‘Nostalgia is not what it used to be’: Exploring the kitsch in Grainger’s music
Peter Tregear

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A swag of books and recordings over the past two decades has refocused both scholarly and popular attention on the works of one of 20th-century music’s most colourful characters and original thinkers. This new attention, however, is not universally well received; Grainger’s music is commonly perceived to be infused with a kind of mawkishness or kitsch sentimentality, a characterisation which sits uncomfortably with our common ideas of what good music should be, let alone what good 20th-century music should be. In his *Percy Grainger*, however, Wilfrid Mellers suggests that Grainger’s music is not only sublimated kitsch, but this is a ‘commodity essential to our survival in a commodity-dealing community.’ This paper explores aspects of some of the central aesthetic issues his claim raises, such as kitsch itself, and concludes by suggesting possible affinities between aspects of Grainger reception with debates surrounding the music of contemporary composers like Gavin Bryars and Alfred Schnittke, as well as aspects of pop- and postmodern art movements more generally.

Not so long ago, there might have been cause to place Percy Grainger into that awkward category of special pleading we know as the ‘neglected composer’. By the mid-1990s, however, British recording company Chandos was announcing an attempt at a complete Grainger edition on CD with the slogan that it was ‘one of the most important recording projects of the decade’. (Fig. 1.) That attempt (still in progress), the series of books and biographies (including a new edition in 1999 of John Bird’s pioneering biography of 1976), and now the appearance of this journal, suggest that Grainger’s foothold on at least the periphery of both the popular and academic musical consciousness is today much more secure.¹

It is easy to speculate why interest in Grainger as a personality, and as a writer on music, might have grown in recent years. We now live, after all, much less in the age of the ‘Great Man’ [sic] than the flawed one, and as a subject he offers such enticing topics for a biographer as his notorious sexual proclivities, legendary physical dynamism, perverse racial views, self-destructive generosity, and an obsessive relationship with his mother. Furthermore, for those authors who owe an allegiance to a university music department, the sheer quantity (if not quality) and scope of Grainger’s literary estate is an attraction in itself. It is still relatively easy to come up with an
original archival-based Grainger-related topic for research or theme for contextualisation, and thus have a presumptive claim for publication in an academic journal.

Understanding the contemporaneous revival of interest in his music, however, seems a less straightforward task, and not just because music aesthetics and criticism are notoriously resistant to simple assertions of fact. While, as a result of the pioneering work of biographers and musicologists like

**Fig. 1.** Chandos: *The Grainger edition*, publicity poster, c.1997. Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library, University of Melbourne.
John Bird, Malcolm Gillies and David Pear, the music-lover and the musicologist alike are now able to approach Grainger’s writing with unprecedented clarity, and place the music in an ever-deepening historical context, sustained critical engagement with his music as music is still rare. One reason might be what Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe has called the ‘Grainger trap’, whereby our interest in Grainger’s personality simply obscures his musical achievements. Another might be because, whereas a biographer does not necessarily need to like his or her subject, when it comes to considering the music, judgments of value inevitably become more determinative—for scholars and music critics alike a suspicion as to the music’s quality is likely to be enough to discourage reviews or analyses of it.

Grainger’s compositions and arrangements are, it is true, generally recognised for their technical innovations and eccentricities, but they also commonly arouse critical comment concerning their apparent mawkishness, levity, and exultation of kitsch; witness Paul Griffiths’ summation for *The Times* (UK) of the value of Grainger’s music by way of marking the centenary of his birth:

Grainger ... was not a composer but a state of mind. He had few ideas of his own but the ability to make anything exposed to him instantly commonplace: folksongs he denatured with dance hall harmonies and inevitable counter-melodies, Bach he reduced to a picture postcard. His much vaunted freedom is not revolution but escape. His emotional range is bounded by schoolboy stereotypes of jollity, fun and earnestness. The appeal of his music is as dated as that of mountain walking and youth hostels.

Grainger himself had been acutely aware of the precariousness of his critical reputation as a composer; he once said of his teacher, Ferruccio Busoni, that he ‘impressed people immensely, but pleased few. I was able to please almost everybody including Busoni, but impressed nobody.’ Later in life he would write, painfully, of ‘my wretched tone-life’, a phrase he considered as the title for a projected autobiography, no less. The subsequent lack of a sustained corpus of reflective work on his music suggests that it continues to represent something of both an enigma and embarrassment. Professing to admire, even love, Grainger’s music, in the presence of at least some of one’s professional colleagues, can feel like admitting to a rather guilty pleasure.

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All this makes Wilfrid Mellers’ compact and fecund study, *Percy Grainger* (1992) a conspicuous achievement, for it is most certainly a substantial study centered on Grainger’s music, albeit heard through Mellers’ idiosyncratic ears. Somewhat out of step with his musicological peers, Mellers had life-long interests in reconciling not only the reception of so-called ‘art’ music with its origins in communal and folk practices, but also with linking analyses of musical scores to music’s basic physiological and psychological consequences. It is no surprise, then, that the problem of Grainger’s music must have seemed an especially attractive critical challenge for him given that it appealed to precisely such interests. While, as Robin Holloway has astutely observed, Mellers appears troubled by the question as to whether Grainger is a ‘great’ (as opposed to effective, or even just pleasurable) composer, his wide-ranging mode of enquiry nevertheless leads to some genuinely original and challenging critical observations about the music. When he notes, for instance, that *Shepherd’s hey* ‘functions more on the habits of communal activity than on accredited artistic principles’, he is able to encapsulate not only the work’s estrangement from commonly understood notions of musical value, but also its suggestion of an alternative source of value, here what Grainger called the ‘unbroken and somewhat monotonous keeping-on-ness of the original’ as an invocation of a ‘will to dance’. More intriguingly, in the course of discussing *Colonial song*, Mellers squarely faces the views of critics like Paul Griffiths by suggesting that such music is a kind of ‘sublimated kitsch’ which, far from being a negative quality, is in fact a ‘commodity essential to our survival in a commodity-dealing community.

Certainly, *Colonial song*, described by Grainger as an attempt ‘to write a melody as typical of the Australian countryside as Stephen Foster’s exquisite songs are typical of rural America’, offers a good example of the problematic reception of his music. While it was to achieve some popular success, particularly in America, it also garnered much adverse criticism, above all in established English musical circles. In an essay from 1924, for instance, Grainger noted that Balfour Gardiner, ‘did not consider *Colonial Song* a satisfactory work, nor did English critics or individuals realize the importance of this piece as the first musical voicing of definite Colonial and Australian feeling.’ For Sir Thomas Beecham, it was, quite simply, ‘the worst piece of modern times’. It is not difficult to imagine why *Colonial song* in particular might have called forth feelings of aesthetic queasiness in Grainger’s peers. The composer’s initial performance direction: ‘[w]ayward in time. Rich, broad and vibrating, with ample swells’ in itself evokes well the character of the music that follows, which revels in a texture thick with passing notes, suspensions, and other expressive gestures, all supported by a tonal underlay which, by and large, would not have been out of place in an Edwardian parlour song. Indeed, the
music seems to be deliberately over-determined, straining to wrest as much expressive content as possible from otherwise commonplace musical material, including the use of innovative pedalling techniques in the version for piano solo (Ex. 1).


A suspicion that this might in fact be kitsch arises, one can assume, because the underlying musical material appears not to be ‘worthy’ of such compositional attention; it does not seem to ‘demand’ it as a realisation of some fundamental structural principle or course of music-historical development. According to a view that still resonates in many colleges and universities today, any western art music that stayed comfortably within the boundaries of conventional tonality after 1908, or thereabouts, is liable to such criticism (we might note here the similar suspicion of kitsch that also hangs, albeit usually in *sotto voce* tones, over the music of many contemporaries of Grainger, such as Rachmaninov, Elgar, Schreker, Sibelius and Richard Strauss).

Furthermore, in deliberately evoking the sentimental style of a popular composer like Stephen Foster, Grainger placed his art in direct conflict with modernism’s profound suspicion of mass culture. As Kierkegaard had already proclaimed early in the 19th century, ‘wherever there is a crowd, there is untruth’. That is, any creative expression that is ‘in tune’ with mass culture is inherently fraudulent; the qualities that make it popularly attractive are those, therefore, which also suggest that it might be kitsch. Thirdly, and in Grainger’s case perhaps most importantly, given its significance for the rest of his oeuvre, the attempt in *Colonial song* to imagine some kind of authentic folk song tradition, or at least something of that ‘sentimental wistfulness that we
find so touchingly expressed in much American art; for instance in Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn, and in Stephen C. Foster’s adorable songs …’

brings to mind that folksy earnestness of many of his contemporaries so powerfully satirised by Constant Lambert in his 1934 polemic, *Music ho!*

There is about this music something both unbearably precious and unbearably hearty. Its preciosity recalls the admirably meant endeavours of William Morris and his followers to combat the products of those dark satanic mills with green and unpleasant handwoven materials, while its heartiness conjures up the hideous faux bonhomie of the hiker, noisily wading his way through the petrol pumps of Metroland singing obscure sea chanties with the aid of the Week End Book …

Lambert’s specific target was the English folk song movement and what he saw as its lack of an authentic social context (which distinguished it from similar movements such as that spearheaded by Bela Bartók and Zoltan Kodály in Hungary). Indeed by the time Grainger composed his *Colonial song*, not only was Australia a newly federated nation, it was already well on the way to becoming a highly urbanised one. An Australian sense of identity tied to ‘an idealised bush’, as opposed to the reality of rural experience, served as an antidote to the perceived decadence and decay of the major urban centres. Grainger’s claim to voice a ‘definite Colonial and Australian feeling’ might seem then as not just the nostalgic musings of an expatriate Australian, but also part of the same broader enterprise that Lambert critiques. Furthermore, the fantasy expressed in *Colonial song* seems at first sight not all that removed from Grainger’s professed racial theories; both seem to be born of a longing for authentic origins, ‘for a pre-modern and uncontaminated past that somehow authorizes and defines the authenticity and essence’ of the musical material, and the nation-state, respectively. As Regina Bendix notes, the use of, or allusion to, folk song, and emerging nationalist discourses share such common ground because ‘the verbal art of the peasantry’ had become in the 19th and 20th centuries the primary means by which such discourses could cement their claim to authenticity. The presumed value (but also political danger) of folk repertoire, or in the case of Grainger’s *Colonial song*, an invented folk song, was that it could transform ‘an experience of individual transcendence’ (as experienced by the ‘folk’ poet or composer) into ‘a symbol of the inevitability of national unity’, and ‘serve in the unambiguous exclusion and annihilation of all who could not or would not belong.’ Such an implied or overt claim to authenticity ‘implies and mandates the existence of its opposite, the inauthentic, the fake, the non-authorized’—a discourse of which we have
rightly become deeply suspicious as we look back over the last 200 years of western history.\textsuperscript{25}

Conversely, prophets of modernism such as Clement Greenberg, following in the wake of \textit{fin-de-siècle} Viennese polemics like Otto Wagner, Karl Kraus and Arnold Schoenberg, declared that modernist artists needed to demonstrate both a rigorous idealism, and a rejection of common demands that art serve decorative, illustrative or sentimental functions.\textsuperscript{26} Music such as Grainger’s which foregrounded such functions was at odds with our traditional privileging of musical \textit{Idée} (idea) over \textit{Klang} (sound) and could only offer, according to Greenberg’s famous definition of kitsch, ‘vicarious experience and faked sensations’,\textsuperscript{27} or as Theodor Adorno suggested, was liable ‘to deny both cause and effect, indeed every actual determinant of composition’.\textsuperscript{28} Like that exemplar of kitsch, the row of painted plaster ducks on the wall of a suburban house, such music seems to be appropriating the style and claim to our attention of an artwork, without the substance. As an effect without apparent sufficient cause, it appears to undermine or suppress art’s potential for transcendence (what is an otherwise necessary quality for a ‘genuine’ artwork to have because of the presumed insufficiency of everyday human experience in the modern age). Kitsch art such as Grainger’s music thus seems to proffer a kind of false aesthetic consciousness; it is not enough for modern art to \textit{appear} beautiful for it to \textit{be} true.

But what if these criticisms also pointed to the very qualities in Grainger’s music that make it not only superficially attractive, but actually of value? What if were possible that Grainger’s music conveys in fact an ironic ‘self-awareness’ of precisely the necessarily incomplete character of the superficially popular, sentimental, or nostalgic in music? What, indeed, if Mellers’ intriguing suggestion is indeed plausible, and that what we ‘hear’ in his music is rather a kind of sublimation of kitsch, designed, ultimately, as a defence of the value of everyday human experience in the wake of high modernism? Certainly, well over a century after the emergence of a radical musical avant-garde in Vienna, we now recognise that there could be in fact a variety of valid aesthetic responses to the social and aesthetic stresses of the early 20th century.\textsuperscript{29} Even the radical avant-garde’s chief prophet, Theodor Adorno, eventually came to believe we might need to recalibrate our aesthetic principles when reviewing this period of music history, noting that valuable artistic responses to the social and artistic conditions before World War I had come ‘in a variety of categories, and not just in those of the great historical trend.’ By the latter half of the 20th century, he continued, ‘when that trend threatens to become universal and mechanical’, we should be prepared to ‘re-evaluate many things which previously appeared to be of minor importance.’\textsuperscript{30}

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I wish to suggest that, principally because of the directness, the shamelessness, or the knowingness of the musical presentation, what we might hear as kitsch in Grainger’s music becomes ironic, and thus open to such interpretative re-evaluation (or, after Mellers, more portentously ‘sublimation’). Grainger’s exaggeration and intensification of musical commonplaces and clichés beyond what otherwise might be thought of as good taste or appropriate for serious art, invites us not just to reflect, cerebrally, upon how we are being manipulated by such music effects, but also, licensed by this cloak of ironic self-awareness, to be moved viscerally by them all the same.31 Is it not, for instance, the very contrast between the prosaic vocal ‘doodling’ and the shamelessly emotive music that we are given in one of the first versions of Colonial song that becomes the music’s primary aesthetic realm (Ex. 2)?

[Music example]

Ex. 2: Percy Grainger, Colonial song, version for two voices (soprano and tenor) and piano, bars 21–23. London: Schott, 1913.

The self-aware work is not a unique aesthetic gambit in music, or indeed in the other arts; one need only think of the long tradition of ironic references to the apparatus of theatre from the stage, in works by Shakespeare or Calderón, or the framing device used in the opening of Leoncavallo’s I Pagliacci.32 Grainger, however, surely is one of the first to apply it consistently to musical
kitsch. Of later works which apply the same principle, a noteworthy example would be *Jesus’ blood never failed me yet* (1974) by Gavin Bryars (1943–), which has its origins in a recording made of a homeless man singing a temperance hymn in London in 1970, originally for use in a documentary film. Here it is the layers of irony that exist in the relationship between what the homeless man is singing and what we can reasonably presume about his dismal personal circumstances, framed by a sentimental, indeed Grainger-esque, musical accompaniment, that is the source of the music’s evident emotive power.

Comparisons can also be made to techniques commonly found in the music of Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998). In his ‘Stille Nacht’ for violin and piano, for instance, Schnittke ‘alienates’ the famous carol ‘Silent night’ by Franz Gruber with judiciously placed ‘wrong’ notes and an acerbic texture (Ex. 3). Given over 200 years of sentimentalisation and commercialisation, a ‘straight’ rendition of the tune must have seemed inconceivable. Schnittke instead haunts the tune, and as such, it is kitsch no longer, or perhaps more accurately, ‘kitsch, and yet …’


The technique of estrangement that Schnittke applies here compares well with Grainger’s own ‘haunted’ arrangements of his *Air from County Derry* (1920) and *Country gardens* (1953); the latter was aptly described by one reviewer as ‘an ironic, jolly/bitter personal statement … [where] a few well-placed wrong notes’ not only deny us any simple reverie, but also ‘show the pain he associated with this music.’ Similarly, while his setting of the Scottish folk song ‘Hard hearted Barb’ra (H)ellen’ begins in a relatively simple, straightforward manner, the piano providing an unobtrusive chordal accompaniment, its later musical ‘interventions’ into the folk song narrative develop to the point of such extravagance that we cannot but acknowledge the presence of the manipulative effects (Ex. 4). Grainger justified this as follows:
Taking the view that the old ballad foreshadows the modern preference for sublimation over consummation, where love is concerned (a preference I do not share), I have not hesitated, in my setting, to treat the verses dealing with Barbara (H)Ellen’s death and burial with exultation—as a welcome stage in the development of the final satisfaction seen in the union of the lovers in the form of plant-life, on the church-top.\textsuperscript{34}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Ex. 4: Percy Grainger, ‘Hard hearted Barb’ra (H)ellen’, (1946), for voice and piano, opening of verse 12. London: Thames, 1982.}
\end{figure}

Grainger knew that a \textit{Liebestod} was a hopeless romantic notion, indeed, like kitsch art, a kind of lie, and yet by inviting us to hear it precisely as a construction, as a fantasy, the setting also licenses us, from our contemporary ‘sadder but wiser’ perspective, to be moved by it nonetheless.
Another kind of ironic framing technique can be found in the *Tribute to Foster*, a work composed in 1914 and later arranged for full orchestra and solo piano. Throughout, Grainger uses the melody, and initially, the words from Stephen Foster's well-known song ‘Camptown races’. It is constructed in three parts; the middle part transforms the tune into a hymn of praise to Foster himself. The harmonisation here is a particularly fine example of Grainger's ability to take everyday melodic material and, by transforming it, challenge our notion of the boundaries of good taste. That Grainger indeed wished to challenge our preconceptions of musical value we can have little doubt; in an essay from 1934 entitled ‘Sublime and frivolous elements in music’, for instance, he noted that the main tune of the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth symphony did not differ greatly in style, mood or form from ‘Yankee Doodle’, and yet we considered one ‘frivolous, vulgar and undignified’, and the other ‘suitable thematic material for incorporation in one of music’s sublimest creations’. Mellers speculates:

If Grainger can reveal such pathos [in the tune], perhaps it was never quite what it seemed; its jollity always contained wellsprings of sorrow not merely for until-recently enslaved black folk, but for all variously isolated and alienated people in big cities, unsure of direction, or even of identity … the emotion is [in fact] not in excess of the object.

Grainger arguably creates a successful (post?)-modern context in which traditional ‘expressive harmony’ reappears to create ‘heart-throb-some chord-music’ that voices ‘the painfulness of human life’, no less.

In the *Tribute to Foster*, however, the principal framing device is at root timbral; Grainger calls for, among other effects, the chorus to play tuned musical glasses that are introduced gradually to produce a pitch cluster around A-sharp and C-sharp. The effect is like a soft, background ‘halo’, against which a quintet of voices sings (Ex. 5).

Like the crude effect of a frosted photograph, the musical glasses invite us to hear this section as constructed nostalgia, that is, something to be received as if it were an object of love framed in the distant past. The bucolic section that follows declares that Foster’s music is ‘Gwine to still be sung, as long as the world’s heart is young.’ Given what precedes it, we are invited to hear this not so much as a naïve statement of fact as one in the subjunctive mood: ‘Gwine to be sung, were the world’s heart still to be young.’ This is music which asks us ‘what if?’
Another example is his short piece entitled *The lonely desert-man sees the tents of the happy tribes* (sketched 1911 and 1914, finished 1949). We are given no words for the ‘lonely desert-man’ nor any attempt at an ethnomusicological representation of the ‘happy tribes’, but another of Grainger’s vocal ‘doodles’, a setting of nonsense syllables (Ex. 6).

Inspired by an early childhood memory of seeing the South Australian desert at dawn from a train window, Grainger’s imagining seems at first an embarrassing, maudlin representation of both a wistful colonist and ‘generic’ indigene; in particular the music for the ‘happy tribes’ would not sound out of place in a matinee Western movie soundtrack. But do we not recognise in it, precisely because of its shamelessness, and perhaps also its very inappropriate-ness no less, one of the more honest depictions? Has not White Australia been able only to imagine native culture entirely from within the limits of its own gaze? Mellers, an Englishman, was able to interpret the directness of its expression more positively: ‘Grainger reminds us, in the very music he created, that the Happy tribes of the Folk sing and dance that they might have life more abundantly; in the process he hints that such conditions might again be feasible.’ Whatever the case, we know Grainger was especially fond of this
piece—quotations from it appear in *The warriors* and *Tribute to Foster*—as if Grainger recognised that it was not just native Australian music that he felt condemned to hear, as it were, from outside. As Mellers concluded of Beecham’s dismissal of *Colonial song*, yes the music is vulgar, but what else could it have been? ‘In this instance the musical Grand Seigneur was less wise than the Boy from the Bush.’

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Understood in this way, Grainger stands out as an example of a modern(ist) composer whose use of such ironic devices applied to kitsch musical material seems nigh definitive of his compositional style, in which his frequent use of folk song material seems suddenly much more than a mere hankering after an idealised rural life and its concomitant pre-industrial lifestyle. True, evocations of folk song inevitably have an air of rural nostalgia, the feeling that they reflect an ideal that is not, nor could be, lived now, but the foregrounded compositional apparatus that Grainger almost invariably employs in setting them reminds us that we are not so much listening to a musical (and social) ideal that is complete, stable, and coherent, but rather one made in our own image that is ironic, contingent, and tragic.

More broadly perhaps, Grainger’s music also suggests, then, that we should be prepared to revise our suspicion of nostalgia and sentimentality as states of mind always-already deserving of aesthetic suspicion. A retrospective perspective is, after all, inescapably our biological, as much as our psychological, destiny, no more so in an age largely rent from the comforts of religion. Lacking a promise of redemption or resurrection, the course of our lives cannot but be characterised by a growing awareness of what we have lost. The nostalgic need not, however, be someone who is merely afraid of the future, just as the lover of Grainger’s music need not necessarily be a reactionary conservative who wishes only to hide in some idealised past. Indeed if we recognise that an imagined past can be a counterpart to an imagined future, then aspects of Grainger’s ironic kitsch-nostalgia—a wistful longing for a (re-)connection with nature, and indeed with our own nature—might even seem prophetic in a ‘commodity-dealing’ age self-evidently crying out for a revitalised social and environmental consciousness.

As Mellers suggests, Grainger’s music can evoke in us such responses because of what he calls its quality of ‘sublimated kitsch’, or what we might consider its ironic self-awareness of kitsch achieved through the application of compositional devices such as self-quotation, stylistic pastiche, or over-determination. Whereas one postmodernist view might suggest that the failure of such music to be able simply ‘to be itself’ leads to a mode of cynical detachment in the listener, Grainger’s music would have us think otherwise simply by the apparent sincerity of its application. Such knowing art can yet be authentic art, and perhaps even, like the comically absurd gestures of the Fluxus movement, share in an ambition to help ‘transform the position of music and the other arts within society as part of a larger strategy of transforming society as a whole’. Maybe it is for this reason above all that Grainger’s music finds new audiences today—for being what it is without shame, no more, no less, and thus daring to suggest that the more gloomy prognoses concerning the state of contemporary western culture ‘ain’t necessarily so’.
Dr Peter Tregear is a graduate of the Universities of Melbourne and Cambridge, and a former Fellow and Director of Music of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. Active as both a music academic and conductor, Tregear has championed Grainger’s music both in Australia and the UK for many years. In 2010 he was appointed Executive Director of the Academy of Performing Arts at Monash University.

This article has been independently peer-reviewed.

NOTES


11. Charles W. Hughes, ‘Percy Grainger, cosmopolitan composer’, Musical Quarterly, vol. 23, no. 2, April 1937, pp. 132–133. Grainger commented that settings such as Shepherd’s hey and Molly on the shore ‘are good because there is so little gaiety & fun in them’, noting that ‘where other composers would have been jolly in setting such dance tunes I have been sad or furious.’ Quoted in Bird, Percy Grainger, p. 70.


16 According to Grainger, ‘the cult of the chord, vitally furthered by Grieg, was a marvelous device for engendering musical sensitivity and compassion.’ Percy Grainger, ‘Grieg: Nationalist and cosmopolitan’ (1943), in *Grainger on music*, p. 329.

17 Søren Kierkegaard, ‘Concerning the dedication to “The single individual”’, in *The point of view*, London: Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 110: ‘There is another view of life which conceives that wherever there is a crowd there is untruth, so that (to consider for a moment the extreme case), even if every individual, each for himself in private, were to be in possession of the truth, yet in case they were all to get together in a crowd—a crowd to which any decisive significance is attributed, a voting, noisy, audible crowd—untruth would at once be in evidence.’


20 Lambert’s argument was later taken up by Benjamin Britten in his essay ‘England and the folk-art problem’, *Modern Music*, vol. 18, 1941, pp. 71–75. In the light of the arguments advanced below, it is worth noting, however, that Britten was particularly fond of, and indeed a champion of, Grainger’s own folk song arrangements.


24 Bendix, *In search of authenticity*, pp. 20–21.

25 Cheng, *Inauthentic*, p. 34. Nationalists are, in the words of Michael Ignatieff, ‘supremely sentimental. Kitsch is the natural aesthetic of an ethnic “cleanser”. There is no killer on either side of the checkpoints who will not pause, between firing at his enemies, to sing a nostalgic song, or even recite the lines of some ethnic epic.’ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and belonging: Journeys into the new nationalism*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994, p. 10.


32 There, one of the characters, Tonio, breaks the ‘fourth wall’ and addresses the audience directly, reminding them that although they are about to witness actors in their masks, the emotions depicted are no less real for that fact.
37 Percy Grainger, ‘Irish tune from County Derry: Sketch for beginning of P.A. Grainger’s part of The music-lover’s Grainger’, manuscript and typescript, SL1 WG7/6:2, Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.
38 Grainger describes the source of his inspiration in his annotations to ‘Excerpt from “The easy Grainger”’, manuscript, SL1 WG7/6:3, Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.
39 Mellers, Percy Grainger, p. 150.
40 Mellers, Percy Grainger, p. 47.
41 Cf. ‘It is my theory to like vulgarity—to think well of it, to champion it, to gird myself to always fight on its side. It is my theory to think nothing can come to pass without a pinch (or more than a pinch) of vulgarity.’ Percy Grainger, quoted in Bird, Percy Grainger, p. 174.
42 Cf. ‘If my music ever makes its mark, it will do so because of the intense tragic feeling behind it …’ Grainger, ‘Why “My wretched tone-life”?’, p. 174.
44 For a powerful critique of this melancholic view of postmodernism, see Timothy Bewes, Cynicism and postmodernity, London: Verso, 1997.
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