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Dreams, Gardens, Mirrors: Layers of Narrative in Takemitsu's *Quotation of Dream*

Mark Hutchinson

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Takemitsu's two-piano concertante work Quotation of Dream: Say Sea, Take Me! (1991) is typical of the composer's late works in its rarefied atmosphere and spacious, carefully balanced structure, both qualities which highlight the influence of Claude Debussy. Uniquely within his output, however, here Takemitsu makes this debt explicit: Quotation of Dream is interwoven with a series of direct quotations from Debussy's La Mer, which serve as crucial landmarks in its formal drama. Three metaphors taken from Takemitsu's writings serve to delimit a number of different layers at which we might perceive the work. We might hear it as a 'dream', perceptually immediate and built around bizarre free-associations; as a Japanese 'stroll garden', where elements recur in ways which seem free but are actually carefully balanced; or as a fractured 'mirror' (or even a hall of mirrors), integrating Western and Japanese elements into an ambiguous, unstable whole.

Keywords: Tōru Takemitsu, Claude Debussy, temporality, metaphor, proportion, Japanese aesthetics

The late music of the Japanese composer Tōru Takemitsu (1930–96) plays with a number of different conceptions of musical space, time and motion. Characterised by its particularly unhurried, autumnal atmosphere, like a written-out improvisation it seems to project a space of timeless possibility around itself at every moment – in the words of Roger Reynolds, it is 'rarely sudden, never abrupt'.¹ This sense of refined slowness is complemented by a resolute 'flatness' in analytical terms: although full of triadic sonorities and carefully shaped gestures, this music defies expectations of structural hierarchy or direction beyond the level of individual phrases. Instead, we are presented with a slowly changing array of different materials and sonorities. Yet a careful control of balance and proportion ensures that the experience is never quite static; for all their surface-oriented character, these pieces still leave us somewhere different from where we began, with a sense that some level of closure has been

achieved. These tensions – between time and timelessness, motion and stasis – call to mind broader questions of time and space, the time of musical history and the space of nationality. Takemitsu's late works are saturated with the gestures of other eras – in particular, the richly coloured orchestration and harmony of Debussy, whom Takemitsu described as 'my great mentor' (Takemitsu, 1987, p. 110). Yet these are set within a context that owes more to the unsettling juxtapositions of the post-war avant-garde than to the fluent continuity of Debussy's language. Likewise, although he frequently drew upon ideas from his Japanese heritage in his writings, and although earlier works – such as *November Steps* (1967) and *Autumn* (1973) – had attempted to incorporate more concrete Japanese musical characteristics into his language, there is little sign of this here. Rather, these last pieces seem to demonstrate a composer trying, at the end of his life, to find a different way of bringing together the disparate strands of his musical interests, beyond simple combination or juxtaposition.

A particularly intriguing perspective on these issues is provided by *Quotation of Dream: Say Sea, Take Me!* (1991), for two pianos and orchestra. In this work Takemitsu's artistic debt to Debussy is made explicit: as the title suggests, it is built around a number of direct quotations from *La Mer*, which far surpass any of Takemitsu's previous acts of musical homage in their extent and audibility.² Around one fifth of the duration of the piece is given over to these quotations; taken together, these amount to a kind of whistle-stop tour of Debussy's score, covering most of the primary thematic material from across the three movements of the original. They are joined together by passages of Takemitsu's own falteringly melodic language, with its own reservoir of interacting motifs and recurrent material; the boundaries between the two composers are sometimes very clear and sometimes almost inaudible. The title is taken from the work of the American poet Emily Dickinson (1830–66), who also provided the inspiration for the titles of *How Slow the Wind* (1991), *And Then I Knew 'Twas Wind* (1992), and *A Bird Came Down the Walk* (1994); the full poem evokes a longing by the poet to be absorbed into her surroundings, to find unity in a wider sea – a longing which resonates with Takemitsu's own handling of his influences and his conception of the 'sea of tonality' into which his music was flowing (Burt, 2001, p. 176):

My River runs to Thee –
Blue Sea – Wilt welcome me?

My River waits reply.
Oh Sea – look graciously!

I'll fetch thee Brooks
From spotted nooks –

Say Sea – take me?

(Dickinson, 1998, p. 100–1)

The complex intertwining of different influences and techniques here suggests a number of layers of narrative that might unfold as we reflect upon *Quotation of Dream*. There are narratives of the moment, questions about the way in which its characteristically delicate atmosphere is created, and the relationships that join together disparate materials. There are narratives of form, raising issues of longer-range sequence, energy and repetition. Finally, there are narratives of history, taking in the broader context which connects Takemitsu's music both to his past influences and to the Western and Japanese traditions more generally; the presence of the Debussy quotations here renders these issues particularly important by comparison to other late works by Takemitsu. This study will explore these three levels via connections with three metaphors that recur throughout the composer's writings. The handling of musical atmosphere and shared material is well represented by the metaphor of the *dream*, where a focus upon the moment is combined with a 'free associative' approach to the way these moments connect. Explorations of form and teleology make use of the metaphor of the *garden*, which combines a non-linear approach to development with a careful control of pacing and proportion. Finally, the metaphor of the *mirror* (specifically, the fractured mirror) provides a way of understanding the status of this piece within the wider narratives of musical history and nationality.

Dreams: narratives of the moment

Dreams form a central topic in Takemitsu's aesthetic, and so their appearance in the title of this composition comes as no surprise. The composer's own discussions of the idea often only scratch the surface of its relevance for his music, however. In his own writings, Takemitsu uses the idea of the dream above all to set limits on the extent to which music can and should be susceptible to systematic analysis. His most influential article, 'Dream and Number' (1987), sets up an explicit polarity between

the two elements of its title in order to explore the interaction between instinct and system in his compositional process: dream represents the ineffable workings of inspiration, and number the more rigidly structured procedures which 'clarify the complexities of the dream', and are meant to be grasped 'instinctively' (Takemitsu, 1990, p. 102). The result is that the concept of dream comes to stand for an intuitive working process which underpins all of Takemitsu's mature music: even when material is generated through numeric processes, these rarely adhere to any larger or more systematic overall compositional outlook. As Peter Burt puts it, 'Takemitsu's music is clearly not written for the gratification of future analysts' (Burt, 2001, p. 250). The metaphor itself seems to be a kind of warning or ward, an indication to those looking to study Takemitsu's output that they should not expect to find any logic beyond compositional instinct.

Seen in the broader climate of Takemitsu's influences and cultural surroundings, however, such an idea seems rather disingenuous. Describing something in the terms of a dream does not immediately render it impervious to further analysis; quite the opposite. Although the cognitive processes that lie behind the experience of dreaming remain far from clear, there is substantial agreement on many of the core features which differentiate it from wakeful alertness. Four characteristics in particular are relevant in relation to Takemitsu's music. The first is that dreams are notably 'single-minded', in Allan Rechtschaffen's term: in other words, the attention of a dreamer is usually entirely focussed on the experience of the dream, and not distracted by any of the usual reflective processes which normally accompany waking perception; one example of this is that dreamers very rarely realise that they are dreaming, even though in waking terms such a lapse of self-awareness seems 'rather remarkable' (ibid., p. 98). The second, related characteristic is the often frightening vividness of the internal perceptions generated during a dream, and especially the emotional responses that accompany them – a characteristic that J. Allen Hobson identifies with the selective activation of the emotional centres of the brain during sleep (Hobson, 2002, p. 5). The third is the frequent incorporation of outside events into the narrative of a dream – either the 'residues' of the previous day's experience, or stimuli actually occurring during the course of sleep, such as a feeling of cold or the sound of an alarm (Empson, 2002, p. 55–58). Finally, the fourth distinctive feature of dream experiences is their disrupted logic. As Jacob Empson describes it, 'when dreaming [...] events do not unfold in any steady progression; rather, there are sudden changes in scenario, or scene shifts, which are sometimes baffling. Ordinary logic is suspended' (ibid., p. 71).

Taken together, these four elements add up to a pervasive tension between immediacy and disconnection which is characteristic of dream narratives: each scenario unfolds with a perceptual and emotional intensity which commands total, 'single-minded' attention (with even external memories and events being transfigured to serve its interests), yet in the light of day the connections between them seem to defy conventional logic. The appeal of dreams to artists and thinkers in the modernist period – from the early Symbolists, through Freud, to the Surrealists and beyond – arises precisely from this tension. In this context, it is significant too that Takemitsu was highly influenced throughout his life by the work of James Joyce, and in particular *Finnegans Wake*; Joyce's 'lingerous longerous book of the dark' (Joyce, 1939, p. 251) represents perhaps the ultimate attempt to render the 'primitive, inarticulate, infinitely imprecise' fragments of dream consciousness in literary form (Wilson, 1947, p. 329). If the workings of dreams remain mysterious, then, their impact on twentieth-century art is all too clear; far from warding off further analysis, they set up a duality of content and form that seems to invite it.

Single-mindedness

The single-mindedness of dream narrative, and its emotional intensity, both find very immediate parallels in *Quotation of Dream*. The language of Takemitsu's late style is notable for its focus upon the experienced moment as the locus of musical meaning and perception; longer-range 'structural listening', which functions by segmenting material into clear blocks and tracing arcs of development within and across these blocks, is subverted. Instead, we must hear each gesture for itself, within a temporal present which can never quite be isolated from the past or future – an absorbed, surface-oriented listening position which parallels the unreflective quality of dream narrative. This approach is consistent with the composer's attitude: Takemitsu was adamant that his music should be appreciated on a moment-to-moment basis, not allowing the materiality of the individual instant to be overridden by the intrusion of longer-term developmental processes (Burt, 2001, p. 252). He traced this stance to traditional Japanese aesthetics, where musical timbres were seen as a microcosm of the universe in their complexity, something to be appreciated rather than understood: 'So, with some exaggeration, I might say God dwells in a single sound' (Takemitsu, 1990, p. 66).

This single-minded quality is achieved through Takemitsu's handling of phrase-structure, orchestration and thematic material on the local level. This music is made up almost entirely of short gestures surrounded by silence or the 'negative space' of held chords or resonance; often, they trace melodic arcs, or shapes of rising

and falling tempi, which serve to separate them even more clearly (Koozin, 2002, p. 17). Although individual phrases often contain clear rhythmic gestures, no continuous pulse is ever established for more than a few seconds. Likewise, Takemitsu's characteristically subtle orchestration is focussed decisively towards the moment. Adjacent gestures are delineated by constant subtle variations in timbre and texture, making use of the whole orchestral palette through a variety of nuanced layerings and chamber-like subdivisions; the subtlety of Takemitsu's approach is evident from the first phrase, which presents a simple, bell-like melodic motif in complex, resonant antiphony between the two pianos, with string harmonics, celesta and harp layering behind it to create a kind of orchestral 'sustain pedal' effect (Figure 1).

Figure 1 reduction of bars 1–4.

Takemitsu's use of harmonic and melodic material plays an equally important role here. His late works are distinctive for their richly expressive, almost naive emotional quality; their frequent use of swooping string lines and other archetypal (often rather filmic) melodic gestures, alongside a variety of richly-coloured triadic sonorities whose similarities to Messiaen and to jazz have often been noted. Takemitsu himself was happy to describe this music as 'very romantic' (Burt, 2001, p. 246), and there is a clear parallel here with the vivid and unmediated emotional world of dream narrative. Again, however, these materials are deployed in such a manner that any larger-scale structural potential is largely negated; melodic lines rapidly tail off as their containing gestures evaporate into silence, whilst the rich chordal gestures serve, in Messiaen-esque fashion, as colourings upon octatonic, whole-tone or other more esoteric collections, rather than following through on their tonal potential.

Takemitsu's surface-oriented approach to harmony can be illustrated by one collection that is important throughout *Quotation of Dream*, a transposition of the material described by Takemitsu as the 'SEA motif', and used by him in a number of works from the 1970s onwards. This collection is made up of a chain of thirds which outlines two tritonally-opposed pairs of major and minor triads in a rising and falling sequence (Figure 2); it is so named because its opening three notes, in their original form, can be written in German notation as 'Es-E-A'. It thus presents a variety of triadic allusions in a manner that is highly evocative and carefully balanced but essentially non-tonal – or perhaps, to use Takemitsu's preferred designation, 'pantonal' (Takemitsu, 1987, p. 112). This collection is only stated

overtly on four occasions within *Quotation of Dream* – following the first Debussy quotation, in the closing bars, and around the two Golden Section points (see below). Elsewhere, it serves as a kind of harmonic skeleton that is variously transposed, distorted and merged with other pitch collections, in keeping with the focus upon individual moments. Its presence contributes to the atmosphere of evocative, non-directed consonance that persists throughout.

Figure 2 'SEA motif' (adapted from Takemitsu, 1990).

Motifs, connections and dream logic

The bell-like idea that opens the work is the first and most omnipresent of a collection of motifs that recur throughout *Quotation of Dream*; these are the basis for much of its surface variety – the quality of disconnection which is another primary aspect of dream narrative arises in many cases here from the abrupt juxtaposition of one gestural idea with another which seems quite different. The passage which follows the third recurrence of the 'bell motif' (bar 29,³ figure II in the score) illustrates this: the introduction of a new, more percussive figure (Figure 3a) forms the basis for the first clear sectional break of the piece, carrying with it a change in tempo, instrumentation, focal pitch (C# rather than D), and timbral quality – the pianos now exploring the extremes of their register rather than remaining focussed mainly on central pitches. There is even a brief *caesura* marked in the score. Yet the 'bell' motif retains a subterranean presence in condensed form, transposed to C# and rumbling in the bass. What follows is equally unexpected: at bar 34, the first of many quotations from Debussy's *La Mer* begins. Even here, the juxtapositions continue: a four-bar passage taken verbatim from the opening of the second movement, 'Jeux de vagues' (Figure 3b), is followed by six bars where the descending major thirds of that quotation are layered over a similar descent from the end of the first movement, 'De l'aube à midi sur la mer' (Figure 3c), which disintegrates rapidly into a collage of Debussy-esque rising whole-tone gestures (Figure 3d) against a further statement of the 'bell motif' in the flute, horns and piano. At bar 44 (figure III in the score), D returns as a focal pitch and the 'bell motif' is restated in compressed form in an emphatic *tutti*.

Figure 3 motifs in bars 29–44: a) bars 29–30; b) bars 34–36; c) bars 37–8; d) whole-tone rising figure, bars 40–41; e) 'SEA' collection, bars 42-3.

This passage is typical of Takemitsu's handling of the Debussy throughout *Quotation of Dream*. The composer seems almost literally to be 'dreaming' of *La Mer*: short passages appear exactly as they are in the original, in every detail, but sooner or later they dissolve into Takemitsu's own material, or else are conflated with fragments from elsewhere in the Debussy. Motifs which appear originally in the context of a Debussy quotation often resurface later as part of a passage which is original to Takemitsu; in the ruminative two-piano passage which forms most of section XI, for example, a variety of Debussy motifs reappear as part of the cadenza-like exploration of prior material. Although at first the passages of Debussy are generally audibly different from their surroundings, over time the boundaries between their materials begin to blur, such that it becomes quite difficult to tell where Debussy ends and Takemitsu begins without careful perusal of both scores. The whole process offers a highly audible reflection on Dickinson's poem, with the presentation of this first quotation even seeming to provide a brief musical commentary – almost an in-joke – on the process: as the second Debussy quotation begins to fall apart, it gives way to a sequence of ascending figures based around the 'SEA' collection (Figure 3e). Takemitsu's music flows into *La Mer*; *La Mer* flows into the SEA.

As with the bizarre juxtapositions of dream logic, however, surface discontinuity coexists here with deeper connections, which go beyond the pun-like correspondences of names. The motifs which recur throughout *Quotation of Dream* – those original to Takemitsu and those taken from Debussy – are saturated with interrelationships of pitch-content and melodic contour, many of them derived from the contrast of tritones, semitones and major thirds which underpins the 'SEA' collection. Both Takemitsu and Debussy are omnivorous in their harmonic explorations within this piece: alongside clearly triadic sonorities stand a variety of octatonic and whole-tone passages, and Takemitsu often chooses passages from *La Mer* which fit harmonically with his own material. In the section just noted, for example, although in terms of gesture and sonority it comes as a surprise, the entrance of the Debussy quotation can be connected retrospectively to the foregoing passage by means of a tonal motion from C# to F# in the bass (which then leads back to C#/D, throughout the next quotation); moreover, Debussy's motif is related to the preceding piano figure by its focus on parallel thirds and its shared opening pitch, with Takemitsu's figure simply circling irregularly and shuffling between intervals rather than following a clear descending trajectory. The interaction of motifs from one passage to the next is thus less a question of highly contrasted juxtaposition, and thus more of a kind of 'free association', following a hidden, dream-like logic which

is opaque but still present. One aside in 'Dream and Number' illustrates that this more specific connection was not lost on the composer: writing briefly about his approach to formal structure, Takemitsu suggests that 'my music is composed as if fragments were thrown together unstructured, as in dreams' (Takemitsu, 1987, p. 105).

The link with Debussy's own approach here is too suggestive to be ignored. His late work is characteristic for its cultivation of a wide variety of interconnected motifs, which circulate and interact in a non-directed, dream-like fashion; this principle is most famously evident in his 1912 ballet *Jeux*, but it applies equally to *La Mer*, whose structural and motivic complexity likewise raises significant issues for understanding its relation to the symphonic tradition (Howat, 1983, p. 65). Debussy's motifs interact not via the symphonic principles of continuous, linear development but rather through a 'freely growing process of breeding' (Eimert, 1961, p. 10), retaining their own individual identities even as they constantly shuffle into new alignments and formations; this approach shows further the composer's debt to Baudelaire, whose poetry is built upon the 'free association of ideas and memories' (Clark, 1995, p. xviii), with the result the same 'paradoxical combination of distance and intimacy' (ibid., p. xviii) that forms the central tension in the experience of dreams. As well as outlining Takemitsu's intuitive approach to compositional process, then, the metaphor of the dream opens up a perspective upon immediacy and interconnection which joins up the disparate interests of *fin de siècle* French literature, Japanese aesthetics, and the ever-present influence of Debussy upon this music.

Gardens: narratives of form

The idea of a 'dream logic' that connects elements from moment to moment leads naturally to considerations of longer-range structure. Here, the focus shifts to a different metaphor. Takemitsu often described various aspects of his music in terms of Japanese formal gardens; indeed, in 'Dream and Number' he used a number of detailed diagrams to suggest that he had actually designed the 1963 piano concerto *Arc* as a kind of musical 'stroll' around a specific garden, with different layers of the orchestral texture representing different features (rocks, grass, trees), and the soloist as the observer wandering around them (Takemitsu, 1987, p. 120–6). This specific analytical mapping represents only one of a number of ways in which this metaphor might be applied to his music. It also presents a different angle, for example, on the questions of perception and connection that were discussed in the previous section: Takemitsu described the orchestra in these earlier works as 'my own multiply

focused musical garden' (ibid., p. 114), with the seeming intention of highlighting the importance of timbre, and the freedom of listeners to focus on different elements within complex textures – much as the 'free association' of motifs in *Quotation of Dream* creates cross-associations that may not be noticed immediately.

Garden aesthetics are particularly relevant, however, to questions of form and teleology in this music. A garden is based around static objects, which we view from changing perspectives as we walk around them. The interest of the journey is less in reaching a specific destination, and more about observing the subtle changes of perception that occur as our position shifts relative to our surroundings. At certain points, we may look closely at some detail – bending down to admire a flower, or a water feature, for example – whilst at other points our attention is drawn more to the way these elements have been arranged as a whole, or even to looking at the view in the distance. Many Western gardens are designed to allow an uninterrupted view of the whole, and there is a tradition of this in Japanese garden aesthetics too. But there is also a parallel tradition of *miegakure*, where the overall shape of the garden is deliberately concealed, and paths are used to lead viewers around its different elements in a carefully controlled sequence – with even the pace of the walk influenced by changes of the path (steps, rougher gravel, and so on) that may be imperceptible to most visitors but are essential to its effect (Lowry, 2006, p. 10). In this kind of garden – known as a 'stroll garden' – the only way to experience the balance of its form is to enter it and traverse it one step at a time.

The impact of this metaphor upon the balance of form and content is profound. Whilst at one level every element in a garden is crucial to its effect, on another the individual identities of each of these elements is almost irrelevant; instead, what matters is the way that they are laid out, and the relationships which each has to those around it. A blossoming cherry tree may provide a striking focal point in a Japanese stroll garden, but any other blossoming cherry tree would likely be just as effective if it were placed in the same location, as indeed would other trees or plants of similar visual impact. Indeed, even the characteristics of the tree which seem most vital to its effect – its blossom, its arresting appearance, its height – are totally dependent on their surroundings for their success; in a garden full of flowering cherry trees, it is the small green shrub which stands out. Situation, context and relationship are thus central to the aesthetics of the stroll garden.

The result of this is a particular approach towards the handling of expectation, one which closely matches that found within Takemitsu's music. On the one hand, from moment to moment the experience is deliberately unpredictable: round any corner we may be surprised by a new plant or water feature – or,

conversely, by the reappearance of something we have seen before. On the other, it is important that the overall structure and proportions of the garden be carefully controlled, so that there is some sense of balance and shape to our walk around it – even though its overall structure may never become apparent. In the case of *Quotation of Dream*, this effect is created through a combination of carefully overlapping structural layers – individual passages never quite ‘adding up’ into longer-range progressions, but always interrupting one another at crucial moments – and a keen eye for balance, symmetry and proportion in the overall formal structure.

Recurrent materials, changing perspectives

One way to make sense of the overall structure of *Quotation of Dream* is to understand it as a ‘free perambulation’ around a collection of musical objects (Burt, 2001, p. 182), and to analyse the characteristics of these different materials to see the way that novelty and repetition are balanced in their selection and placing. Takemitsu’s handling of the different layers of musical material – motivic, timbral, harmonic, and referential – might be called ‘permutational’, in its unpredictable and non-synchronised shuffling of different possibilities. There are a number of different melodic figures that recur with varying frequency throughout, but variations of timbre also play an important structural role; the contrast between piano and orchestra is particularly important. Alongside this, there are concerns of pitch hierarchy: although there is little in the way of functional tonal harmony here, the piece spends much of its time focussed around D, and brief excursions to other focal pitches serve as audible breaks in continuity. Finally, the quotations from *La Mer* serve as perhaps the most obvious formal interruptions, outlooks onto another landscape entirely. Figure 4 shows a visual overview of the way these different formal elements interact. Takemitsu’s own twelve-part formal division (taken from the score) is laid out over the top of this diagram, for comparison.

One thing that is immediately evident is that this work is not laid out according to simple, clear-cut overall divisions. The interaction between different layers of perception is complex, with frequent overlaps: shifts from solo pianos to orchestral *tutti* are often out of sync with changes of material or focal pitch, and vice versa; although this music is very ‘eventful’ at the local level, these events rarely line up in such a way as to articulate any overall sectional changes. The result is that *Quotation of Dream* becomes a study in the affective power of context and relationship, and not of specific material *per se*. The shifting teleology of this piece comes above all from the way that adjacent events are ordered and connected, rather than from the nature of the events themselves. As a result, although materials recur

throughout, our perspectives upon them vary each time according to their context and manner of presentation – just as the same landmarks may be viewed from a variety of different angles and settings over the course of a garden stroll. By connecting adjacent events using *different* combinations of shared qualities – at one point a unifying timbre or motivic idea, at another a shared focal pitch, texture or dynamic contour – different kinds of transition can be explored in a highly nuanced way, in particular the subtle distinctions which exist between fragmentation and teleological expectation.

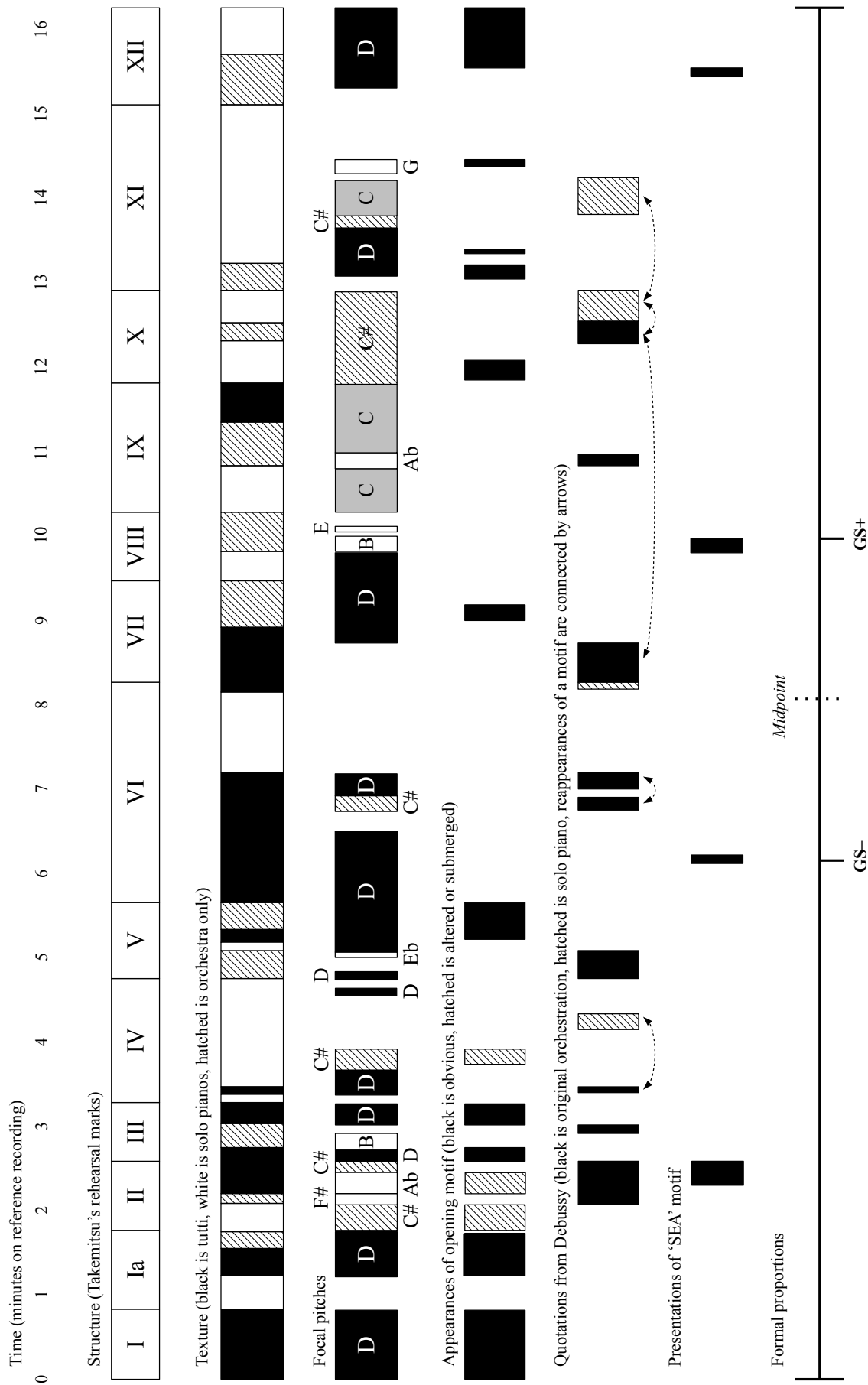


Figure 4: Formal overview of *Quotation of Dream*

This principle is illustrated by the variety of ways in which the *La Mer* quotations are integrated (or otherwise) into their surroundings. Although the boundaries between Takemitsu and Debussy are often blurred in these passages, the quotations remain definite structural events, responding to or revitalising what has come before in a variety of context-dependent ways. For example, the passage *Animé et tumultueux* (from 'Dialogue du vent et de la mer') which opens section V (bars 89–93) is connected with the foregoing piano section by shared focal pitch and by a balance of registral and dynamic contour (bars 82–88 fall, and bars 89–94 rise), but separated by the shift from pianos to orchestra, and by a marked increase in tempo (Figure 5a and b); meanwhile, its rising octatonic harmonies provide the basis for the following piano solo in bars 99–105 (Figure 5c). By contrast, the passage *Modéré, sans lenteur* (quoting the motif given in Figure 5d, from 'De l'aube à midi sur la mer') which appears in bars 127–134 is preceded by a passage of expectant, bell-like chords (Figure 5e) that prepares for it in instrumentation (prominent brass and harp with accompaniment from strings and upper woodwind), tempo and the shared central note of B \sharp (or C \flat), such that the quotation appears as a new perspective on familiar material – animated by its 6/8 time and bustling texture, and given freshness by the shift of mode from Mixolydian to Dorian harmonies.

Figure 5 integration of Debussy quotations: a) bars 85–8; b) bars 89–91; c) bar 99; d) Debussy motif in bars 127–9; e) bell-like chords, bars 124–6.

Pacing and proportion

Takemitsu's delicate exploration of different kinds of continuity suggests a keen awareness of the way formal energy can be controlled and shaped from moment to moment. Yet considerations of larger-scale structure remain highly ambiguous. Bernard Rands writes of the composer's 'unique sense of order and succession, proportion and timing' (Rands, 1987, p. 478), and Roger Reynolds of his 'taste for deliberate pacing of events' and 'superb' formal awareness (Reynolds, 1987, p. 480); yet this aspect has proven difficult to discuss at anything beyond the anecdotal level. Peter Burt traces the difficulty back to a basic tension between Takemitsu's highly moment-oriented compositional philosophy and Western analytical expectations: when analysis relies on the 'subordination [of sounds] within some preconceived constructional scheme', it will inevitably come into conflict with an aesthetic built upon 'the sound-quality of the individual event' (Burt, 2001, p. 249). Indeed, from this point of view it is a small step to argue, as Burt does, that Takemitsu shows a 'relative lack of interest in structural organisation', and that this was 'no unconscious

failing on his part, but rather a consciously pursued policy' (ibid., p. 242). One way around this impasse is to move away from atemporal concepts of 'structural organisation' and instead focus on the active process of *forming* we experience as the music unfolds. In a stroll garden, the absence of an overall vista certainly does not imply a 'lack of interest' in organisation.⁴ Rather, the implication of *miegakure* is that viewers are forced to experience the structure of the garden *from within*; it provides an order and a rhythm to their experiences of individual features so that the whole journey is as satisfying as possible. In *Quotation of Dream*, the importance of 'pacing' and 'proportion' (identified by Rands and Reynolds respectively) to a listening experience can provide the basis for a tentative further analysis of this forming process.

The careful pacing of events here is above all a result of the way in which the balance between novelty and repetition is handled. New elements continue to appear throughout the composition, scattered like rocks in a garden; and once they have been introduced, they recur at carefully spaced intervals, so as to avoid either monotony or bewilderment. As material becomes more familiar, rather than being developed further, it is used less and less, coming to serve increasingly as a point of return rather than of departure. A case in point is the opening motif, which largely disappears throughout the central section (following an extended development of it at the beginning of section VI), until it recurs in the final bars as a gesture of cyclical closure. Indeed, the brief reappearances of it in sections X and XI – often on unfamiliar instruments or transposed onto different focal pitches – are rather akin to passing glimpses, through obscuring vegetation, of a landmark which marks the beginning and end of a walk.

Looking at Figure 5, it is possible to suggest a tentative division into three formal 'regions' on the basis of shifts in this sense of pacing. Sections I to V are dominated by repetitions of the opening motif, and most of the other recurrent motivic figures also appear for the first time here; shifts between focal pitches are frequent and relatively wide-ranging, and the texture shades rapidly between solo, tutti, and orchestra-only passages. Section VI begins with an extended single phrase, a string chorale based around the harmonies of the 'bell motif' and incorporating the clearest statement of the 'SEA' material in the piece; from this the 'bell motif' virtually disappears until section X, appearing only once, briefly, in section VII. Instead, sections VI to VIII are built primarily upon a variety of subsidiary material, particularly upon short-lived timbral gestures, passages for solo instruments, and a number of new Debussy quotations in quick succession. The most startling moment in this section is a sudden, unexpected climactic flourish at bars 181–2 (the close of

section VIII) built around a presentation of the 'SEA' collection with its inversion. Finally, section IX begins with the introduction of a melodic figure based around the new focal pitch C (Figure 6a); the final 'region' is built primarily around alternations between this figure, the opening motif and a single quotation from *La Mer* (Figure 6b, closely related to the new motif in its semitonal construction), which appears in a variety of different contexts and orchestrations. The relative material simplicity of this section, and its increasing polarisation of piano and orchestra, contribute to a growing sense of closure.

Figure 6 recurrent motifs in closing section: a) bars 190–3; b) bars 224–6.

The temporal relationships of these three formal 'regions' suggest a final, more tentative observation about proportion. In music as metrically complex and temporally flexible as this, attempts to trace proportional relationships are very risky. Yet it is striking how closely the regions I have traced fit with proportions based upon mirror symmetry and upon the Golden Section, when they are mapped onto the reference recording used here.⁵ Based on the duration of the whole, the negative Golden Section point falls at the point within section VI where the 'SEA' collection appears most explicitly upon the focal pitch D; the positive Golden Section falls exactly upon the parallel gesture which closes section VIII, the only *fortissimo* marking in the whole piece. Finally, the midpoint coincides closely with the first appearance of the Debussy quotation that is pervasive throughout the final section.⁶ These correspondences should not necessarily be interpreted as evidence of conscious precompositional design in late Takemitsu, of course, although the composer's interest in numerology in other circumstances would certainly lend credence to that idea.⁷ At the very least, however, they can provide insight into why Takemitsu's late works – which seem on first analysis to be 'all surface', with no larger formal pattern at all – nonetheless form satisfying musical wholes.⁸

Mirrors: narratives of history and place

The metaphor of the garden may help to explain the formal coherence of *Quotation of Dream*, but the broader historical and cultural questions that it raises remain unresolved. Perhaps they are unresolvable; *Quotation of Dream* works above all as music, and not as a 'statement' about Takemitsu's relationship to Debussy or wider musical history. Nonetheless, it is helpful, in concluding, to evaluate some of the ways in which the analytical features above might contribute to discussions about the wider context of Takemitsu's late style. One way to do this is through the image

of the mirror, which provides one of Takemitsu's preferred metaphors for the complex interplay of nationality and history in his music. The extended essay 'Mirrors' (1974) sets out many of the concerns of national identity that would continue to preoccupy the composer throughout his life. The text consists of a series of reflections (as it were), exploring the ways in which encounters with other cultures and their musics help to clarify Takemitsu's relationship to his own split Japanese/Western aesthetic self-understanding. Most notably, he describes Western music as 'an enormous mirror' which has collapsed into fragments, and his desire to 'plac[e] myself among the refracted rays of light arising from the intricate reflections' of these fragments, and to 'reassemble them – the enormous mirror's broken pieces, still lit with the afterglow of dusk's passing – into one mirror within myself' (Takemitsu, 1992, p. 47).

In this context, the phrase-structure of *Quotation of Dream* appears as a fulfilment – nearly two decades later – of Takemitsu's stated aim. Debussy's music, and more generally a kaleidoscopic array of Western triadic gestures, are set in silence like the shards of a mirror, each one brief but containing within itself a reflection of the whole tradition. Like a mosaic made of mirror tiles, the arrangement of these shards is as important for the overall effect as the nature of the shards themselves; as a result, there are two ways to perceive the whole, which blur into one another – as a reflection of another object, or as a piece of art in itself. But the metaphor also has resonance beyond the immediate fragmentary structure. Quite aside from direct quotation, many of the characteristics identified in *Quotation of Dream* owe a clear debt to Debussy. These go beyond the obvious parallels of harmony and orchestration which have often been identified in Takemitsu's output: for example, the linking of motifs by multidirectional 'free association', rather than by linear development, shows the influence of *Jeux* in particular (as discussed earlier), whilst the idea of fixed motivic ideas reappearing in varying harmonic and textural contexts resonates also with the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faun*. Takemitsu's 'permutational' approach towards the handling of different structural elements is likewise reflected in the 'visible and audible structural counterpoint' of Debussy's music, where, for example 'tonal and motivic events [often] follow separate rates of change' (Howat, 1983, p. 13). Finally, Debussy's own use of structures based around Golden Section proportions is well documented, of course, even though he – like Takemitsu – was notably coy about analytical approaches towards his music (Howat, 1983, p. ix). In this context it is particularly noteworthy that these proportions provide a way for Debussy, like Takemitsu, to produce satisfying formal wholes whilst maintaining a fluid, seemingly unstructured surface – the same kind

of studied artlessness found in the *miegakure* garden. In this way, even the aesthetics of *Quotation of Dream* appear as a kind of reassembled Western mirror.

Yet the mirror also provides another perspective upon questions of national identity in Takemitsu's music (thus broadening the discussion from time to space). Whilst he portrays Western music as a broken mirror, Takemitsu describes non-Western musics, and Japanese traditional music in particular, as an unpolished one, which serves (in Roger Reynold's terms) to 'indicate an original state of music which existed prior to the polishing that took place in the West' (ed. note in Takemitsu, 1992, p. 77). Both mirrors – Western and Eastern – are imperfect in different ways; the implication is not that one should be used to reinforce or complete the other, but rather that the composer should draw upon the individual characteristics of both. Certainly, many of the distinctive features identified in this analysis have close connections with ideas taken from Japanese aesthetics. For example, the single-mindedness of dream narrative, which here translates to an emphasis upon timbre and upon the moment, resonates with a long Japanese tradition of timbral sensitivity, exemplified for Takemitsu by the concept of *sawari* in *biwa* playing (Burt, 2001, p. 238; see Takemitsu, 1995, pp. 64–5). Likewise, the disconnected, stream-of-consciousness quality of the phrase structure has parallels with the Japanese literary genre of *zuihitsu*, 'following the brush', whereby a writer moves freely from topic to topic according to the fancy of the moment, particularly based on what they see around them (Keene, 1995, p. 28); many of Takemitsu's own essays (including 'Mirrors') show the influence of this approach. The metaphor of the Japanese stroll garden, with its attendant notion of *miegakure*, has already been described, but alongside this bigger concept, a number of smaller correspondences also exist: in the context of the quotations from Debussy, the most notable is the principle of *shakkei*, or 'borrowed scenery', whereby a garden incorporates external features – a mountain, perhaps – into its structure, with the designer taking great care to blur the distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' views by means of careful framing and arrangement (Hendry, 1997, p. 88). Although there may be no overt reference to Japanese traditional music in the vocabulary of Takemitsu's late style, then, the influence of this 'unpolished mirror' is thus ever-present at the level of structure and compositional approach.

The implied polarity this creates between Western and Eastern aesthetics is impossible to sustain, of course. Debussy's own interest in Japanese art and aesthetics is well-known, and his appeal for Japanese composers such as Takemitsu after the war surely stems (at least in part) from the links which already existed between his approach and their own. Moreover, once the field is expanded, a similar

back-and-forth can be seen elsewhere: Takemitsu's own understanding of Japanese aesthetics was arguably as indebted to John Cage as it was to his own background, for example, and certainly Cage's influence was important in 'lending the seal of Western endorsement' to ideas which a cosmopolitan post-war Japanese composer might otherwise have treated with some embarrassment (Burt, 2001, p. 96). Likewise, the means by which he was first introduced to Western music – first through his father's collection of Dixieland jazz LPs, then via radio broadcasts of classical music from the American military during the occupation of Japan after the Second World War (Burt, 2001, p. 21–23) – betray the complex contextual relationships that underpin his appropriation of these materials. At this point, as influences, counter-influences and complex historical situations merge and overlap, it is easy to feel as if one is trapped in a hall of mirrors, lost amid a confusion of distorted and multiplying reflections.⁹ At the end of his essay, Takemitsu states his desire to 'roam within the eternal inner maze that the two mirrors' – of East and West – 'have created. And I would like to intensify the opposition and contradiction that takes place' (Takemitsu, 1992: 71). The metaphors of dream, garden and mirror illustrate three layers upon which this ambiguous roaming can unfold – for listeners as well as for the composer. And as the 'opposition and contradiction' intensifies, so too does the fascination of Takemitsu's music.

Notes

¹ See Roger Reynolds's (1987) article of the same title.

² *And Then I Knew 'Twas Wind* (1992) is scored for flute, viola, and harp, reflecting the unusual instrumentation of Debussy's own late sonata, and near the end the viola part incorporates a brief quotation from Debussy's composition – a reference which Takemitsu has to mark as such in the score, since otherwise it would be barely audible (Burt, 2001: 222). The main theme of *How Slow the Wind* (1991) seems like a homage to *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faun*, given that it is centred on the same pitch, traverses a tritonal space in an equally sinuous, chromatic way, and is used similarly throughout the tone-poem as motivic stable point across constantly shifting harmonic contexts. Neither of these works approach *Quotation of Dream* in the scope or clarity of their reference, however.

³ A brief explanation on bar numbering may be useful for anyone wishing to consult the score. Takemitsu provides no bar numbers, and the piano parts are briefly barred differently from one another during two of their solos, to signify a hemiola pattern between them; the numbering here always uses the 'Solo Piano I' part as its basis.

⁴ The high level of attention paid to structure in Japanese garden design is evident from even a cursory examination of its foundational text, the 11th-century manual *Sakuteiki*, which is replete with detailed measurements for different situations, and dire warnings of the curses which are supposed to arise from structural errors. For example, the introduction to the section on 'Taboos' states: 'Regarding the placement of stones there are many taboos. If so much as one of these taboos is violated, the master of the household will fall ill and eventually die, and his land will fall into desolation and become the abode of devils.' (Takei and Keane, eds., 2001, p. 188).

⁵ The reference recording was taken from the CD *Quotation of Dream*, with the London Sinfonietta conducted by Oliver Knussen (Deutsche Grammophon: DG 453 495-2).

⁶ Disregarding additional silence at the end of the recording, GS– falls at 6'9"; the overt presentation of the 'SEA motif' in section VI runs from 6'7" to 6'13". GS+ falls at 9'58", and the climactic 'SEA motif' gesture in section VIII falls from 9'48" to 9'58". The midpoint falls at 8'4", and the central Debussy quotation begins at 8'16".

⁷ See Takemitsu, 1987, p. 102–5.

⁸ For a discussion of similar proportional relationships in *How Slow the Wind*, and their implications for formal coherence, see Hutchinson, 2012, p. 213–18.

⁹ For a detailed discussion of the issues that arise in considering Takemitsu's 'Japaneseness', see Burt, 2010.

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