreman on getting the slaves up and off to work is going to tell them that

“The dawn begins to gild the East”? For the sake of this turgid poesy, all characterisation was lost and any potentially dramatic moments that existed were submerged in this cloying ‘poetry’. One particularly dramatic moment in Act II where Palmyra and Perez had a tremendous confrontation of lust and loathing was reduced to a discussion of Christian ethics! The general effect of all these ‘poetics’ was to cast a blur over the entire opera, imbuing it with an almost claustrophobic sameness and exasperating any attempt to logical treatment by throwing up one inconsistency, mistake, irrelevancy, and non sequitur after another. In fact the libretto as published in 1935 provides an interesting and eloquent historical testament to the complete ignorance to the facts, and to the fanciful conceptions that Europeans had of Negro life in the Deep South.’

(Delius, Craig, & Page, 1974, pp. iv-v).

Appendix C: Table Extracted from *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*
by Ralph P. Locke

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| (1) | <p>Modes and harmonies that were considered non-normative in the era and place where the work was composed. This category of features is vast and varied. In the art music of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in many film scores, popular songs, and Broadway shows of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the norm consisted/consists of what music theorists call “functional tonality” or the major-minor tonal system. One should immediately note that, from around 1850 onward, many art-music composers began to enrich the major and minor modes, break down the distinction between them, and create or elaborate new modes (e.g., Aeolian, whole-tone, and octatonic) and harmonic practices (bitonal, atonal, dodecaphonic). Some film composers have followed suit. But, even in the contexts of more “extended” and alternative practices, the basic “tool” defined in the first sentence remained (and remains) available for evoking the exotic, namely using modes and harmonies different from whatever was (or is) the prevailing norm in the given work – or in other works in that genre at that time and place. (For simplicity’s sake, style features nos. 2-6 are worded with regard to the basic major-minor tonal system.)</p> |
| (2) | <p>One sub-category of style feature no. 1: pentatonic (e.g., black-key) and other so-called “gapped” scales, with their strong implications of simplicity and, hence, of stable unchanging sociocultural conditions.</p> |
| (3) | <p>Another sub-category of style feature no. 1 (and almost the opposite in means and effect from no. 2): intense chromaticism and constantly shifting harmonies, which may move purposefully toward a goal, slither sinuously, or yank about jerkily.</p> |
| (4) | <p>Somewhat in between style features 2 and 3: modes and scales with chromatically “altered” notes; and whole-tone and octatonic scales. In the first of these possibilities, the chromatic alterations may include such things as the lowering of the second scalar degree (e.g., D_b in the C-major or C-minor scale), raising the fourth (F_#), and a fluctuating treatment – sometimes natural, sometimes flattened – of the sixth (A) and seventh (B). The second possibility, whole-tone writing, is valued in part because it tends to deprive the listener of a home tonality. All the notes being the same distance apart, the listener cannot determine –without other factors, such as a long-held pedal note in the accompaniment – which note in the scale is “home.” The third possibility, octatonic writing, is somewhat similar to whole-tone in that it constructs its scales systematically, except that their notes are, in alteration, a whole step and a half step apart. Again, a sense of “tonic,” if the composer desires it, needs to be achieved by a pedal or other means.</p> |
| (5) | <p>Related to style feature no. 2 above: bare textures, such as unharmonized unisons or octaves, parallel fourths or fifths, and drones (pedal points – whether tonic or open-fifth); and static harmonies (often based on a single chord; or employing two chords in lengthy, perhaps slowish oscillation).</p> |
| (6) | <p>The opposite of style feature no. 5 (and related to style features nos. 3 and 4 above) complex and inherently undefined chords (sometimes described as “magical” or “mystical”) that, because they can resolve in several ways, operate in unpredictable ways; or chords that are cacophonous or cluster-like.</p> |
| (7) | <p>Distinctive repeated rhythmic or melodic patterns, sometimes deriving from dances of the country or group being portrayed; or repeated (ostinato) rhythms – for example in an instrumental accompaniment – that are not distinctive (not inherently marked as to origin) but nonetheless suggest either Otherness (by their rigid insistence) or rural-ness (by their resemblance general or specific, to the recurring patterns of folk-dance). Certain exotic styles make use of rhythmic complexities considered characteristic of the location (e.g., the polyrhythms of Caribbean, sun-Saharan African, Middle Eastern and Indonesian musical traditions.)</p> |

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| (8) | Opera arias – or melodies in instrumental works – that are more like simple songs , hence are presumably more typical of simple folk, whether in rural locations or the home country or in places far away. Sometimes opera arias of this sort are flagged by a genre designation such as Romance. (This is not to say that all arias that are called “Romance” are exotic.) |
| (9) | Vocal Passages that evoke ritualistic (and incomprehensible) chanting by means of extended melismas on “Ah!” or nonsense syllables in free rhythm. Or (as in the case of despotic legalistic decrees) by declamation in a monotone and rigid, undifferentiated rhythm. Also various “ cries ” – such as the riveting “Aoua!” in Ravel’s <i>Chansons madécasses</i> - or other musical highlighting of unusual words that are supposedly typical or indicative of the culture in question. Yet another possibility: use of local linguistic variants that are understood as bizarre or peculiar, such as the <i>lingua franca</i> in various Turkish or other Middle Eastern works of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. |
| (10) | Instrumental lines that are the presumed equivalent of the melismas common in many traditional vocal styles (e.g., <i>rāga</i> -based singing in India) and also in many places traditional styles (<i>vīṇā</i> playing). These instrumental lines may take the form of extended “arabesque”-style wind or violin solos that are perceived as being “arabesque”-like, not only by their curling shape but because they make heavy use of unbroken chains of escape-note figures such as are indeed found in much Middle Eastern music. |
| (11) | Departure from normative types of continuity or compositional patterning and forward flow. These departures may include “asymmetrical” phase structure, “rhapsodic” melodic motion, sudden pauses or long notes (or quick notes), and intentionally “excessive” repetition (of, for example, short melodic fragments using a few notes close together; or of accompanimental rhythms, as noted in style feature no. 7 above). |
| (12) | Quick ornaments used obtrusively or over-predictably, and presumably intended to be perceived as decorative encrustation – or as dissonant, nerve-jangling annoyance – rather than as organically integrated design. The “arabesque” solos mentioned in style feature no. 10 above are based on this principle of ornament (but repeat the ornamental feature many times in quick succession). |
| (13) | Foreign musical instruments , or western ones that are used in ways that make them sound foreign, for example xylophone, which, played pentatonically, can signify East and Southeast Asia; or specific piano figurations that evoke a Spanish guitar or Hungarian (Hungarian-Gypsy) cimbalom. Also, instruments that are used in a context that is unusual for them. Particularly valuable for a composer in these various regards are woodwind instruments, such as flute, oboe or (more striking because it is rarely used in Western art music) English horn, especially when any of these is given an extensive solo of an “arabesque” or a “melancholy-minor” type. Likewise valuable are unpitched percussion instruments, such as tom-tom, conga, and darabukka (to mention three relatively culture-specific options) but also the more generic ones: tambourine, bass drum, gong, and small bells. |
| (14) | Highly distinctive instrumental techniques (and also techniques that are more usual – such as portamento, pizzicato, or double stops – but used in an unusual context). Also, emphatically regular (stomping, relentless) performance of repeated rhythms. Or the opposite: flexible, floating “timeless” rendition of vocal melismas or instrumental solos (see style features nos. 9, 10, and 13 above). |
| (15) | Distinctive uses of vocal range and tessitura (e.g., the “sultry” – to use a standard, freighted term – mezzo-soprano voice), and unusual styles of vocal production (“darkened” sound, throbbing vibrato, lack of vibrato, etc.). |

Table showing typical stylistic devices used by Western composers for the portrayal of the Exotic (Locke, 2009, pp. 51-54).

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