

Form and Dialectical Opposition in Elliott Carter's Compositional Aesthetic

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The Australian National University.

2017

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Marguerite Maree Boland, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it
is entirely my own.

Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

For my daughter Alice Louisa Claire

Acknowledgements

The writing of this dissertation has been a ten-year journey: a journey of research scholarship and a journey of ever-expanding appreciation of the music of Elliott Carter, for certain. But the writing of this dissertation has also accompanied me during numerous very significant personal journeys: a journey into motherhood, a journey of relationship transformations, a journey into deeper awareness of the social disconnect between the life of work and the work of raising our next generation, and the gender inequality that is often a part of that disconnect. On some level these personal travels have been woven into the fabric of my writing along side my academic reading, listening and discussions with colleagues. The reverse is also true: the research I have undertaken during the last decade has given me tools to understand not only my academic adventures but also my personal ones.

This project is incomplete but it cannot be otherwise; there is so much to explore in Carter's music and there is so much that life demands of an individual that to attempt to neatly close off or constrain one for the sake of the other becomes an unsustainable conceit. Nonetheless, what I have to offer here does open up a number of new ways of hearing and understanding Elliott Carter's compositions and I have been able to come to these perspectives thanks to a number of people whose generous support has been invaluable to me over the years. Firstly, my co-editor and friend John Link has not only been a source of inspiration for me, his generosity in sharing his extraordinary knowledge and understanding of Carter's music has been without bounds—my most heartfelt thanks. I am also immensely thankful to my supervisor Larry Sitsky, for his unwavering support and especially for his patience; to David West, for his wonderfully inspiring lectures on the Frankfurt School; and to Guy Capuzzo, for his thoughtful feedback on early drafts of my analytical chapters. I am extremely grateful to Kate Bowan, for her insightful feedback on drafts of the thesis and for making so many things at the University possible for me in the last year but also for many inspiring conversations over the years. I would also like to thank: Judith Crispin, for great discussions early on in the piece and especially for encouraging me to take the opportunity to meet Elliott Carter for the first time in 2006; Jenny Gall, for her collegiality and support through challenging times; Pauline Dusink, for always being there; and Betty Gordan, without whose generosity I would not have been able to

undertake this pursuit. I also want to thank all the friends I have gained since becoming a parent for providing me with constant support, many confidence boosts, and many shared moments of joy with our children; my extra special thanks to Elizabeth Baker and Claire Henderson; Anna Ephraim, Zana Friend, Serina Mukerjee, Steph Kehoe, Susan Rundle, Ken Setiawan and Kim van Zutfen.

My greatest gratitude goes to my family—without them this project would have been truly impossible. Most importantly, my love and thanks to my mother, Rosemary Livingstone, and to my father, James Boland.

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Abstract

In his many writings and interviews, Elliott Carter frequently stresses the connection between human experiences of opposition and conflict and the opposition he composes into his musical interactions. While these concepts have received much attention in the scholarly literature over the decades, in this dissertation I examine the role of opposition in Carter's music by bringing Carter's aesthetic into contact with an Adornian tradition of dialectical aesthetics, something new to Carter scholarship. In particular, I harness Adorno's concept of the social mediation of music materials to shed light on Carter's linking of the musical and the human in his highly abstracted music. Central to this mediation is the way materials respond immanently to social conditions. I show how Carter conceives of musical form and temporality in terms closely aligned to Adorno, particularly with respect to non-repetition and freedom of formal design. However, I also argue that the way in which Carter worked with his musical materials did not remain static but responded to a changing modernism around the turn of the twenty-first century. Through an analysis of two of Carter's late-late orchestral compositions, I examine how the notion of dialectical opposition finds expression in sonic images of lightness, effervescence and human fragility rather than the explosive oppositions of Carter's middle period music. Part 1 of the thesis identifies traces of dialectical thinking in Carter's writings and interviews and interprets these through an Adornian lens. Part 2 presents technical analyses of both the *Boston Concerto* (2002) and the *ASKO Concerto* (2000), focusing on how the repetition built in to the ritornello form of both pieces is re-formed by way of Carter's dialectical handling of form and content. Part 3 offers a 'second reflection' in which philosophical concepts in Part 1 and technical concepts in Part 2 are drawn together into a critical analysis of how both materials and composer are mediated by the social.

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**PART 1. CARTER, FORM AND DIALECTICAL
OPPOSITION**

“ I feel about the future that in the end what we’re living through at the present time—a kind of strange mixture and confusion—will wear itself out and people will become much more sensitive and aware than they are now. They will have to be because as society becomes more complicated, more full of people and more different kinds of things happening, people will have to become much cleverer and much sharper. And then they will like my music ... [smile]” — Elliott Carter

Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time, 1h29’30”

Chapter 1

Music dialectics and Carter contextualized

1.1 “a kind of dialectic”

Elliott Carter’s music has been characterized as a music of opposition. The theme of opposition is one introduced by Carter himself after the composition of his String Quartet No.2 (1959), the piece that marks in most narratives the beginning of his mature music. Carter explains the idea of opposition in the Second Quartet not with the term ‘opposition’ however, but instead with the term ‘dialectic’:

... the piece was never conceived of as an ensemble work in the ordinary sense of theme and accompaniment but a conception that all these instruments were somehow related more by a kind of dialectic, by a way of discussing things.¹

What did Carter understand by his use of the term ‘dialectic’? In his writings of the 1960s and 1970s, the word occasionally pops up in different contexts, and although Carter never fully explores its meaning, he uses it consistently in reference to the way he conceives of the interaction between his instrumental parts. Carter elaborates a little on the nature of this “kind of dialectic” in a statement in *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*:

And of course in any “dialogue”, musical or otherwise, there must be areas of overlap and interchange as well as points of divergence. Thus in my music there is a kind of ongoing dialectic of affirming and contradicting the character of the instruments involved...²

Perhaps not surprisingly for a student of Classics, Carter’s use seems to fit best with the ‘dialectic’ of Greek philosophy—not yet burdened by the weight of German Idealism—as an exchange of conflicting or contradictory propositions. The definition of ‘dialectic’ in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory Online* begins by referencing the Greek origins of the word:

¹ Elliott Carter, “Dartmouth Lectures,” (Elliott Carter Collection, Paul Sacher Stiftung, August 12, 1963). cited in Daniel Guberman, “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War” (PhD. diss., University of North Carolina, 2012), 201.

² Allan Edwards, *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: a conversation with Elliott Carter* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 69.

A method of argument based on the idea of two people in dialogue each putting forward a proposition that the other counters and by this means arriving at an ultimate truth. The word originates in Classical Greek philosophy—its invention is sometimes attributed to Zeno, but it was Socrates and Plato who popularized it as a means of obtaining truth by a process of asking questions.³

The word thus began life in antiquity, although the concept of the dialectic did not remain static. The shift in its meaning over the course of the history of Western philosophy up to the twentieth century is neatly summarized by Peter Singer in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*:

In ancient Greece, dialectic was a form of reasoning that proceeded by question and answer, used by Plato. In later antiquity and the Middle Ages, the term was often used to mean simply logic, but Kant applied it to arguments showing that principles of science have contradictory aspects. Hegel thought that all logic and world history itself followed a dialectical path, in which internal contradictions were transcended, but gave rise to new contradictions that themselves required resolution. Marx and Engels gave Hegel's idea of dialectic a material basis; hence dialectical materialism.⁴

Singer captures the basic change of implicit meaning that the notion of 'dialectic' undergoes throughout a period of more than two centuries. The goal of resolving the dialectic by attaining an ultimate truth gradually becomes more complicated over time. Importantly, by the time we get to Hegel we find that contradiction or conflict is considered to be the basic state of things.⁵ Ian Buchanan explains that "[c]entral to Hegel's notion of the dialectic is the constant presence of contradiction: as Hegel points out, identity contains its opposite, namely difference, inasmuch that to be one thing something must also not be another thing."⁶ Awareness of this inherent state of conflict is necessary for the progress of human consciousness, which in Hegel's scheme follows a process of overcoming contradictions out of which new contradictions arise until an

³ Ian Buchanan, "Dialectic," *A Dictionary of Critical Theory Online*. Accessed 20 September, 2016, DOI 10.1093/acref/9780199532919.013.0183.

⁴ Peter Singer, "Dialectic," *Oxford Companion to Philosophy, Online ed. 2005*. Accessed 20 September, 2016, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/10.1093/acref/9780199264797.001.0001/acref-9780199264797-e-629>. Another excellent discussion of the changing meaning of dialectic is Kim O'Commer, "Dialectic," *University of Chicago Theories of Media Keyword Glossary*. Accessed 20 September, 2016, <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/dialectic.htm>.

⁵ It is acknowledged that Hegel is revisiting Heraclites with this idea. See Martin Heidegger, "Hegel and the Greeks," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Also Michael Cherlin, "Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg's Music and Thought," *Music Theory Spectrum* 22, no. 2 (2000).

⁶ Buchanan, "Dialectic."

ultimate freedom or a transcendental state is achieved for human consciousness.⁷ The essentially Hegelian notions of the dialectic that shaped modern European philosophy converged, for interesting reasons, with developments in musical thinking that were shaping the European music world during the nineteenth century.⁸ As Julian Horton notes, both musical and philosophical spheres of activity were being formed by “strands of idealist thought, as well as a complex of social, cultural and political forces, in which many of the structures of contemporary musical life have their origin.”⁹ Michael Cherlin similarly draws attention to the fact that the notion of the dialectic “as adapted and profoundly developed by Hegel, and later by Karl Marx and subsequent philosophers, becomes diffused through the general culture so that thought in terms of dialectical opposition becomes a basic constituent of German and Austrian culture through the nineteenth and continuing into the twentieth century.”¹⁰ In light of these definitions and this significant historical context, I wish to re-examine Carter’s meaning of the term ‘dialectic.’ As mentioned above, Carter’s uses of the term could be taken at face value in its popular, uncomplicated sense of an exchange of differing views, “a way of discussing things” as Carter puts it, in line with a Classical philosophical understanding. A second possibility is that Carter’s understanding of the term ‘dialectic’ inherits underlying Hegelian implications from the nineteenth and twentieth-century cultural milieu because of the historical context in which Carter’s compositional aesthetic developed. It is this second possibility that I will explore in the present study.

What I investigate in this thesis has two intertwined components. One component is the study of Carter’s musical aesthetic through the lens of a dialectical thinking inherent to aesthetic modernism of the first part of the twentieth century—its traces in Carter’s conception of his own compositions and of the role of modern music in society more generally. While much has already been said about Carter’s compositional aesthetic, no specific connections have been made to a dialectical mentality, one that influenced so many of Carter’s (particularly European) contemporaries. The understanding gained

⁷ See Max Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 112-16. Also Robert McKinney, “The Origins of Modern Dialectics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44, no. 2 (1983).

⁸ See the extensive discussion of this connection in Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁹ Julian Horton, “Dialectics and music analysis,” in *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives*, ed. Stephen Downes (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 112.

¹⁰ Cherlin, “Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg’s Music and Thought,” 162.

from this aesthetic perspective on Carter's work feeds into the second component of this study, which is an analysis of form in two of Carter's post twentieth-century compositions, with a distinctly dialectical reading of opposition within the music. Carter's compositional career spanned a large part of the twentieth century and extended into the early part of the twenty-first century. His mature music of the 1960s developed at a point in time that was socially, politically and culturally laden with concerns that came to be viewed somewhat differently by the turn of the twenty-first century. I argue that Carter's compositional aesthetic remains grounded in the dialectical notions he consolidated in his early mature period but that the changed shape that these aesthetic ideas take in his late-late music represents Carter's response to a changed socio-cultural reality, one that had moved through a modernist period to a post-modernist and a late-modernist context. To this end, I have chosen to analyse two early twenty-first century compositions that share ritornello form as their underlying formal design: the *Boston Concerto* (2002) and the *ASKO Concerto* (2000). These compositions provide a clear example of a dialectic between musical content and musical form, precisely because of the historical nature of ritornello form with its in-built repetitive design that is in conflict with Carter's aesthetic of formal innovation through non-repetition and content-driven musical structures rather than anachronistic use of pre-established forms. As I shall argue, the pieces represent Carter's dialectical engagement not only with musical materials but also with the historically changing meaning of modernism.

Interestingly, the term 'dialectic' all but disappears in Carter's writings and interviews after the 1970s, and the idea of a 'music of opposition' takes hold in the general and scholarly literature on Carter's music. While 'opposition' and 'dialectic' both share concepts of adversary, conflict, and antagonism, 'opposition' does not imply inherent contradiction nor a process of evolving truth that emerges by continually overcoming contradiction, notions that are defining of modern dialectical thought. Furthermore, 'opposition' often implies resistance to something external; 'dialectic,' on the other hand, internalizes the protagonist and the antagonist, and implies that these contradictory terms are defined, out of necessity, by each other. David Schiff's first edition of *The Music of Elliott Carter* (1983) takes up the theme of opposition, incorporating the idea that 'opposites' in Carter's music are in motion, changeable,

responsive to each other. The book opens with the sentence “Elliott Carter makes music out of simultaneous oppositions.” The next paragraph begins: “Carter has an appetite for opposites. He is not interested in reconciling them, as a romantic composer would be; nor does he ignore them. He delights in them.” And in the third paragraph, on the same opening page, Schiff claims: “Carter’s taste for opposition manifests itself throughout his musical life, from his boyhood through his education and onwards through the slow process of creative self-discovery.”¹¹ Further on in the introduction, Schiff creates an image of the composer himself in a state of constant struggle:

It was out of the many contradictory forces he was experiencing that Carter chose to make his music. Every work would be a ‘crisis in my life’. The conflicting claims of a mechanized society and individual freedom, of order and disorder, European tradition and American innovation, would not be obstacles to creation but would become the subject of creation. Each work would be a summation of opposites, and each new work would be a fresh start, a new crisis.¹²

In the later revised edition (1998), Schiff expands on this image of the struggling modernist composer, but this time he unfolds a framework for understanding Carter’s music with more explicit dialectical implications. In the book’s introductory essay, the ‘opposition’ of the first edition has now primarily become ‘conflict.’ Carter’s biography is filtered through a broad concept of “transatlantic cultural conflict” permeating Carter’s own “inner struggles”¹³ as well as his artistic goals and methods, and out of which Carter ultimately creates not “a summation of opposites” but a synthesis: Ives with Boulanger, American ultramodernism with European high modernism, Copland’s French-influenced neo-classicism with Ives’s home-grown experimentalism, and even Schoenbergian expressionism with Stravinskian neo-classicism. According to Schiff:

The transatlantic conflict that had haunted Carter’s work now assumed a fundamental structural role; out of the argument within himself, to paraphrase Yeats, Carter created

¹¹ David Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 1st ed. (London: Eulenburg Books, 1983), 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 21. No doubt Schiff’s book would have influenced scholarship with respect to the emphasis on “opposition” in Carter’s music, although this book does not reject the dialectical as such and even uses the word occasionally, such as on page 193, where Schiff talks of Carter “selecting influences dialectically.” However, it is interesting to note that Shreffler points out the significance that Cold War thinking had for scholarship in the arts more generally and the loss of a dialectical engagement with music history from the discipline of musicology in particular (see Anne C. Shreffler, “Cold War Dissonance: Dahlhaus, Taruskin, and the Critique of the Politically Engaged Avant-garde” in *Kultur und Musik nach 1945: Ästhetik im Zeichen des Kalten Krieges*, ed. Ulrich Blomann (conference report from Hambacher Schloss, 11.-12. March 2013, Saarbrücken: Pfau-Verlag, 2015).)

¹³ David Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 14

a music of argument. By giving the clash of styles and character a structural role, Carter had found a way to make his music European and American at the same time.¹⁴

Schiff's conclusion suggests that it was a dialectical engagement with the history of musical materials that formed the basis of Carter's mature compositional developments; in other words, Carter synthesized the stylistic antagonisms of a previous era into a new form of music.

What Schiff largely leaves aside is the question of the ultimate goal of such a musical dialectic—is it merely a means of fulfilling the modernist call to “Make it new!”¹⁵ Or is it in fact a means of arriving at the ‘truth’ of some (musical) proposition or claim, as the dialectics of the ancient Greeks through to the nineteenth century German philosophers would ultimately have it? It is clear from all of his writings that if Carter did think of his compositional work as purposeful in that sense, its goal was that of communication and transmission of a message about the possibility of an alternative (utopian) way of coexisting with difference and with conflict: a depiction of the ‘truth’ of the world as he saw it or would have liked it to be.¹⁶ This truth lay in confronting conflict in such a way that an alternative could emerge.¹⁷ In discussing the direction in which he developed compositionally after the War, Carter said in a 1984 interview:

Well, as one lived through those changing times during and after the Second World War, it became obvious that there was a permanent extravagant part of people's experience and actions that had to be faced. We don't want to run around like wild people and hurt each other at every turn but one [sic] the other hand we do have that wild side and it has to be fitted into a socially effective situation if we are going to live together and profit by it. It seems to me that this could be part of the message of my music. It could be seen as a way of trying to deal with this irrational, rather extravagant and violent side of ourselves.¹⁸

Seen in this light, Carter's reference to the ‘dialectic’ in his Second String Quartet rather than simply opposition is in fact not without significance. Carter's desire to construct

¹⁴ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵ Carter: “Of course my particular generation was stimulated by one statement made by one of our important poets, Ezra Pound, who said: ‘Make it new’.” In Sue Knussen, “Elliott Carter in interview,” *Tempo* no. 197 (1996): 4.

¹⁶ See for example Carter talking about this aspect of his work in Frank Scheffer, “Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time,” (Allegri Film BV, DVD, 2004), 1h24'30" onwards.

¹⁷ I discuss how Carter expresses such an alternative in Chapter 3.

¹⁸ Elliott Carter, “Elliott Carter in conversation with Robert Johnston, Michael Century, Robert Rosen, and Don Stein (1984),” in *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, ed. Felix Meyer and Anne C. Shreffler (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 255.

his music out of the dialectical oppositions of other musical styles—or perhaps more accurately, out of the compositional principles associated with musical styles which had historically been pitted against each other¹⁹—was entangled with his desire to communicate a message through abstract musical means about “dealing with” two contradictory modes of being: a social way of being in which individuality was kept in check for the greater good, but that also risked at its extreme a radical subservience; and an individual way of being that included an “extravagant part” but that at its extreme risked violating others. Such a conception of artistic endeavours needing to carry a message about the conflict between society and the individual suggests that Carter’s use of the term ‘dialectic’ is in fact very much bound up with his own historical context of twentieth-century modernism.

1.2 Modernism and Carter revisited

This context is by no means easily characterized, as recent scholarship on modernism in the humanities has demonstrated.²⁰ Definitions of musical modernism remain problematic because of the danger of applying potentially restrictive terms to such a complex notion. Nevertheless, authors continue to find a need to offer specificity to the idea of musical modernism in order to render it useful as a concept. In this respect, Max Paddison’s description seems to accord with many recent authors on musical modernism. He defines twentieth-century modernism as:

a range of often conflicting responses to a common dilemma, that of the process of societal modernization itself. Furthermore, an important feature of all modernist positions, however contrary, is resistance to commodification, even when employing the material and the means of mass culture itself.²¹

¹⁹ For an analysis of stylistic conflicts in new music debates in the post-war period and Carter’s thinking about and contribution to these debates, especially in relation to his Cello Sonata see Guberman’s “Chapter 1: The Cello Sonata: Mediating Schoenberg and Stravinsky in Early Cold War America” in “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War.” For an extensive perspective on Carter’s relationship to serial composition, see also Daniel Guberman, “Elliott Carter as (Anti-)Serial Composer,” *American Music* 33, no. 1 (2015): 68-88.

²⁰ See for example Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Marjorie Perloff, *21st Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Andrew Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²¹ Max Paddison, “Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-garde,” in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Irène Deliège and Max Paddison (Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 206.

Paddison points to the split between a commodified ‘mass culture’ and a culture aiming to resist commodification as an essential element in the modernisation process.

Paddison argues that this cultural split represents something of the lived experience of a modernising world rather than an abstract notion applied to art. An overarching preoccupation of the modernist artistic response to modernisation was the rupture between individual needs and societal demands in a century characterized by the recurring experience of world conflict and unprecedented scales of human destruction. This dialectic is analysed by Critical Theorists in terms of an increasingly technocratic, rationalized and administered society reliant on commodification and reification on the one hand, and on the other hand the increasing alienation of the individual and the fragmentation of subjective experience, giving rise to various forms of revolt and resistance.²² Aesthetic modernism believed in its own power to transform social consciousness and steer it on a path to a utopian alternative.²³ “The autonomous, self-reflective art work”²⁴—with its abstracted, non-signifying materials generating form out of content, while transforming traditional materials and forms—was conceived as standing outside of processes of commodification and of forms of expression that supported capitalist ideology and thereby capable of critiquing them.²⁵ Thus, aesthetic modernism carried the hope of conceiving of an emancipated future. Diverse as the artistic responses may have been, aesthetic modernism has been identified as such to group together artistic pursuits that shared a goal for the function(ing) of art, underpinned by a pervasive Hegelian dialectical inheritance, through Marx, Weber, and later the Frankfurt school.²⁶

Anne Shreffler nicely summarizes how modernist music in this tradition engaged both the musical materials and the listening audience in its pursuit of ‘truth’ through musical autonomy:

²² See for example discussion of the work of the Frankfurt School in J.M. Bernstein, “Introduction,” in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, by Theodore W. Adorno, ed. J.M. Bernstein (London & New York: Routledge, 1991).

²³ For the use of the term “aesthetic modernism,” see Paddison, “Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-garde,” 210-14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁵ See Martin Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic: The Political Relevance of Autonomy and Formalism in Modernist Musical Aesthetics,” in *The Pleasures of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology*, ed. Arved Ashby (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 79 and 86 including fn.48.

²⁶ For a discussion of Hegel’s influence on modernist musical thinking see for example Cherlin, “Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg’s Music and Thought.”

... the modernist model of progressive music, received its most extensive, and extreme, treatment in Theodor W. Adorno's *Philosophie der neuen Musik* of 1949, although the basic ideas had already been articulated in the 1920s by Adorno and others. This viewpoint sees musical language evolving as an inevitable result of historical forces. In using an 'advanced' idiom – for example an atonal, twelve-tone, or serial language – music resists being co-opted into the commercial sphere, or being used as a symbol of state power. Responsible art music embodies all the contradictions and 'crises' of society in its forms and language; in its autonomy, it holds up a mirror to the flawed society and serves as a locus for structural critique. Specifically, in the 1930s and 1940s it was held to represent an anti-Fascist stance. Advanced musical languages moreover prevent a passive, 'culinary', purely emotional reception of music on the part of the listener; the goal is to get the listener to think, and even to change the listener's consciousness.²⁷

The themes encapsulated here—of “responsible art music” being autonomous, anti-Fascist, materially advanced, challenging the “listener’s consciousness”—are discussed by Shreffler in relation to Luigi Nono's *Il Canto Sospeso*. As we will see, they are also themes that preoccupied Carter throughout much of his musical career. However, as Shreffler discusses, social and political critique also took different forms in music: Shreffler identifies what she calls the “populist model” and analyses how Eisler's ‘Comintern Song’ and Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* each deliberately used musical means that would easily and immediately resonate with the ‘masses.’ This type of artistic response also had significance for Carter since in the early years of his career he held a firm belief in the need for a high level of accessibility of his music in order to reach a large audience with which to communicate. Carter's relationship to the modernist movement was therefore especially interesting because of his differing musical response at various points in its history. As has been widely discussed, Carter was attracted by all that was artistically modern, particularly during the 1920s as a young person in New York. However, a rapidly changing world brought on by war prompted Carter to doubt his youthful interest in early twentieth-century modernism. The reality of hardship and human atrocities during the depression of the 1930s and the years surrounding World War II made the modernist position with its resistance to the masses seem less tenable.²⁸ Reflecting on Varèse and the question of popular and experimental music at this time, Carter says:

²⁷ Anne C. Shreffler, “‘Music Left and Right’: A Tale of Two Histories of Progressive Music,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 185 (2013): 71.

²⁸ For example see Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 114.

It's true that Varèse ... seemed very melancholy during this period, which was turning toward new, more populist artistic aims, thus putting into question the more experimental attitudes of the best artists of his generation. It was easy for me to sympathize with both the old and the new of that time. ... Surrounded by so much violence and so much need, one could not help wondering whether such a thing as advanced modern music with its élite audience wasn't just beside the point ... I'm sure that Varèse felt the same way, and perhaps doubted that his kind of music was worth anything in the light of the problems facing us then, even in the United States. We lived in the midst of a state of affairs that urgently demanded solutions and that made it very hard to find the peace of mind to carry on one's work.²⁹

Carter captures the sense of irrelevance and lack of valuable contribution which was felt by many making experimental art at this time. For some, such as Ruth Crawford and Charles Seeger, leaving behind the ultramodern goals and following the “turning towards, new, more populist artistic aims” was politically and socially important.³⁰ Carter, on the other hand, was yet to compose in an ‘advanced’ modernist idiom himself. Despite his exposure to and interest in the group surrounding Ives as well as the Second Viennese School, Carter initially embraced the neoclassicism he had been schooled in by Nadia Boulanger and turned it to political purpose in his early compositions (albeit with more latent programmatic content and greater musical complexity than other composers).³¹ However, post war, the heroism and nationalism to which Copland's neoclassic music became the soundtrack seemed to Carter equally out of step with the social reality of the then present:

Many people felt—and I certainly was one of them (perhaps not rightly)—that the whole German cult of hypertrophic emotion could have been held responsible for the kind of disaster we were witnessing then in front of our noses (certainly Brecht came to hold this view). This is why, in my opinion, many of us became interested for a time in neoclassicism as a way of ‘returning to reason’ and to a more moderate point of view about expression, as well as to a more accessible vocabulary. After a while, though, before the end of the Second World War, it became clear to me, partly as a result of rereading Freud and others and thinking about psychoanalysis, that we were living in a world where this physical and intellectual violence would always be a problem and that the whole conception of human nature underlying the neoclassic

²⁹ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 59-60.

³⁰ Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 180-200.

³¹ See Annette van Dyck-Hemming, “Words and Music in *The Defense of Corinth*,” in *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Also Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 76.

esthetic amounted to a sweeping under the rug of things that, it seemed to me, we had to deal with in a less oblique and resigned way.³²

Carter discusses the return of his interest in modernist expression as a response to a changed understanding of “human nature” coupled with concern shared by a whole civilisation for preventing another war—not, however, by way of a popular, appeasing aesthetic but precisely by returning to an aesthetic of autonomy. Importantly for post-war modernists, this was where the critical and utopian potential was to be found, within the material means themselves which were seen as inaccessible to commodifying or corrupting mechanisms. While it was a return to an aesthetic *interest* Carter had held in earlier years, for Carter this aesthetic move was the beginning of his creative maturity. In fact, Carter’s mature music is not infrequently cited as an example of a recalcitrant modernist thinking, as many of Carter’s major “works of opposition” were composed in the 1960s and 1970s when yet another change in the landscape was developing: the ‘new’ postmodern musical imagination had begun to take flight.³³

The postmodernist attitude challenged modernism’s musical autonomy once again, as a bourgeois cultural relic, inaccessible and irrelevant to most of post-war society—in fact, the post-modern critique followed more or less the very terms that had also been used by neoclassicists to challenge the modernist aesthetic pre-war, albeit for different reasons. The challenge this time came not only from composers and audiences but equally from within the academy. A good example is found from possibly the least dialectical of musicologists, Richard Taruskin. Taruskin puts the reductionist view that:

The essential question of modern art, as it was understood by modern artists during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, and the essential debate, was whether artists lived in history or in society. ... In the minds of many, one served one’s art or one’s society, and loyalty to the one precluded loyalty to the other. One had to choose.³⁴

As an example of polar extremes in his somewhat caricatured world of artistic modernism, Taruskin pits Carter against Benjamin Britten. According to Taruskin, Britten, through his explicitly programmatic music concerned with social issues, is an

³² Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 61.

³³ John Link, “Elliott Carter’s Late Music,” in *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Link has argued that the persistence of the image of Carter as uncompromising modernist has failed to keep pace with Carter’s late music which itself has been responsive to late modern concerns.

³⁴ Richard Taruskin, “Chapter 5: Standoff (I),” *Music in the Late Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press (New York, USA, n.d.). Accessed 20 September, 2016, <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/Volume5/actrade-9780195384857-chapter-005.xml>.

artist ‘loyal to society.’ By contrast, Taruskin assesses Carter’s move from neoclassic to atonal composition as evidence of his disloyalty to society: “It took [Carter] a decade to reconcile the contradictions in his own esthetic sensibility; and he only succeeded by resolutely purging it of social aspirations.” Accordingly, Taruskin finds for example that Carter’s *Concerto for Orchestra* (1969), “from the moment of its unveiling, was a historic work in the narrowest sense of the word—the sense that, according to the ideology we have been tracing, specifically excluded the social.” Engaging with a critical evaluation of Taruskin’s lengthy chapter on Carter is beyond the point here.³⁵ However, Taruskin himself stands as an example of an extreme pole of (postmodernist?) critic who restricts musical modernism to categories such as heroic, historic, asocial, conspirator of cold-war ideology, protagonist of social elitism, and so forth.³⁶ Martin Scherzinger reframes the notion that autonomy, or formalism, in music equated to a rejection or denial of the social as follows:

Broadly, what has been disregarded in recent critical accounts is the socially critical and provocative side of the formulation of aesthetic autonomy as it was elaborated within a dialectical tradition. In other words, the antagonistic side of aesthetic autonomy, which was tied to notions of critique and negativism, has largely been forgotten. What should be remembered is that, by resisting absorption into the terrain of everyday meaning, the inherently non-discursive, absolutely musical work also defied the ideological hold of such meaning. This distance between music and society, which Lydia Goehr calls a “critical gap,” was its social praxis.³⁷

Scherzinger’s account is a reversal of Taruskin’s: it is precisely by “serving one’s art” that one served one’s society. According to Carter, each change in his musical style had

³⁵ A number of people have critiqued Taruskin on Carter, some extensively such as Charles Rosen, “Music and the Cold War,” *New York Review of Books* 7 April 2011; “From the Troubadours to Frank Sinatra,” *New York Review of Books* 9 March 2006; Guberman, “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War.” Others have commented more briefly, for example Arnold Whittall, “Review of *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Celebration*; and *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*,” *Music and Letters* 90, no. 4 (2009); and James Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 98.

³⁶ See Shreffler, “Cold War Dissonance.” Shreffler gives a balanced and insightful assessment of what Shreffler calls “Taruskin’s desire to identify and, if possible, to eliminate vestiges of German romantic thinking wherever they occur, historically or in contemporary musicology.” For critiques of Taruskin’s *Oxford History of Western Music* see J.P.E. Harper-Scott, “Modernism as We Know it, Ideology, and the Quilting Point,” in *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). And also Whittall in “Twentieth-Century Music in Retrospect: Fulfilment or Betrayal?,” *The Musical Times* 140, no. 1869 (Winter, 1999).

³⁷ Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 69. Here Scherzinger is referencing Lydia Goehr, *The Quest for Voice: Music Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998).

at its base a concern for how new music could ‘serve’ society.³⁸ Far from “resolutely purging [his music] of social aspirations,” Carter was attempting to respond artistically to the complex problem of saying something that was for him both socially and musically truthful at different points in time.³⁹ As I aim to demonstrate, Carter’s modernist musical response chose *art as social critique* in line with the ‘dialectical tradition’ that Scherzinger outlines above.⁴⁰

What does it mean to say that Carter’s compositional aesthetic followed a tradition of dialectical thinking about music? The study of contact between dialectical thought and musical thought has a history stretching back to Plato but for our modern era can be found perhaps most famously in the Hegel-Beethoven nexus. As Julian Horton puts it in ‘Dialectics and Music Theory’:

In the history of ideas, the dialectical shift is a major element of the Sonderweg, or ‘special path’ that German intellectual life arguably pursued from the later eighteenth century [and which included] ... a sense of shared cultural identity oriented around Beethoven, which is coeval with the idealist philosophy of Hegel and the poetry of Hölderlin.⁴¹

In Horton’s “prefatory appraisal of Hegelian and Adornian dialectical mentalities,” he provides a three-way view of Hegel’s notions of the dialectic which, at the risk of oversimplifying, I will summarize here as a useful outline. Firstly, Hegel’s dialectic was a response to the contradictions of formal logic or systematic methodology (in

³⁸ Martin Brody’s account of Babbitt’s immersion in the 1930s and 1940s political and cultural scene in New York provides an important insight into the environment which likewise surrounded Carter. Brody explores the influence of John Dewey, Dwight McDonald, Clement Greenberg, and the various communist organisations and publications shaping the priorities for American culture at the time. Martin Brody, “‘Music for the Masses’: Milton Babbitt’s Cold War Music Theory,” *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (Summer, 1993). Guberman has also theorized about the enduring influence on Carter of debates of that time, particularly around questions of mass culture and elite culture, in his discussion of the influence of politics on Carter’s music in Guberman, “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War,” chapter 3. For an exploration of material means reflecting social aims, see Dörte Schmidt, “‘I try to write music that will appeal to an intelligent listener’s ear.’ On Elliott Carter’s string quartets,” in *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 169-72.

³⁹ An excellent example of this problem can be found in Shreffler’s comparison of Nono’s *Il Canto Sospeso* with Copland’s *Lincoln Portrait* and Schoenberg’s *Ode to Napoleon*. Shreffler, “‘Music Left and Right’: A Tale of Two Histories of Progressive Music.”

⁴⁰ Martin Brody makes a similar case for Wolpe, drawing on Arendt and Adorno to argue against views put by Taruskin and Whittall: “In both accounts, social engagement is taken to be incompatible with ‘abstraction’; unresolved conflicts in Wolpe’s psyche inhibit motion on the path of artistic fruition; the composer retreats into esotericism.” (p. 206) Brody argues instead for hearing “the composer’s musical forms as *modelling* critical subjectivity and social engagement.” (p. 208) Martin Brody, “‘Where to Act, How to Move’: Unruly Action in Late Wolpe,” *Contemporary Music Review* 27, no. 2/3 (2008).

⁴¹ Horton, “Dialectics and music analysis,” 112.

philosophy), as identified by Kant. Hegel's critique of Kant led him not to an alternative formal logic but to the notion of the dialectic as "the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative".⁴² In other words, for Hegel contradiction could not be avoided as it is immanent to all things. Secondly, Horton says that according to Hegel "[t]he ontological explanation of the dialectic posits it as the mechanism of the progressive self-understanding of consciousness (the Spirit or Geist)."⁴³ The experience of existence is understood as one of 'becoming' (rather than the dualistic and static opposition of being/nothingness), a continual process of self-reflection on the contradictions of subject and object which puts consciousness in motion towards transcendence.⁴⁴ Finally, for Hegel this dialectical process constitutes a model of the progress of history since "the progress of Spirit towards self-understanding is also the engine of human history."⁴⁵

While Carter was in no way self-consciously a Hegelian (like, for example, Wolpe was),⁴⁶ we may nonetheless examine aspects of Carter's aesthetic in this light since, as we saw above, this kind of thinking undergirded the modernist mentality more generally. Furthermore, the notion of the unity of opposites pervades the technical as well as programmatic aspects of Carter's mature music. It manifests itself in the broadest sense in the poetry Carter chose to associate with his compositions and in the way he built dramatic musical scenarios out of the fundamentally contrasting way musical instruments can produce their sound. For example, Carter wrote pieces that brought together sustaining and non-sustaining instruments specifically in order to emphasize their fundamentally different sonic characteristics, such as the Duo for Violin and Piano or the Double Concerto for Piano and Harpsichord. Carter also composed pieces in which he deliberately highlighted the differences between similar instruments: he purposefully super-imposed contrasting playing techniques of instruments from the same family, such as the sustain and the staccato of the flute and clarinet in *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux* or the myriad ways the strings can distinguish themselves from each other in the String Quartets, while contrasting these with textures in which the individual instruments blend together. Unity of opposites also manifests itself in specific techniques related to working with pitch and interval aggregates, which

⁴² Ibid., 114, quoting Hegel. See also McKinney, "The Origins of Modern Dialectics."

⁴³ Horton, "Dialectics and music analysis," 114.

⁴⁴ Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 113-16.

⁴⁵ Horton, "Dialectics and music analysis," 115.

⁴⁶ See for example Matthew Greenbaum, "Stefan Wolpe's Dialectical Logic: A Look at the 'Second Piece for Violin Alone'," *Perspectives of New Music* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2002).

Carter splits up to make unique contrasting musical identities that are each other's opposites (mutually exclusive yet sourced from a single origin). These partitioned aggregates are pitted against each other but also united into new sonorities over the unfolding of a piece. The unfolding, or *form*, of a Carter piece is in continual motion, flow, 'becoming,' where the opposing sonorities interact and transform each other, never returning to a previous sonic state, but nonetheless never entirely discarding or losing their identities. Carter's attitude towards the development of new musical form and material reflects a dialectical model of progress: novelty that negates or denies its inheritance, or the re-use of past forms and materials which ignores its contemporary context, fail to lead to a true new music. Instead a dialectical approach requires music to build on inherited material and form, incorporating and transforming the past in the new context of the present (more on this in Chapter 2: *Tracing the dialectical in Carter's compositional aesthetic*).

According to Horton "... it is entirely reasonable to argue that music written in the age of Hegelianism absorbs something of that epistemological context." And, he adds, "[t]his argument can be extended to encompass Adorno as well."⁴⁷ Adorno, as heir to the Hegelian dialectical tradition, has had the most significant influence on dialectics in musical thought in the twentieth century (with a lineage continuing from him to Carl Dahlhaus and Herman Danuser). While Adorno's *negative dialectics* does not seem to hold much resonance with Carter's musical aesthetic—as many have noted Carter was too much of an optimist⁴⁸—Carter was nonetheless composing and writing about music not only in the wake of the era of idealist philosophy but in the era of its critical re-appraisal, the 'era' of Adorno. Adorno's dialectics, while grounded in a Hegelian-Marxist tradition, is also a critique of Hegel, his utopianism in particular. For Adorno like other twentieth-century philosophers, there is no "progress of Spirit," no reconciliation of individual and collective possible.⁴⁹ Adorno's analysis of the disintegration of society and the disintegration of modern music is mostly interpreted as a bleak prognosis for society and art music alike; as Carter said of Adorno's

⁴⁷ Horton, "Dialectics and music analysis," 111.

⁴⁸ Paul Giffiths sees in Carter "an optimism and brightness" (Michael Anthony, "Elliott Carter: America's greatest living composer or alienating ogre?," *The Star Tribune* 3 March 2006). Whittall sees Carter's attitude as radically opposed to an aesthetic of alienated anguish or melancholia ("The search for order: Carter's *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism," in *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 71-72 and 77. Max Noubel also portrays Carter as an optimist in *Elliott Carter ou le temps fertile* (Genève: Éditions Contrechamps, 2000), 59-60.

⁴⁹ Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 265.

Philosophie der neuen Musik “It is depressing . . .”⁵⁰ Recent studies of Adorno’s later work do discuss Adorno as showing signs of a rethinking of his earlier conclusions.⁵¹ However, regardless of this, what is significant for music and music analysis is Adorno’s theorising of how autonomous structures of music mediate structures of society. In other words, as Horton notes, for Adorno

[m]usical works, like all art, constitute ‘the unconscious historiography of their epoch.’ Their social ‘essence’ can therefore be read from their technical, structural components; the intra-musical embodies the extra-musical, because the former is the dialectical partner of the latter.⁵²

In other words, music—like all other aspects of culture and society—is a product of its history, unconsciously and inescapably. In fact, according to Adorno the musical work sits within a network of mediations: it is mediated autonomously within itself, it is socially mediated, and historically mediated; and the same categories apply a second time around to the work’s performance. But the musical work is engaged in this mediation ‘intentionlessly.’ Paddison explains:

This totality of mediations is the work’s context of meaning, and constitutes its gesture, its physiognomy, the face it makes at us, its expression. This is all the work fulfils, without intending or meaning to—in the sense in which Adorno uses the term ‘intentionless’—and it is precisely in this that the meaning of the work lies, in what he calls its ‘mimetic being’ rather than in the amount of intention invested in the work by the composer (or indeed by the performer or listener).⁵³

Thus, composers need not themselves be conscious of the processes of mediation in their work.⁵⁴ In fact, as Paddison points out, the composer’s intentions may differ from the “true” meaning of the work. All the same, it is possible that there exists a degree of

⁵⁰ Letter from Elliott Carter to Bayan Northcott, Elliott Carter Collection, Paul Sacher Stiftung, March 15, 1974.

⁵¹ See especially Julian Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” in *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth Century Music*, ed. Bertold Hoeckner (New York and London: Francis and Taylor, 2006).

⁵² Horton, “Dialectics and music analysis,” 116.

⁵³ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 274 but see also 65.

⁵⁴ Paddison gives a great example of a composer’s ignorance of the social “embeddedness” of his art: “The wonderful irony of Schoenberg’s alleged statement in support of an uncompromising art-for-art’s-sake position, that ‘music has no more to do with society than a game of chess’, is telling on all counts, given the formal clarity with which the hierarchy of mediaeval society is represented on the chessboard.” *Ibid.*, 259-60.

accord between composer intention and the “intentionless” work, even if the composer’s freedom with his/her materials may appear greater than it really is.⁵⁵

What interests me in the first part of this study is the significance Carter himself places on the social aspect of his musical thinking. This is illustrated in a somewhat grandiose statement Carter made in a 1973 interview:

Sound for its own sake is of very limited interest to me. Human beings, I think, come to expect more from music than entertaining patterns of tone-colors. Mine uses a large variety of these but, I hope, always to transcend the medium of sound completely and present a more significant human message.⁵⁶

In this statement, Carter not only makes the claim that his music is about more than the music itself, he places the significance of the social above that of the purely artistic. It is in this aspect of Carter’s aesthetic that we find evidence for the claim of a critical function for formalist music. What is more, while Carter’s musical innovations remain entirely about the musical materials—his compositions do not transfer their message programmatically as Taruskin would have liked—the explanations he gives of his compositions, nevertheless, make recourse to anthropomorphising the instruments and tying the musical drama to human scenarios of conflict and opposition, albeit often somewhat abstracted ones. For example, the “dialectic” of the Second Quartet to which Carter makes reference in the opening quote to this chapter concerns the interaction of the musical *material* as played by the instruments (“all these instruments were somehow related more by a kind of dialectic”), but Carter’s explanation that the instruments interact by “discussing things” makes use of a *human* metaphor.⁵⁷ Thus, in Carter’s aesthetic, there exists a complex relationship between musical material (the technical) and “human message” (the social). I wish to tease out this relationship by way of an

⁵⁵ This interesting web of connections between composer intention and intentionlessness of the work are touched on by various of authors. Julian Johnson discusses Feldman’s music in relation to these notions in Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno.” Peter Edward discusses the interaction of Ligeti’s music philosophy and musical form as well as Adorno’s influence on him in Peter Edwards, “Convergences and Discord in the Correspondence Between Ligeti and Adorno,” *Music and Letters* 96, no. 2 (23 April 2015). And Martin Brody discusses the way Wolpe presents his materials as having independent agency in Brody, “‘Where to Act, How to Move.’” esp. 214.

⁵⁶ Carter, “Elliott Carter, Interview with Stuart Lieberman (1973).” Quoted in Henning Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess: Studien zur Problematik von Form und Gestalt, dargestellt am Beispiel von Elliott Carters Trilogy for Oboe and Harp* (Kassel: Gustav Bosse, 1999), 243.

⁵⁷ See John Roeder, “‘The matter of human cooperation’ in Carter’s Mature Style,” in *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 114-15 and 22.

interpretive/analytical perspective informed, at least in part, by an Adornian aesthetics of music.

* * *

My interest in this study lies in the reciprocal influence felt at the boundary between technical analysis and aesthetic interpretation. It is not necessary to set out to find in the music what we think the composer might have put there; at the same time, however, there is an interplay between the body of thought that produces analytical understandings and that which created artistic works—the composer in this case is situated in the same social world as the analyst, even if they are at an historical distance from each other. Adorno claimed technical music analysis to be necessary before any other reflection can take place but that technical analysis was not sufficient reflection in and of itself: a philosophical and sociological analysis is required to be able to find the true link between the purely musical thought and its dialectical partner, the social world from which it emanated.⁵⁸ How to go about this linking task, whether following Adorno or within other epistemological frames (feminist, queer, post-colonial, linguistic, etc.), has been the challenge to musicology and music analysis since Adorno and the question has resulted in particularly innovative responses from the 1980s onwards.⁵⁹ In the next section I turn to examining some of the issues of Adorno's legacy to music analysis before returning to a detailed outline of the aims of this study.

1.3 Music dialectics and Adorno's legacy

Interpreting and re-interpreting Adorno's legacy to musicology steadily gained momentum in the English-speaking world after Rose Rosengard Subotnik's groundbreaking books.⁶⁰ As this legacy has been so wide-ranging, scholarship in musicology

⁵⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Problem of Musical Analysis," *Music Analysis* 1/ii (1982): 176-77. See also Max Paddison, "Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking? Adorno and the Problem of Musical Analysis," in *Adorno: a critical reader*, ed. Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Henry Klumpenhower, "Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music," *Music Analysis* 20, no. iii (2001): 368.

⁵⁹ See Andrew Edgar, "Adorno and Musical Analysis," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 4 (Autumn, 1999): 448.

⁶⁰ For this view on Subotnik's influence see Tia DeNora, *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xv; and Robert Witkin, *Adorno on Music* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 5. The works referred to are Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); and *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

has focussed on many diverse aspects of Adorno's thought and for many different purposes.⁶¹ Analysis of nineteenth century music, particularly responding to Adorno's writings on Beethoven, Schubert, Mahler and Wagner, seems to have stimulated perhaps the greatest interest.⁶² Adorno's assessment of jazz and popular music have also provoked wide-spread responses (both dismissive and constructively critical),⁶³ often linked to critiques of Adorno's sociology of music, with Tia DeNora's 'rethinking' of Adorno's music sociology representing the most constructive.⁶⁴ Engagement with Adorno's aesthetics of music from a philosophical standpoint is at its apex in the works of Lydia Goehr, of Max Paddison, and of Andrew Bowie.⁶⁵ Recent contributions in Berthold Hoeckner's collection *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth-Century Music* offer some of the finest representations of the current diverse interests of musicological scholarship.⁶⁶

The specific focus of the questions, issues and points of contention in studies that deal with Adorno's legacy to music(ology) depends significantly on the disciplinary starting point. The shortcomings of Adorno's thinking to the music philosopher (for example, the lack of a sufficiently developed concept of mediation) may be incidental to the questions pursued by the music sociologist (for whom Adorno's lack of empirical evidence may cause his theories to run aground).⁶⁷ Furthermore, music analysts are faced with trying to understand how to carry out "immanent music analysis" in the almost complete absence of concrete analytical examples provided by Adorno.⁶⁸ In what follows I will sketch a brief picture of the historical context of Adorno's music

⁶¹ For a view on Adornian aesthetics in musicology, see both Paddison, "Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking?," 211-15; and Alastair Williams, "Review: Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture by Max Paddison," *Music & Letters* 78, no. 2 (May, 1997)., for a view on Adornian aesthetics in musicology For an outstanding appraisal of the reception of Adorno's work more generally see Lydia Goehr, "Reviewing Adorno: Public Opinion and Critique," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

⁶² See for example Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the process of becoming: analytical and philosophical perspectives on form in early nineteenth-century music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Stephen Downes, ed. *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014).

⁶³ For example James Buhler, "Frankfurt School Blues: Rethinking Adorno's Critique of Jazz," in *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth Century Music*, ed. Bertold Hoeckner (New York and London: Francis and Taylor, 2006).

⁶⁴ DeNora, *After Adorno*.

⁶⁵ Lydia Goehr, *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*. Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*.

⁶⁶ Bertold Hoeckner, ed. *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth Century Music* (New York and London: Francis and Taylor, 2006).

⁶⁷ DeNora, *After Adorno*, 22. See also Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "Adorno and the New Musicology," in *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, ed. Nigel C. Gibson and Andrew Rubin (Wiley-Blackwell, 2001).

⁶⁸ See for example Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 132.

aesthetics within his broader philosophical theory, before discussing Adorno's notion of form-content dialectic in music, the mediated nature of musical materials, and the role of music analysis. I do not engage with a critique of Adorno's philosophy of music as such—as a music analyst and composer such a critique is well beyond my area of expertise. What I do examine are re-interpretations of aspects of Adorno's musical thought by scholars wishing to identify the critical power that Adorno ascribes to music but in the context of a changed social, cultural and intellectual reality of the decades around the turn of the twenty-first century. In this discussion I identify writings and analytical approaches of significance for my own analysis of Carter's aesthetic and compositions.

1.3.a Adorno's music aesthetics contextualized

While it is true that Adorno's aesthetic theory remains resistant to summary, it is also true that a number of excellent overviews have been written, making Adorno's thought more easily available to those practicing music analysis whose experience lies outside of a philosophical training.⁶⁹ Perhaps the most significant first point that these writings make is that Adorno's aesthetics of music sits within a much broader interdisciplinary project and, while his aesthetic theory bears directly on music (its social, technical, and psychological constituents), the concepts and categories developed about music stem from Adorno's philosophical and sociological critique of reason, the principle motivation of Adorno's life work.⁷⁰ Tia De Nora, in *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology*, explicitly states that her introduction is not an introduction to Adorno, but perhaps because of this, she gives the most helpful outline of the central philosophical themes that underpin Adorno's work. As DeNora says, Adorno

sought to understand what he perceived as a transformation of consciousness, one that fostered authoritarian modes of ruling. ... Adorno's critique of reason centres on the idea that material reality is more complex than the ideas and concepts available for describing it. ... Reality ... cannot be fully addressed by words, measurements, concepts, and categories, all of which must be understood at best as approximations of

⁶⁹ Simon Jarvis commented in 1998 that “[t]he premises of Adorno's music criticism are unfamiliar in musicology and often discourage those who might otherwise be attracted to Adorno's musicological thought.” Ibid., 126. While this picture might have changed in some places, Adorno's aesthetics of music are not commonly seen in music curricula. My interest has been self-lead and my formal training has been in music theory, analysis and composition rather than in philosophy or aesthetics, with the exception of having the privileged opportunity to attend David West's outstanding introductory course *The Frankfurt School and Habermas* at the Australian National University in 2007.

⁷⁰ See for example Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 1-27.

reality, as socially constituted ideas or images of phenomena. ... His work highlighted the disjunction between ideas and material reality, a gap within which the former might be useful, indeed, even 'effective', but never be eternally or comprehensively 'true.'⁷¹

Thus, the way we think about and articulate reality is not the same as reality itself. As human beings, the communication of thought is a necessity of our existence. However, we build up complex ways of thinking about our world and us in it, which are in turn constantly changing as human conditions of existence change. But precisely because our way of reasoning can change, it is also incapable of being identical to fixed material reality (Adorno was a materialist, not an idealist).⁷²

Taking a step further back, Adorno's critique of reason must be situated within the historical context of modernity since the Enlightenment. As scientific reason and individual rationality gradually got the upper hand over more speculative modes of reason and over collective thinking, the "gap" between reason and reality became gradually more apparent. The question that faced the post World War II generation perhaps most urgently, is put by Horton as follows:

If the achievement of the Enlightenment was to emancipate the individual by asserting the primacy of rational autonomy [of the citizen-subject] over social function or convention, then the question arises as to what kind of a society can be devised, which respects this autonomy while also preserving a notion of collective responsibility. The great bourgeois aspiration is the attainment of such a social order, the citizens of which could act freely in accordance with the dictates of reason and simultaneously fulfil their communal responsibilities ... Adorno's historical model is in essence the narrative of this aspiration's failure.⁷³

Thus, the bourgeois *idea* of individual freedom within collective responsibility did not match the *reality* of experience. In fact, the inability to identify this gap was seen by Adorno as fundamental to how reason was constituted under Enlightenment tenets. Reason and culture had a tendency to engage in a kind of deception, or self-deception, of believing that ideas were fixed (could not change) and that they faithfully represented how things really were—a process Adorno termed objectification. Objectification was dangerous because of what it then made possible in terms of the way human beings

⁷¹ DeNora, *After Adorno*, 4.

⁷² Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 89.

⁷³ Horton, "Dialectics and music analysis," 116.

could act or the kind of actions of others they might accept. It “dehumanised consciousness” and made it “amenable to externally imposed relations of ruling.”⁷⁴ Scherzinger points out that:

... for Adorno, totalitarianism was not an irrational eruption in an otherwise progressive continuum of Enlightenment logic, but a refinement of some of its central tenets. The Nazi industrialization of death, for example, was both a perversion and an embodiment of the instrumental principle of efficiency and self-interest. For Adorno, Enlightenment reason needed to remain allied to other (“non-identical”) concepts of truth and ethics if it was, politically, to resist the power of the totalitarian state, and, economically, to resist the movements of brazen monopoly capital.⁷⁵

The “non-identical” refers to all that is opposite, contradictory, excluded, different from a defined concept; it is the particular individual case within a universalising category. As DeNora puts it, in his philosophical project, “Adorno sought to illuminate difference and contradiction—the residual, the ill-fitting, non-sense, in short, anything that did not ‘fit’ within existing categories of thought.”⁷⁶

Adorno’s philosophy of music is an application of his critical theory to a cultural product that has unique non-representational and temporal properties which, according to Adorno, enable it to critique reason through means other than reason itself (i.e., a social critique mediated through music). Adorno theorized that the arrangement of musical materials within a composition’s form could affirm the existing social order, or alternatively it could show up how the existing social order was an idea that excluded from itself the reality of individual experience and at the same time it could offer an alternative for organising individual and collective needs. Most significantly, this critique was not made by way of metaphor or analogy to the real world: music did not ‘represent’ actual society. Rather, the manner in which the musical materials of the past were reshaped into something new illustrated a process of handling one type of material reality (i.e., musical materiality) that could stand as an example of how other areas of material reality could be reshaped. Music was so important to Adorno because, as we saw above, “the intra-musical embodies the extra-musical, because the former is the dialectical partner of the latter.” In other words, music is the dialectical partner of conceptual reason, since music itself is without concepts. However, for music to carry

⁷⁴ DeNora, *After Adorno*, 6.

⁷⁵ Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 74.

⁷⁶ DeNora, *After Adorno*, 22.

out a critique it must not be put to the services of instrumental reason. Scherzinger notes that for Adorno “[t]his is where the principle of aesthetic autonomy played a pivotal role.” He continues:

Adorno considerably invested autonomous modernist artworks with the ability to resist undesired political and economic developments. Art’s very aesthetic autonomy freed it from the instrumental reason that operated only to secure the ends of certain (market-driven) means. In the words of Adorno, “The uncalculating autonomy of works which avoid popularization and adaption to the market, involuntarily become an attack on them.”... Hence, the formalist autonomy of these works rendered them recalcitrant to permanent (and therefore exploitative) values. They were a dialectical “challenge [to] the lying positivism of meaning.” In other words, the formal aesthetic dimension, however hermetic and receding in itself, was relevant to aspects of political struggle.”⁷⁷

Precisely because of the autonomy of these works, they were able to reach into the consciousness of the audience and make them feel uneasy about something about contemporary existence that was almost impossible to acknowledge. In other words, the inaccessibility of these works to logical reason protected them from corruption. As an example of how even words can escape this logical reasoning, Adorno wrote of Samuel Beckett’s plays “no-one can persuade himself that these eccentric plays and novels are not about what everyone knows but no-one will admit.”⁷⁸ According to Adorno, Schoenberg’s music worked in a similar way in relation to the logic of the musical language of a previous era, as Scherzinger points out: “Likewise, the atonal works of Schoenberg put into question their very own compositional procedures.”⁷⁹

At the core of Adorno’s concern in his aesthetics of music, as far as I understand it, is the way in which these compositional procedures—the music materials and their structuring—not only resist corruption but also undertake the task of immanent social critique.⁸⁰ Adorno’s claim that ‘radical’ music is able to make such a social critique is made by way of a complex and idiosyncratic style of argument that (as already noted) is grounded in Hegelian dialectical thought. Max Paddison’s book, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of*

⁷⁷ Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 75.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ The concept of mediation in Adorno’s work also appears to be the most problematic. See Paddison, “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation,” in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Irène Deliège and Max Paddison (Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 259-276. Also *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 101

Music, demonstrates the complexity of the “constellations” of thought that lie behind Adorno’s theory of music. His work is invaluable to anyone attempting to undertake music analysis that is informed by Adornian thought. It is not my aim here to try to summarize Paddison’s work, even less Adorno’s aesthetic theory; nevertheless many ideas have their basis in pre-established philosophical and musical understandings and categories that make up the conceptual framework from which to begin to approach Adorno’s “immanent dialectic of musical material.” In what follows I am guided by Paddison’s work and only highlight concepts that specifically relate to the task of technical formal analysis at this point. Others I address in the course of this thesis.

1.3.b Form-content dialectic

Some of these concepts are familiar: the form-content dialectic famously shaped many debates in new music post 1945, to which Adorno but also many others contributed, such as Pierre Boulez and Elliott Carter. Boulez’s 1960 Darmstadt lecture entitled “Form” opens with an orientation to the modernist re-conception of possibilities for large-scale musical organisation:

[In the past] the composer was working in a universe clearly defined by general laws that already existed before he embarked on his composition. From this it followed that all “abstract” relationships implicit in the idea of form could be defined a priori, and this gave rise to a certain number of schemes or archetypes that existed ideally before being realized in any actual work . . . This whole scaffolding of “schemes” had eventually to make way for a new conception of form as something that could be changed from one moment to the next. Each work had to originate its own form, a form essentially and irreversibly linked to its “content.”⁸¹

Carter, in his 1958 essay “A Further Step” written two years before Boulez’s lecture, similarly discusses the break with what he called “pre-established patterns” in the twentieth century. He explores his idea of an “emancipated musical discourse” in which new music must re-examine the premises of musical continuity:

Up to now, twentieth-century composers have explored new domains of harmony and their implications and have tried experiments with new materials in familiar contexts, and often produced expressive or formal effects similar to those found in older music. But today—as befits an art whose formative dimension is time—the technique of

⁸¹ Pierre Boulez, *Orientations: Collected Writings*, trans. Martin Cooper (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), 90-91.

continuity and contrast, of qualities and types of motion, of the formation and development of a musical idea or event, and in general the various kinds of cause and effect patterns that can be suggested in musical flow, occupy the attention of composer more than harmony or other matters, of which now become simply details in a larger kind of concern. In this view, no item, no unifying principle or method of continuity is self-evident or considered a given part of musical process, but all are considered in light of the whole and included or worked over so as to be able to fit the general scheme. Such a reexamination of musical discourse seems inevitable now, and a necessary culmination of all the different efforts of composers in our century.⁸²

In their different ways Boulez and Carter each express the relationship of form to content as needing to be dynamic and responsive to the ‘new’ materials. Carter goes on to explore examples of music that demonstrate this dynamic relationship both to new materials and to materials of the past, and also provides contrasting examples of music which ignore these demands (including serial music that is purely constructivist). Adorno creates a more complex schema than the ‘form-content’ opposition of Boulez and Carter in order to accommodate a number of other concepts.⁸³ Nevertheless, what is shared by all three is the broad idea that musical materials and their relationship to pre-established formal types had broken down out of necessity, and that the treatment of the materials themselves commanded a new formal response.

In Adorno’s theorising of the relationship of form and content, he distinguishes between ‘material’ and ‘content.’ For Adorno, ‘content’ addresses ‘what goes on in the piece’ in the process of its unfolding (the establishing and treatment of material relationships), while he designates the term ‘material’ to the elements of music (pitch, rhythm, texture, timbre etc.) with their ‘pre-formed’ historical meanings, which also include ‘forms’ in the sense of historical formal types (sonata form, rondo etc.) At base, Adorno’s concept of musical ‘material’ is not especially unfamiliar: ‘material’ is not neutral but is made up of ‘sedimented historical meaning.’ A simple example is that of the diminished seventh chord, which in Beethoven’s era had dramatic meaning that became trivialized by overuse for dramatic effect by Romantic composers and in the post-tonal world can no longer escape any of its implied (historically sedimented) meaning except if treated in a way as to explicitly avoid conjuring up that past sound world. But Adorno’s

⁸² Elliott Carter, “A Further Step (1958),” in *The Writings of Elliott Carter*, ed. Else Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 5.

⁸³ Paddison shows how Adorno makes a distinction between ‘content and ‘material’ that is significant for other parts of his theory, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music.*, 151-2

‘material’ may also include *forms* and *genres* that have been handed down through history; the composer must equally be cognisant of the historical meaning of these formal types and respond to them from the present historical situation of music, and, as Boulez and Carter say above, not use them anachronistically as the architectural “scaffolds” into which “new” content is poured.

Adorno also has a separate concept of ‘form,’ as the counterpart to ‘content’ and ‘materials,’ which comes about as a response to the particular continuity of individual musical moments that are not subjugated to the demands of an overall form structure but can exist and move according to their own spontaneous requirements; the consistency of the piece’s organisation results from a unity of the musical ideas with their formal unfolding.⁸⁴ While Adorno shares with Boulez and Carter the idea that form must respond to material, for Adorno form always involves a tension between sedimented historical meaning present in the material and new meaning that comes about by the composer’s re-contextualisation and deconstruction of the pre-formed material. This ‘dealing with the past’ congealed within musical material is crucial to a dialectical approach.⁸⁵ Something truly new can only come about by first showing up and dismantling how things have been: revealing what has been left out, what does not fit, what contradicts the current organisation of ideas and expectations. Furthermore, Paddison says, for Adorno the essential problem of musical form in modern music is how “to construct a unity which does not conceal the fragmentary and chaotic state of the handed-down musical material, yet which does not simply mirror fragmentation through identification with it ...”⁸⁶ In other words, while unity and consistency are required for form to be articulated, the truth of the materials is that they are coming apart, that they no longer have a fixed function in a shared system of organisation (i.e., tonality)—how can these two be reconciled?

The example that might best be given is that of Berg’s Sonata for Piano Op.1 since it is the piece of which Adorno made the most sustained analysis himself and which has had a history of further analysis extending to the present day.⁸⁷ In this piece, the pre-formed typology of sonata form is put into tension with Berg’s motivic and harmonic processes (of developing variation of the smallest motivic cells and of transitional harmonic

⁸⁴ Ibid., 150

⁸⁵ As I address in Chapter 2, Carter also saw the relationship to history as crucial.

⁸⁶ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 158.

⁸⁷ See Horton, “Dialectics and music analysis,” 135-40.

material derived from the themes/motives themselves). While there is a ‘scaffold’ of a formal type present, Berg’s use of this scaffold is dialectical, breaking it down so as to reveal that the old formal order can no longer support the new musical materials, which do not simply support the articulation of the form (e.g., with first and second themes, tonal areas etc.) but blur its divisions and create ambiguity between sections and functions as a response to the demands of the new materials themselves. Sonata form is present and recognisable, but only as a disfigured traditional form, one that is disintegrating yet being held together by the sonic logic of the new configurations now available. Berg’s handling of form challenges the ‘concept’ of sonata form and the idea that its structures are “perfected within themselves which might be exhibited for all time in museums of opera or concert.”⁸⁸

1.3.c Mediated social critique

It is in the dialectic between what is pre-formed and what is re-formed that Adorno finds the mediated social critique that music can perform. Radical new music does not paint a musical picture of social relations programmatically. Rather, to make a contemporary analogy, it can be likened to the way hand-made local goods produced from recycled materials and environmentally conscious processes—through their very materials and social relations of production—provide a critique of a society obsessed with low-quality, low-cost goods that is happy to ignore both the social and environmental exploitation necessary for their production. The form of the goods themselves (their materials and shape) makes an immanent critique because of the concealed (or perhaps today no longer so concealed) relations of their production. This is essentially the Marxist materialist argument that Adorno turned to the service of cultural critique.⁸⁹ In other words, musical material is also material that has been ‘formed’ by the rationality of its time and the ‘form’ it takes is either critical or affirming of that rationality. Paddison says that according to Adorno: “Authentic autonomous works function as a critique of the instrumental rationality of the outside world, although they are mediated by that same rationality through the logicity of their form.”⁹⁰ Below I will look at some of the difficulties that Paddison in particular

⁸⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 32. Quoted in Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 74.

⁸⁹ Paddison, “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation,” 262-4. See also Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 178.

⁹⁰ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 158. The complexity, and to some extent circularity, of this argument is underscored by Paddison as he explains: “... Adorno also saw musical form as a homologue

identifies with the question of mediation, or the linking of inner musical structure and outer social reality, in Adorno's aesthetic theory. But to return for the moment to Berg's Op.1, the disintegration of sonata form—Enlightenment reason's most emblematic of musical forms—was seen by Adorno as homologous to the disintegration of social relations and bourgeois rationality that characterized twentieth-century modernism. The thinking that produced sonata form was being challenged. And it is the particular way that this experience is reproduced in Berg's handling of the old and the new that gives it, for Adorno, its critical quality. For example, Horton discusses Adorno's analysis of the significance of Berg's treatment of the ending of the piece, contrasting it with a composition historically situated at the beginning of this process of disintegration, namely Beethoven's 'Tempest' Sonata:

In Berg's Op.1, the embedding of antinomies has progressed to a point of almost inconceivable density. (...) The ultimate sense that no overarching synthesis can draw all of these conflicts into a higher unity—in brief, the work's negative-dialectical posture—is basic to its expressive trajectory, and it is this above all that locates it as one historical end-point to the manner of composition introduced in the first movement of Beethoven's 'Tempest.' Unlike Beethoven, however, Berg supplies no finale that might take up his movement's dualities and resolve them; the Sonata's manifold teleologies are simply left hanging with its closing chord. This is Adorno's fractured totality *in nuce*: resolution persists here as an aspiration with no prospect of fulfilment.⁹¹

In other words, in Berg's Op.1 the fragmentation of musical material is not falsely unified or made to cohere, thereby concealing its true state, but instead is left in a semi-coherent state of confusion with a question mark hanging over its future. The workings of this material dialectic are found back in the dialectic of social relations at that point in history. Unlike the way the aspiration of the bourgeoisie masked social reality (e.g. the claim that social change is undertaken for the freedom of its citizens), Berg's music critically demonstrates the lack of possibility of its attainment.

In his essay, Horton attempts "to add more analytical flesh to Adorno's philosophy" by re-examining some canonical studies in the analytical literature, including analyses of

of society, and saw freedom of form and its corresponding critique of pre-given form as a metaphor for an ideal, free society, and, simultaneously, as a critique of existing society. But at the same time, through the fetishization of form, music becomes assimilated to society." (p.183)

⁹¹ Horton is comparing Adorno's analysis of Berg's Op.1 with Dahlhaus's analysis of Beethoven's 'Tempest.' Horton, "Dialectics and music analysis," 139-40.

Berg's Sonata Op.1 by Adorno, by Schmalfeldt and by Paddison but also analyses of Beethoven's "Tempest" Sonata by Dahlhaus and by Schmalfeldt. He further offers his own dialectical reading of large-scale formal processes in Bruckner's Symphony No.5.⁹² These analyses are outstanding examples of dialectical interpretations of form and content in pieces that each work quite differently with their materials and that furthermore can be interpreted as making quite different types of mediated social critique. Beethoven's "Tempest," for example, thwarts the expectation that theme and harmony support formal function. Instead, motivic development is initiated at the very start of the piece and drives the whole formal idea of the movement, dialectically struggling with its sonata form frame and ultimately failing to fulfil the historical convention of a synthesising recapitulation. In Horton's words: "The mediation of a social dialectic is tangible: the failure to contain the music's subjectivity [its motivic development] within sonata conventions parallels the failure to generate social and political order from rational individuality."⁹³

According to Horton, Bruckner's Symphony No.5 comes to a different conclusion. Horton's analysis offers an interpretation of continuity and discontinuity (Horton refers to parataxis and hypotaxis) across the large-scale sonata form designs of the paired First movement and Finale movement. A dialectical interplay of theme and "topical" elements (such as march, chorale, dance, processional) works to contradict the sonata form of both movements in a variety of ways. Unlike the Beethoven example, Bruchner's Finale resolves the problem of its oppositional material definitively: the struggle between secular and sacred musical material is concluded in favour of a Christian world view as the secular march theme "is drawn into the service" of a final chorale.⁹⁴ That a religious conclusion still had validity at the time of Bruchner's Fifth Symphony serves to highlight the inauthenticity that such a conclusion would have in a twentieth-century context.

Horton argues that these analyses exemplify the Adornian notion that a composition consists of a musical problem to be worked out and critically responded to in the process of the composition. Each resolution posits a different type of social critique mediated through its materials. The notion that a musical composition involves the

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 127.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 136.

working out of a problem in its compositional unfolding recalls Carter's idea of a "field of operations" that he said he exposed at the beginning of a composition and from which the rest of the composition drew its impetus.⁹⁵ I will argue that Carter's appropriation of ritornello form presents a compositional problem to which the musical content is itself a solution. However, the musical terms of reference relevant for a discussion of Carter's music are very different those in Horton's examples. Horton's essay highlights the significance that thematic-motivic material played in Adorno's conception of musical content and form and at the same time the inadequacy of thematic-motivic material as a way of approaching music of the second half of the twentieth century. This point made by Julian Johnson when he notes that "[t]he primary status of harmonic-motivic working in Adorno's theory reflects, of course, a fundamentally classical view. It is one, moreover, that restricts Adorno to categories derived from tonal practice which makes problematic his approach to music that works by quite different principles."⁹⁶ As such, Horton's chapter impresses the need for analysis of post-1945 music to work with different categories of material and their dialectical disposition if it is to show dialectical processes and mediated social critique at work in this music.

1.3.d Post World War II music

Perhaps most challenging for any attempt to apply an Adornian concept of analysis to music after the Second Viennese School is the fact that Adorno's concepts were developed in response to *that* music and *that* period of musical innovation. As Johnson says, Adorno's "definition of the category [new music] is fundamentally informed by his understanding of a particular body of work—early modernism in general and the Second Viennese School in particular. In music, the criteria of newness appears to be given, above all, by the period of free atonality prior to the adoption of the twelve-tone method."⁹⁷ The workings of Adorno's 'form' seem best fitted to that transitional music (such as Berg's Op. 1) that was in the process of overtly challenging and breaking down its nineteenth-century musical inheritance of form-content relationships. Johnson points out that Adorno had nothing to say about music written after the early 1960s and "the relatively small amount of writing on post-war music is confined to his experience of

⁹⁵ Elliott Carter, "Shop Talk by an American Composer (1960)," in *Elliott Carter: collected essays and lectures, 1937-1995*, ed. Jonathan W. Bernard (New York: University of Rochester Press, 1997), 218.

⁹⁶ Johnson, "'The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia': New Music Since Adorno," 80-81.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

the Darmstadt composers of the 1950s.”⁹⁸ Is it possible to take anything from an Adornian concept of form as mediated social critique that can shed light on an analysis of music since the 1960s and an analysis of a “postmodern” or indeed “post-postmodern” society?

This line of questioning has been pursued by a number of musicologists, particularly those arguing for the need for a new response to a persistent—albeit materially and historically transformed—aesthetic modernism, one with ongoing radical potential and in opposition to the relativism of the postmodern aesthetic. This secondary literature is of great significance for my present study as it critically reinterprets and contextualizes central strands of Adorno’s thought on new music both within the much more recent musical landscape and within recent music scholarship. It provides a research basis on which to build my interpretation of Carter’s musical aesthetic through an Adornian lens in the chapters that follow. The scholarship I will look at first is primarily musicological in nature, addressing music composition conceptually rather than technically. In the section that follows, I discuss studies that take on Adorno’s legacy in relation to empirical music analysis.

In an extremely insightful and wide-ranging essay, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic: The Political Relevance of Autonomy and Formalism in Modernist Musical Aesthetics,” Martin Scherzinger criticizes a postmodern attitude that claims “art cannot be an agent for social change or resistance after all” and asks “how do we forge a new link between culture and politics that is adequate to our times?”⁹⁹ One of Scherzinger’s aims is to illustrate, following Adorno, that the space opened up by the critical praxis of modernist music (immanently through its formal and autonomous nature) is needed even more urgently today where “the oppressive moment in late-capitalist society largely depends on a complex mechanism of internalized psychic subjection.” He argues that the postmodern aesthetic was largely reactionary and instead of breaking down oppositions such as high/low, autonomous/commodified, global/local, totality/fragment, it in fact fetishized the second term at the expense of a dialectical engagement with the contradictions of modernism. In today’s socio-political reality, those contradictions flourish in many forms and make the questioning of ideology through autonomous cultural practice pressing. To resist the ever-transforming niche

⁹⁸ Ibid. See also Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 264.

⁹⁹ Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 72.

markets of the late-capitalist culture industry requires a “formalism taken to its limits,” Scherzinger argues, as a way of opening up our consciousness to what is so pervasively excluded: “its obstinate focus on the radically insulated particular would flush out those unacknowledged beliefs and secrets that we are habitually in on.”¹⁰⁰ Scherzinger points out that Adorno claimed music analysis has an important role to play in putting into words that which is mediated by such radical music.¹⁰¹

An essay that nicely complements Scherzinger’s chapter with contemporary musical examples is Paddison’s “Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-Garde.” Paddison takes the Western rock music of Frank Zappa and the Western art music of Brian Ferneyhough to illustrate that despite a current prevailing postmodern aesthetic that rejects both history and subjectivity, there are still possibilities for pursuing ideological critique through radical commodified musical material (Zappa) as well as through radical autonomous musical material (Ferneyhough).¹⁰² Like Scherzinger, Paddison considers that Adorno’s concept of mediation retains pressing relevance today in relation to any interpretation of cultural phenomena. This is because no matter how the meaning, structure and function of music is construed, any musical activity is always a human activity and thus cannot escape its social situatedness, or in Paddison’s words “the extent to which society inheres historically within musical structures and musical material, and—importantly—the extent to which music itself, whether intended or not, engages with its socio-historical content in musical terms, and does so with greater or lesser degrees of reflexivity at a structural level.”¹⁰³ He considers this reflexivity as a characteristic of “advanced critical music” regardless of the specific socio-historical conditions of its creation. Paddison critically widens Adorno’s musical reference points, arguing that there need be no restriction on musical style or musical culture since all musics, including for example jazz, pop and any form of non-Western music, exist within particular social conditions and are therefore capable of critical reflection upon those conditions. In particular what is significant about this essay for my discussions in Chapters 2 and 3 is the way Paddison offers an example of how Ferneyhough’s articulation of a personal musical aesthetic that is radically late-modern can be conceptually linked to aspects of Adorno’s philosophy of new music of an earlier era. Paddison’s work gives validity to the approach I take in Part 1 of the present study,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 94.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Although, in the second decade of the twenty-first century it is worth considering if a postmodern aesthetic is quite as prevailing as it was 20 years ago.

¹⁰³ Paddison, “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation,” 259 and 69.

in which I draw parallels between Adorno's and Carter's conceptions of authentic musical composition as immanent social critique.

In a more sympathetic reading of postmodernism, Alastair Williams tackles affinities and contrasts in the musical thinking of Adorno and Wolfgang Rihm in relation to subjectivity.¹⁰⁴ Rihm's inclusion of late-romantic gestures used with minimal re-forming, seemingly in a post-modernist aesthetic stance of 'anything is up for grabs now,' appears in stark opposition to Adorno's criteria for musical truth. However, Williams (with the help of Rihm's own written reflection on his work) argues that it is precisely Rihm's subjective handling of musical form that allows these gestures to acquire new contexts of meaning. The music that surrounds these gestures—how the moments unfold into such music and away from it again—gives them an expressive value quite different from the period in which they originated. This is in contrast to Scherzinger's critique of quotation pieces such as John Zorn's *Forbidden Fruit* which "announce their references plainly, without irony, without any trope of distorted misreading."¹⁰⁵ In Rihm's music, Williams argues, the subjective element lies in the formal possibilities that Rihm explores and that reshape the experience of the past to become an expression of the present-in-relation-to-the-past. In other words, the meaning of romantic gestures is not 'fixed' in time but is able to shift with this new handling. Williams also argues that Rihm's multiple versions of a number of his own pieces similarly challenge the idea of form as static, instead creating forms that "point beyond the boundaries of the self-contained whole."¹⁰⁶ According to Williams, this openness of form alludes to Adorno's *musique informelle* where the musical moment is free to move in response to its internal needs without being constrained by the dictates of pre-conceived form. Williams's study is informative because, despite obvious divergences between Adorno and Rihm, Williams is able to make an Adornian perspective shed light on Rihm's music in imaginative ways by engaging with Rihm's writings on music. This approach forms an important model of interpretation for my own study of Carter's writings in Chapters 2 and 3: the gaps or partial congruence between Carter and Adorno do not discredit observations about their sharing of mutual ground. It is even possible to glean parallels between Rihm's and Carter's thinking—despite *their* obvious

¹⁰⁴ Alastair Williams, "Wolfgang Rihm and the Adorno Legacy," in *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth Century Music*, ed. Bertold Hoeckner (New York and London: Francis and Taylor, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ Scherzinger, "In Memory of a Receding Dialectic," 90.

¹⁰⁶ Williams, "Wolfgang Rihm and the Adorno Legacy," 99.

differences—in notions such as openness of form, the critical engagement with historical materials and even a positive reconsideration of musical subjectivity (which I address in detail at the end of Chapter 3).

In an equally probing essay, Julian Johnson questions the relevance of Adorno's aesthetic theory to music of the second half of the twentieth century by re-posing the question of the relationship between “new music and new music theory.”¹⁰⁷ What might music theory want to tell us about new music? Johnson's conclusion is that the only analytical pursuit valid today is to reveal the “utopian content” of new music since Adorno, a conclusion that has important significance for the study of Carter's late music. By taking up themes in Adorno's “Vers une musique informelle” in particular, Johnson rethinks the restrictive function and possibility Adorno assigned to the categories of repetition and temporality, texture and sonority, and plenitude and silence, arguing in the process that much ‘recent’ music retains both a critical as well as utopian impulse through its dialectical handling of these materials *as* content. Johnson cites among others the music of Berio, Ligeti, Boulez, Birtwistle, and Feldman. As we saw above, Adorno's focus lay very much with the dialectical treatment of thematic and tonal-atonal relations, something that lost its significance in the innovations post-1945. Johnson argues that Adorno was not able to adequately theorize this shift before his death although he left hints of rethinking the nature of these musical materials in his late writing and these ‘hints’ motivate Johnson's study. In Chapter 3, I discuss this essay extensively and adopt the categories that Johnson proposes as a model for thinking about and analysing Carter's late music.

1.3.e Adorno and technical analysis

The work outlined above exemplifies some of the cutting-edge of Adornian scholarship in musicology in that it aims at rethinking and renewing elements of Adorno's aesthetic theory in order to respond to the context of the newer music which it examines. However, there is another question that needs to be examined in relation to Adorno's legacy and that is its usefulness and possibility for analysis known as formalist, technical, or empirical.

¹⁰⁷ Julian Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” *ibid.*, 69.

Adorno's own position on the role of technical analysis was somewhat contradictory.¹⁰⁸ While Adorno insisted that technical analysis had to be the starting point of any analysis, in itself it was too narrow and restrictive in what it looked at and alone could not access the enigmatic, "riddle-character" of art/music. According to Paddison, Adorno "accuses technical analysis of a narrowness of focus which excludes that which is left over after analysis—what he calls the remainder, the "surplus" (*Rest*)—as irrational, because not susceptible to its methods."¹⁰⁹ Technical analysis as "mere note-counting" cannot provide a complete "interpretive understanding" of a work. Paddison contextualizes Adorno's response to empirical analysis and positivism within the period post Second World War when empirical data collection had all but taken over sociological research in the United States to the detriment of a more speculative Critical Theory. Adorno's requirement for immanent analysis of music was the combination of musical data with "social reflection."

In an extensive essay titled "Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking? Adorno and the Problem of Musical Analysis," Paddison unpacks precisely some of the difficulties with respect to the combining of empirical analysis and philosophical and sociological analysis in Adorno's own writing. He articulates the problem of analysis in Adorno's theory as that of mediation; in other words, connecting the inner workings of the musical composition with the outer workings of social relations (a question already raised above). As mentioned, Adorno placed conceptually a high priority on technical analysis but he saw it only as useful if undertaken in tandem with socio-historical interpretation. There exists, however, no one-to-one correspondence between these inner and outer relationships. How, then, to make connections between the two? Examples such as the break-down of tonality and its related musical forms that we saw in Berg's Op.1 seem more self-evident, perhaps because of the ubiquity of sonata form in the previous era and the relative proximity of that transitional music to its historical precedents. But how can this problem of mediation be solved to enable applicability of "immanent analysis" beyond that limited historical context?

Paddison goes in pursuit of a methodology for Adorno's "immanent analysis." The crux of Paddison's interpretation of Adorno here is that the musical materials of an authentic modernist work mediate their own critique immanently:

¹⁰⁸ See Adorno, "On the Problem of Musical Analysis."

¹⁰⁹ Paddison, "Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking?," 217.

The extent that the structure of the individual work is a critical reflection upon the historically preformed material (which is not the same for all historical periods), the work may be considered to “contain its own analysis,” to use Adorno’s own phrase. ... it is this self-contained analysis [performed by the composition] that needs to be revealed by the process of immanent technical analysis [performed by the music analyst/theorist].”¹¹⁰

In other words, it is for the analyst to answer how are the ‘universal’ pre-formed historical musical materials (such as formal schemes, tonality, rhythmic systems, etc.) are particularized, re-interpreted, given new functions in the composition, organized in a way that they perform a critical reflection upon those materials. What is the nature of the dialectical interaction between what is given and how it is shaped anew? Paddison concludes that “[t]he work is seen as authentic to the degree that its structure is the outcome of this inner dialectic.”¹¹¹ Thus, instead of looking for social meaning through analogy, the organisation of the musical materials themselves contains the sedimented socio-historical content “mediated through [the work’s] form”.¹¹²

To provide a more concrete model of how to go about such an analysis, Paddison argues “it is necessary to be able to envisage the direction of Adorno’s thinking here at a theoretical level” because of Adorno’s lack of specific examples. Paddison define a model of “a dialectical theory of form” following Adorno’s concept of “second reflection.” To begin with, Paddison outlines what might constitute a ‘first’ reflection in the analytical process as follows:

A first level of reflection would be one where material is uncovered, a content is analyzed, relations are identified, a factual account of the structure can be given. I suggest that the aim of such an analysis is to establish the technical consistency (*Stimmigkeit*) of a work, its correspondence to its dominating idea as unity of form and content (*Form/Inhalt*).¹¹³

The process of “first reflection” as articulated here touches on some problems for analysis. The aim of establishing “technical consistency ... as unity of form and content” is central to Adorno’s theory and distinct from the idea of organic unity, as we have already seen in the discussion of the form-content dialectic. Adorno’s concept of *Stimmigkeit* Paddison defines as “the full realization in the structure of the work of its

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 225.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 224.

¹¹² Ibid., 223.

¹¹³ Ibid., 222.

motivating ‘idea’ or concept” which additionally must include the composer’s response to the “historical demands of the material.”¹¹⁴ These ideas are tied up with a constellation of concepts in Adorno’s theory, including that the idea of each work is in fact centred on the working out of a “problem” that is both material and historical (as seen in the Berg and Beethoven examples above).¹¹⁵ However, as it is articulated in the quote above, “a factual account of the structure” can easily be mistaken for the notion that a purely formalist (objective) analysis is possible, something that today’s self-reflective music analyst has already been taught is illusion.¹¹⁶

Some of the difficulty is resolved in Adorno’s “second reflection” which Paddison outlines as involving a number of different types of engagements with the work and with the analysis of the “first reflection”:

A level of second reflection involves both critique and interpretation, not only in terms of the inner relations of the closed world of the musical work revealed through immanent analysis, which is an aspect on “first reflection,” but in terms of the relations between the work and its social and historical context—a context which also constitutes, if I understand Adorno correctly, the work’s structure, as socially and historically mediated content (*Gehalt*).¹¹⁷

Thus, a “second reflection” requires that both the analysis of the ‘first reflection’ as well as the socio-historical context of the materials are critically re-interpreted. This does not resolve the problem of what constitutes “empirical data collection” in relation to music analysis, which, as we will revisit below, became/remains a site of contention in the music discipline. Equally, how to uncover what is historically sedimented meaning within the materials remains unanswered and subject to the same contentions as the analysing of material relations themselves. Despite Paddison’s model remaining somewhat abstract for practising analysts, “first reflection” and “second reflection” actually provide a very useful breakdown of a possible way of proceeding with

¹¹⁴ Adorno’s *Aesthetics of Music*, 89. Possibly best illustrated in the Dahlhaus and the Schmalfeldt analyses of Beethoven’s “Tempest” Sonata discussed in Horton, “Dialectics and music analysis.”

¹¹⁵ See Alastair Williams, *New Music and the Claims of Modernity* (Ashgate, 1997), 78.

¹¹⁶ Despite what I see as difficulties for practical analysis, Paddison’s careful and detailed development of “a dialectical theory of form” is extremely useful for understanding how musical analysis fits into Adorno’s larger philosophical and sociological project. That this account highlights challenges for analysis is very useful for finding ways in which analysis can respond to Adorno. For example, on the possibility of “objective analysis,” see Edgar, “Adorno and Musical Analysis.” Similar issues are discussed in Klumpenhouwer, “Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music,” 392. Paddison himself also makes a full exploration of Adorno’s objections to positivist analytical pursuits in Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 218-22.

¹¹⁷ *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 222.

immanent analysis. In fact I structure this current study around a two-part reflection, Part 2 being a “formal analysis” and Part 3 being a “second reflection” that engages in particular with Paddison’s theory of mediation which he outlines in a complimentary essay “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation” and which I discuss at the start of Chapter 7: *A critical interpretation of Boston and ASKO concertos*.

A good example of some of the problems for analysis which are highlighted by Paddison can be found in a special issue of *19th-Century Music* which presented four analytical responses to Adorno’s “Schubert” essay and one commentary on these responses from Kofi Agawu.¹¹⁸ The analytical essays are extremely interesting in themselves, engaging specifically with Adorno’s hearing and interpretation of Schubert but also with Schubert’s music in various ways. What is of most value to my present study is Agawu’s response. Agawu reflects on the attempts in the other four essays to provide concrete analytical examples to Adorno’s “verbal-poetic” insights into what constitutes Schubert’s unique musical style. Most interesting is his claim that “[a]nalysts who seek to domesticate Adorno’s thought by aligning the more or less explicit methodology of canonical analytical techniques with the implied methodology of his peculiar philosophical or poetic formulations are always rewarded with a deficit.”¹¹⁹ And yet, he argues, Adorno’s insights should at the same time not be ignored by analysts because in fact they are so strongly supported by the music itself, thereby acknowledging what he calls a “double impossibility” in approaching empirical analysis through Adornian thought. Agawu seems to lead us to a dead-end, but in fact what he does is urge the analyst to suspend certainty and retain the provisional, the speculative, the poetic in writing about analytical observations (as Adorno did) because it gives access to imaginative understanding that falls outside the “technical baggage” carried by conventional analysis (as Adorno also argued). What we can take away from his critique is that the inherent conflict between empirical analysis and the speculative philosophical mode of analysis that Adorno practised ought not be resolved into one another but rather “[i]n order to begin to make good on Adorno’s legacy, music analysis must be willing to take nothing for granted ...”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Kofi Agawu, “What Adorno Makes Possible for Music Analysis,” *19th-Century Music* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2005).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

While on the one hand this conclusion puts into question Paddison's notion of an analytical first reflection providing a "factual account of the structure," on the other hand it points to a way in which the analytical insights can become fruitfully contingent on imaginative rethinking about that which lies outside the music, of sociocultural contradictions not only of the music but of the analytical method. Frederic Jameson writes "the dialectic proceeds by standing outside a specific thought ... in order to show that the alleged conclusions in fact harbour the workings of unstable categorical oppositions."¹²¹ This speaks to Agawu's call to retain the provisional within the empirical. Adorno himself rejected any *a priori* method that can be applied to the analysis of music that will get to "the fact" of it:

... methods cannot be separated from the subject and treated as something ready-made and external, but must be produced in the course of a process of interaction with their subject. ... Hegel understood dialectics not as a particular philosophical standpoint, but as the sustained attempt to follow the movement of the object under discussion and to help it find expression.¹²²

This "attempt to follow the movement of the object under discussion" is an important notion that I take up in a different guise in Chapter 4: *Analytical prelude* where I outline in detail methodological considerations for my analysis of Carter's *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos.

1.3.f Music theory's critical self-examination

Adorno wrote: "It is just as urgent for music theory to reflect on its own procedures as it is for music itself."¹²³ The question of how to engage with the musical text "itself" has by now had a significant history since Adorno. The decades around the turn of the twenty-first century were ones of intense self-interrogation for the discipline of music theory (and analysis), partially in response to criticism from the "new musicology" that

¹²¹ Frederic Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2010), 26; quoted in Samuel John Wilson, "An Aesthetics of Past-Present Relations in the Experience of Late 20th- and Early 21st-Century Art Music" (PhD. diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2013), 25. Klumpenhouwer concurs noting that "ideology critique involves what Adorno calls 'thinking against thought,' showing 'the inequality among the equality,' carrying identity thinking forward to express the contradictions it sets out to obscure." Klumpenhouwer, "Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music," 391, quoting Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 141.

¹²² Theodor W. Adorno, *Sound Figures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 145. Wilson also discusses this in "An Aesthetics of Past-Present Relations," 23-24.

¹²³ Theodor W. Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle," in *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music* (London and New York: Verso, 1998; reprint, 2011), 272.

music analysis lacked “context,” partially motivated by music theorists’ own interests in epistemologies informing the humanities more broadly and cultural studies in particular. Agawu’s summing up of the situation in 1997 in “Analysing Music under the New Musicological Regime” provides an overview of the parallels between musicology’s adventures with post-modernist lines of inquiry and music analysis’s melding of formalist inquiry with the questioning of its own foundational assumptions.¹²⁴ In fact, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries produced a large number of notable publications addressing the question of what is possible for music analysis given our current state of knowledge. Many of these refer to Adorno, recognising his pioneering theorising of the mediated nature of musical material and the dialectic of musical structure and social meaning. In “Analysis in Context,” Jim Samson says: “The recognition that music’s ‘project of autonomy’ was historically produced and contingent brooks little dissension today. Well before the New Musicology, it was a central plank of Adorno’s aesthetics, and his commentary in the respect remains persuasive.”¹²⁵ Similarly, in his introduction to *Music/Ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, Adam Krims notes that “Adorno’s attempt at a solution to the problem of close reading [of musical structure] anticipates many of the current critiques of music theory.”¹²⁶ In this debate, theorists contesting the claim that formalist readings of music lacked value often harnessed Adorno’s aesthetic theory. But equally, voices emerged that highlighted the need to critically rethink Adornian aesthetics in a new era and for a new style of music.¹²⁷ Then, of course, there have been the myriad other influences on music analysis from feminist theory, theories of sexuality, race, ethnicity and other strands of philosophical thought such as those of Badiou, Deleuze and Arendt to mention only a few.¹²⁸ While a clearly defined, cohesive shape for a ‘critical music theory’ might not have emerged, certainly as far as undergoing a process of critical reflection in the

¹²⁴ Kofi Agawu, “Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime,” *The Journal of Musicology* 15, no. 3 (Summer, 1997). See also Subotnik’s musicological account in “Adorno and the New Musicology.”

¹²⁵ Jim Samson, “Analysis in Context,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicolas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 47.

¹²⁶ Krims, ed. *Music/Ideology: resisting the aesthetic* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998), 4.

¹²⁷ For a discussion of examples, see the introduction to *ibid.*, 1-11. Also Henry Klumpenhouwer, “Commentary: Poststructuralism and Issues of Music Theory,” in *Music/Ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998); Giles Hooper, “An Incomplete Project: Modernism, Formalism and the ‘Music Itself,’” *Music Analysis* 23/ii-iii (2004).

¹²⁸ See for example Martin Scherzinger, ed. *Music in Contemporary Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

discipline of music theory and analysis, there are few stones that have been left unturned at this stage.¹²⁹

Where does all this leave us as far as infusing the “note-by-note analysis,” as Agawu calls it, with a dialectical interpretation?¹³⁰ In other words, how to (as Jameson suggests) “stand outside of” any chosen conceptual framework for technical analysis and reflect on assumptions underlying the framework (what does not fit within it, what is not accommodated by its concepts and categories), while advancing at the same time a socio-historical reflection on both music and method?¹³¹ In what follows, I discuss scholarship that is exemplary in the way it engages with this pivotal question of linking text with context.

Agawu suggests that one way to unhinge empirical certainty is by a willingness “to stage ongoing enactments and re-enactments of the musical work” rather than to claim or refer to a “definitive analysis.” Outstanding examples of the engagement with this notion of re-enactment are Scherzinger’s readings of Schoenberg and Webern *against* Adorno’s own analyses. Scherzinger takes Adorno head on by revising his “disparaging reading of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone music” to demonstrate that a dialectic of pre-formed and re-formed materials can still be read in this music.¹³² In brief, Adorno objects that a twelve-tone row pre-determines the compositional material to an unacceptable level and eliminates the possibility of a dialectical handling of pitch relations. However, rather than a dialectic between tonal and atonal tendencies as in Schoenberg’s transitional music (or the music of Berg), Scherzinger positions the dialectic in the opposition between the organisational strictures of the system (i.e. order within a row) and the structures that can be subjectively determined (e.g. motivic connections, hexachordal ordering, incongruent phrase boundaries). Schoenberg’s subjective handling of the row also elevates pitch organisation to a significance unknown in the tonal world of pitch-class equivalent function and thus, Scherzinger claims, through the manner of disposition of the row, “the dialectical interplay [of the

¹²⁹ Samson’s essay is an exemplary charting this journey within the discipline. Samson, “Analysis in Context.”

¹³⁰ Agawu, “Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime,” 302.

¹³¹ Agawu asks “Is there any way in which music theory can embrace the positive tenets of the new musicology and still give due attention to what Adorno called the ‘technical structure’ of musical works, not as an end but as a means to an end?” *Ibid.*, 301.

¹³² Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 79.

row and its realisation] functions critically.”¹³³ By “standing outside of” Adorno’s own dialectic, Scherzinger has been able to re-interpret the function of Schoenberg’s pre-compositional pitch material and “re-enact” the workings of the music in a more critical way.

Similarly, the historical distance denied Adorno has afforded Scherzinger the possibility of fruitfully re-interpreting social context as manifest within the musical materials of Webern’s symmetrical structures, arguing them to be progressive in terms of “a radical critique of gender hierarchy.”¹³⁴ Similar to Adorno’s objection to Schoenberg’s twelve-tone music, Adorno’s critique of symmetrical inversion in Webern’s music hinged on the loss of a dialectic between compositional material and subjective expression. But unlike the way Scherzinger is able to demonstrate subjectivity in Schoenberg’s use of the rows, the structures in Webern’s symmetrically inverted row forms are so utterly pre-determined that they pose a genuine challenge. Adorno claimed that in these compositions the composer was completely superfluous to the shaping of any of the music’s motivic unity. In re-evaluating Adorno’s claims, Scherzinger pursues the deeper social meaning of symmetrical inversion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in an extensive consideration of the parallel rhetoric around inversion and gender in tonal music theory and other fields of thought, most significantly in sexology. Scherzinger argues that in his inversional structures, Webern in fact creates a musical space free of a dualistic gender identity determined by the dominant rationality by resolving that duality into symmetry, which simultaneously and equally contains both genders as a “third gender.” He shows that this particular transitional moment in history provided Webern the opportunity to engage with gender in this dialectical material manner before public discourse on and scientific inquiry into inversion turned to a discourse of pathologized homosexuality. Scherzinger locates the dialectic in Webern’s symmetrically inverted music between “the closed musical work ... and the social world in which it circulates” rather than solely as a dialectic of musical materials and musical form. Scherzinger’s essay is an outstanding example of the rethinking of Adorno’s categories of dialectic through critically investigating the social context in which the concepts central to this music were born while at the same time remaining loyal to the pursuit of formal analysis.

¹³³ Ibid., 86.

¹³⁴ “Anton Webern and the Concept of Symmetrical Inversion: A Reconsideration on the Terrain of Gender,” *repercussions* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1997). See particularly insightful comments on ‘methodology’ p.88.

Another exceptional essay that resonates with Agawu's call to retain the poetic and the speculative within formal analytical writing is Martin Brody's "'Where to Act, How to Move': Unruly Action in Late Wolpe." Brody's aim is to demonstrate the way the "abstraction" of Wolpe's late music retains an engagement with the social despite its formalism. Hereby, he contests the claim that Wolpe moved from a politicized composer in his youth to a mature composer with a disengaged and insulated modernist aesthetic. Harnessing (via Jameson's observations) the formalism of Adorno's writing as a way to model "the complex modalities of political thinking," Brody models in his own writing the way that Wolpe's music enacts social interaction critically. He analyses "the urgent, comedic exchange of identity and non-identity" between the materials of the ensemble in the opening to Wolpe's *Piece for Two Instrumental Units* by using a richly poetic narrative that references the materials in their specificity, without generalizing theoretically beyond what is necessary to show the "subtle affinities and incongruences" between the musical objects. Brody argues that in the form and the exchange of musical objects, the piece displays a "dialectical awareness." But even more suggestive of a social critique is the way Wolpe imbues his material with a kind of autonomous agency, and this resonates remarkably with Carter. Brody takes Wolpe's *String Quartet 1969* as an example and borrows Arendt's conception of freedom and control in social action. The actions of the opening material, Brody shows, model a community of engaged individuals in pluralistic, simultaneous and non-authoritarian exchange. In other words, the musical content determines its form through its individual and collective actions and while this content might originate in a degree of predetermined (controlled) organisation, the unfolding of the musical action breaks out of its initial structured "confinement" to respond instead freely to the "community of activity."¹³⁵ Brody offers not only a way "to hear the composer's musical forms as modelling critical subjectivity and social engagement" but indeed he offers a verbal-poetic analytical model for accessing this mediation.

A final example of exceptional scholarship that aims to link the music to a broader critical context is John Roeder's essay "'The matter of human cooperation' in Carter's mature style." Roeder's analysis pursues a similar goal to Brody's in that it shows how the "moment-to-moment interactions" of Carter's musical gestures mediate in particular "cooperation," but also "familarly human conflict" and other types of "responsiveness"

¹³⁵ Brody, "'Where to Act, How to Move'," 213-14.

with a framework of minimally predetermined materials.¹³⁶ Roeder is particularly interested in balancing the notion of opposition and conflict in Carter's music with the equally significant notion of cooperation, and while Roeder does not engage with any explicit philosophical models, his focus on the presence of both terms in Carter's music suggests a dialectical awareness. The context in which Roeder situates his analyses is the commentary by Carter himself on the importance of "the matter of human cooperation with its many aspects of feeling and thought" in his music. Like Brody, Roeder weaves a narrative of musical agents that respond with self-determined actions to each other from one moment to the next in Carter's *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux* for flute and clarinet, *Riconoscenza* for solo violin and *String Quartet No.5*. Roeder shows how these interactions also determine the process of large-scale formal unfolding. This model of analytical writing dramatizes the instruments metaphorically while keeping the drama within the confines of the musical form—in other words, without extending the purely musical to a "representation of social cooperation." Roeder's analyses illustrate that the "cooperation" in Carter's music lies in "the formal exigencies of absolute music" which can be seen as homologous to social actions.¹³⁷

The work surveyed here has significance for the analyses in this study, not because I adopt any one specific methodology in my analytical interpretations but rather because these studies model a mode of engaging with a musical object that allows the outside in without losing the self-containedness of the object. They model a dialectical thinking about music and its social other, and about music and its analysis, which shape my own engagement with Carter's aesthetics and his music. In the first part of this thesis I will put Adorno and Carter side by side in an attempt to gain a specific understanding of how Carter saw his music as a "picture of society," as a way of dealing with "the whole conception of human nature," as a "more significant human message," in a similar way to Williams connecting Adorno and Rhim, Paddison connecting Adorno and Ferneyhough or Johnson connecting Adorno with various post-1945 composers. Drawing on Adornian concepts assists me in bringing to the fore a position on new music underpinned by a dialectical philosophical aesthetics that was not only shared by Carter and Adorno but was also representative of a modernist *Zeitgeist* in new music. In

¹³⁶ Roeder, "'The matter of human cooperation' in Carter's Mature Style," 111. Compare with Brody, "'Where to Act, How to Move,'" 214 and 19-20.

¹³⁷ Roeder, "'The matter of human cooperation' in Carter's Mature Style," 137. For different approach to the interpretation of opposition within a solo piece see Joshua Mailman, "An Imagined Drama of Competitive Opposition in Carter's *Scrivo in Vento*, with Notes on Narrative, Symmetry, Quantitative Flux and Heraclitus," *Music Analysis* 28, no. 2-3 (2009), 373-422.

the second part of the thesis, I will present two analyses that develop their own ways of drawing out the immanent dialectic of form and content that I argue is to be found there, and in this task the work of Scherzinger, Brody, Roeder and Agawu have been of particular importance to me. In the third part of the thesis, I widen the context and take a second look at the analyses, bringing in narratives that attempt to access a level of mediated social critique performed by the music, formally and historically. The work that has been of particular significance in this part of my study has been that of Paddison along with Brody and DeNora.

1.4 Aims of this thesis

This study consists of two areas of investigation— Part 1: *Carter, Form and Dialectical Opposition* which traces dialectical thinking in Carter’s compositional aesthetic; and Part 2: *Two Formal Analyses* which offers a reading of form in two examples of Carter’s late music. These two parts can be conceived as two separate investigations with different methodological approaches: the first a hermeneutic approach, searching from within Carter’s written texts ways of interpreting the *author’s stated aesthetic*; the second brings together philosophical understanding and analytical method with the aim of interpreting Carter’s music, *independent of author intent*. To a certain extent, these investigations are carried out separately, responding to the above caution about attempting to meld formal and speculative methods. However, the investigation of Carter’s aesthetic is heavily reliant on my analytical knowledge of Carter’s music and equally my approach to the two formal analyses draws its shape from my understanding of a body of “critical” music theory literature which I have just discussed and to which I add in Chapter 4: *Analytical prelude*. Ultimately my investigation is shaped by the way in which the two approaches intersect and inform each other. This intersection is explored explicitly in Part 3: *Second Reflection*. In this section, I revisit the analytical work, reflecting critically on my technical findings of Part 2 and drawing on insights into Carter’s aesthetic gained in Part 1.

To be more specific, in Part 1 of this study (Chapters 2 and 3) my aim is to make a case for the connection between some (but certainly not all) concepts central to Carter’s musical aesthetic and the milieu of dialectical thought—with Adorno as its main proponent—that undergirded the notion of modern music in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. In Chapter 2, the writings of Carter’s which I discuss come

principally from the period of his earliest published reviews in the 1930s up to the last substantial writings of the 1970s. While not seeking direct influence, I do draw parallels between Adornian aesthetics and Carter's way of articulating his thoughts on new music's place within the history of a Western art music tradition, on temporality in new music, on new music's relationship to its listener, and on the specific ways that the relationship between new musical materials and form carries a responsibility to be true to the social reality in which they are conceived. In Chapter 3, I extend the investigation into the question of the social 'content' of Carter's music. I examine the way in which Carter himself framed the connection between his music and society, and in particular his claim for a critical and utopian side to his musical 'message.' In this chapter I especially aim to show how Carter maintained the central tenets of a modernist as well as personal musical aesthetic while at the same time responding with musical means to the changing socio-political landscape in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

In Part 2, I present formal analyses of two of Carter's late compositions that display with particular clarity a dialectical engagement with historical form and postmodern, or rather perhaps 'late-modern,' content. Carter's use of ritornello form in the *Boston Concerto* and the *ASKO Concerto* demonstrates an explicit engagement with an historical form that embodies ideas of repetition, return, and formal clarity—characteristics associated with a postmodern aesthetic and directly opposed to the qualities of musical material previously associated with Carter's mature compositions. I argue, however, that far from being a postmodern 'turn,' this formal frame exemplifies Carter's critical engagement with history: by placing the demands of the repetitious form and the demands of the constantly varying materials into tension, the music both questions the historical meaning of ritornello form and plays with postmodern expectations of repetition and return. The analyses are technical, drawing on a post-tonal analytical 'tool bag,' without aiming to demonstrate unity per se but leaving room for the presence of contradiction.

In Part 3, I embark on a second reflection on the work I have undertaken in Part 1 and Part 2. Chapter 7 presents a reading of these two pieces informed by notions important to Carter's aesthetic that were considered in Part 1 including musical time, musical memory, utopian 'message' and the engagement with music history. The oppositions in the music are examined through a lens of dialectical relationships stemming from the

materials themselves and from the historical nature of the ritornello form. The critique is extended outwards from the music to the sphere of production, where the dialectic of the autonomy character and the commodity character of the materials are shown to be social mediated through the institutions of music, the processes of music dissemination and the “situatedness” of the composer.¹³⁸ The composer’s working with the musical materials, rather than being a neutral creative endeavour, is instead also shown to be mediated by the social. Finally, in the concluding Chapter 8, I extend the critique a little further, tying together strands of the preceding chapters but at the same time opening up again the distance between Adorno’s thought and that of Carter’s which I have tried to bring closer together in the first part of the thesis. This gesture of opening up at the end rather than concluding tries to suggest that the ideas presented here are not fixed, while at the same time showing that they have all the same usefully facilitated the possibility of a new direction in examining Carter’s music and musical thought.

¹³⁸ This part of the study draws extensively on Paddison, “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation.”

Chapter 2

Tracing the dialectical in Carter's compositional aesthetic

“Although constantly preoccupied with musical dialectic, composers have often felt [the] need of preventing it from becoming a meaningless routine, and have searched in many directions for new freshness.” – Elliott Carter

Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents, p.164

“...the dialectical synthesis of the contributing sub-continuities and characters is irreducible to any one of these or to any “sum” of their qualities” – Elliott Carter

Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds, p.99

2.1 Introduction

In the search for a broader interpretive framework for Elliott Carter's music, one might reasonably look to Carter's own discourse on his music and on contemporary music more generally. Carter has been an important figure among a number of intellectually engaged composers of the twentieth century. While he did not produce treatises or analytical works, like Schoenberg's *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* or *Theory of Harmony*, nor publish a specific manifesto on his compositional aesthetic, like Boulez's *Orientations* and *On Music Today*, or Cage's *A Year From Monday*, Carter can nonetheless be compared to these other composers in his extra-compositional engagement with his audiences on the philosophical, social and aesthetic dimensions of music.¹³⁹ These engagements have taken the form of articles, reviews of music and other art forms, extended program notes on his own music, published lectures and interviews, and as the subject of a major documentary film. In addition to Carter's published writings, there exists a large range of insightful archival material in the form of written drafts of talks, beginnings of articles and a composition booklet as well as recordings of various types. Carter scholarship is beginning to pay closer attention to these materials.¹⁴⁰ Scholarly interest was sparked in particular since Meyer and

¹³⁹ The *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds* interview with Allen Edwards published in 1971 comes closest to Carter's personal manifesto.

¹⁴⁰ See for example, Schmidt, “Emanzipation des musicalischen Diskurses. Die Skizzen zu Elliott Carters zweitem Streichquartett und seine theoretischen Arbeiten in den späten 50er Jahren,” 209-48; Schmidt, “‘I try to write music that will appeal to an intelligent listener's ear.’ On Elliott Carter's string quartets,”

Shreffler exposed the extent and significance of Carter's archive at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in their publication to celebrate Carter's centennial year.¹⁴¹

Carter's writing presents a point of view informed especially by his own experience as a composer living through the greater part of the twentieth century and beyond. Jonathan Bernard observes this feature of Carter's writing in his introduction to *Elliott Carter: Collected essays and lectures*: "Carter's life as a composer, it is fair to say, has provided him, as a writer, with a point of departure: he often seems to feel impelled, in the medium of prose, to generalize upon his own experience."¹⁴² His writings, spanning the number of decades that they do, also represent aspects of the history of particular moments and movements during the twentieth century which intersected with stages of Carter's musical and personal experience and development. However, this history is more than just a backdrop to Carter's musical endeavours. Carter's long intellectual engagement with questions of new music extend to its relationship to history as well as to the present, in particular how music fitted into the social and the political, how it related to notions of nationalism and internationalism and to ideas from other art forms, and not least what new music's relationship was to its performance, its audience and the techniques of its creation. Carter very deliberately *thought* about many facets of music and did so in ways that attempted to deepen an understanding of the complexities and problems of *music of the time*. Informing his own experience was also his extensive reading of American and British, as well as French, German and Italian literature and of certain Western philosophers. Carter's desire to articulate his insights into the complexities of music in the twentieth century made him one of the more significant music intellectuals of our age.¹⁴³

For Carter, it was not until 1964 while in Berlin on a Ford Foundation Scholarship, that he became familiar with Adorno's writings. In an insightful interview in 1995 with the

168-89; the recording in the Betty Freeman collection transcribed in Jake Johnson, "Elliott Carter in Los Angeles, January 12, 1994," *Elliott Carter Studies Online* 1 (2016), <http://studies.elliottcarter.org/volume01/04Johnson/04Johnson.html>; Carter's Minnesota Lectures transcribed in the forthcoming issue of *Elliott Carter Studies Online* 3 (2018); and Guberman's extensive consideration of archival material at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War." See also the preface to *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ix-xi.

¹⁴¹ Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*.

¹⁴² Jonathan Bernard, "Introduction: Essayist Despite Himself," *Elliott Carter: collected essays and lectures, 1937-1995* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 1997), vii.

¹⁴³ Bernard assesses of the value of Carter's essays as "among the very best of their kind." *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

then German PhD student Annette van Dyck-Hemming, Carter said that it was during this time that he read everything he could of Adorno's in German and later also acquired Italian versions of *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy* and *In Search of Wagner*, which he claimed were easier for him to understand than the German texts. However, in this same interview Carter distances himself completely from Adorno and Adornian ideas as well as the German Idealist tradition more generally:

Annette van Dyck (AvD): When and how did you come to know Adorno esp. Adornos [sic] writings?

Elliott Carter (EC): I didn't really... You understand that I read that magazine 'Die Reihe' in the old days and I read about Adorno but I didn't come to know anything about Adorno until living in Berlin in 1964 ...

I mean I have a great many almost all of—while I was in Berlin then I became very interested and I bought all of his books that were published at that time in German but I must add, I find it very very difficult to read. All the way through there are very remarkable things. Actually, I have translations of the book on Wagner and Mahler in Italian and I can read that much better... So I find the total concept of his music ... I don't understand ... I'm not very sympathetic to it because of one thing: we haven't been through a political situation in this country that is like that in Germany and I also find that the whole idea, the dialectic that comes from Hegelianism is something I don't really understand very well. I'm not philosophically trained in it, it disturbed me. I find it very hard to understand any of the German: Husserl and Heidegger, I find both of them very hard to understand, Wittgenstein. So these all... I mean I haven't made a grade up to learn; I just hadn't have [sic] the time to train myself to understand these things.¹⁴⁴

Twenty years earlier, in correspondence with Bayan Northcott in 1974, Carter gives a brief but more balanced assessment of his opinion of Adorno's work:

I met Adorno once when we were on a German speaking panel about neue Musik in Berlin - he delivered in interminable Hegelian German for what seemed forever and, since I could hardly understand anything that he said (we were in public, at the Akademie der Kunst) [xx] I had to respond in English and admit it - much to the

¹⁴⁴ Annette van Dyck-Hemming, "Diskurse zur 'Musik Elliott Carters.' Versuch einer Dekonstruktiven Hermeneutik 'Moderner Musik'" (PhD. diss., Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 2002), 226-30. Remarkably, while Carter claims a certain ignorance of German philosophy, he nonetheless had read or had ventured to read texts by many of its central figures as James Wierzbicki has noted in *Elliott Carter*, 59.

amusement of the audience.¹⁴⁵

I have suffered my way with what help I could get from a dictionary through the German of his 'Philosophie der neuen Musik' and am glad that finally it has appeared in English - It is depressing, - and it shows its age badly, I think. I shall write more when I have studied it out. I like his book on Mahler and especially his short essay[s] - like the one on Parsifal! Which are not such hard going. [...] At least music accumulated some intelligence, if only philosophical, with him.¹⁴⁶

It is interesting to speculate why Carter later distanced himself so strongly from Adorno and from German philosophical thinking more generally. It is possible that by the 1980s and 1990s so much more had been written about the philosophy of modernist music that Carter no longer felt in a position to say anything about such ideas with confidence (reflected to some extent in his comment above that "I haven't made a grade up to learn; I just haven't had the time to train myself to understand these things"). By this stage his age was also advancing and he was less inclined to be distracted away from composing by other interests. In the 1950s and 1960s, by contrast, these ideas were only just arousing interest, certainly in the Anglo-Saxon musical landscape, and were a vibrant and vital part of new musical thinking.¹⁴⁷ It could have been that at that time Carter's obvious facility in approaching philosophical texts gave him the confidence to reference them in his own writings and lectures with a sense of authority.¹⁴⁸

Nevertheless, as far as Adorno's writings were concerned, Carter had at the time clearly been interested enough in Adorno's ideas to "suffer through" a reading in German, as well as undertake a thorough study in English, of *Philosophy of New Music*. In fact, the English translation had only just appeared the year prior to his letter to Northcott.¹⁴⁹ Carter had found things he liked in Adorno's later writings and he also had respect for the "intelligence" that Adorno had brought to the subject of modern music. Thus, while

¹⁴⁵ This anecdote is also in the interview with van Dyck-Hemming, "Diskurze zur 'Musik Elliott Carters'," 226.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Elliott Carter to Bayan Northcott, Elliott Carter Collection, Paul Sacher Stiftung, March 15, 1974.

¹⁴⁷ See George Gelles, "An Interview with Elliott Carter," *Academy* 2, no. 1 (July 1979). Here Carter talks about his earliest thinking about the importance of the connection between music and philosophy while teaching at St. John's College, quoted in Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 231-2. On Carter's years at St. John's and the value of music within a liberal arts curriculum, see Hollis Thoms, "Rolling His Jolly Tub: Composer Elliott Carter, St. John's College Tutor, 1940-1942," *The St. John's Review* 53, no. 2 (Spring 2012).

¹⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion of many of these texts see Jonathan Bernard, "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time," *Musical Quarterly* 79 (1995). See also Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter*, on Carter's philosophical interests.

¹⁴⁹ The first English translation was published in 1973, so Carter had acquired a copy of it soon after it became available. Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

many of Adorno's ideas were problematic for Carter (as they were for most composers, particularly in earlier writings such as *Philosophy of New Music* and later in the challenges Adorno brought to the Darmstadt school),¹⁵⁰ Carter had nonetheless studied them and was even grateful for their articulation. Echoes of Adornian thought are certainly evident in Carter's writings and public statements, including some direct references and citations, which I will discuss below.

To be clear, Carter never subscribed to Adorno's theory of modern music and any shared aesthetic might be put down to a modernist *Zeitgeist*, or as discussed in Chapter 1, the influence of an 'Adornian' era. Other influences would have certainly contributed. For example, Carter knew Schoenberg's *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* and *Theory of Harmony*, and the essays in *Style and Idea*,¹⁵¹ texts brimming with dialectical thought as Michael Cherlin illustrates.¹⁵² Another émigré to move to Carter's side of the United States was Stefan Wolpe. Carter was friendly with Wolpe and knew his music and writings well.¹⁵³ Wolpe's explicit left-Hegelian influence would also not have been lost on Carter.¹⁵⁴ Regardless of influence, however, there are concepts that reappear through Carter's writings which show a dialectical thinking about composition. These concepts are important for understanding the foundations of Carter's compositional aesthetic and they can be fruitfully brought into contact with and illuminated through Adornian notions of the dialectic of new music. This task is the subject of the current chapter.

One of the themes that recurs throughout Carter's writing on music is what he referred to as the "human side of things": broadly, his aim to manifest *musically* his

¹⁵⁰ See for example Gianmario Borio, "Dire cela, sans savoir quoi: the question of meaning in Adorno and in the musical avant-garde" in *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth Century Music*, ed. Bertold Hoeckner (New York and London: Francis and Taylor, 2006); and Edwards, "Convergences and Discord in the Correspondence Between Ligeti and Adorno."

¹⁵¹ See for example references in Elliott Carter, "Expressionism and American Music (1965/72)," in *Elliott Carter: collected essays and lectures, 1937-1995* ed. Jonathan W. Bernard (New York: University of Rochester Press, 1997), 75-76.

¹⁵² Cherlin, "Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg's Music and Thought."

¹⁵³ Carter invited Wolpe to talk at Dartington Summer School, see Carter, "In Memoriam Stefan Wolpe (1972)." Both composers would have also read each other's writings; for example, Carter's "Shop Talk by and American Composer" and Wolpe's "Thinking Twice" were both published in Barney Childs and Ernie S. Schwartz, eds. *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1967).

¹⁵⁴ For more on Wolpe's compositional aesthetic and philosophy see Brody, "'Where to Act, How to Move'"; Greenbaum, "Stefan Wolpe's Dialectical Logic: A Look at the 'Second Piece for Violin Alone'"; and "Debussy, Wolpe and Dialectical Form," *Contemporary Music Review* 27, no. 2-3 (2008): with reference to Carter on p. 350. See also Brigid Cohen, *Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

understanding of human experience and, crucially, his idealized vision of people relating to each other.¹⁵⁵ Carter articulates this social vision as one of people co-existing peacefully despite difference, where unavoidable opposition (opposition that is in fact necessary to maintain individual difference) leads not to the kind of devastating conflicts of the twentieth century, but to a new kind of pluralistic human activity characterized by ultimate cooperation. The construction and treatment of *musical* conflict and opposition in Carter's compositions can be read as his exploration of the possibilities of such a social vision articulated through music. In a 1988 interview Carter said: "I see music as a metaphor for how society should behave, honoring the individual, but working together for a common goal."¹⁵⁶ The conviction that purely musical processes are capable of embodying a critical social vision connects strongly with Adorno. Carter frequently referred to the dialectical relationship of individual and society in statements about the message he wanted to convey through his music. In interview with Andrew Ford, Carter summarizes in the simplest terms how this relationship plays a role in his musical composition:

I never think of my pieces in the abstract. Very early in the piece the general typecasting of the various instruments or groups of instruments becomes something that is, to me, a means of expression of a certain specific idea, like a human idea: the idea of groups of people in society; individuals and their relationships to each other. My music has been very concerned with the presentation of individual characters and their interrelations.¹⁵⁷

Toward the end of Frank Scheffer's 90 minute long documentary, in a shot taken in the early 2000s, Carter elaborates on the importance of an awareness of the social component to his music:

In previous times there was a dominant group of society that explained just how everybody ought to act and now this has become much freer. As a result people have to make ... every individual has to make a choice about how we will cooperate and how we will fit into any particular situation that is produced by a group of people. And this is very important in my work – the idea of having all the ... I've tried to give, in a string quartet for instance, the idea that each player is an individual that he has his

¹⁵⁵ See Scheffer, "Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time," 6'41". See also for example Benjamin Boretz, "Conversation with Elliott Carter" *Perspectives of New Music* 8, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1970): 14.

¹⁵⁶ Mark Swed, "The Difficulties And Rewards Of being Difficult," *New York Times* 27 November 1988.

¹⁵⁷ Andrew Ford, *Composer to Composer: conversations about contemporary music* (St. Leonards, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1993), 6.

own way of thinking, his own way of expression and music, but he also has a way of behaving in relation to the other people that are playing with him.¹⁵⁸

Over the many years of Carter making such statements, their complexity, specific emphasis and choice of wording changed, reflecting both Carter's professional development and his ageing, but also the changing socio-political climate to which he was responding. Nevertheless, the underlying proposition that his music is an abstracted message about the individual in relation to the group, about the struggle or conflict of the expressive self in relation to the social whole, remained primary in Carter's compositional aesthetic.¹⁵⁹

How this aesthetic is realized in Carter's composition will be explored in the rest of this chapter through a number of topics. The first is the nature of the relationship of musical innovation to the musical past. For Carter the communicative act of a piece of music comes about only through an acknowledgement and a reshaping of the historical nature of its musical materials—not by way of novelty for its own sake, nor by evading the influence of inherited musical history, problematic as it might be, but by grappling with it. In the same way that it is impossible to say something new about human interaction itself by beginning with a “clean slate,” so it is impossible to say anything musically new without a dialectical engagement with a musical tradition. Carter's views on this topic and the points of connection they make with Adornian thought, I will examine next in section 2.2: *Music history and “dialectical method.”*

The second topic in tracing the dialectical in Carter's compositions involves the connection between form and temporality in new music. To compose a music where, in Carter's words, “individuals” can “fit it” while also having “his own way of thinking, his own expression and music” requires special consideration of the way music can be articulated in time.¹⁶⁰ That innovation with musical time became Carter's main preoccupation has become somewhat of a cliché today but in the context of the post-1945 new music debates Carter was engaged with problems that were pressing for a

¹⁵⁸ Scheffer, “Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time,” 52'03”.

¹⁵⁹ See for example the comments Carter makes to cellist Alisa Weilerstein about the Cello Concerto in the last interview that he gives before his death: “I love the beginning of this, you're playing away and then BANG the orchestra, and then you're playing softly and then BANG the orchestra ... I like that, the whole orchestra comes in and here's this poor cello trying ... But it keeps the cello playing and the cello wins out!” (at 2'12”) “Elliott Carter - The Last Interview,” (Filmed July 2012. Posted October 11, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1stGn4NA-tU>). Accessed 24 September, 2016.

¹⁶⁰ “Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time.” 52'03”.

generation of composers. Some historical context for Carter's interest in the temporal in music is worth briefly revisiting. In the wake of the disintegration of tonality and its associated temporal formal structures, new music's search for solutions to the interlinked problems posed by musical form and temporality was felt as urgent.¹⁶¹

Carter famously said "Any technical or esthetic consideration of music really must start with the matter of time."¹⁶² The centrality of the "time problem" in music was also identified by Adorno. In one of his later essays, "Vers une musique informelle," Adorno writes:

In traditional listening the music unfolds from the parts to the whole, in tune with the flow of time itself. This flow—that is to say, the parallel between the temporal succession of musical events and the pure flow of time itself—has become problematical and presents itself within the work as a task to be thought through and mastered.¹⁶³

But the question of temporality in the arts had already become pressing more than half a century earlier, permeating most artistic endeavours around the turn of the twentieth century. Adorno had located the breakdown of the linkage between the language-like nature of tonality and its temporal structuring through formal schemas in its embryotic stage as far back as Beethoven.¹⁶⁴ The crisis unravelled fully for Adorno after 1910 when the moment of Schoenberg's free atonal music dissolved into the strictures of 12-tone music. Having grown up in the ferment of these ideas it is little wonder that they found such strong expression in Carter's own musical concerns.

As Bernard shows in "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time," early twentieth-century modernist thinking about temporality in the arts generally was defining for Carter's creative maturity.¹⁶⁵ It included the Marxist film director Sergi Eisenstein's dialectical theory of film at which I take a closer look below. Furthermore, James Wierzbicki points out that, in addition to the large range of artistic influences during his

¹⁶¹ See in particular Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 264; and Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, esp. 209-10. Relevant here are also Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 149-58 and 79-80; and Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 180-82 and also 83-84.

¹⁶² Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 90.

¹⁶³ Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle," 271.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. See comments on this in Alastair Williams, "New Music, Late Style: Adorno's 'Form in the New Music'," *Music Analysis* 27/ii-iii (2008): 196-97.

¹⁶⁵ Bernard, "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time." Bernard's focus is on Carter's most frequently self-declared influences during the early years of his musical education and career up to 1944 and those that specifically relate to questions of time/form in the arts: American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, French writers Marcel Proust, Charles Koechlin, Gisele Brelet, and Pierre Suvchinsky (expat-Russian), Russian-born choreographer George Ballantine, and Russian cinematographer Sergi Eisenstein.

early years, Carter cites significant philosophers in his writings about temporality and form, among them Hegel:¹⁶⁶

... Carter, in his various efforts to explain his new “temporal thought,” also deals with ideas about time as expressed by serious thinkers who range chronologically from Greek antiquity (Plato and Pythagoras, explicitly, but by implication also Aristoxenus) through the heyday of music’s “common practice period” (Hegel, explicitly, but by implication also Kant and Hanslick) to the time of his own writings; the more or less contemporaneous thinkers he cites include Henri Bergson, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Susanne K. Langer.¹⁶⁷

Carter’s ideas on musical temporality and form were clearly shaped by a range of extra-musical influences. Musical influences were of course of no less significance, especially those Carter gained through personal contact.¹⁶⁸ Shreffler traces the early influences on Carter of the American ultramodernists of the 1920s and 30s and their experiments with temporal ideas in music: Cowell’s tempo modulations, Seeger’s dissonant counterpoint, Crawford’s rhythmic forms, Ives’s polyrhythmic layering.¹⁶⁹ By contrast, Dörte Schmidt considers significant European sources in Carter’s development, surmising how “the public presence of the émigrés in American musical life of the post-war years” might have influenced Carter.¹⁷⁰ Schmidt paints a picture of a vibrant European-influenced performance culture that would have surrounded Carter living on America’s east coast, and especially the performance practice of the Kolisch Quartet. She considers Carter’s polyvocal and formal experiments in his string quartets and his dramaturgy of musical voices having to do with a (democratic) social ideal, as paralleling ideas of Schoenberg’s circle.¹⁷¹

The treatment of musical time and its implications for formal innovation were directly connected to how Carter conceived of the treatment of conflict and opposition in his

¹⁶⁶ In Carter, “Time Lecture.”; and “Music and the Time Screen (1976).”

¹⁶⁷ Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter*, 59.

¹⁶⁸ See for example Guberman, “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War.”; Anne C. Shreffler, “Elliott Carter and his America,” *Sonus* 14, no. 2 (1994); and Felix Meyer and Anne C. Shreffler, ed., *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008).

¹⁶⁹ Anne C. Shreffler, “Elliott Carter and His America,” *Sonus* 14, no. 2 (1994)

¹⁷⁰ Schmidt, “‘I try to write music that will appeal to an intelligent listener’s ear.’ On Elliott Carter’s string quartets,” 168-89, quote on 173.

¹⁷¹ Schmidt cites important premières (of Schoenberg, Bartók and Berg) given by the Kolisch Quartet and the Juilliard Quartet, influenced by the Kolisch, as well as Rudolph Kolisch’s lecture “Democratic Principles of Ensemble Playing” given at Black Mountain College in 1944 and Dika Newlin’s *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg* (1947) and René Leibowitz’s *Schoenberg and his School* (1949).

music. In other words, musical temporality and form lay at the foundation of expressing Carter's "human message." Put another way, the dialectic between the expressive needs of Carter's individual musical strands (that are deliberately conceived in opposition to each other) and the overall collective musical expression must find a formal unfolding in time that does justice to each in order to compose a truthful message about how collective and individual relationships exist and can be reconceived fruitfully. Points of contact between Adorno's aesthetic theory and these notions in Carter's composition are discussed in the remainder of the chapter, section 2.3: *Musical form and "time continuity";* section 2.4: *The dialectic of musical motion: "human" and "inhuman" experiences of time;* section 2.5: *Musical form and Adorno's Subject-Object dialectic;* and finally section 2.6: *Carter's dialectic of expression and construction.*

2.2 Music History and "dialectical method"

It is certainly possible to read aspects of dialectical thinking into Carter's musical techniques and writings, even without the explicit use of terms such as "dialectic" or "dialectical." However, even this language, while rare, is not altogether absent from Carter's texts. Most notable is a lecture Carter delivered in 1961 at the Tokyo "East-West Music Encounter" festival.¹⁷² The thread running through Carter's presentation to the festival's (presumably largely Eastern) audience is that the successful continuation of the Western art music tradition is due to its "dialectical" nature. The title of the talk—"Extending the Classical Syntax"—highlights how Carter wished to emphasize the historical continuity of modern Western art music with the earlier Western classical tradition, connecting, by implication, his own musical thinking to 'masterworks' of the past. Much of the presentation could be read as a statement of Carter's own compositional intent and personal musical interests.¹⁷³

The listener-composer relationship is crucial to Carter's concept of "the dialectical method of Western art music" that he refers to in the talk. It is the communication that

¹⁷² This conference was organized by Nicolas Nabokov who was director of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, see Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 163. For more on Carter's involvement with Nabokov during the cold war era see Martin Brody, "Cold War Genius: Music and Cultural Diplomacy at the American Academy in Rome," in *Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction, 1900-2000*, ed. Carol J Oja, Felix Meyer, Wolfgang Rathert, and Anne Shreffler (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2014).

¹⁷³ It is interesting to compare this lecture with the brief article Carter wrote for *Perspectives of New Music* in the same period. In this article, Carter puts positive emphasis on the interest of American composers in tradition contrasting them with the experimentation by young European composers that involved "[a] definite break with the past on every level." Carter, "The Milieu of the American Composer (1962)," 216.

occurs between composer and listener that is at the heart of the method. He introduces the idea with the following paragraph:

For the most striking characteristic of Western art music is that it makes appeal to a special aspect of the listener's intelligence and memory. The composer assumes that the listener will carry out a creative task analogous to his [own], that is, to the act of composition proper – that he will organize notes into groups and these groups in turn into larger units, that he will perceive the relationship of these building blocks to one another and apprehend the similarities and differences that exist in diverse elements or, indeed, in various placings or occurrences of the same element.¹⁷⁴

The listener is given a task almost analogous to the composer's in the (re-)creation of musical relationships through "intelligent" listening. Carter points to the kinds of musical relationships and musical awareness a listener should perceive in this method, which include listening temporally both forward and backwards (i.e., "... organize notes into groups and these groups in turn into larger units"; "apprehend the similarities and differences ... in various placings ... of the same element"). Such a listening strategy has similarities to the "structural listening" that Adorno demands of his listeners. Adorno's "expert listener" must listen "structurally" in order to grasp the how each present musical moment stands in a dialectical relationship with past and future moments, all of which occur within a temporal process of 'becoming' that makes up the totality of the composition (more on this below).¹⁷⁵ Carter concludes that this way of composing and listening:

... is the dialectical method of Western art music. It is by using this method that it is able to express such a variety of interrelated thoughts and feelings and give a remarkable experience of living time.¹⁷⁶

Here Carter emphasizes that a dialectical approach to music results in the expression of "thoughts and feelings" as well as of the "experience of living time," expressions he often used to describe his own compositional aesthetic and aims. Yet, in the same talk Carter claims that "[n]o other art has striven so persistently for a self-contained dialectic and is therefore so untranslatable"; that in Western masterworks, "the musical argument was a self-sufficient thing, developed within the music itself, on its own terms."¹⁷⁷

There is an apparent contradiction between the "self-sufficiency" of the music and the

¹⁷⁴ "Extending the Classical Syntax," 164.

¹⁷⁵ See Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 208-213 esp. 210.

¹⁷⁶ Carter, "Extending the Classical Syntax," 164.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

musical expression that reaches outside the music to the human: to thought, feeling and temporal experience. It is in fact the dialectic between the two that is the crux of Western music's success, according to Carter.

While this “self-sufficiency” underpins the nature of Western art music, in Carter’s opinion some composers in recent times have nevertheless failed to successfully extended the boundaries of the Western musical language and instead have “dislocat[ed] the musical dialectic by imposing on it programs derived from non-musical experience and non-musical thought.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, Carter claims here that some Western music has moved from being materially “self-sufficient” to relying on extra-musical content to its detriment. He goes on to critique composers of ‘program music’ (without naming names) where in essence the program makes up for the lack of musical invention. He claims that “In the long run it is only works of a preponderantly dialectical interest that continue to be heard—those whose concern is mainly programmatic fade very soon.”¹⁷⁹ His examples of twentieth-century composers who were successful in discovering “new methods of musical dialectic” include the music that he refers to in many of his writings as influential on his own thinking: “the later Debussy etudes and sonatas, the pre-12-tone Schoenberg, and some early Bartók and Stravinsky works.”¹⁸⁰

As noted, there is an interesting contradiction in these statements: for Carter, music expresses “thoughts and feelings,” in other words subject experience, and yet it must remain entirely musically “self-contained” and refrain from superimposing non-musical meaning. Here the point of contact with Adornian thinking seems quite clear: as discussed in Chapter 1, the musical work must, according to Adorno, be understood on its own terms —analysed in terms of its musical material and their relations. However, the immanent dialectic of the musical materials is made evident in the extent to which these materials, and their relationships within a musical form, address the dialectic of the self-expressive individual and the social totality *but* “self-sufficiently,” without recourse to programmatic elements—in other words, mediated through the musical materials themselves.¹⁸¹ To revisit briefly the discussion in Chapter 1, I would like to quote Cherlin’s very clear summary of the broad concepts underlying Adorno’s

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 165.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 164.

¹⁸¹ See for example Max Paddison, “Review: Aesthetic Theory by Theodor W. Adorno,” *Music Analysis* 6/iii (1987): 364.

immanent musical dialectics. Cherlin, following Paddison, identifies two manifestations of this dialectic:

... one emphasizes the dialectic between “preformed” musical materials and the creative vision of the composer, and the other emphasizes an immanent critique of societal values within the composition. *In the first formulation*, the composer inherits musical material from the work of those who have preceded him or her within the tradition. Such musical material has taken on what seems to be “a life of its own.” It has specific tendencies and implications for its own expansion. Musical meaning exists a priori, and the composer must resist this meaning if new meaning is to emerge. The musical composition becomes the place where the composer both obeys and dialectically opposes those demands. *Aspects of the same dialectic* take on social significance as we realize that the composer is a socially mediated subject, and that the material as well is historically and culturally mediated. The material, a social/historical construct, has become a “second nature”. The composer’s dialectic with that material forms an immanent critique of society.¹⁸² [italics mine]

The “first formulation” in the above quote could be considered the basic premise of Carter’s Tokyo talk: “Extending the boundaries of the musical language” involves the composer’s struggle with pre-existing materials and how to make them “fresh, new, different, irreplaceable,”¹⁸³ without inventing random systems that abandon their connection to the history of music (seen in Carter’s dislike of ‘total serialism’ or of ‘chance music,’ a stance shared with Adorno as I will discuss below). In the Tokyo talk, the main examples of composers grappling with the sedimentation of musical history which Carter discusses are the extension of the triad and the development of musical material originating from a single idea:

To the triad, two superimposed thirds, was added still another third to make a seventh chord. And with the seventh once accepted, one could continue the process by creating and establishing the ninth, and the eleventh and the thirteenth. In analogy with this stacking of thirds, Schoenberg and Scriabin could base some of their harmonic theory and practice on pile-ups of fourths. Likewise, Wagner with methodical logic elaborated an entire work, *Tristan and Isolde*, out of a consideration of the uses of one single chord.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Cherlin, “Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg’s Music and Thought,” 37.

¹⁸³ Carter, “Extending the Classical Syntax,” 164.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

In these examples, Carter suggests that the composers have responded to the demands of the musical material dialectically by taking historically sedimented material (e.g. the triad) and extending it in ways that were not possible in previous contexts: e.g. the triad loses its harmonic function when extended by additional thirds; or, the interval of a fourth is extended to create a chordal harmony which in a diatonic system lacks functionality; or, as in the example of the Tristan chord, tonal themes and harmonic plans give way to musical form that is generated principally by its chord structure.¹⁸⁵ Carter cites other examples of the “method of developing ideas from one single musical feature:”

To mention a few, *The Rite of Spring* deals among other things with patterns of irregular scansion, the Webern *Bagatelles* deal with the intervals of the seventh and the ninth, and the third of the Schoenberg *Five Pieces for Orchestra* deals with sonority. *This kind of freshening consists essentially of an internal operation performed upon the language itself.*¹⁸⁶ [italics mine]

In these Stravinsky, Webern and Schoenberg examples the same generating idea applies to the musical parameters of rhythm, interval and sonority. Carter clarifies that this kind of invention in new music results from “an internal operation performed on the language itself.” Carter’s “internal operation” performs in Adornian terms an “immanent critique,” a critical response that is mediated by the musical materials rather than one superimposed by an extra-musical program.¹⁸⁷ By musically reworking the historically handed-down materials, their inherited meaning is reframed, thereby creating the possibility of an “intelligent” listener questioning the ‘fixedness’ or ‘stasis’ not just of music, but of how other aspects of society are organized.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ In his conversation with Boretz, Carter includes his own composing as a further extension of the same idea: “This use of a unifying chordal sound is found in music of many periods. It is most obvious in Tristan and in the late works of Scriabin, and I have extended the procedure by forming a chord that could have many varied uses.” in “Conversation with Elliott Carter” 8.

¹⁸⁶ “Extending the Classical Syntax,” 164.

¹⁸⁷ All these examples that Carter chooses can be compared with Adorno’s objections to these techniques: Wagner’s use of *leitmotiv* because of it being developmentally static; Stravinsky’s use of rhythm because of its primitive impulse and repetitive nature; Webern’s twelve-tone writing because the predefined ordering confined the possibilities for subjective choice; and unmediated use of sonority was also questionable, although Schoenberg’s *Farben* Op.16/3 Adorno considered to have other qualities, see Adorno, “Vers une musique informelle,” 278; and “Berg’s Discoveries in Compositional Technique,” 195. Also on Wagner see Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 246.

¹⁸⁸ Recall Shreffler’s formulation: “... in its autonomy, [modernist music] holds up a mirror to the flawed society and serves as a locus for structural critique,” in Shreffler, “‘Music Left and Right’: A Tale of Two Histories of Progressive Music,” 85. Quoted in Chapter 1, p. 11.

The imperative for this critique to be immanent comes through in Carter's Tokyo talk in his argument against program music. Carter strongly suggests a responsibility on the part of the composer not to "deceive" the listener by trying to woo them with easily "verbalized" music. He is highly critical of music that is primarily of "entertainment value":

It is interesting to point out also the appeal that program music has always had for non-musical persons. Sometimes the public is deceived into believing those factors that can be verbalized are the essentials of the music. It is obvious to the musically experienced that this is not so.¹⁸⁹

Any kind of "program" must be expressed immanently using musical means, and not rely on words to substitute for a musical message.¹⁹⁰ Musical styles and methods that do not engage a "musical dialectic" fail to engage musically with social critique and fail to create a kind of truthful music.

The idea that art must express its message through its unique medium, not through simplistic analogy or verbal program, had already been an important aesthetic notion for Carter that he expressed publicly as far back as his first published writings of 1937-38 in *Modern Music*, in particular in relation to dance performance. In his 1938 article "With the Dancers," Carter attacks a group of modern dancers for their overtly programmatic presentation of social critique along with a lack of structure to their "intense emotional strain." While it seems Carter was not without sympathy for the message of social critique that the dancers hoped to convey, he took great issue with its method of delivery:

Doubtless the dancers believe (and with some justice) that modern life is disintegrated and frustrated. But there have been works—and there are going to be more—that show this strongly and clearly without being so technically submerged by their message that they are weak and ineffective: Berg's *Wozzeck*, Weill and Balanchine's *Seven Deadly Sins*, and Blitzstein's *Cradle Will Rock*. What the dancers want to say about society may be significant and valuable. It should be said as strongly and with as much conviction as possible in order for the idea itself not to succumb to the very forces they criticize. Moreover, their message is not delivered on stage, but via their

¹⁸⁹ Carter, "Extending the Classical Syntax," 165.

¹⁹⁰ For an interesting comparison see Shreffler on Nono's approach to the text setting of *Il Canto Sospeso*. The very political nature of Nono's chosen text is nevertheless expressed musically, not verbally, displaying Nono's conviction of an aesthetic of musical autonomy. Shreffler, "Music Left and Right: A Tale of Two Histories of Progressive Music," 82-86.

program notes ... The theme of revolt against bourgeois society (and I suspect against any form of society) is a recurrent one with artists. But surely the direction should be not toward that of emotional, chaotic conflicts as these dancers seem to maintain but toward greater physical, intellectual, and emotional discipline; that is the only road to liberation from the society they loathe.¹⁹¹

To “succumb to the very forces they criticize” may refer to using artistic means that evoke strong sensational responses that lack a sense of rational thought, or that simplify the presentation of a complex scenario—means that could also be associated with propaganda and methods of manipulating mass social behaviour. Carter contrasts the approach of this group of modern dancers with Uday Shankar’s choreography, his “discipline,” his “highly developed technic and a thorough muscular control:”

And what he does has to do with the body and its parts from eye to toe. The modern dancer’s body [by contrast] is always used monotonously as a whole, and the lack of disciplined gesture, hence concentration of meaning, dissipates the message.¹⁹²

In other words, the ‘materials’ of dance—the physical body, its gesture, its control and the structuring of its motion—need to be the message carrier, not an explicit theatrical program. In his earlier article “More About Balanchine, 1937,” it is “the interrelations of the people on stage” that Carter praises about Balanchine’s ballets, the “lyric and poetic vein” in his choreography and the way he “worked out flow in dancing.” Again Carter contrasts this successful approach with the failure of what he calls “modern dance”:

Modern dance generally shows us individuals in the throes of self-indulgent emotions, who by their apparent disregard of the looker-on, seem to move within a ritual like that of the church. Groups of individuals also take part in these ritual dances without contact, apparently swayed by a simultaneously experienced emotion. The relationships are not human and emotional; they might exist between schools of small fish. Sometimes we see satirical situations such as the genius-hero being tortured at the hands of a fantastic society conjured up for the occasion without any social validity.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Carter, “With the Dancers (1938),” in *The Writings of Elliott Carter*, ed. Else Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 25.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ “More about Balanchine,” in *The Writings of Elliott Carter*, ed. Else Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 14.

Carter takes issue with the simplistic, over-dramatized approach to movement and to social message that fail to take into account the intelligence of the “looker-on” (the equivalent of the “intelligent” listener in music). By using the metaphors of “the church” and “schools of small fish” Carter evokes images of an undifferentiated, unthinking mass conjured up by the movements of the dancers, a caricatured portrayal of real human interactions which, by contrast, involve a much more dialectical relationship between the individual and the group.

The kind of social message that Carter criticizes in modern dance as well as in program music is explicitly verbal or theatrical. But in his Tokyo talk Carter speaks also of “another type of program music, one whose program is of a scientific, arithmetical nature.” Meyer and Shreffler identify this as Carter’s “veiled critique of mid-1950s European serialism.”¹⁹⁴ At the conclusion to his talk, Carter states:

Our interest leads us to avoid the cynicism and contempt [of] some music so perilously close to the practical joke. In avoiding the distracting temptation of sensationalism for its own tedious sake, we are seeking new kinds of musical thought patterns, new formulations of ideas, and new methods of continuity that make use of the special faculty of musical understanding that has been developed so extensively by Western art music already.¹⁹⁵

Carter’s mention of “sensationalism” and “the practical joke” may equally be in reference to ‘chance’ music, but in either case, the composer who neglects the historical nature of musical materials and fails to grapple dialectically with music history is avoiding their responsibility to engage critically with musical means.¹⁹⁶ In his earlier essay “A Further Step (1958),” Carter praises Stravinsky’s *Agon* and *Canticum Sacrum* and Copland’s *Piano Fantasy* as compositions “which reveal a living and meaningful sensitivity to the *mutual interaction of detail and whole* and to differences of qualities and styles based on a thorough *reworking of inherited musical language*”¹⁹⁷ [italics mine]. It is noteworthy that in this quote Carter identifies two features of new music that are for him critical to its success: a “mutual interaction of detail and whole” and a

¹⁹⁴ Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 163.

¹⁹⁵ Carter, “Extending the Classical Syntax,” 165.

¹⁹⁶ Noubel nicely summarizes the way Carter sees the relationship of music to its past and its future in a section titled “Musique de la memoire, musique du devenir” in Noubel, *Elliott Carter ou le temps fertile*, 59.

¹⁹⁷ Carter, “A Further Step (1958),” 165.

“reworking of inherited musical materials.” Carter argues that neither requirement is fulfilled by a “scientific, arithmetic” approach nor a “programmatic” approach.

In Carter’s critique of serialism (and chance music) we find clear parallels with Adorno.¹⁹⁸ Adorno famously attacks “twelve-tone composers” in his lecture “The Ageing of the New Music” delivered at Darmstadt in 1955 and later published in *Das Monat* (May 1955).¹⁹⁹ Like Carter’s criticism in his Tokyo Talk of composers who think that “merely mapping out the technical devices constitutes a justification and sufficient defense of a composition,”²⁰⁰ Adorno targets the pretence of technical complexity which obscures the lack of musical meaning:

Judgment is passed over innumerable contemporary twelve-tone compositions by the fact that in them relatively simple musical occurrences stand in a relatively simple musical interrelation, the establishment of which by no means demanded serial technique in the first place. Such technique becomes what in mathematics is called the convergence of an equation, a simple error.²⁰¹

In 1961, the same year that Carter gave his Tokyo address, Adorno gave another Darmstadt lecture, “Vers une musique informelle”, which took on board criticisms from the Darmstadt community towards Adorno’s rather scathing assessment in “The Ageing of the New Music.” Many felt Adorno had been too dismissive of the attempts by composers to create music not reliant on traditional musical forms.²⁰² While Adorno largely maintains an uncompromising position towards serialism, in “Verse une musique informelle” his criticism comes across more humorously:

Musicians are usual truants from maths classes; it would be a terrible fate for them to end up in the hands of the maths teacher after all. The speculative artist above all ought to cling to the vestiges of common sense which would remind him that music is not necessarily more advanced just because he has failed to comprehend it. It may indeed be so primitive and uninspired that he failed to consider it an option in the first place. This explains why the products of laborious mindlessness are sometimes not seen through at the outset. Because the musical material is intelligent in itself, it

¹⁹⁸ See the extended treatment of Carter’s relationship to serialism in Guberman, “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War,” 73-139.

¹⁹⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, “The Ageing of the New Music,” *Telos*, no. 77 (September 21, 1988): 95-116. See discussion in Paddison, “Introduction; Contemporary Music: Theory, Aesthetics, Critical Studies,” in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Irène Deliège and Max Paddison (Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 5 and fn.8.

²⁰⁰ Carter, “Extending the Classical Syntax,” 165.

²⁰¹ Theodor W. Adorno, “The Ageing of the New Music,” *Telos*, no. 77 (September 21, 1988): 100.

²⁰² See Edwards, “Convergences and Discord in the Correspondence Between Ligeti and Adorno,” 10.

inspires the belief that mind must be at work, where in reality only the abdication of mind is being celebrated.²⁰³

It is interesting to compare Adorno's critique with Carter's assessment of new music performed on the "festival circuit" in Europe in 1962, the year following his Tokyo talk, and published as "Letter from Europe" in *Perspectives of New Music* in 1963. To get a sense of the extent that Carter's ideas parallel Adorno's I have included a lengthy quote. In it, Carter criticizes—in less veiled terms than in Tokyo—serial and aleatoric music out of the Darmstadt School (again without mentioning names):

Like the old avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde has a very great preoccupation with the physical materials of music ... The presentation of these in time concentrates at present on producing varied or kaleidoscopic alternations such as are inevitably achieved by either total serialization or the use of aleatoric devices. There seems to be very little concern with the perception of these sounds, their *possibilities of intellectual interrelation* by the listener, and, therefore, their possibilities of communication on a high level. Most of the time the possibility of communication is denied, or, if admitted, kept on the *primitive level* of any music that has only a *sensuous effect*. The most talented works, by very definition, communicate, apparently almost unintentionally, while a greater part of the others consist in an auditorily random display of unpredictable groupings of sound, rather violently opposed in pitch, speed, intensity, and color. ... Yet many of these have considerable interest, and since they are approached from such an untraditional point of view have an important effect on esthetic and philosophical ideas about music; perhaps they could even become useful if given direction by equally "advanced" concepts arising from an awareness of the listener's psychology. But without these, even in the most stimulating sound combinations, there is usually a stultifying *intellectual poverty* that no amount of arithmetic patterning will overcome; for either such a pattern can be heard by the listener, in which case it is usually far too simple to be of any interest, or it cannot, in which case an impression of pointless confusion results. For the most part, the Darmstadt music seems to waver between these two extremes—this is, when it is heard in large amounts—for there is *no denying that on first impression some of the works are quite striking*.²⁰⁴ [italics mine]

Carter is somewhat more hopeful for the potential of some of this music than Adorno is. However, as far as describing the criteria for an genuine communicative musical experience, they resemble each other. Like Adorno who seeks, but fails to find, an

²⁰³ Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle," 269.

²⁰⁴ Carter, "Letter from Europe (1963)," 220.

intelligent communication or “mind,” Carter looks for “possibilities of intellectual interrelations by the listener” and finds them mostly lacking. Both label music that does not communicate in this way as “primitive” and both warn against the seduction of novelty which Adorno says is “sometimes not seen through at the outset” and of which Carter says “there is no denying that on first impression some of the works are quite striking.” What is shared is the critique of a perceived lack of communication, lack of musical sense-making, by composers resorting to systems—or the opposite, chance—to take over from their own subjective expression. This also involves a denial rather than a critical engagement with the historically inherited meaning of musical materials. Serialism (or ‘total serialism’),²⁰⁵ as critiqued here by Adorno and Carter, is considered to be a kind of mindless application of mathematical ‘formulae’ and the systemization of expression, rendering it ultimately expressionless. The “aleatoric devices” that Carter notes above are simply the flip side of total organisation.²⁰⁶ The apparent absence of the composer’s subjective involvement with the music’s materials troubled Carter as it did Adorno. To leave the outcome of musical expression to chance or to a preordained system was to give over one’s subjective responsibility to an external force, something that was artistically but also morally suspect. I will return to the philosophical significance of this below in Section 2.5 *Musical form and Adorno’s Subject-Object dialectic*.

To recapitulate, the “dialectical method” of Western music and its “true” extension in modern times, as Carter summarized in his Tokyo lecture, involves reshaping the inherited (socio-musical) meaning of musical materials and form into something new that takes account of a “living experience” of time, of “feelings and thoughts” and of a dynamic relationship of part and whole. It must communicate to its listener not through pure and immediate sensuousness but by engaging the mind, and not through words or program but by way of music alone. How did these ideas take shape in Carter’s writings about musical form in his own music?

²⁰⁵ See comments by Bernard on Carter’s “musique serielle” in *Elliott Carter: collected essays and lectures, 1937-1995*, 17 fn.1.

²⁰⁶ Carter also mentions this similarity in serial and aleatoric techniques in “La Musique sérielle aujourd’hui (1965/94),” 17. Peter Edwards discusses this observation as one made by Ligeti. Ligeti’s original essay “Metamorphoses of Musical Form” in which he makes this observation was published in *Die Reihe* in 1962 in German. The English was published in 1965, see Edwards, “Convergences and Discord in the Correspondence Between Ligeti and Adorno,” 6 fn.27, 7 and 12. Carter mentions that he used to read *Die Reihe*, although whether he had the German or English copies is unknown to me. It is possible that Carter had read Ligeti’s essay before writing his review as he mentions the relationship between chance and serial music as if this relationship between the two techniques were common knowledge.

2.3 Musical form and “time continuity”

In the 1971 interview with Allen Edwards, *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*, Edwards asks Carter: “It has been remarked that you are today one of the only advanced composers who really thinks of music in a contrapuntal way. Is this way of thinking specifically related to your feelings about *time-continuity and musical form*?” [italics mine]. Edward’s question elicits the following response from Carter:

While it’s obvious that the constant and over-all phenomenon of music is one in which every “moment” is in the process of coming from some previous moment and leading to some future moment - only thus contributing to what is happening in the present - it seems to me that this process can have a number of simultaneous dimensions such that, for example, the moment, as it occurs, may consist of a number of simultaneously evolving event patterns or sub-continuities of more or less radically different musical character, which interact with each other to produce the “total” continuity and character-effect (which, as the dialectical synthesis of the contributing sub-continuities and characters is irreducible to any one of these or to any “sum” of their qualities). It seems to me that this is very much the way we think all the time and that the feeling of experience is always the synthesis of our awareness of half-a-dozen simultaneous different feelings and perceptions interacting [sic.] together, with now one and now another coming into the main focus while the others continue, more or less in the background, to influence it and give it the intellectual and affective meaning it has.²⁰⁷

These two very dense sentences encapsulate a number of important, interrelated ideas. Firstly, it is noteworthy that, at the end of the quote, Carter draws his preceding technical explanation back to his conviction that (as we have seen above) music can “show” something about not only the make-up of an external society but also of an internal psychology: about “the way we think all the time” and about “the feeling of experience.” Once again, Carter emphasizes the importance of taking the “human” experience as a starting point for shaping musical material. Secondly, in this paragraph Carter makes an analogy between the psychological experience of time and what he calls “the simultaneous dimension” of music—in other words, the uniquely musical way in which sounds are combined into counterpoint. The plurality of the musical counterpoint mirrors the plurality of thought. Carter elaborately describes the individual musical lines that make up such counterpoint as “simultaneously evolving event

²⁰⁷ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 99-100.

patterns or sub-continuities of more or less radically different musical character.” This is deliberate on his part as he is wanting to move away completely from any association with traditional musical voices. By referring to the “total” effect as a “dialectical synthesis,” Carter squarely places his musical layers in opposition to each other, in contrast to tonal music which is thematically, rhythmically and harmonically far more integrated than the layers in Carter’s own music. The “simultaneous dimension” in Carter’s music is “irreducible” and thereby presents a space for expressing the idea of multiple self-contained thought processes flowing at the same time.

Jonathan Bernard puts “the language of ‘dialectical synthesis’” of the passage quoted above down to the influence of Sergei Eisenstein’s Marxist/Hegelian philosophy of film.²⁰⁸ In a section of his article “Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time,” Bernard explores in some depth aspects of Eisenstein’s montage techniques, convincingly highlighting parallels with Carter’s own descriptions of his compositional techniques and his concept of form. It is worth revisiting some of these parallels. For example, central for Eisenstein was the idea that “art is always conflict.”²⁰⁹ The connection of art to social conflict and to a Hegelian dialectical ontology is given artistic expression in Eisenstein’s montage *process*. His list of montage techniques were to be used successively, bringing each technique into conflict with the next, such that each “collision resulted in a higher unity.”²¹⁰ Eisenstein’s idea of “dynamism” animated the collisions of his montage, providing the impetus for continual change that gave the film its overall form. Of the overall direction or progress of a film, Eisenstein said that the motion of montage should be

through a simultaneous advance of a multiple series of lines, each maintaining an independent compositional course and each contributing to the total compositional course of the sequence ... The general course of the montage was an uninterrupted interweaving of these diverse themes into one unified movement. Each montage-piece had a double responsibility—to build the total line as well as to continue the movement within each of the contributory themes ... Montage is actually a large,

²⁰⁸ Bernard, “Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time,” 667.

²⁰⁹ Sergi Eisenstein, “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form,” in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. Jay Leyda (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 46.

²¹⁰ Bernard, “Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time,” 662.

developing thematic movement, progressing through a continuing diagram of individual splices.²¹¹

The similarity of Eisenstein's language to that of Carter's in the quote above is indeed striking, and it is even more so in the following quote where Carter elaborates on the "progressive" nature of his music as he continues his response to Edwards:

What began to interest me was the possibility of a texture in which, say, massive vertical sounds would be entirely composed of simultaneous elements having a direct and individual horizontal relation to *the whole progress or history of the piece*—that is, simultaneous elements, each of which has its own way of *leading from the previous moment to the following one*, maintaining its identity as part of one of a number of distinct, simultaneously evolving, contributory thought-processes or musical characters ... the principle idea is a sort of generalized program concerned with one aspect of the formal structure, whereby the trajectory of the whole piece, *its progression or rise and fall of tension in time*, from its beginning to its end, is produced by the interaction of the contributory elements. The coordination of these contrasting layer of music then forms an integral part of the musical discourse of the work and give it its small and large formal evolution. (The form I seek is Coleridge's "form as proceeding," and I try to avoid "shape as superinduced." For the latter, as he says, "is either the death or the imprisonment of the thing; the former is its self-witnessing and self-effected sphere of agency.")²¹² [italics mine]

The conceptualization of formal unfolding that Carter presents here is virtually identical to the way Eisenstein expresses his idea of the motion in montage. Carter elaborates on the make-up of his simultaneous dimension, adding important emphasis on how the individualized musical characters have a "double responsibility" (to borrow Eisenstein's term): to their own evolving identity and to the trajectory of the whole piece.²¹³ Time-continuity—or "the way everything ... happens as and *when* it does in relation to everything else"²¹⁴—is crucial Carter says, "precisely in works that seem to depend on 'discontinuity' for their character."²¹⁵ Carter expresses this view strongly in *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*:

²¹¹ Quoted in *Elliott Carter: collected essays and lectures, 1937-1995*, 328.. Eisenstein's use of the word "theme" in film could be thought of as the equivalent to Carter's use of the term "character" in music.

²¹² Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 101.

²¹³ Bernard, "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time," 667. Bernard discusses Carter's essay "The Gesamtkunstwerk (1966/94)" and notes how central the idea of irreversibility of time is to Carter's musical thinking.

²¹⁴ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 92.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

I take exactly the opposite stand from those composers of every stripe who don't believe the order of presentation is important in music and who don't appear to recognize that this order influences and in fact confers the meaning and effect that a given set of musical events comes to possess ...²¹⁶

The irreversibility of time is a given for Carter, and while time can be elastic in music, the effect of sequence cannot be avoided. This view was certainly shared by Adorno.²¹⁷ The distinction between “shape as superinduced” and “form as proceeding” that Carter refers to above speaks not only to the modernist rejection of classical formal models that imposed structure on the material, but also to this specific understanding of time-continuity that Carter wishes to capture in his music, something he frequently referred to as “flow.” In an interview with Boretz around the same time as the Edwards interview, Carter said:

Composers had been very routine about what goes on in any given instant of music—simultaneously, I mean—usually they settled for harmonic effects that emphasize certain qualities of the theme, or contrapuntal ones that repeat fragments of the main theme in order, so to speak, to cook the chicken in chicken broth, to intensify its particular character. I was interested, by contrast, in flow, in the contribution of the past to the present and the effect of predicted futures on it, in dealing with the process of an emerging present.²¹⁸

The idea of “flow” sits at the very foundation of dialectical thought: in both Heraclitian and Hegelian/Marxist dialectic the fundamental state of the material world and human thought is one of constant conflict, change and flux, the subject as becoming rather than being.²¹⁹ Carter's writings and interviews are full of references to the significance of “flow” in his compositions.²²⁰ Its relationship to the “dialectical synthesis of the contributing sub-continuities and characters” in Carter's music hinges on the concept of

²¹⁶ Ibid., 103.

²¹⁷ Adorno's view on time is something Witkin insightfully critiques in Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 180-200. See also Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 179-81; and Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 78.

²¹⁸ Boretz, “Conversation with Elliott Carter” 13.

²¹⁹ See Cherlin, “Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg's Music and Thought,” 159-60. Also “Being, nothing and becoming,” ed. Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Blackwell Reference Online: Blackwell Publishing), 23 August 2016. Accessed 20 September, 2016, DOI 10.1111/b.9780631175339.1992.x.

²²⁰ For example Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 37 and 98-99; Boretz, “Conversation with Elliott Carter” 13; Enzo Restagno, ed. *Elliott Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre Musica 1989*, ISAM Monographs, no.32 (Brooklyn: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1898), 10; Carter, “Music and the Time Screen (1976),” 363; and “Sound and Silence in Time,” 136. See also Marguerite Boland, “‘Linking’ and ‘Morphing’: Harmonic Flow in Elliott Carter's *Con Leggerezza Pensosa*,” *Tempo* 60, no. 237 (2006).

the “emerging present,” a concept associated with process philosophy. In this understanding, the present is not “pointillistic”²²¹ and cannot be grasped as a static moment but rather is conceived as continuous, incorporating both the past, which has *just come from being the present*, and the future which is *about to become the present*; in Carter’s words, “the ‘now’ of any given point to me is only as significant as how it came to be ‘now’ and what happens afterwards.”²²²

To summarize, Carter’s idea of flow is manifest by way of a music that contains a plurality of musical motion, collectively defining the trajectory of a composition but without abandoning the relationship of each musical strand to its own past and future unfolding, in other words a dialectical interaction. Interestingly (and perhaps provocatively), Boretz questions whether Carter’s simultaneous dimension to polyphony might really be a “*new category of textural relations*” to which Carter offers the following comment:

My musical attitude did not arise from a desire to compose a certain kind of music “original” or otherwise. Rather it came directly from my own human experience and thoughts about it, corroborated by St. Augustine, A. N. Whitehead (especially in *Process and Reality*), Eliot, Williams, Proust, Joyce, Broch and others. I have been in search of a music that would embody the human experience of process and its transcendence.²²³

While Carter does not explore what he means by the suggestive reference to “transcendence,” it is hard not to hear Hegelian overtones. The rich web of the influences Carter cites here is certainly connected by a shared pre-occupation with temporality, memory, and human process. Bernard examines in detail the influence of Whitehead on Carter, as well as the influence of Proust.²²⁴ I do not wish to retrace Bernard’s extensive coverage of these specific influences. However, I would like to draw links between Carter’s conception of how the musical moment is constituted, its relationship to “human experience,” and Adorno’s notion of the centrality of time for a musical work’s truth content. For both Carter and Adorno, the nature of temporality was determining not only for the individual psychological experience but for the human social dynamic. I will attempt to flesh out these ideas in what follows.

²²¹ Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 182.

²²² Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 98.

²²³ Boretz, “Conversation with Elliott Carter” 14.

²²⁴ Bernard, “Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time.”

2.4 The dialectic of musical motion: “human” and “inhuman” experiences of time

The notions of time flow and social progress are tied together in a comment Carter makes in Scheffer’s film:

I’m very much concerned throughout all of my life to avoid the idea of mechanical repetition because it seemed to me that we were being deluged by advertising and by propaganda. This is something that I have tried specifically to fight - what we want is a kind of growth, a kind of development, a kind of liveliness and not just a kind of prison in which everything is made mechanical and inhuman. And so my music has always tried to reflect the human side of things, human in the sense that we are, like Montaigne says, constantly changing - “l’homme ondoyant et divers” is what Montaigne said, and this is what I try to capture.²²⁵

In this interpretation of the experience of time, “mechanical repetition” or stasis is the negation of flow, of (lived) temporal experience, of progress, of becoming, indeed of humanity, all of which are for Carter the primary expressive priorities of his music (note his use of the word “fight,” reflecting the strength of conviction this concept held for him). Furthermore, for Carter mechanical repetition brings into music something all too expected and predictable, promoting a passivity of listening antithetical to true expressive communication. Its social manifestation can be found in advertising and in propaganda that promotes a kind of programmed mass responses which halts individual thinking and critical reflection, and hold both the individual and the collective in a state of stasis.²²⁶ Both Carter’s and Adorno’s critique of listening is relevant here because, as noted above, the listener is the idealized receptor of musical communication and needs to keep an active, critical listening capacity despite the “deluge” of false communication that surrounds them. Conversely, it is the composer’s responsibility to communicate something worthy of deep listening, which for Carter involves this sense of the human in a state of constant change. The social interactive dynamic is played out between composer and listener mediated by the music.

Carter’s criticism of mechanical repetition has definite parallels with Adorno’s diagnosis of the features of repetitive music that facilitate capitalist production and

²²⁵ Scheffer, “Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time,” 6’03”.

²²⁶ Both Martin Brody and Daniel Guberman explore the ideas that were circulating in the 1930s and 1940s around the arts and mass communication in the United States. See Brody, “‘Music for the Masses’: Milton Babbitt’s Cold War Music Theory.”; and Guberman, “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War.”

marketability but also repressive social organisation.²²⁷ While Carter’s claim that mechanical repetition in music is the sonic equivalent of advertising and propaganda certainly expresses a *critique* of these consumerist and brainwashing activities, during the 1980s in particular Carter also levelled stronger public criticism at the *morality* of repetition in minimalist styles of music and in neo-romanticism. In one interview Carter cites Adorno’s “regression of listening” and, like Adorno, targets the effects of repetitive music that mimic negative influences on the development of a “human” society—not only advertising, consumerism, passive engagement, conformism, and state propaganda but, at its extreme, fascism.²²⁸ In interviews over the last decade of his life, Carter maintained this position toward repetition, particularly as it is manifest in Minimalism in the arts.²²⁹ Eisenlohr points out that Carter’s views originally stemmed not from a reaction to the rise of a post-modern aesthetic per se but rather from Carter’s long-developed stance towards the relationship between composer and listener. Already in 1938, when Carter himself was still composing in an American neo-classic style, he had articulated his criticism of the passive listener. His article “Orchestras and Audiences; Winter, 1938” in *Modern Music* opens boldly with:

There are two ways of listening to music. The most popular is for the listener to give himself up to an evening of reminiscence or reverie after having checked his conscious, critical self at the door with his hat.²³⁰

The second “more objective ... kind of listener ... is eager for new ideas and new feelings.” It is the composer’s responsibility to communicate to this “intelligent listener,” who in turn is responsible for actively listening to grasp this message:

²²⁷ See Theodor W. Adorno, “On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening,” in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arati and Eike Gebhard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978).

²²⁸ Carter, “Elliott Carter in conversation with Robert Johnston, Michael Century, Robert Rosen, and Don Stein (1984),” 253. For a discussion of parallels between Carter’s comments and the thinking of the Frankfurt School, see Schmidt, “‘I try to write music that will appeal to an intelligent listener’s ear.’ On Elliott Carter’s string quartets,” 54-57. Carter makes similar comments in Andrew Porter, “Riches in a Little Room,” *The New Yorker* 14 May 1979; and Leighton Kerner, “Creators on Creating: Elliott Carter,” *Saturday Review* December 1980; both cited in Dyck-Hemming, “Diskurze zur ‘Musik Elliott Carters’.” Further references are found in Restagno, *Elliott Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre Musica 1989*, 58; and Scheffer, “Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time.”

²²⁹ For example “Elliott Carter, interviewed by John Tusa,” in *The John Tusa Interviews* (BBC Radio 3: Broadcast July 2, 2000); Geoffrey Norris, “Minimalism is death,” *The Telegraph* 26 July 2003; and Frank Otari, “In the First Person: Elliott Carter,” *New Music Box* (March 1, 2000). Accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/the-career-of-a-century-elliott-carter/7/>.

²³⁰ Carter, “Orchestras and Audiences: Winter, 1938,” 28. For further references to Carter’s writing on the active listener see Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 208-12; and Schmidt, “‘I try to write music that will appeal to an intelligent listener’s ear.’ On Elliott Carter’s string quartets,” 169-72.

He follows it attentively for he know that it is a living message to him from another living man, a serious thought or experience worth considering, one that will help him to understand the people about him. To him, dead, worn-out formulas or non-communicative styles are anathema. Serious composers and musicians have always aimed at this listener and he in turn has shown that he could take his listener's share of the responsibility by keeping his mind actively fixed on the music he was hearing.²³¹

Composer and listener engage in a "true" social exchange through their postures towards their tasks of composing and listening respectively. In his reviews of new music in the 1930s and 1940s Carter always commented unfavourably on excessive repetition of musical ideas and musical forms that relied on classical or romantic models.²³² As already noted, Carter's "two ways of listening" recall Adorno's "structural listening" and "regressive listening" but Carter's early views seem also to echo the writings of Schoenberg, whose ideal listener must have "an alert and well-trained mind" and who is offended by the musical equivalent of "baby talk."²³³

Carter's formulation of his ideal listener as the target of his musical communication has received attention in the scholarly and popular literature partially because Carter himself continuously raised this topic in interviews. Dörte Schmidt and Henning Eisenlohr delve into this aspect of Carter's aesthetic in detail. I wish to extend the discussion a little further, and suggest that it is not simply that the ideal listener was important to Carter because of his desire for communication but because of a broader social vision that Carter himself felt almost morally obliged to engage with musically. Arnold Whittall sees this as an ethical stance to which Carter holds.²³⁴ And in my reading it connects to what Tia DeNora says of Adorno's insistence on "the handling of musical materials [being] nothing short of moral praxis."²³⁵ The expression of this moral praxis for both Carter and Adorno hinged on the understanding of how music temporality embodies the social.

²³¹ Carter, "Orchestras and Audiences: Winter, 1938," 28.

²³² See many of Carter's reviews for *Modern Music* in the 1930s: for example his 1937 critique of Chavez's *Sinfonia India* and his 1939 critique of Harris's Second Symphony and Sibelius's music in Else and Kurt Stone Stone, ed. *The Writings of Elliott Carter* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 7, 61 and 64-5, respectively. See also Elliott Carter, "Music of the 20th Century," *Encyclopedia Britannica* Vol. XVI (1953): 18; cited in Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 225.

²³³ Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London: Faber, 1984), 102-4. See also DeNora, *After Adorno*, 19-20 on Adorno's and Schoenberg's ideal listeners. For a discussion on Schoenberg and repetition see Luis-Mauel Garcia, "On and On: Repetition as Process and Pleasure in Electronic Dance Music," *Music Theory Online* 11, no. 4 (October, 2005), <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.05.11.4/mto.05.11.4.garcia.html#Beginning>.

²³⁴ Whittall, "The search for order: Carter's *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism," 62.

²³⁵ DeNora, *After Adorno*, 13. See also discussion in Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 3.

Witkin remarks that for Adorno “[temporality] is inseparable from his notion of what is ‘social’ and what is ‘creative’” and thus “[a] music that is truly social (and, therefore, socially true), in Adorno’s analysis, is one in which the elements manifest sociality and temporality in their relations with each other.”²³⁶ Social relations resulting from mass responses put a halt to “the *emergent* character of the present.”²³⁷ Time in a sense becomes petrified in false social relations:

In Adorno’s analysis, so long as individuals act freely and spontaneously and enter into real dialectical relations with others, there will be temporality and an historical dimension to action. Any system of relations in which the individual is totally subsumed by the collectivity, and his or her relations with others mechanically determined, is a de-socialized and atemporal reality, a structure from which all change and development have been expunged.²³⁸

What is so significant for Adorno, as it is for Carter, is the interaction of past, present and future musical elements that set musical time in motion analogous to the way individuals change and progress through genuine (free) interactions with other individuals and thus set social progress in motion.²³⁹ Witkin explores in detail the sociological basis for Adorno’s temporal model of interaction between individuals in his chapter “Taking a critical line for a walk” in *Adorno on Music*.²⁴⁰ It is instructive that Witkin connects Adorno’s view of social interaction and temporality with George Herbert Mead’s philosophy. Alfred North Whitehead was an admirer of Mead’s and as already noted Carter was influenced by Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*, having studied it as a student at Harvard where Whitehead was a faculty member.²⁴¹ While exploration of this connection is outside the scope of this study, it is worth at least noting that elements of Hegel’s, Whitehead’s and Mead’s philosophies regarding ‘process’ and ‘emergence’ can be found to connect on different levels with Adorno’s

²³⁶ *Adorno on Music*, 182.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.* Witkin also problematizes Adorno’s notion of the link between “sociality and temporality” by considering other philosophies of time, including Freud’s ‘primary process,’ and the consciousness of dream states in which the sequential nature of time is challenged by the simultaneous awareness of non-sequential events or objects (e.g., “past and present” brought together, “back and front” perceived at the same time). This notion is in fact critically important to Carter’s conception of musical time. I have addressed this in Marguerite Boland, “The All-Trichord Hexachord: compositional strategies in Elliott Carter’s *Con Leggerezza* and *Gra*” (M.A. diss., LaTrobe University, Melbourne, 1999), 10-14.

²³⁹ In Chapter 3, I discuss how the notion of ‘progress’ is in turn critiqued in the era of disbelief in “grand narratives”; and how Carter responded to this changed understanding of time, as well as how Adorno was rethinking the notion of progress.

²⁴⁰ Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 180-200.

²⁴¹ Bernard, “Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time,” 649.

philosophy and Carter's aesthetics. Time and again, Carter places his musical ideas in opposition to mechanical expression and to social and political activity that "expunges" the temporal, instead stressing the ever-changing (and thus ever-progressing) nature of the 'participants' or 'layers' in his compositions. Carter is very clear in his discussions of repetition and form during the 1960s and 1970s: his musical forms contain no repeats. In a discussion of his Third Quartet (1971) with Charles Rosen, for example, Carter says:

What may be interesting about the form is that none of the material ever repeats literally, and this is characteristic of many of my pieces ever since the First Quartet. They never actually repeat the same theme, but they are always improvising [sic] on a basic piece of material that holds together all the various things that are being played. There will sometimes be repetitions of certain speeds and textures that dominate different sections ... but the form is not a form in which there is literal repetition, only a constant repetition of a general principle. ... Maybe you can find one chord that is the same from beginning to end, but the main thing is the sense of constant growth and change.²⁴²

Carter's constantly changing, growing and differentiated musical characters maintain their basic identity, while the "musical discourse" (i.e., the progressive unfolding of form in time) is "produced by the *interaction* of the contributory elements" [italics mine]. In this way, the musical materials themselves model the notion that (ideal) *human* experience comes about through true subjective interaction, in which the exchange changes all participating individuals in a way that has consequences for the future.

Once again, this kind of treatment of musical material finds a parallel in the interaction between creator (composer) and receptor (listener) in Carter's thought. In his "Time Lecture" of 1965, Carter links the composer's treatment of the temporal aspect of music (here referred to as "the manner of dealing with time and memory") with the listener's experience of the social world. As in the above quote from Scheffer's film, forms of mass communication provide the example of undesirable experience that genuine musical expression must avoid.²⁴³ The listener is presented as a recipient whose

²⁴² Charles Rosen, *The Musical Languages of Elliott Carter* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1984), 39.

²⁴³ See also discussion in Guberman, "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War," 10 onwards; and in Brody, "'Music for the Masses': Milton Babbitt's Cold War Music Theory."

capacity for memory and complex experience of time should always be addressed by the composer. Carter concludes his lecture as follows:

... the manner of dealing with time and memory has become very obvious, almost primitive. Things continue for a while in a more or less uniform way and then switch to another, contrasting stretch of similar concept. This is actually a denial of memory and time, which corresponds to the treatment of these we receive as readers of newspapers and advertisements, as targets of almost any kind of public communication which reduces everything to superficiality and ultimately to loss of identity.²⁴⁴

Memory is critical to “lived” temporal experience but also to the constitution of the subject, its “identity.” Music is capable of referencing and playing with memory and time in complex ways. However, Carter sees a diminishing use of this capacity in the New Music. That Carter connects the “denial of memory and time” in musical form with “public communication which reduces everything to superficiality and ultimately to loss of identity” relates directly to what Williams notes is Adorno’s aspiration for new musical form:

Adorno hopes for a form of music in which particular moments are not subsumed by the overall structure; and it is well known that for him this vision relates to a larger concern with the ways in which all-purpose patterns of thinking crush the spontaneity of the moment.²⁴⁵

The “spontaneity of the moment” is where true human interaction capable of growth occurs and for this to happen time cannot be rigidly structured into “all-purpose patterns of thinking.” Carter also captures this sense of “spontaneity of the moment” in his contrasting of the “primitive’ organisation of time with his own musical treatment of part and whole:

In my own music, I am keenly aware of the ways in which some of these concepts of time can affect even small details and make them able to participate in larger constructions. For it is the large continuity and conception of progress which determines the choice of all the materials in my recent work—any given moment, for the most part, is a bridge from a previous one to a succeeding one and contains both

²⁴⁴ Carter, “Time Lecture,” 318.

²⁴⁵ Williams, “Wolfgang Rihm and the Adorno Legacy,” 88.

the elements of unexpectedness as well as intelligible relations to the past and anticipation of the future, not always fulfilled in the way anticipated.²⁴⁶

Again the relationship of part to whole is presented here as a dialectic where the choice of materials are in service of the large continuity while simultaneously never ceasing to relate to their own flow. The final phrase "... anticipation of the future, not always fulfilled in the way anticipated" is laden with significance, because by allowing the spontaneous individual moment to determine the future, the form of the piece accommodates its individual constituents rather than superimposing a pre-determined shape on their inherent expressive trajectories. As we saw in Chapter 1, the dialectical handling of part and whole was where Adorno located music's immanent social critique. The relationship of the pre-formed material with sedimented historical meaning and the re-forming of material in a way that the particular is not subsumed or violated by the whole—in other words, the relationship of the objective and the subjective in music—must be a dialectical one for the music to contain any truth content.²⁴⁷ While the concept of Subject-Object relations in Adorno's philosophy of music is not straightforward,²⁴⁸ it is worth at least sketching some of the elements in a way that connections to Carter's thought can be made.

2.5 Musical form and Adorno's Subject-Object dialectic

Roughly, for Adorno traditional formal means of organising music's materials ('given forms') constituted the objective content of music—the content that musically embedded the external world—even if this content was in fact not really objective, but only seemingly objective by becoming "second nature." In "Form in the New Music," Adorno analyses the modern day situation by first revisiting the past. Of the objective nature of formal schemes he writes:

To be sure, the traditional forms, the schemes, are more than just schemes. Music possesses no contents borrowed directly from the external world. In exchange, contents have become embedded in the traditional forms. Thus the rondo evokes a spiritualised form of the round dance, with its distinction between couplet and refrain.

²⁴⁶ Carter, "Time Lecture," 318.

²⁴⁷ This dialectical tension needed to be maintained in new music, even if the condition of new music in Adorno's aesthetics was that it could only fail at achieving a truth. It was the task of new music to make explicit within the music the condition of art today, which was a condition that could only lead to its own finality if it was to remain true to reality. See for example Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 272-73. I elaborate on this in Chapter 3 particularly in reference to Johnson's essay "'The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia': New Music Since Adorno."

²⁴⁸ See the discussion in *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 109.

To grasp it as a form always meant sensing this form, moulding oneself to it, varying it. The contrasts between tutti and solo hidden in the rondo, between the individual and the totality, were made dynamic with the concerto and became essential for the decisive form of the modern age, the sonata.²⁴⁹

Through their historical use and transformation, traditional forms had become ‘objective’ schemes with which to structure musical content; however, they in fact originated in social practice which had now become sedimented within the structure. On the other hand, ‘subjective’ musical content consisted of musical innovations (of the composer) through the way motives, themes and harmonies negotiated this (relatively fixed) formal objectivity. The way subject and object mediated each other was critical to the success of the music. Adorno continues:

However, even if the traditional musical forms were also content, thanks to their implicit meaning, and if every musical content made itself heard uniquely in them or their modifications, then this shows that even in traditional music, form and content, and especially what is known as expression, were profoundly mediated by each other. The rank of a work of music was determined by the level of profundity at which this meditation took place, by the degree to which the forms were justified by their specific and spontaneous contents (instead of being merely adopted in a superficial way) and, conversely, by the depth at which the unique musical event adapted itself to the forms in which it manifest itself. This intersection, this conciliatory resolution of the tension between form and content, was the lifeblood of the Viennese Classicism, of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven.²⁵⁰

Gradually as tonality—the integration of melody and harmony (and of course rhythm, although Adorno does not mention it)—broke apart over the course of the nineteenth century, so formal organisation that dictated and depended on harmonic function lost its *raison d’être*. In other words, the subjective and the objective were no longer able to sustain the mediated relationship that held the universal (form) and the particular (content) in aesthetic tension.²⁵¹ For Adorno, the New Music needed to retain a dialectical relationship between subjective musical content and objective musical form: despite the disintegration of material and the necessary dissolution of traditional forms, subject and object must continue to mediate each other. This imperative can be

²⁴⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, “Form in the New Music. Translated by Rodney Livingstone,” *Music Analysis* 27, no. 2-3 (July/October, 2008): 201.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

²⁵¹ See also Simon Jarvis, p.130

understood in the context of Adorno's inherited Hegelian notion of mediation.²⁵² Witkin explains:

True subjectivity for Adorno is always an historically constituted subjectivity. It is a subjectivity in which subject and object, individual and society, mediate one another, constitute one another; there is no realm of pure subjectivity which is 'in-itself' and distinct and different from its objects; subject and object tango together in history but not without a struggle for hegemony, not without one or other appearing, sometimes, to get the upper hand - more subjectification, more objectification, etc.²⁵³

Subjectivity is defined against objectivity, dialectically. In this way Subject cannot be subsumed by Object but retains its autonomy to varying degrees. Witkin continues:

In the very process of actively mediating (and being mediated by) its objects - in being historical - the subject continuously realises its own non-identity which, for Adorno, is the ground of its becoming, its freedom, autonomy and spiritual integrity. The more that the subject seeks to de-sociate itself, to empty itself, the less does it possess within itself the wherewithal to resist the total domination of the 'external' - that is, the domination of the collectivity - and the more it gives itself over to the latter in an act of self-immolation.²⁵⁴

This philosophical understanding of the mutual immanence of Subject and Object—this 'dance' that the subject does in retaining its identity while recognising it is simultaneously constituted by (and constitutes) 'external' reality—lies at the core of Adorno's analysis of New Music. As we saw above, integral serialism and aleatoricism are two sides of the same coin according to Adorno (via Ligeti) because both relinquish the subjective hand of the composer to a pre-determined scheme or to randomness respectively. Their claim to objectivity by removing the subject from the equation of form-creation is false according to Adorno, because there is no such thing as a pure form of either. Both the subjective and the objective must be expressed in musical terms that are true to their relationship at any particular point in history. Paddison explains:

The relations of Subject and Object takes place within the work itself. It is, in Adorno's view, necessarily an antagonistic relationship today, characterized by the conflicting demands for unity of form (as Subject) in the face of the need to remain true to a disintegrating material (as Object). That is to say, the 'form' of the integrated work, to be 'authentic' (that is, true to the demands of the material), must now

²⁵² Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 109.

²⁵³ Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 25.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

incorporate its apparent opposite - disintegration, fragmentation, chaos, along the lines of his ideal of 'une musique informelle.'²⁵⁵

As the experience of the subject in the modern world becomes more fragmentary and elements of life more dissociated, the musical content needs to be true to this reality. But the ideal relationship between subject and object must also not be forgotten, and it is the form that must suggest an idealized integration that does not oppress the subjective materials. Adorno's ideal, Williams writes, is

a music that would be dependent neither on traditional forms nor on technical systems; instead, like the pieces deriving from Schoenberg's free atonal period, the music he foresees would create its own form from its own immanent needs ... More specifically, Adorno envisages what he calls "a third way between the jungle of *Erwartung*, on the one hand, and the tectonics of *Die glückliche Hand*, on the other."²⁵⁶

The subjectivism of the expressionist *Erwartung* and the objectivism of the serial *Die glückliche Hand* represent the two extremes to which a dialectical third ideal would become Adorno's true 'new music.' The necessity for music to maintain this dialectical relationship points back to Adorno's sociological and philosophical critique of Enlightenment reason, and the role of music as reason's dialectical partner, as we have seen in Chapter 1. Witkin elaborates on this connection as follows:

When Adorno lines up his champions of truth in music against the enemies of that truth, it is on the basis of that same dark choice between a music that, he claims, truly reflects the human condition—a music that is the result of an historically constituted and mediated social praxis, a music which refuses identity and resists oppression—and a music which seeks to escape from entanglements, to lay claim to an unmediated realm of pure musical experience and which, whether it retreats into inwardness or escapes into outwardness, is a music which collaborates with oppression. In a world in which the spiritual, sensuous and expressive life of the subject is so threatened—and with it, all true sociality—the serious artist assumes a special significance. A 're-valuing' of experience under the conditions of barbarism, a re-socialization of life, becomes the special province of the artist in the modern world.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 109 and 275 (quote on p. 275).

²⁵⁶ Williams, "Wolfgang Rihm and the Adorno Legacy," 87.

²⁵⁷ Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 26.

In other words, the artist is faced with a choice that is not a stylistic, musical choice but a moral one. The treatment of the objective and the subjective in musical expression is a statement about the human condition that cannot be escaped. Adorno's rejection of chance and serial music is on the basis of its of "inward retreat," since the composer ultimately avoids the question of the dialectic of subject and object by letting systems pre-determine the form. Typical of his negative stance, Adorno was cautious in identifying *any* of the compositions of the decades immediately following the Second World War as having achieved his ideal (more on this in Chapter 3).²⁵⁸ Carter's insistence of the treatment of musical time as an expression of human experience speaks directly to this moral aspect of composition. It finds direct expression in Carter's compositional preoccupation with the balancing of the objective and subjective through the simultaneous individual layers that are conceived as individuals responsive to the total interaction and trajectory of the piece, as we saw above. In the next section, I connect this balancing of subject/object with Carter's ideas of expression and construction, and chaos and order, especially important to his middle period music.

2.6 Carter's dialectic of expression and construction

We have already noted a parallel between Adorno's and Carter's assessment of serial and aleatoric music. Carter does not talk in Adornian terms about a Subject-Object dialectic in the relationship of musical content and form. However, what is revealing is Carter's analysis of 'new' music from the early part of the twentieth century in his 1965 essay "Expressionism and American Music."²⁵⁹ As Meyer and Shreffler explain, Carter initially wrote on this topic in 1964 for the *Convegno Internazionale di Studio sull'Expressionismo*, organized by Roman Vlad during Florence's annual music festival.²⁶⁰ On this occasion Carter gave a lecture titled "On the Borders of Expressionism." A "completely reworded and much longer" version of this talk was published in *Perspectives of New Music* in 1965 as "Expressionism and American Music," stimulated by exchanges that Carter had with Benjamin Boretz (then editor of the journal *Perspectives of New Music*).²⁶¹ Carter writes to Boretz that the participants in the conference

²⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 109 on Adorno's choice of ideal composers.

²⁵⁹ Carter, "Expressionism and American Music (1965/72)," in *Elliott Carter: collected essays and lectures, 1938-1995*, 72-83.

²⁶⁰ This was the year Carter was resident in Berlin and first came into contact with Adorno's writings.

²⁶¹ See Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 182 and the letters between Boretz and Carter on 183-185.

all received a book-sized (printed) bibliography of *Espressionismo, Caos e geometia*, by P. Chiarini, with quotes from all the important texts and their dates of printing—and summaries. This is most helpful, for now I shall try and relate the American school more precisely, ideologically, with the middle European, Italian, French, and English currents of the time.”²⁶²

In Carter’s published article he contextualizes musical experimentation in the United States during the first few decades of the twentieth century in the light of parallel musical innovation and musical thought during what Carter calls German Expressionism (but he also mentions schools of French and Russian music). Referencing a wide range of literature of the day on “expressionism” (no doubt aided by the above mentioned bibliography), Carter draws parallels between the American ultramoderns such as Ives, Varèse, Cowell, Ruggles (and others), and principally the Second Viennese School. What is interesting is the way Carter brings into focus the two opposing tendencies of the expressionist attitude: one subjective, driven by “the primeval, immediate expression of basic human emotion” (or *Urshrei*) and the other taking an objective starting point in “constructivism.”²⁶³ He engages with the historical debates around subjective and objective expression in music, citing Rufer, Kandinsky and Schoenberg as well as Ives on the primacy of the Subject in expressionist music. But he insightfully prefaces his discussion with the observation that Ives misquotes Hegel in support of his claim that music must be an expression “that comes from somewhere near the soul.” Carter writes:

The basic point of agreement [between ultramodernist composers] is Hegel’s statement (quoted in part by Ives) that “The universal need for expression in art lies, therefore, in man’s rational impulse to exalt the inner and outer world into a spiritual consciousness for himself, as an object in which he recognizes his own self.” This statement as quoted by Ives omits the words “and outer” and the last phrase “as an object ...”. Both of these omissions are very significant, for they reveal how close Ives’s thinking was to that of the expressionists, for whom the inner world was of prime importance, and for whom art was not an object but a means of embodying his own spiritual vision ...²⁶⁴

In pointing out Ives’s omissions in his quoting of Hegel, Carter is drawing attention to the dialectical nature of the “inner and outer world” basic to Hegel’s philosophy and to

²⁶² Ibid., 184.

²⁶³ Carter, “Orchestras and Audiences: Winter, 1938,” 78.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 76.

how Ives's omission negates this basic dialectic. Carter quotes Italian literary critique Ladislao Mittner who argues that the opposing tendencies of the subjective and objective, which Mittner terms "chaos and geometry," also contain the potential to turn into their opposites "since geometry can deform and even disintegrate, while the "cry" can turn into an ecstatic shout of jubilation which invokes or creates a new world, an ideal world ..."²⁶⁵ Further evidence of Carter's sensitivity to the dialectical nature of expressionism can be found in the fact that Carter uses the same ultramodernist composers to exemplify both expressionist and constructivist techniques present in American music of that period. Carter identifies compositions by Ives, Rudhyar and Ruggles for both "expressionistic intensity" as well as "'geometrical' schemata," pointing to Carter's perception that despite their "expressionist" ideology these composers nonetheless wrestled with the dialectical nature of musical materials. This essay is evidence that Carter was clearly comfortable navigating his way around the philosophical foundations of the aesthetic debates concerning musical form and content, subjective expression and objective construction.

Significantly, it was also precisely at this time that Carter's own compositional work was steeped in similar ideas. The pieces of the 1960s (the Second String Quartet (1959), Double Concerto (1961), Piano Concerto (1965) and Concerto for Orchestra (1969)) are discussed in precisely these terms by Schiff in his first edition of *The Music of Elliott Carter*.²⁶⁶ Of Carter's compositional approach in general during this time, Schiff notes the tug-of-war between construction found in Carter's exploration of flexible systems of large-scale organisation and his need for expressing the fragmented nature of the modern subjective experience:

The expressive contrast of order and chaos was achieved through extensions of techniques Carter had developed in the early 1950s, but whereas the surface of the music became more fragmented, its underlying language became far more rigorous.²⁶⁷

In particular, Schiff's discussion of the Piano Concerto delves deeply into the ideas and techniques of objective and subjective synthesis for which Carter was aiming, contrasting Carter's dialectical approach with "the Darmstadt school" and "his European contemporaries" whose predominant interest, according to Schiff, lay in "total

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 78.

²⁶⁶ See in particular Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 191-6.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 194.

serialization and aleatory composition.”²⁶⁸ Summing up the influences on the Piano Concerto, Schiff says:

The work thus transforms the architectonic group-opposition of the baroque concerto grosso and the metaphorical ‘heroics’ of the romantic concerto into a new conception. It can also be seen as a synthesis of the lyrical drama of the Second Quartet and the geometric choreography of the Double Concerto, with the concertino’s lyricism and the orchestra’s geometry placed on a collision course.²⁶⁹

The piece Carter composed after the Piano Concerto was his Concerto for Orchestra, a particularly clear example of the synthesis of “geometric” and “expressive” means. Schiff writes poetically about the direction in which Carter took this dialectic:

The Piano Concerto is a tragic vision whose prophetic darkness recalls the late paintings of Mark Rothko. Carter, however, was able to take his art beyond despair. He transcended the anxious battleground of the Piano Concerto through a leap of ‘negative capability’. He identified with his opposite. The storm that threatened to obliterate the soloist in the Piano Concerto itself became the swirling, cyclonic texture of the Concerto for Orchestra. Carter now viewed destruction and innovation as inseparable ...²⁷⁰

Schiff’s analyses are penetrating but Carter himself was the source of many of these ideas, especially in *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*, an interview that was conducted during and just after the years in which Carter composed the Concerto for Orchestra. In that interview, Carter speaks about ideas of “flow,” “simultaneous multi-layered continuity” and “highlighting” of polyphonic layers in the Concerto for Orchestra with particular reference to Mahler and Ives. Citing discussions by both Adorno and Bauer-Lechner on Mahler’s polyphony, Carter recounts Mahler’s observation of “true polyphony” resulting spontaneously from “hearing festive sounds, bands, and a men’s’ chorus coming from different directions” in a town and how Mahler connected this experience to childhood memories. Carter links Mahler’s account to Ives’s description of similar experiences which Ives captured most directly in his *Central Park in the Dark* but which were important for much of his music.²⁷¹ While

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 191-5.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 229.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 241.

²⁷¹ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 102 footnote.

Carter always rejected the superimposition of unrelated musics,²⁷² these sonic images described by Mahler and Ives do provide Carter with a clear analogy for how his musical layering aimed to enact the true interaction of individuals within a society. At the same time, in order to achieve the spontaneity of that interaction with the materials of musical composition, Carter required constructive techniques to achieve the coordination necessary for the individual layers to be “picked out of a welter of things and contemplated while the welter continues to press in on them, and gives them, dialectically, a special new meaning.”²⁷³ By not having any particular content dominate, and by having the interaction of the participating layers be the motivating force for the formal organisation of the piece, Carter achieves the expression of a democratic ideal. The constructive element in the music has to do with the ordering of time, a large scale polyrhythm that fixes the points of emergence of events to a time grid.²⁷⁴ This aspect of the composition provides the external force that exerts pressure on the free expression of the instrumental layers but also provides the objective integration necessary for the meaningful interaction of subjective layers to occur. The Concerto for Orchestra provides an especially clear example of this dialect in Carter’s mature music but the same kind of reading can be made of many pieces from the 1960s onward. Even the late music retains the important dialectic of construction and expression regardless of a change in expressive means, as I will explore in the coming chapters.

2.7 Conclusion

Throughout Carter’s writings of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, the themes of expression and construction, time continuity and form, part/whole relations, new music’s relationship to its historical material and to its social situation and, importantly, the expression of human experience through purely musical means are constantly present. By following Carter’s thought processes as articulated in his writings over a number of decades, we find the development of ideas that culminated in his most substantial aesthetic statement in *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*, and upon which he expanded during the 1970s

²⁷² See for example the discussion in Boland, “The All-Trichord Hexachord: compositional strategies in Elliott Carter’s *Con Leggerezza* and *Gra*,” 12, fn.41.

²⁷³ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 102.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 112 refers to the large cycles coordinating the Concerto for Orchestra. See also John Link, “Long Range Polyrhythms in Elliott Carter’s Recent Music” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1994); and Klaas Coulembier, “Analyzing simultaneous time layers in selected compositions by Elliott Carter and Claus-Steffen Manhkopf” (University of Leuven, 2013).

in a several important essays.²⁷⁵ A number of tropes reappear in Carter's writings that illustrate his constant reclaiming of a critical space for music through its content and its means. Music must aim to communicate a "living message," "feeling and thought," "the feeling of experience." The way it realizes this communication is by through the motion of music that must involve an "experience of living time," a "constant change and growth," "no literal repetition," musical "flow," "the now in relation to the past and the future." The demands Carter places on musical composition arrive finally at a series of contradictions that present themselves dialectically. The music must be sensuous, yet require thought and attention; it must not be programmatic, yet it must communicate a "message;" it must involve constant change and motion, yet have recognisable character; it must be new and surprising, yet rely on memory of previous events for its effect; it must not be systematic, yet rest on a firm organisational frame. These contradictions create the tensions and struggles within the material that propel the evolving form of a piece to its (often inconclusive) ending.

As I have explored in this chapter, these aspects of Carter's musical aesthetic finds points of contact with Adorno's theory of new music. In particular there is a strong congruence with Adorno's claim for the necessary mediated nature of social critique and the imperative to engage with the historical nature of musical materials dialectically. Furthermore, Carter's and Adorno's categories of listening and their requirements of an active listener demonstrate a similar view of new music's need for reciprocity from its audience to truly communicate. But it is perhaps Adorno's conception of the Subject-Object dialectic as mediated by musical temporality and form-content interaction that sheds the greatest light on Carter's compositional aesthetic. With the aid of Adorno's theory we can understand Carter's thought on the treatment of the organisation of musical time as the dialectical interaction of objective/constructive form and subjective/expressive content which provides the musical material means for immanent social critique.

Expressed in more concrete musical terms, musical form in Carter's aesthetic must arise dialectically out of a constant interaction of opposing parts that through their conflict and cooperation discontinuously propel the moment onwards. The drama and form of the music must be generated entirely from within the musical material without the

²⁷⁵ Particularly "The Orchestral Composer's Point of View" and "Music and the Time Screen" in *The Writings of Elliott Carter*.

superimposition of program or system or recourse to musical formulations with established meaning. Meaning therefore must be mediated and not experienced directly from the music.²⁷⁶ The act of composition must be a communicative act about the social while remaining entirely within the realm of the musical—a modernist challenge, certainly, and in this Carter is at one with Adorno. Arnold Whittall sums up Carter’s challenge to himself, and to his audience, as follows:

To be alive to the creation and recognition of patterns as they evolve, without shunning complexity yet at the same time acknowledging the need to match human experience and feeling: this might seem like a dangerously ambitious, if not utopian aim. But it represents the ethical core of Carter’s motivation as a composer ...²⁷⁷

Whittall’s interpretation of Carter’s compositional aesthetic as “ethical” supports the understanding that for Carter, like Adorno, autonomous music does not escape the hand of man: the composer’s musical choices cannot be viewed as a pure expression of the soul, as Ives would have it, but instead must be seen as laden with social import and laced with moral significance. If Whittall reads Carter’s compositional aims as utopian, then the latent “message” contained in his compositions can be read as equally, if not more, utopian. Despite the requirement that the music itself not be programmatic, the utopian quality of this musical “message” is nonetheless “verbalized” by Carter in his own commentary on his pieces and on how he sees the relationship of his music to society as much as it is by others attempting to explain his music. In the next chapter I will examine some of these verbalisations that focus on the socio-political and utopian content of Carter’s music.

²⁷⁶ The question of literary sub-text as mediating musical meaning in Carter’s compositions is addressed by Henning Eisenlohr in a lot of detail in Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 261-80.

²⁷⁷ Whittall, “The search for order: Carter’s *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism,” 62.

Chapter 3

“a more significant human message”: Carter’s compositions as utopian vision

“Sound for its own sake is of very limited interest to me. Human beings, I think, come to expect more from music than entertaining patterns of tone-colors. Mine uses a large variety of these but, I hope, always to transcend the medium of sound completely and present a more significant human message.”

Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents, p.216

3.1 “a picture of society”

Utopian visions of human existence are characteristic of aesthetic modernism, its desire to resist what is and to imagine what-is-not but might yet come to be—an alternative that improves on human existence as it is and has been experienced. While the utopian vision in modernist instrumental music must be immanent and mediated, this has in no way precluded extra-musical ideas being projected verbally on to the artistic objects, by the artists themselves (as Carter and other composers have done in explanations of their music) or by others trying to understand. Later in his life, Carter spoke candidly of the social aspiration he connected with his music:

I think my own music is a picture of society as I hoped it would be, I hope it will be – that is, there are a lot of individuals dealing with each other, sensitive to each other, and cooperating and yet not losing their own individuality and this is what I hope a state and a society will be everywhere. It’s hard to believe that it can be achieved within this entire century but we hope something like this will happen.²⁷⁸

If, on the one hand, this statement appears perhaps to give a simplistic or naive vision what might be socially possible, on the other hand it can be read as a plain language version of what Adorno writes in one of his very last essays “On Subject and Object”:

In its proper place, even epistemologically, the relationship of subject and object would lie in a peace achieved between human beings as well as between them and

²⁷⁸ Scheffer, “Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time,” 3’25”.

their Other. Peace is the state of differentiation without domination, with the differentiated participating in each other.²⁷⁹

Carter's "cooperating and yet not losing their own identity" and Adorno's "differentiated participating in each other" get to the same basic notion of a utopian marriage of individual and society. Not infrequently, however, interpretations of Carter's metaphors of individuals and society in his music miss the utopian intent and instead see them as hailing a Western democratic individualism. In his interview with Heinz Holliger in 1970s Carter said:

You see, we humans live in a society and we are only individuals in so far as we contribute something to the society. This interests me a lot, this political, this social theme, the question of the influence of individuals on other individuals, on society. The piano concerto deals with this in some way, how the individual stands in relation to the Mass, I wrote it in Berlin in a time when these relationships appeared to be rather sinister.²⁸⁰

While the first part of this quote speaks of individuals and society in general terms, the last sentence about the Piano Concerto being influenced by the situation in Berlin during the Cold War opens up the possibility of interpreting Carter's comments as specifically anti-communist.²⁸¹ Such statements were perfect for the cultural propaganda machine of the West during the Cold War and Carter's Piano Concerto, as Gubermann reveals, was harnessed by the US government in an effort to involve Carter in diplomatic cultural exchanges/propaganda.²⁸²

For the Fourth String Quartet, Carter again uses this analogy, specifically referring to a "democratic attitude":

A preoccupation with giving each member of the performing group its own musical identity characterizes my *Quartet No.4*; thus mirroring the democratic attitude in

²⁷⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, "On Subject and Object," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (Columbia University Press, 2005), 247.

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 235. "Sehen Sie, wir Menschen leben in einer Gesellschaft, wir sind nur Individuen insofern, als wir etwas zur Gesellschaft beitragen. Das beschäftigt mich sehr, diese politische, diese soziale Thematik, die Frage der Beziehung des Individuums zu den anderen Individuen, der Gesellschaft. Das Klavierkonzert etwa handelt davon, wie das Individuum sich zur Masse verhält, das habe ich in Berlin geschrieben zu einer Zeit, als die Verhältnisse ziemlich finster waren" in Heinz Holliger, "Abseits des Mainstreams: Gespräch mit Elliott Carter," *Neue Zeitung für Musik* 3 (1991): 7. Translation mine.

²⁸¹ See below at Section 3.2 for Carter's comments on communism after the War.

²⁸² Guberman, "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War," 207-8.

which each member of society maintains his or her own identity while cooperating in a common effort - a concept that dominates all my recent works.²⁸³

Such statements have easily led to what I consider to be a misinterpretation, or a co-opting, of Carter's utopian imagining in order to lay claim to an American hero, particularly in the popular press. Even those writers who identify a utopian element to Carter's metaphors of individual and society still frequently portray his "musical message" as positive support for a real politics, rather than the hope for alternative possibilities, not only nowhere yet achieved, but not yet fully imagined (by Carter or others).²⁸⁴ For example, while Anthony Chueng makes a concise summary of the utopian aspects of Carter's social vision, he then proceeds to take the metaphors of conflict and cooperation in Carter's *Double Concerto* and superimpose imagery of the then recent American election (2012) on them, including the tropes of "freedom" and "civilization" associated with democratic liberalism:

... Carter created an image of an ideal society that thrives on cooperation in spite of disagreement, of progress and evolution based on mutual relationships (in his music, metric modulation and rhythmic transformation). Political and societal allegory is deeply embedded in his art, and confronting his work in this fashion is the most meaningful way of getting to its core... Maybe the buzz of last week's Presidential election hasn't yet fully subsided, but my mind has been transfixed by the symbolism here. The ultimate bipartisanship in the face of seemingly irreconcilable roles is what makes the *Double Concerto* work, its clashes amplified by the "controversies" and its profile made whole by its "conversations." This is a rhetoric in which polyphony stands for freedom within highly civilized bounds.²⁸⁵

In another example in the *Boston Globe*, Matthew Guerrieri spins a narrative that has Carter's founding aesthetic appropriating no less than the principles of America's "Founding Fathers":

²⁸³ Elliott Carter, "Program note to String Quartet No. 4," in *Elliott Carter: The String Quartets* (Associated Music Publishers; Boosey and Hawkes, 1986), ix-x Quoted in Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 238.

²⁸⁴ Shreffler's insightful discussion of two models for the musical treatment of political messages in twentieth century "progressive" music. There are many affinities between "Nono's vision of a future utopia" (p.86) without explicit expression, and Carter's "musical message." Shreffler, "'Music Left and Right': A Tale of Two Histories of Progressive Music."

²⁸⁵ Anthony Cheung, "Controversies and Conversations: an Appreciation of Elliott Carter," *News Features (Elliott Carter (1908-2012): Two Appreciations)* (November 12, 2012), <http://aarome.org/news/features/elliott-carter-1908-2012-two-appreciations>.

In his own way, Carter's music was very much American: implicitly and explicitly, fascinated by the possibilities and hazards of democracy, by the promise and peril of yoking disparate voices into something resembling a union. ... As a composer, Carter's vision of America resembled nothing so much as that of the Founding Fathers. The early Americans, after all, were dedicated to self-determination, but forever nervous about the gray area between individual opinion and collective policy. In the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison worried over "the violence of faction" ... Carter made that concern musically his own: Faction and unity would become the latitude and longitude of his musical map.²⁸⁶

Displacing the motivation for Carter's preoccupation with conflict and cooperation in his music to an historical period two centuries earlier, Guerrieri is able to make Carter into a cultural crusader for "American democracy." His article concludes with:

The challenge of his music—demanding an uncommon engagement from the listener, exercising the ability to comprehend multiple, divergent layers of discourse—parallels the challenge of democracy. Intricate but unsettled, fixed but fluid, the music evokes the paradox of the experiment that those early Americans set in motion, an experiment still in process, an ideal still being chased. Elliott Carter wrote anthems for a country forever in the making.²⁸⁷

The "ideal still being chased" has been fixed by Guerrieri back with the Founding Father and that ideal is assumed to be understood and shared by Carter in the same way. However, Carter's ideal does not correspond with a democratic ideology and Carter is careful in all his public statements to remain vague about any suggestion that any of his music is politically motivated. While Guerrieri captures the sense of "becoming" that is so important to Carter's concept of musical form, what he ignores is Carter's critical intent, his resistance to a positive image of capitalist consumer democracy. Guerrieri's is not an uncommon interpretation of Carter's metaphors for his music, and it is also one that Carter possibly seized on himself to make a point about his music that might be easily grasped by the less critically inclined of the concert-going public.²⁸⁸ These interpretations are problematic as they promote a congruence between current actual politics and Carter's generalized, idealized notion of social conflict and cooperation.

²⁸⁶ Matthew Guerrieri, "The American Music of Elliott Carter: the composer's "difficult" music captured the spirit of the Founding Fathers," *Boston Globe* 11 November 2012.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ See for example this comment reported to have come from Cellist Fred Sherry: "In his comments Mr. Sherry shared another Carter story. When asked in an interview about his artistic credo, Carter, who did not like talking about such things, suggested that his music was like an ideal of American democracy, with 'dissenting independent voices creating harmony.'" Anthony Tommasini, "The Honoree Would've Felt at Home: Elliott Carter Memorial at Le Poisson Rouge," *New York Times* 15 January 2013.

They uncritically reduce current political processes and systems to an idealized version of the reality of capitalist democracy (in the actual political present as well as historically). They claim Carter's aesthetic to be its musical manifestation: a glorification of things as they are, or aim to be, rather than a utopian alternative that shows up the darkness in the current social order and its aspirations (war, exploitation, commodification of all aspects of life, and so forth).

Henning Eisenlohr is much closer to the aesthetic truth of Carter's "musical message" in his discussion of the utopian character of Carter's conception of 'democracy':

According to all previous findings relating to [Carter's] critique of the existing consumer society and the passivity of the masses, it is clear that the instrumental metaphors of his work are not a glorification of the existing democracy, but rather a utopian alternative of a possible democratic society, that can nevertheless only be conceived as the result of an attitude of resistance towards consumer society. Elliott Carter's musical utopia comes into being not against but rather through an aesthetic of resistance. ... If at the base for Carter there is a critique and inclusion of an undesirable reality entirely distinguished from the Ideal, then in the end he hopes for a positive Utopia (in the sense of Charles Koechlin's lighthouse pointing to the future) "a glimpse of another America" that is only truly understandable when conceived in tandem with its critical origin. Utopia is not escape from the world, but critique of the existing relationships.²⁸⁹

Thus, Eisenlohr claims that far from championing the individualist democratic hopes and desires of the Founding Fathers or of any actual political realisation of a democracy today—or claiming that their goals will lead us to a utopia sonically manifest in his music—Carter's metaphors for his music point to what is not achieved and not acknowledged in the current organisation of individuals in society. This is also evident in the quote at the beginning of this chapter when Carter expresses a far from certain

²⁸⁹ "Nach allen bisherigen Erkenntnissen bezüglich der Kritik an der bestehenden Konsumgesellschaft und der Passivität der Massen ist klar, dass die instrumentale Metaphorik seiner Werke kein Lobpreis der bestehenden Demokratie ist, sondern ein utopischer Gegenentwurf einer möglichen demokratischen Gesellschaft, der aber eben nur denkbar erscheint als Ergebnis einer Verweigerungshaltung gegenüber der Konsumgesellschaft. Die musikalische Utopie Elliott Carters ist nicht gegen, sondern durch die Ästhetik des Widerstandes entstanden. Ihre besondere Betonung in Spätwerk entspricht der Beobachtung an dem Briefentwurf an Paul Henry Lang. Steht am Anfang bei Carter die Kritik und Einbeziehung der schlechten, vom Ideal gänzlichen unterschiedenen Wirklichkeit, so gelangt er letztlich (im Sinne von Charles Koechlin's in die Zukunft weisenden Leuchtturm) zu einer positiven Utopie, "a glimpse of another America", die aber nur wirklich verstehbar ist, wenn ihr kritischer Ursprung mitbedacht wird. Utopie ist nicht Weltflucht, sondern Kritik an den bestehenden Verhältnissen." Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 239. Translation mine.

conviction of attaining his ideal: “It is hard to believe that something like this will be achieved in this entire century but we hope something like this will happen.” I will explore further the idea of the utopian in Carter’s music in relation to Adorno and Jameson below in section 3.3 *Lightness and Darkness: reworking the dialectic of material and form*. In particular, I will consider how Carter’s later music from the 1980s onwards might be expressing a similar utopian vision as the middle-period music despite a recognisable shift in Carter’s compositional approach toward a lighter, more transparent, sound world, accompanied by the question of whether Carter was compromising hereby on what he expected of the listener. However, I will take a circuitous route towards answering these question and begin with section 3.2 *Glance at the socio-political connection in Carter’s compositional oeuvre*. As with any utopian vision, the underpinnings of Carter’s musical message stemmed from a critique of the actual social and political world in which Carter lived and worked. Therefore, a very brief overview of the intersection between the way Carter frames his compositional concerns and the socio-political climate a various points in a particularly turbulent century will provide some important context against which Carter’s late compositions of the following century can be contrasted. This period of Carter’s music and compositional approach has been well-examined in the established literature and what I offer here is an interpretive slant on some of that literature.

3.2 Glance at the socio-political connections in Carter’s compositional oeuvre

An abstracted connection of music to politics existed from the beginning of Carter’s professional career. In conversation with Enzo Restagno in 1989 (Carter was almost 80 and it was the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall), Carter told Restagno:

When I was a young man, in my college days, I looked all over for political ideals. For a while I think I was even a Trotskyite, and I was always very much interested in the Soviet Union. I remember the disappointment caused by Stalin’s purges, but even that didn’t turn me into an anti-Communist.²⁹⁰

Carter’s reflection on this pre-war period when international socialism was of great interest to American artists and intellectuals resonates with Martin Brody’s account of

²⁹⁰ Restagno, *Elliott Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre Musica 1989*, 35.

Milton Babbitt's political experiences in New York in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁹¹ While beyond the scope of this thesis, it would certainly be of great value to pursue an investigation into Carter's intellectual engagement with American cultural-political thinking of this era. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the influence of Alfred North Whitehead on Carter was lasting and the interconnection between his philosophy and other cultural-political thinkers of that period on the US East Coast such as John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and Clement Greenberg would broaden out the perspective on the ferment of ideas which surrounded Carter at this time.²⁹² But even if the young Carter was swept up in the more overtly political interests that dominated cultural debate during this time, he always insisted on the distance between his abstracted music politics and real politics.²⁹³ This is exemplified in his interview with van Dyck-Hemming in 1995 (Carter was 86). In his response to the question of whether the McCarthy era politics affected his composing, Carter said:

... I've never been politically ... except in this early period I was never really concerned with politics in the large scale. But of course all my pieces are in the sense of a political meaning and that is the idea of cooperating - music is a way of making people cooperate.²⁹⁴

This claim is consistent with what Guberman finds in his thorough investigation of how Carter was politically engaged during the post-war and 1960s Cold War period "not only in his compositions ... but in his actions." This engagement was not passive but it was for the most part indirect: always in the service of his music and never clearly aligned with any political movement as such.²⁹⁵ In keeping with a modernist position, Carter's political meaning lay in his musical means.

²⁹¹ Brody examines the political importance of Art for Art's sake in Trotsky's as well as in Greenberg's writings and for Babbitt and the post-war 'serious' composers in America. Brody, "Music for the Masses': Milton Babbitt's Cold War Music Theory."

²⁹² Bernard, "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time," 649. Whitehead and Dewey were admirers of Mead (see George Cronk, "George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)," in *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*: a peer-reviewed academic resource.) Dewey was at Harvard with Walter Piston who also taught Carter (see Nicholas E. Tawa, *From Psalm to Symphony: A History of Music in New England* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), esp. 308.)

²⁹³ Guberman explores Carter's claim that the world extraneous to music had no place in his compositions in relation to the cold-war political climate in "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War."

²⁹⁴ Dyck-Hemming, "Diskurze zur 'Musik Elliott Carters'," 227.

²⁹⁵ Guberman makes a case for Carter being opportunistic in his response to government and non-government benefactors of his music in the "Conclusion" to "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War," 219-23. Exceptions to this position were Carter's outspokenness about wages, rights and subsidies for composers and new music groups and the difficulty of making a living in this field; and also his contribution to the effort to release Isang Yun (e.g., Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 10-11 and 194-5.)

At the same time, as the musical means became more abstracted, more autonomous, Carter's verbal explanations of the connection between his music and a social message became more explicit. Eisenlohr makes a penetrating analysis of the socio-political motivations in Carter's music, discussing the connections Carter makes between his music and political meaning from as early as his 1938 choral composition *To Music* through the neoclassic pieces *The Defense of Corinth* (1941), *Holiday Overture* (1944) and *The Minotaur* (1947) with their less obscured war-time content, to his post-war shift from neoclassicism to his atonal idiom and concomitant musical autonomy. Eisenlohr identifies 1958 as the year that Carter starts explicitly to articulate his music as "a utopian alternative" to the post-war consumer society. For example, Carter describes his music in a letter to Paul Henry Lang (1958) as:

a glimpse of another America not occupied with conspicuous waste, with 'killing time', but occupied with the values of adventure, liveliness, beauty, tradition and the rest that are presupposed but forgotten in the world we face. In music we try to make time live ...²⁹⁶

Here Carter identifies a utopia that has been repressed, "presupposed but forgotten." However, it is a memory to which *music* still has access and the qualities of which he aims for particularly in relation to the treatment of time in his own music. This comment comes at the time of Carter composing the Second String Quartet, the piece to usher in what is commonly regarded as Carter's mature music, consisting of the large works of opposition.

The message of Carter's mature music takes on another layer of political meaning when he begins to articulate it not only as the humanising of a stultifying consumer culture but as a response to the dark psychological states associated with the horrors of the Second World War:

Well, as one lived through those changing times during and after the Second World War, it became obvious that there was a permanent extravagant part of people's experience and actions that had to be faced. We don't want to run around like wild people and hurt each other at every turn but one [sic] the other hand we do have that wild side and it has to be fitted into a socially effective situation if we are going to live together and profit by it. *It seems to me that this could be part of the message of my*

²⁹⁶ Quoted in Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 236.

music. It could be seen as a way of trying to deal with this irrational, rather extravagant and violent side of ourselves.²⁹⁷ [italics mine]

Carter's message as articulated here places the dark reality of recent history in dialectical opposition to his utopian social vision. As Eisenlohr emphasizes, the "irrational, rather extravagant and violent side of ourselves" is in Carter's view not fixed or invariable, and it is precisely this "wild side" that Carter hopes can be transformed by imagining alternatives—not through its denial or suppression but through recognition and accommodation.²⁹⁸ The influence of Freud's irrational unconscious (that had played a role in early modernism) reappeared after World War II and Carter acknowledges this influence directly in *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds*.²⁹⁹ In his essay "The European Roots of American Music," Carter frames the neoclassic/atonal polarity in terms of a French/German stylistic opposition,³⁰⁰ once again claiming an influence of Freud:

... The French ability for characterization, at first so useful to us, has become now less valuable than the German concern for inner psychological states and the search for an organic order in them—paralleling, perhaps, the paths opened by Freud and Jung earlier this century.³⁰¹

The concern with "inner psychological states" and the darkness of human nature that Carter wished to "deal with in a less oblique and resigned way" is found in various guises throughout the works of opposition of the 1960s and 1970s, or as Schiff termed them, the works of the "divided ensemble."³⁰² These pieces include the String Quartet No.2 (1959), the Double Concerto (1961), the Piano Concerto (1964), the Concerto for Orchestra (1969), the String Quartet No.3 (1971), the Duo for Violin and Piano (1973), the Brass quintet (1974), and the Symphony of three orchestras (1976).³⁰³ For Schiff, the darkness in Carter's music of this period manifests itself as "black comedy":

²⁹⁷ Carter, "Elliott Carter in conversation with Robert Johnston, Michael Century, Robert Rosen, and Don Stein (1984)," 253.

²⁹⁸ Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 233.

²⁹⁹ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 61.

³⁰⁰ For more on the use of the Stravinsky-Schoenberg debate in cold war politics and Carter's comments see Guberman, "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War," esp. 20-46.

³⁰¹ Carter, "The European Roots of American Music," in *Elliott Carter: collected essays and lectures, 1937-1995*, 68.

³⁰² Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 26. Also Link, "Elliott Carter's Late Music," 34.

³⁰³ The music from about 1980 onwards displays a shift towards a perceived 'lightness' which I discuss below.

The confidence and expansiveness of the earlier pieces [First Quartet and Variations for Orchestra] gives way to a mood of anxiety—not the *angst* of expressionism, but the ironic despair of black comedy.³⁰⁴

The musical means that Carter developed to express this sense of darkness hinged on the idea of a tenuous balance between order and disorder. Of his rhythmic procedures, Carter said:

It's kind of terrifying in a way—you see, I always deal with things that have a very strong dramatic meaning to myself, and the conflict of chaos and order is particularly significant because it seems to be at the root of so many of the things important to us.³⁰⁵

As Carter explains here, the technical detail of his rhythmic procedures finds greater meaning in “so many of the things important to us” in the world outside of music. The questions of order and chaos in musical composition become immanent questions of society and history. Schiff identifies this mediation of the social and musical, commenting on Carter’s realisation that the order necessary for artistic creation conflicts with the need to express the experience of disorder in contemporary life as well as the need to deny modes of expression that mimic totalitarian order:

Random chaos undermines meaning; and yet disorder may be a necessary rebellion against tyrannical order, an assertion of freedom in a world totally dedicated to making all experiences predictable.³⁰⁶

As Schiff suggests, Carter’s struggle with how dialectically to handle order and disorder (that is, structure and flow, or the objective and the subjective) in the compositional techniques he developed during this time shows Carter’s preoccupation with the handling of musical materials as a way of expressing both a critical and a utopian social vision. These pieces are dialectical in their darkness and lightness; not at all an affirmation of democracy as we know it, but crucially an attempt to work with the musical materials in a way that most authentically communicated Carter’s “significant human message” that human relations might be arranged differently. Recall that Schiff, for example, talks of the Piano Concerto as “a tragic vision whose prophetic darkness” Carter was nonetheless able to take “beyond despair,” claiming that “Carter now viewed

³⁰⁴ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 193.

³⁰⁵ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 114.

³⁰⁶ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 193-4.

destruction and innovation as inseparable, and sources of imaginative creation.”³⁰⁷ As the message must remain entirely immanent to the music, the technical musical means for achieving this dialectical critique—the way of handling the musical materials in relation to their musical form, as we saw in Chapter 2—were at the crux of Carter’s innovations. The Piano Concerto, as the drama of “the discovery of identity,” is a *musical* discovery with an immanent social message, as Schiff notes:

The [Piano] Concerto is not a *representation* of the search for identity, but a specific *enactment* of that search, in which terms, issues and processes of self-discovery are themselves transformed. Formally, it is Carter’s freest conception; expressively, it is his most intense.”³⁰⁸

If the dialectic of chaos and structure had taken on contrary implications in the modern era as Schiff argues, then, to summarize the dilemma Schiff identifies but now in Adorno’s words: “... the question of form which faces composers today must be: Is disintegration possible as a result of integration.”³⁰⁹ This question underpinned Carter’s explorations of form (as we saw in Chapter 2) from his mature period onward.³¹⁰ And even as Carter moved into his late period where the oppositional character of his music began to be modified, the conflict between the need for an integrated formal musical structure and the need to express a disintegrating social reality remained central.³¹¹ In 1986, Carter articulates this dilemma very clearly in a letter where he turns down the possibility of a commission for a choral piece.³¹² In the letter he concludes:

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 241.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 228.

³⁰⁹ Adorno, “Form in the New Music. Translated by Rodney Livingstone,” 208. Paddison elaborates on Adorno’s articulation of this dilemma as follows: “how is it possible to compose autonomous, integrated and consistent musical works in the face of, on the one hand, the disintegration of musical material and on the other hand, the degeneration of music to ideology as a result of its commodification?” Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music.*, 260

³¹⁰ Whether the manner in which Carter responded to this question bears any resemblance to Adorno’s ideal is another matter. But as we will see below, Julian Johnson (in “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno.”) redefines Adorno’s category of ‘New Music’ to better accommodate techniques by composers since Adorno whose music can be read as fulfilling the critical function of art.

³¹¹ See Link, “Elliott Carter’s Late Music.” See also the discussion of opposition in Carter’s opera in Guy Capuzzo, *Elliott Carter’s What Next?: Communication, Cooperation, and Separation* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 18-19.

³¹² The question of choral writing and “social cohesiveness” for Carter is explored in depth in Guberman’s dissertation “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War,” 5-12. Also Daniel Guberman, “Elliott Carter’s Cold War Abandonment of the Chorus,” *Mitteilung der Paul Sacher Stiftung* 25 (April, 2012).

...to me, now, choral music represents a social cohesiveness and agreement about worthy goals – which I no longer see in the world we live in, except on very superficial matters – public relations and consumer goods and as I have no desire to write an advertising cantata (as Milhaud did for a paper company) ... Being one of a crowd and expressing this in choral music is, now, I think, alien to me, writing a work that ‘deconstructs’ a choral as I have instrumental ensembles and still be within the range of American choral potentials would be to solve an arduous time-consuming puzzle ...³¹³

For Carter to consider undertaking such a project, the *musical means* must be able to mediate a critique of “being one of a crowd,” of “social cohesiveness,” of “consumer goods.” The “more significant human message” or the utopian imagining *must* be part of the creative endeavour. However, the techniques of composing for choir that Carter could envisage at that time would not enable such a mediation. We see here what Whittall refers to as Carter’s “ethical core” at work.³¹⁴ And we may also find a parallel in Adorno’s formulation of the moral significance of handling musical materials, which is interpreted here by Horton in somewhat bleak terms:

In all, Adorno offers us a stark choice: if music pursues a notion of community, then it embraces a lie of collectivity that tends towards totalitarianism or submission to the culture industry; if music honours the material’s immanent tendency, then it forever condemns the composer to isolation.³¹⁵

Horton’s “stark choice” captures the extremes of Adorno’s assessment of the moral situation of new music. The quote highlights a parallel with Carter’s thinking on composing for choir at that time and furthermore brings to mind the critiques of Carter’s music in the 1980s by John Rockwell and Samuel Lipman that Schiff cites in his second edition of *The Music of Elliott Carter*. Rockwell “attacked Carter’s music for its distance from the American mainstream of popular culture” and Lipman claimed that “I have no doubt at all that whatever the fate of Carter’s mature work may be, composition cannot go further in the direction he has adumbrated and remain what can be recognized as music.”³¹⁶ Schiff concludes that “[w]ith the rise of minimalism and neo-

³¹³ Elliott Carter to Ann Santen, March 1986, Elliott Carter Collection, Paul Sacher Stiftung. Quoted in “Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter’s ‘Self-Reinvention’ and the Early Cold War,” 9. Guberman interprets Carter’s statement about “social cohesiveness” differently, as embodying “one-worldsim” ideology prevalent in post-1945 America (pp.10-19).

³¹⁴ Quoted at the end of Chapter 2. Whittall, “The search for order: Carter’s *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism,” 62.

³¹⁵ Horton, “Dialectics and music analysis,” 119.

³¹⁶ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 28.

Romanticism, American music was returning to the models of Copland and Barber; Carter, for all his honors, became an increasingly isolated figure.”³¹⁷ The correspondence of this image with the fate Adorno predicted for new music is striking.³¹⁸ Nevertheless, neither the music nor the social remained frozen in the concerns of the post-war period: the historical moment of post-war modernism shifted to address new questions of musical relevance in a transforming society. Adorno was no longer alive to witness how his predictions would play out. Carter however still had a lengthy compositional career ahead of him and the new challenges to new music became increasingly relevant to his own compositional choices. In the next section I will discuss the shape of some of those changes and examine Carter’s later music drawing on theoretical notions of a number of scholars concerned with the ongoing critical potential of art music.

3.3 Lightness and Darkness: reworking the dialectic of material and form

The implications of the conflict between order/structure/totalitarianism and disorder/chaos/freedom that dominated musical innovation in the two decades following the Second World War were given a new challenge in the late 1960s by the arrival of a post-modernist attitude in the musical arts.³¹⁹ Carter was far from deaf to this changed aesthetic environment and the music-philosophical questions it brought with it. In Carter’s musical style from the 1980s onwards, many commentators found that the darkness of the 1960s and 1970s was brought into opposition with a newfound “lightness” and arguably a greater emphasis on cooperation than on conflict.³²⁰

The theme of opposing lightness and darkness in Carter’s music is found in much secondary literature. It characterizes Schiff’s first 1983 edition of *The Music Of Elliott Carter*. However, it is not until the music written after *Night Fantasies* (1980)—the last piece discussed in Schiff’s first book—that commentators begin to characterize many of Carter’s new pieces firstly by a lightness or transparency and only then noting pieces or movements of pieces that present a balancing darkness—in other words, there appeared

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ See also Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 98.

³¹⁹ See David and Kenneth Gloag Beard, *Musicology: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 142.

³²⁰ See for example John Link, “Elliott Carter’s ‘Late Music’?,” *Tempo* 62, no. 246 (October, 2008): 7; Roeder, “‘The matter of human cooperation’ in Carter’s Mature Style.”; and Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 29-30.

to many listeners to be “a change of emphasis,” as Whittall puts it in relation to the Oboe Concerto, in enough of Carter’s music to make it a noticeable feature.³²¹ This change is picked up by Wierzbicki in the final chapter and in the “Epilogue” to his book, where he summarizes observations by Bernard, Caltobianco, Link, Meyer and Shreffler, Schiff, and Whittall on the qualities of “lucidity,” “clarity,” “transparency” and “lightness” in recent Carter compositions.³²²

But what significance does this observation of a new lightness have for understanding Carter’s “musical message,” his “picture of society as ... I hope it will be,” his utopian imagining? It is clear from statements later in his life that for Carter there existed no fundamental change to his conception of what his music was aiming to communicate.³²³ However, we do find, even in the language Carter uses to talk about his music, that there is a change of emphasis. For example, in 1971 at the height of his compositional maturity, we saw that Carter emphasized the message of conflict: “I always deal with things that have a very strong dramatic meaning to myself, and the conflict of chaos and order is particularly significant because it seems to be at the root of so many of the things important to us.”³²⁴ By contrast, towards the end of his life on his 100th birthday, Carter was asked what he wanted people to take away from hearing his music, and without hesitation he said “Happiness!”³²⁵ It remains for us then to question if the goal of expressing the conflict of chaos and order need be at odds with the goal of expressing happiness. Does one necessarily retain a critical space and the other necessarily become a capitulation to ideology? Certainly Whittall has claimed that “the special features of Carter’s late style need not be seen as contradicting all that had gone before...”³²⁶ On a number of occasions, Whittall has noted the potential contradiction between the “exhilaration, even joy” experienced by listeners to Carter’s late music and the “sense of alienation, of endemic melancholia” that once was almost obliged to accompany modernist music.³²⁷ According to Whittall this sense of necessary melancholia arose “as composers contemplate the professional and personal challenges which arise as they

³²¹ Arnold Whittall, “Review of Oboe Concerto by Elliott Carter,” *Music & Letters* 73, no. 2 (May, 1992).

³²² Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter*, 97-100.

³²³ This is evident in the way Carter speaks about his music in Scheffer’s film “Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time.” Whittall in particular sees Carter as “sustaining the modernist project,” a theme that appears in most of Whittall’s writing on Carter. See for example Arnold Whittall, “Summer’s Long Shadows,” *The Musical Times* 138, no. 1850 (April, 1997).

³²⁴ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 114.

³²⁵ Link, “Elliott Carter’s Late Music,” 34.

³²⁶ Arnold Whittall, “The search for order: Carter’s *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism,” 71.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72; see also “Twentieth-Century Music in Retrospect: Fulfilment or Betrayal?,” 20; and “‘A play of pure forces’? Elliott Carter’s opera in context,” *The Musical Times* 149, no. 1905 (Winter, 2008): 4 and 6.

attempt to live and work within communities that have little understanding of and even less time for their activities.”³²⁸ This is the Adornian alienated composer-subject *par excellence*, mediating social struggle through their struggle with musical materials. Whittall concludes that “Carter would seem to conform only if it can be accepted that such alienation need not invariably find expression in songs of sorrow and despair.” While Whittall acknowledges the darkness in a piece such as *Adagio Tenebroso*, he agrees with David Schiff that the “sorrowful spirit” of this music is best heard in context, as the second movement of *Symphonia*, the orchestral triptych that ultimately ends in some of Carter’s most exhilaratingly light music, evoking instead of sorrow, a transcendent spirit.³²⁹

There are risks in using the poles of metaphorical musical lightness and darkness to characterize periods of Carter’s compositional output, let alone the history of musical modernism as a whole: darkness too easily becomes locked into representing all that is the negative, critical, disintegrating; while lightness is too easily associated with frivolity, indifference, or a veneer of existence. Italo Calvino, in his “Lightness” lecture in *Memos for a New Millennium*, delves into the nuances of the characterisation of ‘lightness’ and its ‘Other’ and I will expand upon Calvino’s important influence on Carter in this matter below. But it is also important to note that despite the shift in musical means in Carter’s late music, this shift is in no way comparable to Carter’s move three decades prior from a neo-classic harmonic and formal language to an atonal, polyvocal idiom. In fact, it would be widely agreed that the late music owes everything to Carter’s experimenting with musical means in his large compositions of opposition and darkness. The musical means from the “mature” period also underpin the later music; the long-range polyrhythms—a feature of the 1980s compositions³³⁰—are a further development of Carter’s rhythmic practice since the Second String Quartet; Carter’s late harmonic practice can be seen as a refinement and narrowing of his harmonic language made possible because of the expansive pitch set vocabulary he had developed and composed with in earlier pieces.

Many reasons have been sought for the move to, or perhaps it is better to say the inclusion of, greater lightness in Carter’s late practice. One of the most perceptive

³²⁸ “The search for order: Carter’s *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism,” 72.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Link, “Long Range Polyrhythms in Elliott Carter’s Recent Music.”

insights come from John Link's analysis of Carter's return to vocal writing in the mid 1970s. Link argues that Carter's rediscovered interest in vocal writing prompted the development of what Link calls a "lyric perspective."³³¹ He demonstrates how the new-found clarity of a single singing voice within the "polyvocal" instrumental texture of Carter's songs also made its way into much of Carter's instrumental music of the 1980s and onwards. Link further argues that practicalities, such as orchestral rehearsal time, changes in institutional expectations and Carter's need to speed up his rate of composing, all contributed to the musical innovations characteristic of Carter's late style. Following Link, Whittall and others,³³² I propose to understand Carter's subtle yet significant shift in sound world as partially linked to changing social and musical climate of the late 20 century. However, I also wish to develop a philosophical framework that can provide insight into how Carter's change of attitude towards the musical means in his later music might be seen not as resigning from his earlier utopian imagining and critical impulse—despite its supposed greater accessibility—but rather as continuing his fundamental belief that music must be responsive to its time, its social reality, and its own history, all of which are constantly changing.³³³ These changes in Carter's music may well be interpreted through the work of a number of scholars who have been considering how music *since* Adorno may be heard to respond to Adorno's claims for the possibilities of new music but now at the changed historical moment of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In what follows I wish to engage in particular with the work of Julian Johnson.

In his outstanding article "The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia: New Music since Adorno," Johnson reconsiders Adorno's notion of darkness and lightness in art. It is the desire to break out of the fixity of the characterisations of aesthetic darkness and lightness that seems to motivate Johnson's lines of investigation in this essay, particularly since he identifies this very same desire in a category of new music from the end of the twentieth century. Johnson's work provides a context within which to examine features commonly occurring in Carter's late practice, such as his use of more transparent textures; of repetition; of reduced harmonic and rhythmic complexity; of both sectional formal models and formal 'open-endedness;' and even of 'flexible'

³³¹ Link, "Elliott Carter's Late Music," 38

³³² For example Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter*, 87-88.

³³³ See John Link, "Sense and Sensibility: Music on Stage in *What Next?*," *Chicago Review* 58, no. 3/4 (Summer, 2014): 212-14; and "Elliott Carter's Late Music," esp. 42-45.

boundaries of a piece though self-referencing and the loose grouping of pieces;³³⁴ as well as other elements that contribute to the quality of lightness, such as the use of fragments, lyricism, and ironic humour.³³⁵

Taking a broad starting point, Johnson addresses music theorists (and perhaps composers) with the challenging claim that the “only valid justification for new music today lies in its unique utopian content. The only valid justification for music theory lies in its capacity to bring that content into the realm of reflective thought.”³³⁶ In response to his own ambitious but astute claim, Johnson goes in search of this “unique utopian content” in the “compositional practices and materials” of music written since Adorno. He wishes to define a category of new music which maintains a critical and utopian purpose without conforming to Adorno’s “aesthetics of blackness.”³³⁷ It is music that escapes “the falsities exhibited by the products of the culture industry” while at the same time avoiding “Adorno’s negative construction of the fate of modern music.”³³⁸

Adorno insisted that “art had to assimilate itself into the darkness of contemporary society” but it was its very doing so that was “its measure of remaining true to the idea of the utopian.”³³⁹ In other words, the emphasis on darkness provided the trigger to question the prevailing false bright image of social cohesion and subjective choice projected by capitalist consumer culture, and to propose (utopian) alternatives. How this idea finds expression in music might be understood more concretely by way of a literary example. Fredric Jameson developed the notion of the literary utopia being not “a mode of representation”, but rather a “kind of praxis.”³⁴⁰ The utopian in the novel is not what the Utopia is—the nature or even the presence of an image of an alternative society. Jameson says: “... utopias are non-fictional, even though they are also non-existent.”

³⁴¹ Rather, the utopian is the work that the novel does in making us “unthink” or

³³⁴ For example *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux* and *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux II* which can be played together or separately; similarly the movements of the orchestral triptychs *Symphonia: sum fluxae pretium spei* and *Three Illusions* can be performed together or separately.

³³⁵ The role of irony in Carter’s musical response to a changed era is a theme discussed by many (e.g., Link, Whittall, Capuzzo, Schiff). While it is not one I develop in this study, there is interesting potential in investigating Adorno’s take on irony in artistic expression and irony particularly in Carter’s late music.

³³⁶ Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 69.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid., 71.

³³⁹ Ibid., 71-72.

³⁴⁰ Peter Fitting, “The Concept of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson,” *Utopian Studies* 9, no. 2 (1998): 11.

³⁴¹ Fredric Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” *New Left Review* 25 (Jan-Feb 2004): 54.

“neutralize” our conditioned thinking about current society and future possibilities.³⁴² This is also termed the utopian *impulse* of art.³⁴³ The utopian impulse does not present a fully-conceived Utopia as a workable alternative to present-day society; rather it forces us to confront our assumptions about our own lived reality, our expectations for a Utopia, and the contradictions in our own thoughts about the present. In the same sense, Adorno’s “necessary blackness” of new music stems from the requirement that music not “slide into an ideological affirmation of things as they are.”³⁴⁴ Instead, the blackness provides a means of breaking through conditioned thought/listening patterns. The utopian is not so much a quality that new music should have, but rather the utopian reveals itself negatively by showing up the dark reality that is not otherwise visible/audible and yet which is in need of uncovering and rethinking: a prompt to make us recognize the undesirable and imagine what might be possible instead.

As we have already seen in Chapter 2, according to Adorno, musical materials which were too immediate and too formulaic resulted in experiences which denied music’s temporality. Such music was able to induce a sense of passivity in the listener and thereby capitulated to ideology. The treatment of repetition and sonority in new music falls for Adorno into this category of ideology, as Johnson explains:

The status of repetition and sonority in Adornian theory is of course bound up with a larger constellation of ideas. The refusal of genuine temporal progression, marked by musical repetition, is seen as a fundamental denial of the nature of the subject. The focus on sonority for its own sake denotes a regression into immediacy, which a truly dialectical music would avoid. These ideas meet in Adorno’s category of myth—a term by which he denotes the target of all genuinely critical culture, and all genuine cultural critique. Myth is above all the proposition of Being over Becoming, of undialectical immediacy, of a completion of reconciliation that can only be understood as pure ideology. The historical nature of mankind and thus of culture, requires that artworks must always be mediated, dialectical, and incomplete in themselves if they are to avoid being merely tools of such an ideology.³⁴⁵

As legitimate as Adorno’s claims about the avoidance of ideology in music are to Johnson, Adorno’s categorisation of repetition and sonority as too immediate to be used

³⁴² Fitting, “The Concept of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson,” 10. See also Tom Moylan, “Special Section on the Work of Fredric Jameson. Introduction: Jameson and Utopia,” *Utopian Studies* 9, no. 2 (1998): 1.

³⁴³ Fitting, “The Concept of Utopia in the Work of Fredric Jameson.”

³⁴⁴ Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 71.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

critically Johnson sees as a “blind spot” in Adorno’s theorizing of new music. Johnson critically teases out the connection between sonority, repetition and utopia in Adornian aesthetics, and criticizes Adorno’s locating of the communicative content exclusively in the motivic/thematic material rather than including the possibility that other elements might be able to function critically and communicatively in non-motivic music.³⁴⁶ In other words, the categories of sonority and repetition are far from fixed in the way Adorno seems to theorize them, and instead what they are able to signify has been transformed in new music since the 1960s.³⁴⁷ While Adorno seemed to be re-thinking these elements of his aesthetic theory towards the end of his life, he had not gone so far as to reclaim a critical potential for sonority or repetition, or to rework these categories dialectically in a way that Johnson claims the music of composers such as Fernyhough, Ligeti, Boulez, Berio, Nono, Birtwistle, Feldman, Xenakis, Lutoslawski and even Varèse and Debussy have done. All the same, in seeking qualities of the new music since Adorno that display this critical yet utopian aesthetic, Johnson takes his cues from the “distinctly utopian character” of Adorno’s own later writings, and particularly his idea of a *musique informelle*. Notable within these later writings are Adorno’s modified assessment of the role of repetition, his mention of “the quality of inexhaustibility” he finds in Berg’s music and of the dialectical use of sonority. All these areas bear on the quality of the lightness in Carter’s late music. In the following sections I will outline Johnson’s understanding of the role of repetition, “inexhaustibility” of material and sonority in new music since Adorno and examine how these notions help to understand Carter’s later music as both utopian and critical, in other words how Carter maintained his strong compositional aesthetic developed throughout the post-war period but now expressed with altered musical means.

3.3.a – Repetition

Adorno’s critique of repetition was forcefully levelled at Stravinsky in *Philosophy of New Music*. Adorno later certainly recognized the undialectical treatment he had given Stravinsky in that work, and in later writings he refined his theorising of repetition, examining the necessity for a dialectical handling of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ in music, and the subtle manner in which materials could articulate these categories.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Recall the discussion in Chapter 1, pp. 35-36.

³⁴⁷ Johnson points out that “Adorno tells us that categories of aesthetic judgement are themselves historically defined.” Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 70.

³⁴⁸ Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 177-179

Adorno nonetheless maintained that certain kinds of repetition were no longer tenable in music. Identical repetition, which constituted the reprise of material in historical formal models such as the recapitulation of sonata form, was no longer possible (recall discussion in Chapter 2).³⁴⁹ Such a recapitulation was the result of functional tonal forms in which the repetition participated in the creation and diffusion of tension that defined the flow of time. Without that productive tension, identical repetition resulted in stasis or the denial of time flow, as did attempts at total differentiation, where rapid constant change had the effect of constant sameness.³⁵⁰ Johnson analyses how Adorno refines his thinking on repetition by way of Stravinsky and Beckett in Adorno's 1962 essay "Stravinsky: a dialectical portrait," as well as in his posthumous *Aesthetic Theory*.³⁵¹ While not reneging on his earlier assessment of the dead-end nature of repetition in Stravinsky's music, Johnson shows that Adorno now allows for another possibility: Adorno suggests that the opposition of static-dynamic has come to be replaced by the "spurious infinity of ... reprise" such as found in the repetitions in Beckett's plays. The flow of time in Beckett's work (and in instances of Stravinsky's music) is being constituted by an unending series of sameness that nevertheless contains difference rather than pure invariance (identical repeats). Johnson quotes Adorno from *Aesthetic Theory*:

Repetition in authentic new artwork is not always an accommodation to the archaic compulsion toward repetition. Many artworks indict this compulsion and thereby take the part of what Karl Heinz Haag has called the unrepeatable; Beckett's Play, with the spurious infinity of its reprise, presents the most accomplished example. ... Enciphered in modern art is the postulate of an art that no longer conforms to the disjunction of the static and dynamic. Beckett, indifferent to the ruling cliché of development, views his task as that of moving in an infinitely small space toward what is effectively a dimensionless point. This aesthetic principle of construction, as the principle of *Il faut continuer*, goes beyond stasis; and it goes beyond the dynamic in that it is at the same time a principle of treading water and, as such, a confession of the uselessness of the dynamic.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 177-79.

³⁵⁰ Williams, "New Music, Late Style: Adorno's 'Form in the New Music,'" 205; Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 179. Carter articulated his thinking about textural differentiation in similar terms, see Boland, "The All-Trichord Hexachord: compositional strategies in Elliott Carter's *Con Leggerezza* and *Gra*," 13.

³⁵¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Christian Lenhardt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984). On Adorno's late interpretation of Stravinsky, see also Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 276-70.

³⁵² Johnson, "'The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia': New Music Since Adorno," 76.

While in the pre-war period new music's "dynamism"³⁵³ challenged the static oppression of temporal flow, mid-century new music was quickly losing an objective goal for its dynamic motion.³⁵⁴ Instead of Adorno's earlier prediction of complete disintegration, the idea emerges that music (like society, like history) just keeps on going *ad infinitum*, feeling its way to the next point instead of moving to a prescribed conclusion. The subjective expressive impulse, instead of being killed off altogether by an ever-greater alienation, now finds a way to accommodate living with that alienation (*à la* Beckett). The never-ending but varied reprise provides a means of going from moment to moment, with the musical structuring (form) responding to the momentary need (material)—indeed Adorno's ideal of a *musique informelle*. This new attitude toward musical time is late-modern: in the changed historical moment of late-capitalism, the notion of progress itself becomes in need of challenge. Johnson sees the later music of Boulez and of Feldman as well as Ligeti's music as embodying this notion of musical time that challenges the idea of progress while not being merely static.

Carter's response to repetition and the changing experience of temporality toward the end of the twentieth century has taken a number of forms. For Carter, minimalism in music remained a denial of lived temporal experience, "mechanical and inhuman," a repression of human expressivity, "a kind of death;" this position he held right to the end of his life, as we saw Chapter 2. Temporal flow remained essential to musical expression for Carter. However, like Adorno, Carter recognized a different way in which such flow could manifest itself and that the negation of repetition no longer retained the critical force it once had. The continuation of music, its never-ending onwardness, its repetition, that Adorno points to by way of Beckett's *Il faut continuer*, is recognisable in a number of late compositions in which Carter employs his 'long line,' an extended musical line that weaves its way through large stretches of a composition, morphing and adapting itself constantly. While this technique had its roots in Carter's 'Boulanger' education, and can certainly be found in earlier compositions (the Variations for Orchestra and the First String Quartet are good examples), it is something Carter retained as an expressive resource and arguably foregrounded in

³⁵³ See *ibid.* Recall the discussion of Eisenstein's "dynamism" in Chapter 2.

³⁵⁴ See for example Judy Lochhead, and Joseph Auner, ed. *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 5-7; also Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), xi-xxii.

recent compositions more explicitly than in the middle period music.³⁵⁵ Clear instances of Carter's 'long line' can be found for example in *Triple Duo* (1983), *Pentode* (1985), *Violin Concerto* (1990), *Adagio tenebrosa* (1994) but also much later pieces such as *Caténaires* for solo piano (2006) and *Interventions* for piano and orchestra (2007).³⁵⁶ Perhaps the most evocative example is Carter's character of Rose in his opera *What Next?* (1999). Rose sings a continuous wordless melodic line from the beginning of the opera till the end. Librettist Paul Griffith writes: "the whole thing will be, for her, a performance, in which she tries out various parts—in vocalise except when she has to take part in the verbal drama. 'And the meaning of this', Elliott says, 'is that it's like music: nobody knows what it means, but it goes on and on without stopping.'" ³⁵⁷ Here Carter seems to be in agreement with his modernist fellow-travellers about the unfaltering continuation of musical expression regardless of the direction of history's progress. His comment that "nobody knows what it [music] means" can be given a double layer of meaning if related to the opening of Adorno's essay "Vers une musique informelle" which quotes Beckett: "Dire cela, sans savoir quoi." The meaning of the Beckett quote is elaborated on in Adorno's final sentence of his essay: "The aim of every artistic utopia today is to make things in ignorance of what they are."³⁵⁸ Adorno (through Beckett) articulates an artistic aspiration that is freedom from the known, from control by externally imposed structures. The process towards achieving this aspiration is, on the other hand, a dialectical one between freedom and control. This resonates greatly with Carter's compositional processes: Link points out that "Rose's ability to spin out beautifully formed and continuously varying lines with great virtuosity is unhampered by her limited intervallic repertory, which is both the smallest and the most rigorously adhered to in the opera. Her entire vocal part is written using only four intervals"³⁵⁹ Carter lets the music go "on and on" with a repetitiousness of intervals but without an imposed formal scheme or goal for Rose's singing. In using the interval as the unit of repetition Carter avoids literal reprise as well as motive repetition which maintains a fluidity to variation that nonetheless has a recognisable sonic identity.

³⁵⁵ See Link's discussion of the role of the "lyric voice" in projecting continuity "despite interruptions" in Link, "Elliott Carter's Late Music," 49.

³⁵⁶ See the discussion in Jonathan Bernard, "The true significance of Elliott Carter's early music," 31.

³⁵⁷ Paul Griffith, "*What Next?—A Journal*," in Elliott Carter: *What Next?/Asko Concerto* (ECM New Series 1817, 2003, compact disc), 33.

³⁵⁸ Adorno, "Vers une musique informelle." Quoted in Johnson, "'The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia': New Music Since Adorno," 75.

³⁵⁹ Link, "Sense and Sensibility: Music on Stage in *What Next?*," 214. Link also reads irony and comedy in Rose's part (pp. 213-4). Whittall similarly sees a comic side particularly to Rose's ending, in Whittall, "'A play of pure forces'? Elliott Carter's opera in context," 5.

Related to the shaping of Rose's minimal material into a continuous flow is what Whittall identifies as "late-modern thematicism" in Carter's late music.³⁶⁰ According to Whittall, this late-modern thematicism incorporates repetition as a response to the "cultural situation" of the late twentieth century:

What brings particular power and strength to Carter's own later music is the way he uses small-scale repetitions of rhythmic patterns and lyrical ideas to provide a core of stability which the rest of the music challenges, plays with, but never entirely escapes. And this seems to be his way of working out a response to the cultural situation which he defined with unusual sarcasm, even bitterness, in a discussion in Banff in 1984.³⁶¹

The cultural situation Whittall is referring to is that of the "post-modern" shift in musical expression as found in stylistic imitation of Romantic music and in minimalist styles. Carter forcefully rejects these two choices. Whittall argues that Carter responds with a new thematicism that sits in the gap between the traditional theme and the post-tonal theme: not a theme in the tonal sense, and not quite a 'classical' post-tonal theme in that there is no varied repetition by way of canonical transformations, augmentations, diminutions or other tricks that maintain the essential intervallic relationships in the theme. Instead Carter's late-modern thematicism can be exemplified by his use of a set type, such as the ubiquitous all-trichord hexachord. Such a set appears as a prominent melodic element—what Whittall terms a "recognisable object" in the music—without there ever being a literally repeated or systematically transformed theme. Whittall's coining of *Scheinthemen* to identify this kind of apparent but not actual recurring theme is an important analytical tool in Carter's late work, and I will explore instances of *Scheinthemen* in the analytical chapters.³⁶² At work is a dialectic of sameness and difference contained within each reference that also plays with the workings of memory. The listener, in a sense, can recognize the reprise of something, or the experience of hearing something that might have gone before, but the reprise is different enough that the similarity is not easily grasped with confidence. In this way the 'thematic' material avoids participating in defining a formal structure. Instead it leaves the listener

³⁶⁰ "The search for order: Carter's *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism."

³⁶¹ "Review of *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Celebration*; and *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*," 726. In the Banff discussion Carter attacks minimalism as amoral, see Carter, "Elliott Carter in conversation with Robert Johnston, Michael Century, Robert Rosen, and Don Stein (1984)," 253.

³⁶² Whittall, "The search for order: Carter's *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism," 66. Jeff Nichols convincingly demonstrates something similar in the much earlier *Variations for Orchestra* (1955) in Jeff Nichols, "Mistaken Identities in Carter's *Variations for Orchestra*," *Elliott Carter Studies Online* 1 (2016), <http://studies.elliottcarter.org/volume01/05Nichols/05Nichols.html>.

questioning their memory and expectation, or perhaps conversely questioning the music's progression and relatedness. The analyses of the *Boston* and the *ASKO* concertos will provide concrete examples of how Carter achieves this play with memory and recognition.

Link notes that “since the 1980s, Carter’s avoidance of repetition has given way to an approach that might be called “*reduce, reuse, recycle*,” cleverly using a metaphor that connects Carter’s music to the social movement for ecological sustainability which has characterized the modern world since the 1980s.³⁶³ Carter’s “re-using” notably includes materials that previously would have been considered uniquely defining of an individual composition: background polyrhythms, harmonic collections and forms. Noubel interprets this approach to repetition by way of the metaphor of a “deforming prism” that allows us to perceive within the familiar sound world of Carter’s “*Ultima Practica*” minutely changed details. Noubel claims this “connects [Carter] with certain Baroque composers’ ability to draw on materials and musical ideas already exploited in order to create something new without yielding to facility or renouncing any of their deeper artistic aspirations.”³⁶⁴ In relation to *Three Illusions*, this changed attitude to repetition can be likened, according to Noubel, to Carter mixing “up the cards of his single pack, displaying a range of combinations always surprising despite the remarkable economy of means.”³⁶⁵ Again, this kind of reprise plays with listener memory across the piece’s unfolding as well as across the boundaries of different compositions, making the ‘coming back’ to something familiar in a different context a surprising experience. These ‘repetitions’—that also extend beyond the individual work and create a thread through groups of pieces³⁶⁶—link to the idea of ‘inexhaustibility’ as we’ll see next.

3.3.b – “the quality of inexhaustibility”

The specific kind of treatment of repetition found in Carter’s late music speaks to another quality that Johnson finds in this body of utopian, post-war, post-Adorno music. This is, Johnson tells us, what Adorno identified in Berg’s music as “the quality of inexhaustibility, of a profusion of ideas which constantly regenerates itself and flows in

³⁶³ Link, “Elliott Carter’s Late Music,” 41.

³⁶⁴ Max Noubel, “*Three Illusions* ... and maybe a fourth: a hermeneutic approach to Carter’s recent music,” 254.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Such repetition is found in textural ideas and even melodic lines shared by the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos.

superabundance.”³⁶⁷ The idea behind “inexhaustibility” for Adorno stems from his *musique informelle* where the material is not artificially or forcefully closed off by an externally imposed system, structure or program that determines the form of the music, but rather that the musical ideas can go where they need to, shaped both subjectively by the composer (and the composer’s ear), but also by the immanent needs of the material itself—the idea that the composer can themselves be surprised where the material has lead them. Carter also speaks of this notion of the material having its own voice, and that he must respond to it regardless of any compositional scaffolding that he may have constructed.³⁶⁸ The authority of the composer is reduced as the material itself inexhaustibly generates its continuation. Johnson names the orchestral music of Berio, Ligeti, Boulez, and Birtwistle as imbued with this quality of inexhaustibility, illustrating in most detail with the example of the third movement of Berio’s *Sinfonia*. Johnson sees the piling up of musical material on top of the frame of the Mahler Scherzo in *Sinfonia* not as leading to chaos but rather to one manifestation of the proliferation of musical voices: the layering causes a breaking up of the Mahler frame which ends in a “plurality of musical voices that undermines the notion of any central, unified authorial voice.” These very notions of a plurality of voices, the lack of an imposed central voice and the delicate balance between “chaos” and “a sensible ... collective entirety” lie of course at the foundation of Carter’s compositional practice.³⁶⁹ Carter’s songs illustrate this powerfully in the way the lyrical singing voice is woven into a polyvocal texture and need not be the central focus of the music.³⁷⁰

What Adorno calls “Berg’s plenitude” does not mean “superfluous padding” but rather in Berg’s music a way of generating simultaneous individual voices that remain distinct but interrelated: “The more, and the more compulsively, simultaneous events are presented, the more they strive to expand.”³⁷¹ The expansion requires a regeneration of

³⁶⁷ Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 78; quoting Adorno, “Berg’s Discoveries in Compositional Technique,” 195. Johnson says that Adorno had Stockhausen’s *Gruppen* in mind when he noted something of this quality in “the most recent experiments in music for multiple orchestras,” and from today’s distance the affinities between Carter’s orchestral music of the 1960s and *Gruppen* seem greater than their distinctions. See Schiff’s analyses of these comparisons in the first edition of Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 195; and again but differently in the second edition, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 26 and 235-6.

³⁶⁸ See for example Elliott Carter, *Harmony Book*, ed. Nicholas Hopkins and John F. Link (New York: Carl Fisher, 2002), 33-34. See also Boretz, “Conversation with Elliott Carter “ 9.

³⁶⁹ See Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter*, 64.

³⁷⁰ See for example Brenda Ravenscroft, “Layers of meaning: expression and design in Carter’s songs,” in *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Capuzzo, *Elliott Carter’s What Next?: Communication, Cooperation, and Separation*.

³⁷¹ Adorno, “Berg’s Discoveries in Compositional Technique,” 194.

ideas already presented so that the music ends up “in reality economic in the extreme and, paradoxically, simple.”³⁷² In Carter’s late style we find within the plurality of voices an economy of means, mentioned above, in the recurrence of formal features, textural ‘types’, polyrhythms and *Scheinthemen*. These features illustrate the idea of “inexhaustibility” and “regeneration” in that Carter finds endless ways to make this material speak in a particular and unique manner in each composition.

Unlike Boulez or Rihm, Carter does not reuse or recycle compositions as such. However, Carter did start adding to existing pieces, starting with *Three Occassions* and continuing with chamber pieces such as *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux* (and *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux II*), the *Retracings*, *Figments*, *Tre Duetti*, but also the orchestral triptichs, *Three Illusions* and *Symphonia: Sum Fluxae Pretiam Spei*, the movements of which were conceived and commissioned separately (and can be performed separately). Thus the forms of these pieces gain a degree of flexibility, being able to be played alone or surrounded by and integrated with the member pieces. Another element of “inexhaustibility” and “regeneration” can be found in Carter’s harmonic resources. The All Trichord Hexachord, the All Interval Tetrachords and the groups of Twelve Tone Chords became the pitch material of all his late compositions, and their combinations, diminutions and augmentation have been an unending fountain of source sounds out of which Carter has woven the most complex as well as the simplest textures. They give the late music both a definable Carterian sound and an abundant richness of variation that can be called “exorbitant plenitude.”³⁷³ Rhythmically, the polyrhythmic basis to the layering of musical voices also serves as an example, especially of “regeneration.” Carter’s rhythmic techniques provided him with a means of organising “chaos” that became gradually more structured until it was manifest as ‘long-range’ polyrhythms. Then these ‘long-range’ structures were fractured again in the later music, leaving fragments of polyrhythms almost like a mirage of what were in previous compositions very real determining constraints. That Carter’s rhythmic means facilitated this fracturing without falling apart suggests the quality of “regeneration.”

³⁷² Ibid., 193.

³⁷³ Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 73; quoting Adorno, “Berg’s Discovery in Compositional Technique,” 194.

3.3.c – Sonority

The problem of the immediacy of sound for its own sake was one that Carter shared—to some extent—with Adorno. Recall from Chapter 2 Carter’s *Letter from Europe*, written in 1962, in which Carter considers music with “only a sensuous effect” to be too “primitive”: “[m]ost of the time the possibility of communication is denied, or, if admitted, kept on the primitive level of any music that has only a sensuous effect.”³⁷⁴ It is as if being distracted by sound prevented one from thinking. Carter expressed almost a mistrust of unmediated sonority, when in 1973 he articulated the significance of the communicative act of his music as almost opposing its musical content, in this quote we have encountered before:

Sound for its own sake is of very limited interest to me. Human beings, I think, come to expect more from music than entertaining patterns of tone-colors. Mine uses a large variety of these but, I hope, always to transcend the medium of sound completely and present a more significant human message.³⁷⁵

Carter expresses the desire for his music to contain “patterns of tone-colors” not for aural entertainment, but for a greater purpose, one that “transcends” the sonorous and sensual experience of music to speak of a more urgent concern to his fellow human beings than music itself.³⁷⁶ The dialectical tension in Carter’s formulation can be drawn out by comparison to Johnson’s observation that “Hegelian theory suggests that art as a material, sensuous medium is superseded by the spiritual activity of pure thought. The thinking which art provokes is higher than its own materiality.”³⁷⁷ The same dialectic of the sensuous and the intellectual nature of music is found back in Adorno’s writing. As noted above, for Adorno the sonorous nature of music (e.g. timbre, tone-colour, orchestration, harmonic colour) was too unmediated to be of use in a critical sense. Sonority, for Adorno, must always be in the service of something more “meaningful,” that is, a musical syntax expressed in thematic-harmonic interrelations—the locus, for Adorno, of the musical idea. Adorno was critical to the point of dismissing post-war

³⁷⁴ Carter, “Letter from Europe (1963),” 220. See also “Sound and Silence in Time,” 132. Here Carter criticizes the lack of compositional method and a mere focus on randomly playing with “sound effects” in “all present electronic music and *musique concrète*.”

³⁷⁵ “Elliott Carter, Interview with Stuart Lieberman (1973).”; quoted in Eisenlohr, *Komponieren als Entscheidungsprozess*, 243.

³⁷⁶ See here Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*, 150 on Hegel, Adorno and the function of art as ‘truth’ over beauty, pleasure or usefulness.

³⁷⁷ Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 83.

music's focus on tone-colour (in orchestration and electronic music especially) as a fetishization of sonority devoid of critical potential in itself:

... in works which count [sonority] is never an end in itself, but instead is both functional in the context of the work and also provides an element of fermentation. Schoenberg always stressed that sonority [*Klang*] was a means to achieve the adequate representation of the musical idea.³⁷⁸

This appears to resonate on some level with Carter's contrasting of patterns which are there for mere entertainment with patterns which carry the music beyond itself to promote a thinking which was of greater significance than the experience of the music alone, a criticism which Carter incidentally made of much music, even pre-1945. Despite Carter's suspicion of the vacuous use of sonority, Carter did not share with Adorno the notion that only the motivic could be the bearer of meaning. In his 1968 interview with Benjamin Boretz, Carter states this position clearly:

A tone-color, a chord, or a texture can play just as substantial a role in the musical process as a theme is said to have in previous music. (I would claim, of course, that insistence on the primacy of theme in older music is one of the falsifications music theorists and critics have handed down to us.)³⁷⁹

According to Carter, the importance of theme was overemphasised in relation to most music and just not limited to modern music. Certainly Carter saw the unique sonority and tone-colour inherent to the musical instruments as important material with which to compose (and not just something overlaid on the so-called real musical idea). He says:

The instrumentation and its location on stage are a fundamental part of the work, giving one level of continuity that can be moulded, among many others, not unlike that once associated with theme and development.³⁸⁰

The unique sound qualities of individual instruments furnished many of the expressive ideas of the majority of Carter's music, both chamber and orchestral, starting from the beginning of his atonal style. However, Carter too required that sonority be at least working in tandem with other material and not for purely sensuous effect but for a clear expressive purpose:

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 79-81.

³⁷⁹ Boretz, "Conversation with Elliott Carter" 4.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 5.

As I have said, I feel very strongly that the instrumental makeup of my music has to be part of the concept of the music itself, not only the source of its material, of its structure, but most important, has to be justified by the expressive vision or character of the entire work. The instrumentation, along with all the other aspects of the work, must seem to come from some expressive need.³⁸¹

As we can see, Carter already early on had a complex notion of the possibilities of tone-colour for new music, and Johnson certainly finds this to be the case in a range of other post-war composers. Johnson argues that “foregrounding timbral concerns in no way results in a lessening of syntactical sophistication” and that there exists a “thoroughly dialectical tension in postwar music between sonority and its rational manipulation.”³⁸² He goes on to say that “postwar music is full of works that produce themselves out of the incongruence of highly rational formal processes and the sonic material which they shape.”³⁸³ He cites among others Messiaen, Ligeti and Boulez but of course Carter belongs equally in their company.³⁸⁴ In both the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos we see examples of sonority used as principle syntactical idea. In these pieces timbre is working almost thematically and has its own trajectory and subjective demands, interacting dialectically with musical line and chord to affect a formal transformation over each piece’s unfolding. The distinctive timbres of the ritornello sections do engulf the listener in the sensuousness of the sonority. However, on each reprise, the onward motion of constituent elements (rhythm, interval, pitch, *Scheinthemen*) connect timbre with the formal flow of the piece beyond pure sound effect.

Interestingly, Carter once commented about his sensuous, very fast, continuous single-line piece for piano, *Catenaries*, that it was a rather showy piece, that lots of people seemed to like it, and that therefore maybe he shouldn’t have written it.³⁸⁵ The piece is in fact very entertaining to experience because of the speed at which the performer has

³⁸¹ Ibid., 4.

³⁸² Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 80.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ For example, Carter articulates this very idea about the relationship between pitch and timbre in his Piano Concerto in Boretz, “Conversation with Elliott Carter” 7.

³⁸⁵ This comment was made in an online video that unfortunately is now no longer accessible. While this makes the source unverifiable, the notion that the composer should not write music to gratify the audience is expressed by Carter perhaps most clearly in his interview with Andrew Ford: “I believed that a composer had a responsibility toward the society that nurtured him. However, ... it doesn’t hold water really because society is such an amorphous and uncertain thing that you can’t really know this. And it might be that you’re really serving the society better writing something that is striking and original and unusual, than by writing something that is immediately accessible to the public.” Ford, *Composer to Composer: conversations about contemporary music*, 4.

to make the continuous unbroken texture flow. It is, as Carter said “very unlike anything I ever wrote before or since.”³⁸⁶ It was perhaps the piece’s undialectical nature that gave him the moment of doubt. But the fact that he did write this piece and clearly enjoyed it, exemplifies the shift in emphasis from a darkness and a density of layering to instances of lightness and transparency. It also opens up the possibility that the ideological need not always be found in the same places it used to be. Utopia may need to be painted in lighter shades so as not to lose its critical potential in the present moment in history.

3.3.d – The utopian in shades of light

For Adorno, blackness in modern art was a metaphor for the non-identical, for “recollection of the possible in opposition to the actual that suppresses it.”³⁸⁷ Johnson and others show that this conception of darkness and the utopian is in fact coupled to an historical moment.³⁸⁸ In the spirit of critical thinking that sprung out of this moment, it is appropriate to reconsider the material manifestations of the artistic/musical critique of ideology under more recent historical conditions. Scherzinger makes this point very clearly in his examples of the historical use of the musical and the visual:

... the kind of dialectical montage found in the work of Sergei Eisenstein or John Heartfield can be found in every television advertisement, Hollywood movie, fashion magazine, and store window today. The same kind of argument can be made about the music, once radically experimental, that is deployed for visual effects in mainstream film and television. Relatedly, MTV’s average pop video is practically a showcase of early twentieth-century avant-garde visual techniques.³⁸⁹

Scherzinger points out that for Adorno nothing was immune to instrumentalisation and that “[t]his is why the modernist critique of unchecked reason remains relevant today, even if new historical conditions have dated many of its specific themes.” Today “systems of oppression have changed” to become more psychological. The political or commercial co-opting of the means of expressing resistance and individual diversity is a mode of instrumentalisation particularly characteristic of late-capitalism and

³⁸⁶ “Elliott Carter discusses 100th birthday celebrations at Southbank Centre,” (Filmed Oct 26, 2008. Posted Dec 8, 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp95zFUPEj0>). Accessed 15 Sept, 2017.

³⁸⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 185. Quoted in Johnson, “‘The Elliptical Geometry of Utopia’: New Music Since Adorno,” 78.

³⁸⁸ Such as Paddison, “Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-garde.”; and Williams, “Wolfgang Rihm and the Adorno Legacy.”

³⁸⁹ Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 91 and fn.60.

particularly difficult to counter, Scherzinger notes, “in the tilted social playing-field of global modernity.”³⁹⁰

Can we consider Carter’s lightness within the context of this changed historical moment? The words that have become associated with the lightness of Carter’s late music —play, humour and irony, inwardness, fragment, effervescence, lyricism—may suggest a lessening of difficulty, a degree of accessibility, that would imply a less critical stance, even a capitulation to an ideology where art is entertainment and utopia no longer contains a space for the “irrational, rather extravagant and violent side of ourselves.”³⁹¹ But nothing could be further from the truth about Carter’s late music.

The idea of “lightness” seemed to have made its appearance in the discourse on Carter’s music by way of Italo Calvino’s lecture entitled “Lightness” from his Harvard lectures *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*.³⁹² Carter told Bernard that he “read through [Calvino’s Harvard Norton Lectures in the original Italian] with fascination and found I agreed with many of his ideas.”³⁹³ Carter associated the text with the Oboe Concerto (1987) and according to Schiff:

Throughout the work the oboe is in the spirit of lightness—mercurial, playful, thoughtful, and precise—while the orchestra is the bearer of heaviness: somber, agitated, and anxious. Carter has pointed out the following text from Calvino which he discovered after the work was composed, but which he feels expresses its spirit: ‘Were I to choose an auspicious image for the new millennium I would choose that one: the sudden agile leap of the poet-philosopher who raises himself above the weight of the world, showing that with all his gravity he has the secret of lightness, and that what many consider to be the vitality of the times—noisy, aggressive, revving, and roaring—belongs to the realm of death, like a cemetery for old cars.’³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 91.

³⁹¹ Carter, “Elliott Carter in conversation with Robert Johnston, Michael Century, Robert Rosen, and Don Stein (1984),” 255.

³⁹² Calvino’s reflection in his chapter “Lightness” opposes lightness with weight, not with darkness (‘leggerezza’ versus ‘pesantezza’, not ‘luminosità’ versus ‘oscurità’). However, in places Calvino talks in terms of light and dark (e.g., about the “opacity of the world” (p.4); the luminosity of a match and the extinguished lamp (p.6)) indicating the constellation of words associated with the essential opposition he is making. See Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988).

³⁹³ Jonathan Bernard, “An interview with Elliott Carter,” *Perspectives of New Music* 28, no. 2 (1990): 182.

³⁹⁴ David Schiff, “Carter’s Modern ‘Classicism’,” *College Music Symposium* 29: 122.

Later Carter titled his 1990 trio for clarinet, violin and cello, *Con Leggerezza Pensosa*, after a phrase from this part of Calvino's text:

Above all I hope to have shown that there is such a thing as a *lightness of thoughtfulness*, just as we all know that there is a lightness of frivolity. In fact, thoughtful lightness can make frivolity seem dull and heavy.³⁹⁵ [italics mine]

The reversal that Calvino uses in these two quotes makes thoughtfulness light and frivolity heavy. It suggests that there is a particular quality of lightness which can be critical: reflection that refuses to get bogged down but can climb above the noise and the fake laughter to reach to a truth that frivolity (or “the vitality of the times”) blacks out.

There is more in Calvino's lecture on “Lightness” that suggests how we might think about the transformation of means that created Carter's own musical lightness. Calvino's literary references are extremely rich, soaring through the history of Western thought with the very lightness he seeks to illustrate. In his opening alone, he takes us via Medusa's petrifying stare that turns all to “heavy” stone and Perseus's victory over Medusa thanks to his “winged sandals” and “the very lightest of things, the wind and the clouds,” to Eugenio Montale's lightness of fragility (images of the snail and its trail; of crushed mica) placed in relief against terrifying blackness and heaviness (“Lucifer with pitch-black wings”). Importantly, Calvino asks and answers:

But how can we hope to save ourselves in that which is most fragile? Montale's poem is a profession of faith in the persistence of what seems most fated to perish, in the moral values invested in the most tenuous traces: “il tenue bagliore stronfinato/ laggiù non era quello d'un fiamminfero” (the thin glimmer striking down there/ wasn't that of a match.)³⁹⁶

And it is also this image of “what seems most fated to perish,” of the fleeting, the effervescent, the transitory, and the transformative, that we find especially in Carter's music of the 1990s and early 2000s. It is particularly evident in images from poems Carter sets or associates with these pieces of music. Carter's astonishing late orchestral achievement *Symphonia: Sum Fluxae Pretiam Spei* is associated with seventeenth-century poet Richard Cranshaw's poem “Bulla,” Latin for bubble. The bubble is of

³⁹⁵ Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 10.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

course a transient, fragile and light thing and Schiff observes the connection between the image of the bubble and Calvino's lightness:

In the seventeenth century the bubble often appeared in pictures as a child's plaything emblematic of life's brevity. In Cranshaw's poem, however, the bubble seems to be an emblem of art; the bubble is a transient mirror of human existence. In the lines Carter cites, Cranshaw's bubble, 'the flower of the air,' takes a view of art very similar to Calvino's idea of 'thoughtful lightness' ...³⁹⁷

The subtitle *Sum Fluxae Pretiam Spei* ("I am the prize of flowing hope") suggests the intangible nature of true human achievement and Schiff characterizes the first two movements of the Symphony as a struggle of life versus death, to which the third movement offers a kind of dialectical outcome suggested by Cranshaw's 'bulla': "The three works [each movement was written as a separate piece] are similar in their materials but strikingly contrasted in effect. *Partita* is explosive; *Adagio tenebroso*, darkly meditative; *Allegro scorrevole* does not resolve the life-against-death contrast of the two earlier movements; moving up in register, it celebrates its own gaudy lightness ..."³⁹⁸ The title of Carter's solo flute piece *Scrivo in Vento* ("written in the wind") is taken from a line of a Sonnet by fourteenth century French poet Petrarch, and also belongs to this imagery, as do the stanzas of the Rilke poem that Carter associates with *Trilogy* for oboe and harp, the very last lines of which read "And music, ever new, builds out of the most tremulous stones her divinely/ consecrated house in unexploitable space."³⁹⁹

Carter sets many poems in his music composed in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It would be overgeneralising to say that all this music is concerned with this same imagery of fleetingness and effervescence, although the theme does persist in various guises, often mingled with themes of love and ageing.⁴⁰⁰ It is poignantly illustrated in *A Sunbeam's Architecture*, one of Carter's last settings of poetry, this time by e.e.cummings. The title is taken from the line "–who'll solve the depths of horror to defend/a sunbeam's architecture with his life" and reverberates the idea of Calvino's

³⁹⁷ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 317.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Elliott Carter, "Program Note," *Trilogy*, New York: Boosey and Hawkes (1992).

⁴⁰⁰ See for example Felix Meyer's observations on Carter's text selection for the song cycle *In the Distances of Sleep* (2006) Felix Meyer, "'... no patience anymore for longer pieces': A Look at Two Late Miniatures by Elliott Carter," *Elliott Carter Studies Online* 2 (2017), <http://studies.elliottcarter.org/volume02/04Meyer/04Meyer.html>.

lightness championing life in the face of suffocating heaviness (“horror”).⁴⁰¹ Most of the poems Carter selected for this collection concern love and death in some way. The sixth and final song *Somewhere* speaks of the fragility of a lover. In the second last stanza, fragility is both eternal and powerful: “nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals/the power of your intense fragility: whose texture/compels me with the colour of its countries,/rendering death and forever with each breathing”.⁴⁰²

By moving away from Carter’s earlier cathartic images of the conflict of order and disorder to this type of symbolic imagery of lightness, the darkness associated with Adorno’s negative dialectics (which leads to the total disintegration and radical self-destruction of art) is transformed not into a positive utopia but rather into a utopia of survival: a persistence of the most perishable, the most fragile, the most denied. The authoritarian, the brutal, “unchecked reason”—what Calvino evokes when he says “Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness”—is made problematic by the persistence of that which is crushed by its weight. In an age where the pursuit of acquiring happiness is capitalism’s most powerful psychological tool, the reverence and contemplation of the happiness inexplicably found in the temporary, the effervescent, the fragile, the meaningless, represents a resistance to that commodification.⁴⁰³ A vivid example of this kind of happiness is found in Wallace Stevens’s tiny poem *Life Is Motion* that Carter sets in his song cycle *The American Sublime*: “In Oklahoma,/Bonnie and Josie,/Dressed in calico,/Danced around a stump./They cried,/ “Ohoyaho,/Ohoo”.../Celebrating the marriage/Of flesh and air.”⁴⁰⁴

The two late pieces I have selected to analyse here, *Boston Concerto* (2002) and *ASKO Concerto* (2000), project the utopian not through textual association but through the way they mediate materials and form. Their respective materials are in different ways examples of Carter’s late treatment of lightness, repetition, sonority, and plenitude.

⁴⁰¹ Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 6.

⁴⁰² e. e. cummings, “somewhere.” Accessed 1 June, 2017,

<https://hellopoetry.com/poem/75803/somewhere-i-have-never-travelled-gladly-beyond/>.

⁴⁰³ As an aside, it does seem to me that this artistic resistance and critique must be ever-changing in material form, as the commodities catch up so quickly to all that we believe unable to be commodified. Think of commodification of the natural sonic environment: mobile phone apps that respond with soothing ‘morning’ sounds to your wake-up patterns, or those that give you the aural experience of a rainstorm from beginning to end; however unlike the real thing you can of course ‘plug out’ of the recordings at will. The moment in which “lightness of thoughtfulness” is a critique of the “vitality of the times” is also the moment in which that lightness becomes open to being co-opted. See discussion in Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic,” 90-91.

⁴⁰⁴ Wallace Stevens, “Life is Motion.” Accessed 1 June, 2017, <https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/life-motion>.

They engage critically with the historical ritornello form, a form that is premised on continual reprise. The treatment of musical materials these pieces, I argue, displays a dialectical interplay of opposites that generate the tensions and progression across the formal layers of each piece. I will begin by contextualising the ritornello form of these pieces more generally within Carter's oeuvre before presenting a detailed analysis of each piece in Part 2: *Two Formal Analyses* with a critical reflection on the analyses in Chapter 7: *A critical interpretation of Boston and Asko concertos*.

3.4 Boston and ASKO concertos: the dialectic of ritornello form

As I touched on in Chapter 1.3.b: *Form-content dialectic*, Carter's 1956 essay "A Further Step" articulates his idea of an "emancipated musical discourse"—of form as self-originating and developing out of a process of constantly changing moments.⁴⁰⁵ On the surface at least, the ideas that underpinned much of Carter's mature music seem to be at odds with the appearance of ritornello form in a number of his later works, including the *ASKO Concerto* and *Boston Concerto*.⁴⁰⁶ Not only is ritornello form an archetype that fits Carter's definition of "pre-established pattern" to be avoided in truly new music, it is also a form to which the continual return of previously heard material is intrinsic—it contains a kind of "self-evident continuity" contrary to Carter's ideal of an "emancipated musical discourse." But in view of the elements of lightness that contribute to Carter's late style and with an appreciation of Carter's rethinking of the meaning and manipulation of musical repetition that accompany this late period, the appearance of a traditional repetitive formal structure might come as less of a surprise. Furthermore, while the appearance of ritornello form in Carter's music could never have been predicted, two established aspects of his formal approach make it less incongruous with his overall compositional aesthetic than one might initially suspect. Firstly, in contrast to many post-war composers, Carter has on more than one occasion constructed his complex and novel formal processes in a delicate shadow of more traditional formal schemes, as for example David Schiff points out in relation to the *Double Concerto* (1961) and the *Fourth String Quartet* (1986).⁴⁰⁷ This is of course in line with Carter's concern for engaging with the historical nature of musical material (traditional forms included) that we saw in Chapter 2. Secondly, Carter's interest in the Baroque principle

⁴⁰⁵ Carter, "A Further Step (1958)."

⁴⁰⁶ And also in the *Cello Concerto* (2000) and the *Clarinet Concerto* (1996).

⁴⁰⁷ On the *Double Concerto*, see Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 245; on the *Fourth Quartet*, see *ibid.*, 86.

of ensemble contrasts —fundamental to ritornello form—goes back a long time, particularly in his concerto writing, perhaps precisely because of its in-built dialectical possibilities in relation to orchestration and sonority. The Double Concerto was the first to employ soloists each accompanied by their own contrasting concertino. This principle was later realized in various ways in the Piano Concerto (1965), Oboe Concerto (1986), and Clarinet Concerto (1996). It isn't until the Clarinet concerto, however, that the idea of a regular *alternation* of tutti and sub-sections of the ensemble appears as a formal device. In the Clarinet Concerto, the tutti function more as transitional passages rather than full-blown formal sections, although they do recur between each of the solo sections, hinting at what is to come in later pieces. In the *ASKO* and *Boston* concertos, Carter married the Baroque principle of ensemble contrasts with the formal ritornello patterning.

While it is striking how easily the form of these two concertos can be grasped on first listening, Carter certainly reworks the ritornello form critically. Traditionally, the ritornellos in the Baroque concerto grosso were an important structural means of stabilizing tonal regions, reinforcing themes and providing coherence to the (still novel) virtuosic escapades of the instrumental solos.⁴⁰⁸ However, in the *ASKO* and *Boston* concertos the ritornellos get their identity not from any traditional thematic return or harmonic stability but from the memorable tutti *textures*. The sonority of these textures themselves carry an important part of the musical conceit of the pieces, and are a manifestation of the transformed role of sonority as a communicative element in its own right. In the *Boston Concerto*, the *pizzicato/staccato* texture is so unusual and striking that Charles Rosen's observation about the solo classical concerto—"[t]he most important fact about concerto form is that the audience waits for the soloist to enter, and when he stops playing they wait for him to begin"⁴⁰⁹—could be applied here in reverse: when the tutti gives way to the soloists, we wait for the tutti to return. This surprisingly light yet energetic orchestral sound creates an effect of shimmering movement with its frequent repetition of short single pitches and pitch intervals in individual instruments. The allusion to the rain in the lines of the William Carlos Williams' poem accompanying the concerto is inescapable, and the listener is undoubtedly expected to make the association (more on the poem in Chapter 5). The dialectical tension of the

⁴⁰⁸ Michael Talbot, "The Italian Concerto in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century," in *Cambridge Companion to the Concerto*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45; also Simon and Jehosh Hirsberg McVeigh, *The Italian Solo Concerto 1700-1760: Rhetorical Strategies and Style History* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 29.

⁴⁰⁹ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 196.

falling rain image realized by the *pizzicato* orchestral texture lies in a repetitiveness that appears *static* but that is nonetheless created by way of continual *movement*. As we will see, in both Williams's rain and Carter's ritornellos the dialectic of stasis and movement are ultimately shaped so as to affect a transformation although, as I argue, not a synthesis. By contrast, the *ASKO* ritornellos' loud sustained tutti chords, spread across a consistently wide registral space, appear as static monolithic objects periodically interposed between the flowing counterpoint of the smaller concertino sections. While Carter has not identified any poetic or textual association with the *ASKO Concerto*, the orchestral sonority and static rhythmic treatment of the tutti chords are reminiscent of Varèse's chord masses and what Jonathan Bernard has termed Varèse's "frozen music," particularly in *Intégrales*.⁴¹⁰ But as we will see, in the *ASKO Concerto* too the stasis as well as the repetition are transformed over the unfolding of the piece. These are not pieces that Carter could have written in the 1960s, when the self-evidence of the form and the repetitive structure would have grated with an avant-garde aesthetic. Yet the treatment of repetition here is decidedly late-modernist, engaging with the temporal experience of both 'flow' and of 'infinite reprise,' bringing the ideas of development and of repetition into dialectical tension through the large-scale formal structures of the pieces. Here Carter's use of pitch repetition is unlike the deliberate symbolic critique of temporal stasis at the end of *A Symphony of Three Orchestras*, where Carter seems to be implying, through the latent program of the piece, that minimalist repetition represents a kind of death.⁴¹¹ Instead, these pieces might be heard as an ironic commentary on repetition: it is quite surprising to discover the myriad of ways in which Carter creates the effect of repetition when in fact very little is actually being repeated and there are certainly no literal repeats. The unavoidable ease with which the ear makes connections between similar sounds means that only very little need stay exactly the same in order for the listener to associate sonic events, thus allowing for the "constant growth and change" in musical content that Carter prizes so highly, without losing the effect of a ritornello.

Carter's "constant growth and change" is not a Schoenbergian developing variation, since there is no gradual transformation of material from one shape to the next. Nor are

⁴¹⁰ Jonathan Bernard, "Varèse's Space, Varèse's Time," in *Edgard Varèse: Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary*, ed. Felix Meyer and Heidi Zimmermann (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006).

⁴¹¹ Kerner, "Creators on Creating: Elliott Carter.," cited in Dyck-Hemming, "Diskurze zur 'Musik Elliott Carters'," 156. See Noubel's interpretation of the static repetition in this passage in Noubel, *Elliott Carter ou le temps fertile*, 181-85. Thanks to John Link for bringing this to my attention.

Carter's "very vivid moments" completely block-like in a Stravinskyian sense; instead there is a flow and elasticity to the motion from texture to texture.⁴¹² Carter himself refers to the influence of late Debussy on this aspect of his formal thinking.⁴¹³ Debussy's non-systematic and discontinuous presentation of distinct musical ideas is more akin to a stream-of-consciousness approach to musical time, neither developmental nor consisting of a collage or moment-form approach.⁴¹⁴ Indeed, the "constant change and growth" of Carter's forms and his belief that "music should be continuously surprising, [but] it should be so in a sense that whatever happens should continue an already-perceived ongoing process or pattern"⁴¹⁵ resonates with Richard Parks' discussion of "kinetic form" in Debussy's music: "Kinetic form arises from the organization of discontinuities and imparts the sense of motion that is such an important aspect of musical experience. ... Kinetic form derives coherence from a consistent pattern of *change* of a particular type⁴¹⁶ ..." On closer inspection, Carter's particular "re-forming" of ritornello form in the *ASKO* and *Boston* concertos reveals in each case a struggle between the cyclical drive of the ritornello form and the kinetic drive of the materials: the pattern of change is one that unfolds linearly but discontinuously within the "infinite reprise" of the ritornello sections. In each piece, there is a clear division of basic musical content between the ritornellos and the contrasting concertino sections with which they alternate. While the ritornello sections emphasize whole ensemble playing and the vertical pitch dimension by way of vertically ordered twelve-tone chords prolonged in various ways, the concertinos—each very different from the other—unfurl long contrapuntal melodies that emphasize the movement and interplay of lines over time. Line and chord are in a sense treated as distinct musical entities and partitioned between ritornello and concertino sections giving them contrasting characters not dissimilar to the way Carter partitions interval repertoires, speeds and

⁴¹² Schiff outlines many such "combinatorial" forms in Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*. See also Bernard's analysis in "Poem as Non-Verbal Text: Elliott Carter's Concerto for Orchestra and Saint-John Perse's *Winds*," in *Analytical Strategies and Musical Interpretations*, ed. Craig Ayrey and Mark Everist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996); and John Link on "linking" textures in "Elliott Carter's Late Music," 46-49.

⁴¹³ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 98.

⁴¹⁴ Carter sees himself as having developed this aspect of Debussy's music further in his own music. See Carter, "The Three Late Sonatas of Debussy (1959/94)," 251-52. Greenbaum also notes a connection between Carter's and Debussy's "dialectical" approach to form in Greenbaum, "Debussy, Wolpe and Dialectical Form," 350. For more on form in Debussy's music see Richard S. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and Marianne Wheelton, "Interpreting Discontinuity in the Late Works of Debussy," *Current Musicology* 77 (2004).

⁴¹⁵ Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 87-88.

⁴¹⁶ Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy*, 233. My thanks to John McCaughey for making me aware of this reference.

“behaviour patterns” between *simultaneous* musical characters in many other compositions.

However, if this characterisation of sections holds true for the *ASKO* and *Boston* concerto in a general sense, it is also precisely the chord-line distinction that begins to blur and change over the course of both pieces, and this process, as we shall see, provides a subtle yet powerful overarching linear continuity, or kinetic drive, which is overlaid onto the cyclic ritornello form. As we will see in Part 2, this reading posits a more complex and ambiguous formal design to the *ASKO* and *Boston* concertos than the term ritornello form implies.

PART 2.TWO FORMAL ANALYSES

Chapter 4

Analytical Prelude

4.1 Circle of analyses—some analytical considerations

In this part of the thesis, I present a technical analysis of each of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos. What I do not do in these analyses is engage with the material as mediated social critique, wanting to keep a distance between technical and critical interpretation at first. I reserve the critical interpretation for Part 3: *Second Reflection*. In this sense, Part 2 is a “first reflection” that looks at the pieces without social or historical interpretation but nonetheless with a critical reflection on analytical *methodology*. The analyses are not full pitch analyses (although I do analyse some pitch relations). They are not attempts to account empirically for structural coherence or unity on a background level (although I do suggest that large-scale processes unfold which give the pieces coherence). Nor are they comprehensive analyses in the sense of trying to capture the whole experience of the music through technical means. In this sense I heed Agawu’s warning discussed in Chapter 1 about retaining the provisional and the speculative in the analytical process in an attempt to access, or at least not to ignore, what Adorno considers the “surplus” left after technical analysis, and what others have described as that aspect of the music that lies “just out of our reach” or with which we play “catch-as-catch-can.”⁴¹⁷

While my analyses have remained firmly rooted in the musical object, its materials, and their relationships, I have nevertheless tried to gain a critical understanding of the systems of interpretation and narrative that we project *onto* the material findings. To be more precise: in one simple sense, the polyrhythmic background structure of Carter’s Fourth Quartet (for example) is there as a fact, as much as the opening twelve-tone chord of the *Boston Concerto* or the *ASKO Concerto* is there, without doubt. However, it is the architectures of meaning that we build as we try to define these object and as we look further into the piece trying to describe the significance that chord or rhythm has

⁴¹⁷ Agawu, “What Adorno Makes Possible for Music Analysis.” Quotes from Paddison, “Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking?,” 217; and Marion C. Guck, “Analytical Fictions,” in *Music/Ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998), 172. See also Edgar, “Adorno and Musical Analysis,” 448.

for the experience of the music which are of interest to me. As Agawu states “[d]escription is never neutral, innocent or objective. For Adorno, the site of description becomes the site of provocation.”⁴¹⁸ This is very powerfully illustrated by Suzanne Cusick in her “Feminist theory, music theory, and the mind/body problem,” where she convincingly shows that it is possible to construct almost any sort of narrative one likes about a musical experience to different effect.⁴¹⁹ Cusick models, in her search for the source of the gender encoding that she experiences in Fanny Hensel’s Trio in D minor, op.11, that the challenge of analysis is to find an approach that captures the truest sense of the listener’s experience. Cusick demonstrates that this challenge becomes complicated by the social situatedness of the analyst themselves, and requires constant reflection on the modes of knowledge that are being sought or produced. What we are left with, I propose, is a group of analyses that stand in a dynamic relationship to each other producing different types of understanding.

My analytical approach in this study makes use of a range of narratives and post-tonal analytical tools responding to the kind of musical process I am attempting to bring to light in my analysis. This approach acknowledges Adorno’s notion that “the sustained attempt to follow the movement of the object under discussion and to help it find expression” involves using methods fitting for that object.⁴²⁰ To try and specify in more detail how I approach the question of analytical methodology, I would like to make use of the metaphor of a *circle* of analyses and I would like to categorise three nodal points on this analytical circle—descriptive, interpretive, and critical—although without closing off the circle to understandings that sit in the interstices between the ones I’ve chosen to represent, nor to others understanding which oppose these.⁴²¹

Within the process of descriptive analysis I include a representation of the listening experience that arises through a reading, or in this case a close reading, of the musical object (score and performance). Both David Temperley and Mark DeBellis, in their respective explorations of the purpose and nature of music analysis, have made a distinction between an analysis that seeks to make a representation of what a listener

⁴¹⁸ Agawu, “What Adorno Makes Possible for Music Analysis,” 53.

⁴¹⁹ Suzanne G. Cusick, “Feminist theory, music theory, and the mind/body problem,” in *Music/Ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998).

⁴²⁰ Adorno, *Sound Figures*, 145. See discussion in Chapter 1.3.e. and also Wilson’s discusses of Adorno and analytical methodology in “An Aesthetics of Past-Present Relations,” 23-24.

⁴²¹ See Jim Samson’s wonderfully clear articulation of the notion of “categories”, their limits and “permeability” in his opening paragraph to “Analysis in Context,” 35.

can hear or perceive in a piece of music, and an analysis that seeks to add information to enhance or change the hearing of a piece of music.⁴²² Temperley labels the former “descriptive” and the latter “suggestive.” Both Temperley and DeBellis argue that the two are mutually exclusive. My use of the term descriptive differs to some extent. By descriptive I mean a description of musical materials and their relationships *informed* by my pre-analytical hearing but not exclusive to it. I believe that my (pre-analytical) hearing of the two Carter pieces analysed here forms the base on which I have built new or other ways of hearing the piece *while consulting the score*.⁴²³ In other words, I started with a representation of my listening experience—an experience that came prior to the analysis; then, I added to that experience, by way of my close reading of material features of the musical text aided by the score.

I further added to that experience by re-interpreting my material findings through other intellectual understandings—in this case, music aesthetics and philosophy, feminist musicology, and historical insights into musical modernism.⁴²⁴ These bodies of knowledge have helped me make sense of the musical findings beyond the experience of the individual piece. This process falls within what I’ve called interpretive analysis.

Within the process of interpretive analysis I include the knowledge we bring to bear on the creating of a narrative that helps to make sense of the material features that we have isolated in the initial process of descriptive analysis. To explore what “creating a narrative” might mean, I turn to feminist influenced scholars, starting again with Cusick’s illuminating essay mentioned above.

⁴²² According to Temperley “... the objective of doing theory and analysis is to find and present new ways of hearing pieces [“suggestive” approach], not to describe the way people hear pieces already [“descriptive” approach].” David Temperley, “The Question of Purpose in Music Theory: Description, Suggestion, and Explanation,” *Current Musicology* 66 (Spring, 1999): 70. Compare with DeBellis: “In particular, what I am interested in are cases in which the analysis is said to capture a way of hearing that was enjoyed *prior* to the production of, or encounter with, the analysis (a hearing which the analysis then articulates). To be sure, musical analysis commonly has other functions, such as that of suggesting new ways of hearing and thereby changing the ways we hear, or so it is usually asserted.” Mark DeBellis, “The Paradox of Musical Analysis,” *Journal of Music Theory* 43, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): 84.

⁴²³ Both authors would consider this to be “suggestive” analysis. While it is important to Temperley’s and DeBellis’s logical reasoning that these are mutually exclusive processes, in practice I’m not sure that the lines are so clearly drawn between an analysis that describes what “everyone” hears and that which “adds” to that hearing, for reasons explored in the next two categories that I define. In other words, I’m not convinced there is an empirical basis for the division.

⁴²⁴ See for example Agawu’s discussion in relation to Adorno’s analysis: “...there are different kinds of musical knowledge, and ... these are constituted in a complex variety of ways.” “Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime,” 298.

Cusick begins with a hearing of Fanny Hensel's Trio in D minor, op.11, and briefly outlines analytical strategies she could draw upon to help her explain "where this work's gender subtext (and real drama) lay."⁴²⁵ She first imagines "a historical argument exploring analogies" between instrumental roles in the piece and gender roles of the period. Moving on to find a strategy that would help explain more about the role of gender in the *formal* tension of the piece, Cusick considers but rejects the fruitfulness of a thematic reading of "sonata form as gendered discourse" (from feminist musicologists Marcia Citron and Susan McClary) as well as a "pitch syntax" narrative, as these aspects of the piece did not seem particularly remarkable and thus not likely to be the locus of the subtext. She then engages positively with the ideas of gender metaphors being *performed* in all types of discourse acts (from historian Joan Scott) as well as gender itself being a *performance* (from philosopher Judith Butler), and arrives at the idea of an analysis that "considered the movement's tonal, thematic, and relational scripts in tandem ... *from the situation* of the piano's role" leading to "a narrative that moved me in just the way and just the places that the music moves me."⁴²⁶ However, Cusick also ultimately rejects this line of investigation too: while it provides an explanation for her intuitions about gender in the piece, it excludes the physical bodily act of performance that motivated her in the first place to take up such a line of investigation.⁴²⁷ Her final proposal is a speculation on the possible form of a feminist analysis of the piece which takes the body (performance) rather than the mind (score) as its starting point. What is so important in this essay is that through the process of her search, Cusick demonstrates that the facts of the piece do not need to change with each analytical strategy; rather it is the types of knowledge used in the interpretation that give access to different understandings of the experience of these musical fact. In other words, the narrative of the musical experience need not be singular.

Marion Guck's "Analytical fictions" touches on a related aspect of "narrative" namely the language itself. Guck argues that "language conveying a personal involvement with musical works pervades, indeed shapes, even the most technically oriented musical prose." In it she illustrates how specific grammatical use of "technical, conventional, and novel language" tells a "story of involvement" about the analyst.⁴²⁸ The analyst's

⁴²⁵ Cusick, "Feminist theory, music theory, and the mind/body problem," 42.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴²⁷ Cusick goes on to outline how the denial of features of bodily performance in music also restricts access to an understanding of gender metaphors in music. She also outlines questions to ask if wanting to develop a mind/body approach to music theory.

⁴²⁸ Guck, "Analytical Fictions," 172.

use of even commonplace ways of expressing analytical ideas about music can in fact attribute agency variably to the music, to words, to the analyst, the listener, and the composer. The resultant “fictional narrative” invites the reader into this world created by the analyst, to be convinced by the story that presumably tells us something new and worthwhile about the musical experience. Importantly, Guck shows:

that we can create many kinds of portrayals of involvement with musical works, which themselves are depicted as many different kinds of entities—some of them human representations, some not. More importantly, it is clear that there is no one, right story. Different individuals engage pieces in different ways; they therefore find different language congenial to that engagement.⁴²⁹

Guck acknowledges the cultural element determining some of this difference, and we also can trace a link back to Cusick to indicate that gender, race and other contextual factors obviously play into language choice. Furthermore, Guck observes that analysts do not necessarily hold to one vocabulary to tell a single narrative fiction about the music, rather as analysts we swap and change vocabularies and stories to find the one that best represents “our sense of the music before us, secure that these shifting stories will be understood by our community of readers.”⁴³⁰ The reason Guck gives for this need to roam about linguistically when writing about music is that:

Language more readily expresses what is concrete than what is immaterial. Shifts in musical vocabulary recognize that for all our erudition, evident in analytical texts, the musical work lies not under our finger, but just out of our reach. Our language about music is rightly secondhand, after the fact—and catch-as-catch-can. As such, it reflects what the interaction with music is like.⁴³¹

It is interesting to reflect on this comment in relation to Adorno’s analytical prose, which in fact uses language in such a way as to try to access precisely that sense of understanding that escapes us, not through greater precision in rational language but through greater poetic language. Guck, by contrast, calls for analysts to be more explicit about their own stories of involvement:

I think that the practice of analysis would be improved if stories of involvement were less often subliminal, more often ... explicitly stated, because music analysts are not simply communicating the musical facts by way of a neutral, transparent language.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 173.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 172.

We choose words, and thereby shape texts in particular ways in order to persuade our readers or listeners ... to adopt our way of looking at things.⁴³²

Guck's call for linguistic transparency and Adorno's attempt to make language speak beyond the rational exemplify the tension within the difficult marriage of empirical and speculative analysis.

An outstanding example of analytical interpretation that holds firmly to empirical analysis while offering much in the way of speculative interpretation through the lens of gender is Ellie Hisama's book *Gendering Musical Modernism*.⁴³³ What is particularly exemplary about Hisama's work is the way she achieves great clarity in her prose about what are "technical" observations and what is a "narrative" interpretation of those observations, convincing us in the process of both her analytical arguments and her own story of "involvement" with the music. The essays range across a number of pieces by Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer and Miriam Gideon. Hisama uses different strategies to present "analyses that are inflected by historical and social context."⁴³⁴ Informing all her analyses is biographical information gained from various sources about the situation of these women as women and as women who composed within the social reality of their historical period. Importantly, this information motivates Hisama's choice of analytical tools for her close readings, and specifically her particular "attention to various aspects of contour" as an apt way to access the gendered structures she hears in the music.⁴³⁵ The narratives that she weaves about the relationships of musical voices, melodies, arrangements of the two hands of the piano player, and part arrangements all tell a story about how the musical materials are organised in ways that can be read as "intentionlessly" reflecting gender concerns facing these three women.⁴³⁶ Hisama's analyses model a way of allowing the music to remain "self-contained" while simultaneously locating within itself the traces of the social and it is in this process that Hisama's analyses also flow over into my category of critical analysis.

To summarize so far, my category of interpretive analysis can be understood as a process of translating the musical experience from an internal mental experience to one that can be shared with others through the "situated knowledge" that we choose to

⁴³² Ibid., 174.

⁴³³ Ellie M. Hisama, *Gendering Music Modernism: the music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 10.

engage as metaphor for our musical knowledge of the piece, gained in turn from listening as well as from identifying material features (from the score) salient to that listening. Descriptive analysis as a prior step helps select the concrete material features of the music for interpretation.⁴³⁷ However, in my own experience there is a movement back and forth between these two processes, and as such I don't conceive of them as fully discrete steps but rotatable categories on the analytical circle. Similarly, as already indicated, interpretive analysis flows over into the process of critical analysis.

My category of critical analysis constitutes a reflection on method, materials and subjects. In this present study, critical analysis is reserved in its fullest for Part 3. It is here that the foregoing descriptive, interpretive analysis is reconsidered in the light of the notion of mediation—how musical content might mediate the social in the organisation of the materials themselves. The work of Martin Scherzinger and of Martin Brody discussed in Chapter 1 represent some of the finest examples of critical analysis in the way that they engage with existing stories of the music (by Schoenberg and Webern and by Wolpe respectively) and re-tell them through the dialectical lens of mediated social content, imbuing the music with a critical potential that other accounts have denied.⁴³⁸

In Chapter 7: *A critical interpretation of the Boston and ASKO concertos* I present a “second reflection” along the lines that Paddison describes in his essay “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation.” Here Paddison theorizes about musical mediation of the social on three levels: the level of a dialectic between musical form and content, between historical materials and their social context, and between music as autonomous artefact and as commodity.⁴³⁹ It is important to note however, that in its use of metaphor these notions of mediation are equally “interpretive” in the sense of my second category on the analytical circle. The over-arching metaphor in this case is one of *dialectical relationships* which may also be seen as a “story of involvement”

⁴³⁷ The relationship between my descriptive and interpretive categories is captured by Samson in the following observation about the changing direction of analysis over the latter part of the twentieth century: “Analytical insights increasingly took their place within a much larger ‘implicative complex,’ where the selection, emphasis, and grouping of particular musical features would be determined not just by music-theoretic criteria but by the extent of their isomorphic correspondence to other controlling metaphors.” Samson, “Analysis in Context,” 50.

⁴³⁸ Scherzinger, “In Memory of a Receding Dialectic.” Scherzinger, “Anton Webern and the Concept of Symmetrical Inversion: A Reconsideration on the Terrain of Gender.” Brody, “‘Where to Act, How to Move’.”

⁴³⁹ Paddison, “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation.”

according to Guck, or simply as replacing a metaphor of unity (that was so strongly critiqued by the New Musicology) with a metaphor of dialectic. It is with such an awareness that Horton qualifies the dialectical analyses in his study with the following observation:

Dialectical thought is in the first instance *conceptual*; whether we regard it as logical or critical, the idea that the world necessarily responds to antinomic characterization is at base an observation about its conceptual structure. However, the application of this idea in musical analysis inevitably proceeds by metaphor or analogy, because musical material has no capacity to embody concepts as immanent properties.⁴⁴⁰

The distinction between musical material and the concepts we use to describe them is of course valid. However, while the sounds themselves may be concept-less, musical “content” in Adornian terms is more than just the sounds. As I understand it, musical “content” includes the conception of how materials are organized with all the historical and social implications that that carries, and as such the link between concept and organised sound may be plausibly sought in a metaphor of dialectical rationality. Following Cusick and Guck, the narrative constructed around dialectical relationships in this study enables a story of involvement with the music that aims to get most faithfully at the listening experience of the analyst, myself in this case. Crucially however, it is not the only story possible. And in that sense, the category of critical analysis aims to reflect on the constructed narratives of the descriptive, interpretive analysis and on its own dialectical interpretation in an attempt to identify what these interpretations exclude in order to make their points.

The analytical chapters on the *Boston* and *AKSO* concertos in Part 2, then, are informed most heavily by the categories of descriptive and interpretive analysis. They are descriptive in that they try to capture the mental representation of a hearing (mine in this case) informed by my particular way of interpreting connections and dis-connections between sections of the unfolding form. I support my descriptions and interpretations with examples from the score which are aimed at showing features present in the structure (purposeful organisation) of musical elements (pitch, rhythmic, timbral, textural, orchestral). But not all observations are supported with concrete examples, especially some of the more generalized ideas of how I propose to hear the dynamics of form-in-motion, since these to a large extent need to be experienced in the real-time

⁴⁴⁰ Horton, “Dialectics and music analysis,” 140.

unfolding of the music, and poetic description seems to me the most suggestive way of translating this temporal aural experience. I do not sustain any specific metaphor, but my language will draw on a range of commonly encountered metaphors for music; for example, the idea that musical materials “transform,” that they move in “shapes” (e.g., “arch-shaped trajectory”), that they “stand in opposition” to each other, or that musical instruments, through their musical material, interact “dramatically” (e.g., they are jolted out of a dream, they keep to themselves, they have an exchange or a dialogue).

I had the good fortune of having available to me another interpretation of the *Boston Concerto* by Alan Theisen, who completed his dissertation on this piece in 2010.⁴⁴¹ It became available to me in 2013. While my own analytical work was well complete by this stage (I had already published on the *Boston Concerto* by this time), I have benefitted from Theisen’s work in numerous ways.⁴⁴² Firstly, that Theisen included pitch analyses of a large number of passages in the music has freed me up from reproducing this material in my dissertation. The pitch analyses I include here are of passages not included in Theisen’s work, except in a few circumstances: on occasions where I use the analysis to support an argument that differs from Theisen; and of sections where I would like to enhance the analysis with Carter’s own sketch material. Secondly, it is rare to share with another scholar such a detailed encounter of a large orchestral work and be able to read such a complete response to the same material. Theisen’s analytical methodology follows Lawrence Ferrara’s “Ten Step” model for analysis that incorporates “multiple analytical tactics”⁴⁴³ and is underpinned by the concept of “form-through-time” phenomenology that Judy Lochhead theorises.⁴⁴⁴ This model includes a detailed listening journal which is fascinating in that Theisen’s listening consistently points to parallels with my own listening, highlighting as noteworthy and salient many of the same moments in the music. This congruence of our listening (which might have been otherwise) suggests to me something about the music itself: while subjective listening experiences are all that we have as complete experiences, the music ‘itself’ does offer something concrete out of which those subjective experiences take shape.

⁴⁴¹ Alan Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*” (PhD diss., The Florida State University, 2010).

⁴⁴² Marguerite Boland, “Ritornello form in Carter’s *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos,” in *Elliott Carter Studies*, ed. Marguerite Boland and John Link (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴⁴³ Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*,” 9.

⁴⁴⁴ See Judy Lochhead, “Joan Tower’s *Wings* and *Breakfast Rhythms I and II*: Some Thoughts on Form and Repetition,” *Perspectives of New Music* 30, no. 1 (1992).

Where my reading differs from Theisen's is in the interpretation of the experience of form. Theisen's focus is on the elements and their internal shaping that make up the experience of musical progress across each individual movement (i.e., each ritornello and concertino). Theisen says: "In particular, this dissertation will focus on how larger formal units are opened, closed, and attain climax."⁴⁴⁵ In my case, I aim to capture something of how the motion from start to finish of the piece might be experienced, through the awareness of multiple unfolding strands and their mutual influence that gives the progression of the piece a greater complexity than might be evident from a focus on sectional listening. This aim also applies to my analysis of *ASKO Concerto*. I know of no other published analysis of this piece.

⁴⁴⁵ Theisen, "A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter's *Boston Concerto*," ix.

Chapter 5

Boston Concerto - Analysis

5.1 *Boston Concerto* overview – text and texture, sonority and form

The *Boston Concerto* (2002) is in essence Carter's second concerto for orchestra. His *Concerto for Orchestra* (1969) pre-dates the *Boston Concerto* by 33 years.⁴⁴⁶ The two concertos are a good illustration of the contrast between Carter's middle and late styles.⁴⁴⁷ In terms of form, the *Concerto for Orchestra* is hard to grasp in comparison to the clarity of form articulated by the *Boston Concerto*. The *Concerto for Orchestra* has a continuous form made up of four simultaneous timbral layers that are also defined by register (mid, mid-high, mid-low, low). Solos and different timbral colours of the layers come to the foreground and recede again into a dense textural fabric.⁴⁴⁸ Associated with each layer (Carter called them 'movements') are characteristic types of gestures in which the rhythmic profile is an important defining element.⁴⁴⁹ The gestures between the instruments within each layer are also polyvocal like the layers themselves which are constantly interacting. All this layering forms a highly charged battleground of chaos and order, where one layer at a time predominates in a section of the music but is also forced to respond to interruptions from other layers that refuse to lie completely dormant while a single layer tries to hold ground. Schiff says "Form now grows out of the contrapuntal interplay of movements, so that simultaneity becomes a formal as well as a polyphonic principle."⁴⁵⁰ The form is determined quite evidently by the unfolding interactions of the musical content. It takes quite a lot of familiarity with the *Concerto for Orchestra* to orient to any given point in the music without the score (and it helps significantly to know the order in which the timbral groups appear as the predominant

⁴⁴⁶ *Boston Concerto* is dedicated to Carter's wife Helen and written as a 'thank-you' piece for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. See Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 323.

⁴⁴⁷ On Carter's changed approach to composing for orchestra in his late period, see Link, "Elliott Carter's 'Late Music'?", 2-3.

⁴⁴⁸ In fact, the "simultaneity" of layers is coordinated by a large-scale four-layer polyrhythm that provides an underlying structure to the potential moments at which different layers can surface. Klaas Coloumbier shows the degree to which Carter keeps to this grid and where he deviates for musical purposes. Coulembier, "Analyzing simultaneous time layers in selected compositions by Elliott Carter and Claus-Steffen Manhkopf," 21-92.

⁴⁴⁹ See Bernard, "Poem as Non-Verbal Text."; also Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 243-57.

⁴⁵⁰ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 242.

layer). By contrast, listening to the *Boston Concerto* it does not take long to hear identifying features that provide a quick orientation to which point the music is up to, even without much familiarity with the piece. Change events happen clearly in succession due to the sectionalized ritornello form and the strong textural distinction between sections. The visual metaphor of ‘splicing’ from one scene to the next, that Carter used to describe some of his middle period music, is in fact more obviously applicable to the *Boston Concerto*’s ritornello form than it is to the Concerto for Orchestra’s ‘simultaneous’ form.

The contrast between the two orchestral concertos extends to the literary references associated with each. The Concerto for Orchestra has as a literary model St. John Perse’s epic poem *Winds* that “describes winds blowing over the American plains destroying old dried-up forms and sweeping in the new.”⁴⁵¹ The theme of the poem is itself one that belongs to that time in Carter’s career when addressing ‘the new’ in an almost cataclysmic manner was of great importance. Bernard has shown many parallels between the “cosmic character” of the poem and the “grand scale” on which Carter’s music is conceived, particularly with respect to the density of ideas and the complexity of formal conception.⁴⁵² By contrast, the lighter and more transparent *Boston Concerto* suggests parallels with the intimacy of William Carlos Williams’ poem *Rain*, the opening lines of which are quoted in the score. Again, the theme of this poem reflects Carter’s late period preoccupation with subjects which are more personal and more transient. In the poem *Rain*, the outside is where the rain (“the spring wash/of your love”) falls freely, cleansing and transforming everything it touches. It is juxtaposed with the inside where “the priceless dry/rooms” hide material riches, secrets and desires (“all the whorishness of our delight”). From inside, the rain can only be heard and seen but the touch of its “drips” and “drops” which by their very nature will “bathe every/open/object of the world” and transform it, are kept at a protective distance.⁴⁵³

The sonority of the tutti ritornello sections in the *Boston Concerto* immediately evoke an association with the sound of rain described in the poem. This is achieved not only by the expressive indication of *Allegro staccatissimo*—the *pizzicato* and strummed playing technique of the strings and the many fast repeated notes in the rest of the

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Bernard, “Poem as Non-Verbal Text,” 180.

⁴⁵³ William Carlos Williams, *Asphodel, that Greeny Flower & Other Love Poems* (New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1994). Also at <http://www.zverina.com/bestbooks/poem-online-rain.htm> (accessed October 5, 2016)

orchestra—but also by the ebb and flow of the density of the dripping, spitting, raining texture that is suggestive of the unevenness of rainfall. The ritornellos, then, can be visualized as the outside space of the poem where the rain falls. The contrasting sections are the concertinos which evoke the more emotionally intense and closed inner spaces. The concertinos involve leaner, more focussed textures with heightened instrumental dialogues between subsections of the orchestra. **Table 5.1** gives an outline of the formal sections by orchestration, expressive character and tempo.

Section	mm.	Orchestration	Expressive marking	Tempo
Ritornello 1	1	tutti (full)	<i>Allegro staccatissimo</i>	♩ = 90
Concertino 1	29	flutes/clarinets	<i>Lento, teneramente</i>	♩ = 54
Ritornello 2	74	tutti (no fl/cl in 1st half) (no pf/hrp/vibs)	<i>Tempo primo</i>	♩ = 90
Concertino 2	91	piano/harp/vibs	<i>Meno mosso</i>	♩ = 72
Ritornello 3	119	tutti (no pf/hrp/vib) (no basses)	<i>Tempo primo</i>	♩ = 90
Concertino 3	141	violas/basses	<i>Meno mosso</i>	♩ = 60
Ritornello 4	164	tutti (no brass)	<i>Tempo primo</i>	♩ = 90
Concertino 4	190	brass	<i>Lento, sostenuto</i>	♩ = 36
Ritornello 5	221	tutti (strings only)	<i>Tempo primo</i>	♩ = 90
Concertino 5	244	oboes/English horn/bassoon	<i>Piu mosso</i>	♩ = 120
Ritornello 6	281	tutti (no strings)	<i>Tempo primo</i>	♩ = 90
Concertino 6	305	violins/cellos	<i>Maestoso – molto espr.</i>	♩ = 72
Ritornello 7	344- 358	tutti (full)	<i>Tempo primo</i>	♩ = 90

Table 5.1 – Formal sections of the *Boston Concerto*

Formally, the concertinos can be heard as a series of tableaux, each enacting a self-contained scene that forms a part of a gradually unfolding drama. This idea is nicely captured by John Link:

... in the concert hall the schematic plan is perhaps less noticeable than the gradual intensification of feeling in the soli. Stravinskian cool gives way to witty comedy in the winds, while in the strings, impassioned arco displaces the pizzicato raindrops of

the tutti, and the progression from basses and violas to cellos and violins gives the piece as a whole a sense of gradual brightening.⁴⁵⁴

The effect of gradual brightening comes also from the registral motion across a succession of sections which I will examine below. Accompanying the concertinos are bursts of *staccatissimo* chords from other sections of the orchestra which (to continue the textual association) may be visualized as the sound of the rain penetrating the “dry rooms” that “hear the wash of the/rain” but are not touched by it.

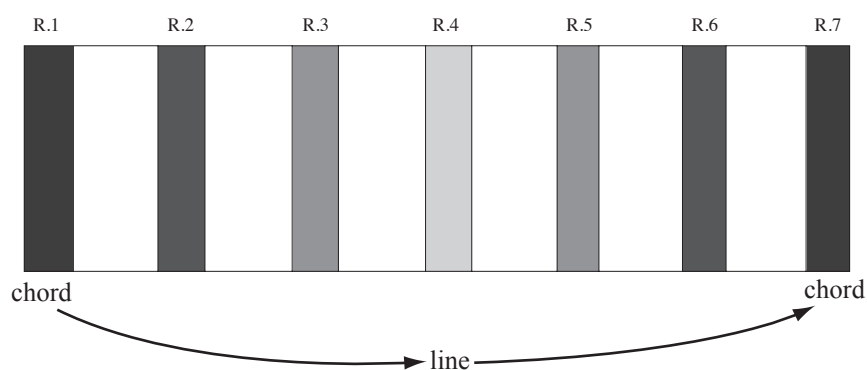
In one obvious way then, the form of the piece is defined by the alternation of the returning *Allegro staccatissimo* ritornello sections and the varied concertino sections. In a number of ways, however, the obviousness of this form is thwarted. Although the ritornellos continually return to the “rain” texture (*pizzicato/staccato* articulation, rhythmic layering of beat subdivisions of 6 and 3 against 4 at a tempo of MM=90), the returns are never static and there are certainly no literal repetitions of any sort. Each ritornello in fact presents a very different kind of “rain” sonority as the instrumentation of the tutti is constantly changing. The ritornellos—which Carter first labelled “interlude” but later “tutti” in his sketches—are in fact only true tutti in the opening and closing ritornellos.⁴⁵⁵ In the remaining ritornellos, the lower sounding instruments are generally excluded (except in the occasional full tutti chord) which helps to keep the sound light. The piano only makes an appearance in Ritornello 6. Furthermore, each set of concertino instruments is withheld from either the preceding or following ritornello (or sometimes from both, as for Concertinos 2 and 4; refer to **Table 5.1**). The linking of the concertinos and ritornellos through the subtraction of instrument groups gives each section a very defined position in the chain of unfolding events despite the discontinuous effect that such an alternation creates. This in turn contributes to the idea of “moment to moment” unfolding of form that Carter emphasized during his middle period, rather than a static or mechanical application of a formal template. Unlike the ritornellos, the sound world of each concertino is unique and clearly defined by its instrumental family. Nevertheless, not all concertinos are entirely dissimilar in their sonority. The double reeds of Concertino 5 are a more active realisation of the meandering, interlocked counterpoint of the flutes and clarinets of Concertino 1. The

⁴⁵⁴ Link, “Elliott Carter’s ‘Late Music’?,” 2-3. Others have also noted a dramatic trajectory across the concertinos, for example Rodney Lister, “Boston, Symphony Hall: Harbison’s ‘Requiem’ and Carter’s ‘Boston Concerto,’” *Tempo* 62, no. 225: 38.

⁴⁵⁵ Sketches for the *Boston* Concerto are held at the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, Switzerland. All sketch material referred to in this chapter was viewed with the kind permission and generous financial support of the Paul Sacher Stiftung.

expressive two-part counterpoint of violas and basses in Concertino 3 finds a companion in the more intensely lyrical polyphony of violins I, violins II and cellos in Concertino 6.

Coupled to the association of outside “rain” with the ritornellos and inside “dialogue” with the concertinos is not only the distinctive sonority of each strand but also a basic distinction between the musical material of each: the concertinos weave a polyphony of instrumental *lines* drawn from smaller groups of instruments, while the hallmark of the ritornellos is the fast reiterated and oscillating notes that form *chords* of varying densities across most of the orchestra. Thus, the spatial and the temporal are set in opposition to each other and distinguished by sonority in various ways. The opposition, however, is not fixed because the division of materials is not maintained hard and fast: melodic textures and chordal textures interpenetrate each other over the duration of the piece. **Example 5.1** is a graphic representation of the transformation that takes place in the ritornello strand, from the distinctly chordal Ritornello 1 to a single *Klangfarbenmelodie* with accompaniment in the central Ritornello 4, returning to a chordal texture in Ritornello 7 that is similar to, yet more static than, Ritornello 1.

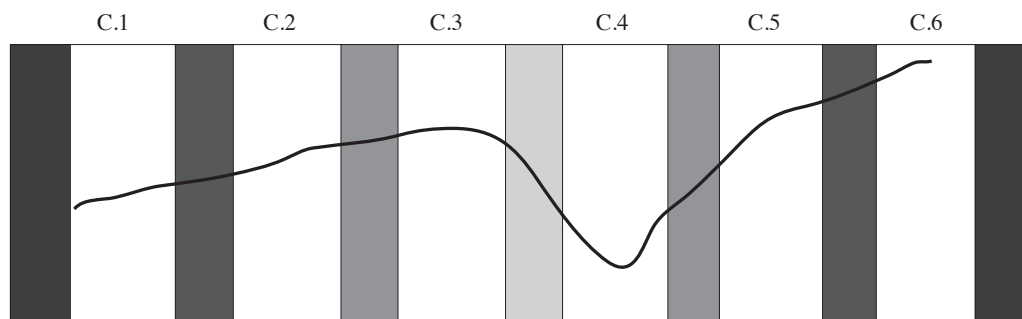


Example 5.1 – Textural transformation across the *Boston Concerto* ritornello strand

In the concertino strand the opposite occurs at the centre of the piece: the lines of the first concertinos become spatialized in Concertino 4 with the brass section playing a very slowly moving chorale which gives the effect of a gradually unfolding series of chords.⁴⁵⁶ The registral space of the concertino strand descends as it moves towards this central concertino and then fans out widely in the second half of the piece. **Example**

⁴⁵⁶ Theisen makes a fine analysis of this movement, see Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*,” 95-101.

5.2. captures the drop in energy and rhythmic activity at the centre of the concertino strand that lifts upward again with the registral expansion, represented by the inverted arch shape.



Example 5.2 – Dramatic energy across the *Boston Concerto* concertino strand

The design has some suggestive parallels to Williams’ poem. Without implying compositional intent or fixed textual correspondence, the textural transformation that happens over the unfolding of *Boston Concerto* is not in discord with the broad trajectory of the poem, which moves from the clearly defined ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ to the messier and wilder movements of rainy and watery transformations, back to a clear delineation of the worldly and unworldly represented by the rain and love respectively. Like these opposition in the poem, ritornello and concertino materials are set up in opposition to each other. But also like the form of the poem, the clearly chordal “rain” texture of the opening and closing ritornellos frames a transformation of both ritornello and concertino textures that complicate the clarity of the ritornello form and ultimately shape the piece’s large scale design.

A dialectic is at work between stasis and motion on the larger formal level which has its origins in the materials themselves. In the first two ritornellos, the stretches of single fixed-register chords are harmonically static but rhythmically activated, expressing this dialectic of movement and stasis in a very immediate way. Furthermore, a melodic ‘path’ is frequently traced through the static chords. In other words, fragments of the registrally fixed chord are melodically activated. In this way, chord and line are shown to each contain their opposite. These elements of the musical material translate to the formal design, or put differently, to the way in which the textural transformation across

the ritornello strand is effected. Ritornello 1 starts with a chordal texture and very gradually introduces melodic fragments. On each return to the ritornello section, the relationship between chordal and linear material changes, until the central ritornello is dominated by a single *Klangfarbenmelodie*. In the ritornellos of the second half of the piece, the relationship between chord and line changes again, until the return of a clear chordal texture in the final ritornello. In section 5.2 that follows, I will examine the details of how this transformation occurs. In section 5.3, I will turn to the concertino strand to examine the processes at work in its trajectory. In the final section of the chapter I look at how the two strands interrelate and how other processes of linking and memory recall contribute to the continuity of the form.

5.2 Ritornellos: the “rain” texture and its transformation

Ritornello 1

The discussion of the first ritornello will be the lengthiest as it is here that the oppositional premise of line and chord is established. It is this narrative of opposition that I will develop in examining the unfolding of the ritornello strand across the whole piece. In Ritornello 1, I will examine two significant stretches of music that are clearly heard as distinct sonic events: the first is a passage that runs from the extended static moment of the opening chord to the next static chord of 9 measures later; the second is a passage where distinct melodic fragments are introduced for the first time (mm. 14-18) into a strongly chordal texture. Both passages consist of clearly delineated linear and chordal material that are nonetheless intertwined by their pitch and interval content as well as their expressive gestures or timbral qualities (such as articulation or instrumentation). Of interest is how the materials are kept both in opposition *and* connected, in other words the way in which their identities are bound up with each other.

One of Carter’s most striking orchestral openings is the first chord of the *Boston Concerto*. The sketches reveal that this opening was actually added towards the end of writing the piece.⁴⁵⁷ Initially, Carter began the piece not with the declamatory down-

⁴⁵⁷ This opening was only added after many of the tutti sections had been composed, as evidenced from a renumbering of measures during the composition of the piece. *Boston Concerto* folder, Elliott Carter Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation. Leaving the beginning until the end is not an uncommon practice for Carter; see for example the sketch study of the opening of “Anaphora” from *A Mirror on which to Dwell* in Denis Vermaelen, “Elliott Carter’s sketches: spiritual exercises and craftsmanship,” in *A Handbook to*

beat chord of the final score but with a sweeping up-beat string gesture similar to the final score's mm. 3.3-3.4. The first two and a half measures were added later and they lead beautifully into the sweeping gesture that follows as if they had always been there. The added opening is a single chord in which pitch pairs are reiterated: a single, rhythmically activated, fixed register, twelve-tone chord presenting a dialectic of rhythmic motion and harmonic stasis as the piece's opening statement. By contrast, the sweeping string gesture (along with a reply from woodwinds that follows a beat later) which Carter had initially sketched for the piece consists of one of the most harmonically dense passages in Ritornello 1.

Example 5.3a — Boston Concerto, opening chord, mm. 1-3

Example 5.3a shows a reduction of the opening two and a half measures. The *forte* attack on the down beat of the score's m. 1 consists of strummed quadruple stops in the strings, accompanied by guiro and lingering wood chimes, and with fast staccato

Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches, ed. Patricia Hall and Friedemann Sallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

sixtuplets in flutes and clarinets oscillating on a major second. The upper hexachord of this fixed-register Twelve Tone Chord (TTC) is an All-Trichord Hexachord (ATH). On beat two of m. 1, the violins reiterate *pizzicato* pitch pairs in a fragmented 4 against 3 rhythm from this upper hexachord: A4/Bb4 and E3/F#3. These four pitches introduce one of the two All-Interval Tetrachords (AITs), 4-Z15 [0146] or in Carter's nomenclature, Tetrachord 18. The lower strings join in from m. 2.3 adding Eb4/D4 to complete an ATH. They also fill out the bottom end of the TTC by adding in the literal complement of the ATH. The lowest analytical staff in **Example 5.3a** shows these sets.⁴⁵⁸

The measures that follow this static opening chord present a series of melodic gestures, densely harmonized and punctuated by brief reiterated chords, each event lasting no more than one or two beats. **Example 5.3b** gives a schematic overview of the first six measures of the piece.

Example 5.3b – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 1 schematic overview, mm. 1-6

Here we can see that in the midst of the dense activity the TTC of m. 1 provides a consistent harmonic reference point throughout the passage. The opening TTC is firstly linked by an ATH formed in the violins to the following sweeping arco string gesture. The ATH shares pitches A4, Eb4 and D4 with the opening TTC while all the pitches are found in the first few notes of the sweeping string gesture that follows. This sweeping gesture (with which Carter had initially opened the piece) involves the whole string

⁴⁵⁸ ATHs and AITs are indicated using Carter's set class numbering. Transposition levels indicated on examples refer to transpositions of the prime form of the set class. A full table of conversion between Forte's set numbers and Carter's numbering can be found in Carter, *Harmony Book*, 23-26.

section and arrives two and a half beats later on a tremolo TTC in the strings. The two contiguous hexachords of the tremolo TTC at m. 42 are hexachords 35/36, just like the opening TTC (see **Example 5.3c**). In fact they are the same 35/36 hexachordal pc sets only realised vertically in pitch space with a slight variation: the lowest note in each hexachord has been flipped up two octaves making both the highest and lowest notes different from the opening TTC. Flowing out of the tremolo chord, woodwind and brass each play a 5-note subset of this chord in a gesture that will become characteristic of the ritornello sections: single reiterated chord tones, one in each instrument, played as fast sextuplet semiquavers or semiquavers, or sometimes both rhythms combined. Woodwinds play a pentad 27 while brass play a pentad 21. An illustration of the level of detailed attention that Carter gives to his pitch material is seen in the very last of these staccato reiterations: the pitches in the second clarinet and bass clarinet move to B3 and C3 respectively (forming a pentad 35) for one semiquaver sextuplet only so as to include the last two pitches of the TTC from which the two pentads are extracted. These pitches are circled in **Example 5.3c**.

The image shows a musical score for Example 5.3c, divided into two sections: m. 1-3.1 and m. 4.2-4.3. The first section, m. 1-3.1, features an 'opening TTC strings' with two hexachords labeled 35 and 36. The second section, m. 4.2-4.3, features a 'tremolo TTC strings' with two hexachords labeled 35 and 36. Below this, there is a 'staccato TTC w/wind, brass' section. This section includes a woodwind part with a pentad labeled 27 and a brass part with a pentad labeled 21. A circled area in the woodwind part is labeled 'clarinets, last pitches of TTC'. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with various annotations and markings.

Example 5.3c – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 1, mm. 3.4-4.3

These pentad reiterations are followed by another sweeping gesture that answers the foregoing string sweep. This time it is played by woodwinds (see **Example 5.3b**, ‘flutes, clarinets sweeping response’). The woodwind gesture is similarly harmonically dense: a series of vertical pentads change every sextuplet semiquaver and are underpinned by semiquaver *pizzicato* strings also playing pentads (see **Example 5.3d**). Again the gesture lasts only two beats. The same pentads (21, 27 and 35) that initiated the gesture at m. 4.3 reappear at the end to frame the passage: pentads 35 and 27 close the woodwind phrase while pentad 21 closes the string phrase. The chords are circled in **Example 5.3d**. Thus we can see how the TTC harmony which opened the piece is a constant presence throughout a rapidly moving succession of gestures.

sweeping gesture in piccolo, flutes, clarinets

m. 4.4

m. 5.1

pizz. strings

pentads extracted from TTC 35/36 at m. 4.3

The image shows a musical score for two systems of staves. The top system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, representing woodwinds. The bottom system also consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff, representing strings. The woodwind part is marked 'sweeping gesture in piccolo, flutes, clarinets' and the string part is marked 'pizz. strings'. The score is divided into two measures: m. 4.4 and m. 5.1. Pentads are indicated by circled numbers below the notes. In the woodwind part, pentads 27, 35, 3, 15, 35, 32, 4 are shown in m. 4.4, and 11, 15, 11, 14, 35, 35, 35, 27 are shown in m. 5.1. In the string part, pentads 21, 3, 18, 28, 11, 11, 21, 21, 37, 37 are shown. A dashed line connects the pentad 21 in m. 4.4 to the pentad 21 in m. 5.1. Two large ovals are drawn around the woodwind part, one around the first half of m. 4.4 and one around the second half of m. 5.1. A dashed arrow points from the text 'pentads extracted from TTC 35/36 at m. 4.3' to the pentad 21 in m. 4.4.

Example 5.3d – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 1 sweeping woodwind phrase, mm. 4.4-5.2

oboes, bassoons and xylophone accelerating line

m. 5.3 m. 5.4 m. 6.1 m. 6.2 m. 6.3

brass+ cbsn pizz. strings

AIT-supersets

interlocking trichords forming ATHs in violins and cellos

stunned string chord T3I 35

Example 5.3e – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 1 accelerating line with string ATH chains, mm. 5.3-6.3

Dovetailing the end of the sweeping woodwind gesture is a new, slower melodic line in rhythmic unison between two oboes, two bassoons and xylophone (refer to **Example 5.3b**, ‘oboes, bsns, xylo accelerating phrase’). This line again forms vertical pentads that are all supersets of the two ATHs. The line is underpinned by *pizzicato* strings weaving an interlocking web of trichords that pair into ATHs (the passage is detailed in **Example 5.3e**). The line lasts five beats and presents an accelerating rhythm that ends in a strummed string chord like the opening chord of m. 1. This time, however, the strummed chord is an ATH at T3I instead of a full TTC. This T3I ATH becomes the new static harmony that lasts until m. 9.

In summary, the opening 6 measures are framed by two strummed string chords, a TTC and a ATH, which present bookending moments of harmonic stasis across the orchestra (refer back to the schematic overview of **Example 5.3b**). The music that happens in between this frame rushes by in a flash. Nonetheless, the whole is underpinned by the return to the opening TTC and the clear gestures connecting these returns are easily registered by the ear: a whirlwind of dense sweeping gestures that are punctuated by tiny moments of staccato chord reiterations. Despite their fleeting quality, Carter orchestrates these gestures in great detail. Many of the pentads are supersets of the two AITs or subsets of the ATH. The ATH itself is carefully partitioned into trichordal chains. Carter’s *Harmony Book* can be seen at work in this passage. Pentads that contain

either [0137] or [0146] can be found in the Harmony Book on pages 81-82 (“Chapter 3. Synthesis I, $1+4=5$ ”), and pentad and trichord subsets of the ATH on page 241 (“Chapter 11. Analysis III, $6=5+1/4+2/3+3$ ”). This was clearly a useful resource for shaping the rapid progression of chords. These harmonically dense gestures also have clear melodic profiles and a definite sense of motion which contrasts with the measures of static chords. They present an opposing musical idea to the framing repeated-note chords of measure 1 and measure 6 which spread themselves out in a rain-like sonic image of orchestral colours and that do not move anywhere except ‘on the spot.’ In this way chord and line are simultaneously presented at the start of the piece. Carter has integrated their individual identities into a fluid gesture without subsuming either.

Ritornello 1 continues through what are perhaps most accurately termed harmonic fields, of which the pitch content is primarily fixed-register TTCs or ATHs.⁴⁵⁹ Some of the TTC are All-Interval, others are not. Pitches are also held in common between one vertically ordered TTC or ATH and the next. These common pitches smooth the shift between harmonic fields. Throughout Ritornello 1, spatially ordered chords are shaped into a variety of gestures and mostly rhythmically activated over one to three measures, often partitioning AITs or ATHs from the fixed pitch aggregate. The ‘tropes’ set up in the first few measures of the piece, such as the tremolo chords, reiterated staccato chords, and strummed string chords, frequently reappear.

⁴⁵⁹ Theisen makes a reduction of the first ritornello. This reduction does not show all the twelve-tone harmonic fields but does include TTCs that occur at a number of significant gestural moments in this section. See Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*,” 58.

While Ritornello 1 as a whole is defined by orchestral chords, the opposing idea of melodic line is dramatically brought to the foreground in a pivotal moment in mm. 14-15 (see **Example 5.4**). In mm. 13-14, a hiatus in the rhythmic activity is effected by three tremando chords: the first is tremolo flutes with held brass, the second and third are two string tremolos (shown in **Example 5.4**). A single muted trumpet line projects out of the last tremolo chord.⁴⁶⁰ The trumpet's climbing contour and repeated final tenuto notes (A5) leave a kind of 'bugle-call' impression. A response comes immediately in the form of a short but sustained *dolce* chorale-like phrase between oboes, English horn and three horns (see mm. 15-16 in **Example 5.4**). As the *pizzicato* strings start up again, the horns play a harmonized continuation of the trumpet call over the top of the now returned "rain" motive (m. 17). Then a further response comes from the first trumpet (m. 18) which picks up the first horn's first three pitches, repeating them to faster note values and extending the phrase with a final leap before the "rain" texture takes over again. Thus, this momentary event consists of four melodic fragments: 1. trumpet melody, 2. reeds/horns choral, 3. harmonized horns, 4. final trumpet response. These fragments are numbered in boxes on **Example 5.4**.

The trumpet's bugle call melody is the first clear, independent melodic phrase of the piece. Nonetheless, it remains fully embedded in its harmonic surrounds, as do the melodic fragments that follow it. The trumpet's pitches at mm. 14-15 are a linear repeat of the preceding tremolo string chord, T8 ATH. In addition, this T8 ATH forms part of a fixed-register TTC that accumulates all its pitches by the end of the trumpet melody (see analytical staff in **Example 5.4**). It includes the T3I ATH string chord that accompanies the trumpet melody and the T5 ATH that is formed between double reeds and horn in fragment 2. Furthermore, the next ATH at T0 in fragment 2 is a linking chord with 5 of its pitches shared with the preceding TTC and 4 with the following TTC.⁴⁶¹ Thus, while melody is brought into focus, momentarily halting the chordal activity, the materials from which the melody is shaped comes directly from the chords themselves—in other words, latent melodic content is drawn out of the chords. Pitch and interval content further connect the trumpet's melody to response fragments 3 and 4 that follow. All three gestures have a high presence of interval class 5 and of open sounding harmonies, such as [027] and [037] in the trumpet melody, [048]s in the horn

⁴⁶⁰ This passage is also discussed with emphasis on the major/minor qualities of the trichords in *ibid.*, 62-4.

⁴⁶¹ Linking will be discussed more below. See also Boland, "'Linking' and 'Morphing': Harmonic Flow in Elliott Carter's *Con Leggerezza Pensosa*."

harmonies and [025]s in the following trumpet harmonies (compare mm. 14-15 and mm.17-18 in **Example 5.4**).

The image displays a musical score for Example 5.4, titled "Boston Concerto, Ritornello 1 melodic fragments in the brass, mm. 14-18". The score is divided into four fragments:

- Fragment 1:** Measures 14-15. Features trumpet 1 (muted), strings (pizz.), and brass instruments (obs, Eng. hrs, hrns). Harmonic labels include T8 [35] [027][037], T5 [35], and T0 [35]. Dynamics range from *p* to *mp*.
- Fragment 2:** Measures 16-18. Continues the melodic lines with various dynamics and articulations like *pizz.* and *arco*.
- Fragment 3:** Measure 17. Focuses on brass instruments (hrns) with triplets and dynamics like *p*.
- Fragment 4:** Measure 18. Features trumpet 1 (T81 [35]) and brass instruments (T6 [016]). Chord symbols [048], [048], [026], [025], [025], and [016] are present.

The score includes detailed notation for dynamics (*p*, *mp*, *pp*, *p-pp*), articulation (*pizz.*, *arco*), and specific harmonic labels (T8, T5, T0, T6, T81) with associated chord symbols. It also shows melodic lines for trumpet 1, strings, and brass instruments, with various musical notations like triplets and slurs.

Example 5.4 – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 1 melodic fragments in the brass, mm. 14-18

Ritornello 1 has set up the elements that will constitute the transformation that occurs across the ritornello strand: vertical chordal sonorities transform into horizontal melodic lines and shift back again. The process is a subtle one that underlies the dominant “rain” sonority of the ritornello strand. In what follows I trace this transformation.

Ritornello 2

Ritornello 2 continues the transformation of the strand to a more linear texture by introducing more extended melodic fragments passed between the instruments. The overall texture and harmonic material of the second ritornello is rather similar to the first, although more lightly orchestrated. The lead-in to this ritornello is an arch-shaped marimba line that descends before climbing up again to meet the *pizzicato* violins (mm. 72-74, see from m.74 in **Example 5.5**). The marimba melody starts *fortissimo* announcing itself assertively at the end of the Concerto 1's soft meandering woodwind soundscape. The marimba decrescendos to *pianissimo* when *pizzicato* first violins take over the line. The music shifts to short melodic phrases that are passed between different instruments: first from the violins back to the marimba, and then on to the oboes and the English horn (mm. 72-79). Like the trumpet call in Ritornello 1, these fragments are predominantly linear ATHs but with greater harmonic independence now, as only the second marimba fragment is drawn from the surrounding harmonies, namely the ATH preceding it and the AIT that following it (m. 76).

The musical score for Example 5.5, Boston Concerto, Ritornello 2 melodic fragments, mm. 74-77, is presented in three systems. The first system (m. 74) features a marimba line starting with a *p* dynamic, followed by a decrescendo to *ppp* and then a *mf* dynamic, and finally a *p* dynamic. The strings play a *pizz.* pattern with dynamics of *p*, *mf*, *p*, and *p*. The second system (m. 76) shows the marimba playing a *p* dynamic, followed by a *ppp* dynamic, and then a *f* dynamic. The brass plays a *p* dynamic, followed by a *ppp* dynamic, and then a *f* dynamic. The oboe 1 plays a *p* dynamic, followed by a *mf* dynamic. The strings play a *mf* dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as accents, slurs, and articulation marks.

Example 5.5— *Boston Concerto*, Ritornello 2 melodic fragments, mm. 74-77

The melodic fragments leads to a longer line that is indicated in the score as a marimba “solo” in mm. 79-82 (see **Example 5.6**). Unlike the trumpet solo in Ritornello 1, the marimba plays an extended rapid solo and the melody itself maintains features of the “rain” texture, mostly made up of repetitions and oscillations of notes rather than a strong melodic contour like the earlier trumpet solo. However, like the trumpet solo of Ritornello 1, the pitches of the marimba solo are now also drawn out of the harmonies of its string accompaniment.

Example 5.6 – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 2 marimba solo, mm. 78-82

The marimba solo ends with repeated C#5s which dovetail to a gesture by four muted horns playing staccato repeated notes that form an AIT 18 (see m. 82, **Example 5.6**).

The horns introduce the rhythmic activation of a static chord for the first time in Rit. 2. And while this gesture is answered by a final melodic cascade in the woodwinds (not shown here), the remaining seven measures of Rit. 2 return to texturally activated twelve-tone chords in the manner of Rit. 1, thereby pausing any further development of the linear texture till later ritornellos. Thus, with the marimba solo's definite linear statement the chordal character of the ritornello strand is disrupted but does not yet transform to a fully linear texture.

Ritornello 3

Ritornello 3 brings to the transformation of the ritornello strand another element: rather than continuing the extension of melodic fragments, in Ritornello 3 a much more stratified texture emerges consisting of greater independent layering. The coordinating TTCs that spanned the full orchestra now virtually disappear. The pitch reiterations and oscillations of the previous ritornellos have all but gone and have been replaced by varied note successions. The fragmented rhythms and the voice-crossings make it impossible to discern clear melodic lines within these layers. In other words, it is not so

The image displays a musical score for measures 132-134 of Ritornello 3. The score is arranged in a system with seven staves, each representing a different instrument or section: Cl. 1.2., Bass Cl., Hrns. Tpt., T. blks., Vln. 1 div., Vln. 2, and Cv. Cbs. The notation is dense, featuring numerous triplets, sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings such as *mf*, *p*, *mp*, and *pp*. Some measures include performance instructions like *p sub* and *mf*. The score is marked with measure numbers 132, 133, and 134. There are also some circled annotations, such as a circled chord in the Horns Tpt. staff and a circled note in the Vln. 1 div. staff.

Example 5.7 – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 3 texture, mm. 132-134

much a contrapuntal texture as a pointillistic “rain” texture of greater pitch density (see **Example 5.7**). Especially the clarinets present an erratic display of fragments, failing to manage more than a dyad or two in succession although with the occasional return of the wave-like sweeping gestures from the first ritornello (refer for example to m. 124-6 in the score). It is as if independent melodic lines are trying to consolidate but are not quite able to take their full form.

The strings generally do complete aggregates linearly while also coordinating together on fleeting vertical ATHs and combining AITs into octatonic collections in a number of passages.⁴⁶² However, overall Ritornello 3 lacks the clear harmonies of the TTCs and the ATHs that unified the whole orchestral sound in the previous two ritornellos. Within this dense textural terrain, the brass are the only group to provide a cohesive layer. Initially the brass play reiterated notes of the “rain” motive (refer for example to mm. 123-124 in the score). However, they then turn to playing short, loud burst of AIT and ATH chords (or subsets of these) at irregular intervals in the manner of the accompanying chords that can be found throughout the concertinos (see end of m. 134 in **Example 5.7**). This textural element of the brass appears here for the first time and reappears in a number of later ritornellos.

Ritornello 4

After the independent layering of Ritornello 3, Ritornello 4 makes a complete transformation away from a chordal texture, bringing in a single line that drives the motion of this central ritornello forward. This is the mid-point of the ritornello strand and also the central section of the piece as a whole. Ritornello 4 presents a continuous melodic line that weaves its way through the whole ritornello and provides a clarity to the movement that contrasts with the much more chaotic texture of the preceding ritornello.

The line is divided between primarily piccolo, xylophone and *pizzicato* first violins, as indicated by the *Hauptstimme* brackets in the score. It is constructed from ATH and AIT collections. The melody maintains the rhythmic values of the “rain” texture—beats are divided into sixteenths against sextuplet sixteenths—making for a very fast, intense

⁴⁶² For octatonic moments, see the strings in mm. 124-125 and mm. 135-136.

melodic line with the high register of the piccolo and xylophone dominating. **Example 5.8a** reproduces a section of the *Klangfarbenmelodie*. The line is fragmented by the rhythmic and timbral changes as it is passed between instruments; however the ATH and AITs (along with various subsets) link the line together harmonically. The first piccolo is frequently doubled in rhythmic unison by second piccolo and likewise the first and second violins. The harmonies between these doubled lines also form predominantly AITs and occasionally ATHs.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: xylophone (xyl.), pizzicato violins (pizz. vlins.), and piccolo (picc.). The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for xyl. and pizz. vlins. with annotations for '35 Tel', '35 Te', and '33 Tu'. The second system includes staves for picc. and pizz. vlins. with annotations for '23 T8I', '23 T4', '23 T0', '18 T1I', 'T6I [014]', 'T6I [01248]', 'T1I [0124678]', '18 T6', and '18 T9I'. Rhythmic markings like '3' and '6' are used throughout the score.

Example 5.8a – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 4 *Klangfarbenmelodie*, mm. 167-172

The accompaniment to the *Klangfarbenmelodie* is quite stratified. The layers consists of unpitched percussion (wood blocks, temple blocks, cow bell, snare drum); upper strings (joined by the lower strings in the last few measures); reed instruments; and a gentle sprinkle of single harp notes. Like the main melodic line, these other layers follow their own linear pathways while retaining the *pizzicato/staccato* character of the “rain” texture. A significant change in Ritornello 4 is that along with the lack of TTC harmonic fields, the pitch reiterations have now also gone. This makes the overall texture far more linear. In place of the pitch reiterations we now find a web of predominantly AIT harmonies (with ATHs also appearing, similar to the *Klangfarbenmelodie* itself). This give a specific colour to the harmonic landscape despite the lack of single coordinating chordal harmonies across the whole orchestra. In addition, emphasis is placed on the vertical pitch classes (pics) 6, 3 and 9 throughout the first half of the section. The passage from mm. 167-169 is a good example (see

Example 5.8b). The violins in rhythmic unison form chains of AITs with intervals between their pitches forming mostly pics 6, 3 and 9, while the oboe and English horn do likewise in their own independent gestures (not shown in example). This manner of set and interval distribution continues throughout Ritornello 4.

Example 5.8b – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 4 ic 3, 6, 9 and AIT chains, mm. 167-169

From about half way, a chordal element is added. Reeds and strings begin now to coordinate on single attacks of AITs or ATHs (see **Example 5.8c**). The chords are short and barely distinguishable amidst the rush of activity. However, each chord is accompanied by sharp percussion attack and these percussion accents are in fact the more prominent part of the listening experience than the AIT or ATH harmonies. The chords occur on a rhythmic grid of 5 semiquavers with attacks appearing unevenly at first but towards the end the strings on their own do articulate a 5-semiquaver pulse with reeds joining in every second or third attack. As can be seen in **Example 5.8c**, the dynamics swell from *pp* to *f* and return to *pp* before crescendoing again. Along with the racing *Klangfarbenmelodie*, these attacks have the effect of propelling the music forward and supporting the linear impulse that characterizes Ritornello 4.

The last few attacks reach *ff* just before the xylophone melody makes a final ascent to a decrescendo. The melody accumulates all the pitches of the total chromatic collection, reaching the last high C8 at a dynamic of *pianissimo* as the rest of the orchestra falls silent (see **Example 5.8d**). This final line is accompanied by a last low *piano* chord held in the bassoons and contra bassoon just as the rest of the orchestra peters out. The chord is given colour and attack by doubling it with *pizzicato* basses. This subtle yet dramatic moment creates an important connection with the following Concertino 4, as we will see in Section 5.4.a below.

The image shows a musical score for Example 5.8d. The top staff is for the xylophone (labeled 'xyl.') and the bottom staff is for the basses (labeled 'pizz. basses' and 'bns + contrabn'). The xylophone part starts at measure 188 (labeled 'm.188') and features a melodic line with various ornaments and a final ascent to a high C8. The basses provide a low piano chord, which is held and accented by the pizzicato basses. The dynamic marking *pp* is present at the end of the xylophone line.

Example 5.8d – *Boston Concerto*, Ritornello 4 ending, mm. 188-189

The xylophone’s last melodic line softly floats away with an upward drift dissolving the driving linear motion of the ritornello strand. Ritornello 5 and Ritornello 6 each in their own way reintroduce the reiterated notes and chords of the “rain” texture, finally leading back to the full tutti *staccatissimo* chords of the piece’s closing Ritornello 7.

Example 5.8c – *Boston Concerto*, Ritornello 4, rhythmic grid with chords, mm. 175-189

The image displays a musical score for Ritornello 4, measures 175-189. It is organized into two systems of staves. The first system (mm. 175-189) features a rhythmic grid with chords for strings and winds. The second system (mm. 184-189) includes parts for xylophone, Bsnst+Cbn, and pizA+c+Cbns. The score includes various dynamics (pp, mf, f, ff) and articulation marks (accents, slurs). Measure numbers are indicated in boxes above the staves, and diamond-shaped markers indicate specific rhythmic patterns. The bottom of the page contains a legend for the diamond markers.

closed diamond noteheads = strings only
 open diamond noteheads = winds only

Ritornello 5

Ritornello 5 (strings only with some supporting percussion) and Ritornello 6 (largely without strings) are a mixture of chordal repetition and melodic gestures, and are also possibly the two most contrasting ritornello sections. The orchestration of Ritornello 5 with strings only gives it a distinctive sonority. The texture is a mixture of melodic fragments and static chord repetitions similar to the opening ritornello but without the additional orchestral colour.

Concertino 4 leads into Ritornello 5 with an important gesture in the piano. The piano plays a motivic figure that, as we will see below in Section 5.4.b, is not only significant in this ritornello but also has a role to play in linking different moments through the piece. It is particularly interesting that this motive consists of a reiterated note—a gesture emblematic of the notion of continual reprise. In m. 220 the piano plays a leaping quintuplet figure that settles on an insistent repetition of $A\flat_4$ to a pulse of 2 eighteenth-note quintuplets (see **Example 5.9a**). This is a measure of tempo modulation where the quarter-note quintuplet becomes the new quarter-note beat (at MM.90). The repeated $A\flat_4$ establishes the new pulse. Immediately following in m. 221 the cellos enter with their own repeated note, A_3 , to a pulse of 3 sixteenth notes. The remaining string sections follow suit, each on their own note and to their own pulse stream. Together the reiterated string pitches form a ATH collection at T2 (see analytical staff in **Example 5.9a**). These brief few measures lead to a passage of strummed chords, also ATHs. Across the passage from m. 221 to m. 225 all ATH chords played belong to a single fixed register TTC, which is finally heard in its complete form at the end of m. 224. The idea of this passage, where individual pitches accumulate in a strummed TTC is a kind of retrograde of the first measures of Ritornello 1 where first the strummed TTC gave rise to the individually reiterated pitches.

Example 5.9a — Boston Concerto, Ritornello 5, repeated-note motif, mm. 219-224

m. 219

(Wood Chimes)

(Piano)

(Vln. 1) pizz.

(Vln. 2) pizz.

(Vla) pizz.

(Cello) pizz.

(Tbn.+Hrn4)

(Hrn3)

(Tps)

T2 (35)

T6 (35)

T10 (35)

T2 (35)

TTC

In this passage, however, the pitch reiterations are single notes not dyads, and this gives the moment its own unique sonority. What's more, the same motivic idea reappears later in the ritornello. In mm. 231-233 the basses are heard projecting a repeated high D5 to a pulse of 4 triplet eighth notes duration (see **Example 5.9b**). The first three attacks are to near silence from the rest of the orchestra which makes the motif stand out clearly. A variation of this motivic idea appears a final time at the transition from Ritornello 5 to following concertino (mm. 242-243, see **Example 5.9b**). Descending rhythmic unison lines between the flutes and violas are set to a regular pulse of 2 triplet eighth notes duration. Together the two lines form a TII ATH. The top line is a [0137] (AIT 23) with the first two pitches reiterated. The lower line is a [037] also with the first two pitches reiterated. While this gesture is not a line of single pitch repetitions, the feel of a momentary regular pulse with a few pitch reiterations is enough to recall the motif from the start of the ritornello. Thus, the whole of Ritornello 5 is framed by the motive idea of pulsation and reiteration. As we will see below, this motivic idea also permeates the piece in other places.

m. 231 (pizz. basses)

m. 242 (flutes doubled by violas)

AIT [0137]

[037]

Example 5.9b — Boston Concerto, Ritornello 5 return of repeated-note motive, mm. 231-233 and mm. 239-240

Even where this motif is absent, the ritornello as a whole contains strongly projected pulse streams fragments and the texture is quite linear at moments. However, strummed chords and ATH harmonies lead Ritornello 5 back to a final static TTC played across most sections of the orchestra. These last measures contain sonorities that have laid dormant during Ritornellos 3 and 4, including fast staccato reiterated notes and flutter-tongue tremolo chords and strummed strings. The sound world of the ritornello strand appears to be moving back to a coordinated chordal texture similar to that of Ritornello 1.

Ritornello 6

Contrary to expectation, however, Ritornello 6 takes a turn away from the narrative of the piece that I've been constructing: that the ritornello strand traces an arch-like trajectory following a pattern of transformation from chordal to linear and back to chordal texture. While the "rain" character certainly dominates Ritornello 6, the chordal texture does not return here in a way that the end of Ritornello 5 would suggest. Instead, Ritornello 6 focuses on a dialogue between the woodwind section and the brass section. Significantly, Ritornello 6 follows Concertino 5 where the woodwinds have just engaged in a lyrical exchange to the gentle background of the occasional string harmonic and sparsely spaced *pizzicato* chords. Ritornello 6 responds to Concertino 5 with a heightened energy level. The woodwinds exchange in a dense counterpoint of twisting and fragmented phrases at high speed, although with no clear sense of a single melodic line.

The image displays a musical score for Ritornello 6, measures 289-291. The score is written in 4/4 time and features five staves. The top two staves are for Horns (Hrns) and Trumpets (Tpts), both in 4/4 time. The bottom two staves are for Trombones (Tbns), with the upper staff in 3/4 time and the lower staff in 4/4 time. The fifth staff at the bottom shows the bass line with three chords: [0137], [0146], and two instances of [35]. The woodwind parts (Hrns, Tpts, and Tbns) feature complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests. The brass parts (Hrns, Tpts, and Tbns) feature staccato chords and repeated notes, with some measures containing rests. The score is annotated with measure numbers (m. 289) and chord symbols ([0137], [0146], [35]).

Example 5.10 – *Boston Concerto*, Ritornello 6 brass chords, mm. 289-291

The brass have briefer response type phrases with fast attacks of chord reiterations punctuated by percussive wood, drums, piano and harp (the strings fall largely silent after the first 8 measures). Brass chords alternate between single repeated staccato ATH/AIT chords and staccato chords that form a rapid succession of ATHs giving the phrases a slight melodic profile (see **Example 5.10**). In fact, ATHs and AITs are present

in every gesture of Ritornello 6.⁴⁶³ However, the overall texture is not coordinated by clear TTCs, making this ritornello less chordal than the previous one. Ritornello 6 leans towards a more erratic and high-energy version of Ritornello 3 where the clarinets and the brass had very similar roles. The overall texture, then, is a mixture of chord and line fragments within a predominantly “rain” sound where the brass chords and sweeping woodwind melodies gestures are equally prominent. The push and pull of the different elements makes for a highly dynamic sonic landscape.

Ritornello 7

The return to a full orchestral tutti texture comes with Ritornello 7. In its clarity, Ritornello 7 recalls the “liquid clearness” of the rain referred to in Williams’ poem that “perfectly” traces the forms of nature. In fact, Ritornello 7 intensifies and compresses the chordal texture heard in Ritornello 1 by doing away with any varied gestures, melodic lines or fragments and by having the entire orchestra reiterate gentle patters and sprinkles of single notes across four TTCs. These chords gradually fade out over a sequence of ATHs and finally end with the strings playing a single *pizzicato* B3 (suggesting perhaps a reference to the piece’s title). The effect is like the petering out of raindrops at the end of a rain shower. However, even in this most repetitive section, the sound is not one of mere stasis, but rather one of subtle change and movement of pitch and harmony. Carter achieves this effect by using a sequence of chord transformations that produce a number of pitch and interval “reflections” from the first to the last chord. On a sketch page for the final ritornello (reproduced on staff (i) in **Example 5.11** with my annotations below), Carter notates four TTCs in a sequence that also show common tones between the first three chords (asterisked below in the example).⁴⁶⁴ The four chords are vertical realizations of a single All-Interval (AI) row class of the QI-type,⁴⁶⁵ built from two chromatic hexachords. The transformational relationship between the rows is given at (iii) in Example 5.11 and the chord progression across the final

⁴⁶³ Theisen makes some insightful analytical points about the pitch material in this ritornello in “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*,” 95-101.

⁴⁶⁴ In the sketch, chord IV is notated a few staves down the page and includes an additional C7 that is part of chord III rather than chord IV. The 8ve signs shown in brackets are not included in the sketch but from the score and sketches are clearly intended. In chord III, Carter’s accidental omission of a ledger line means the notated B#1 should instead be G#1 as in the score (and notated here in brackets).

⁴⁶⁵ In QI-type rows “the interval-class sequences of their two hexachords are identical, projected as complementary intervals.” Tiina Koivisto, “Syntactical Space and Registral Spacing in Elliott Carter’s *Rememberance*,” *Perspectives of New Music* 42, no. 2 (Summer, 2004): 159. On the Q-operation, see Robert and Daniel Starr Morris, “The Structure of All-Interval Series,” *Journal of Music Theory* 18, no. 2 (Fall, 1975).

ritornello is shown on the analytical staff (ii). As the example shows, firstly the interval order from low to high of chord I is reversed in chord II, while the boundary pitches F1 and B6 are maintained. Chord III then changes boundary pitches to C#1 and D7 and inverts all of chord II's intervals; however, the pcs of its adjacent chromatic hexachords remain the same as those of chord II (bottom pcset {4,5,6,7,8,9}, top pcset {t,e,0,1,2,3}).

(i)

(ii)

intervals : chord I < t 1 9 5 8 6 2 e 3 7 4 > chord III < 8 5 9 1 t 6 4 7 3 e 2 >
 (low to high) chord II < 4 7 3 e 2 6 8 5 9 1 t > chord IV < 2 e 3 7 4 6 t 1 9 5 8 >

hexachords swap positions

(iii)

row A = {5, 3, 4, 1, 6, 2}	{8, t, 9, 0, 7, e}	realized as chord I
RT4(A) = {5, 9, 4, 7, 6, 8}	{2, t, 3, 0, 1, e}	chord II
RT9(A) = {8, 4, 9, 6, 7, 5}	{e, 3, t, 1, 0, 2}	chord III
Ti1(A) = {8, t, 9, 0, 7, e}	{5, 3, 4, 1, 6, 2}	chord IV

Example 5.11 — Boston Concerto, Ritornello 7 analysis of TTC structure

Finally, chord IV reverses chord III's interval ordering while maintaining boundary pitches C#1 and D7, mirroring the relationship of chord I and II. The end result of this transformational sequence is that the pcs of chord I's two hexachords swap registral positions in chord IV while each hexachord maintains their interval ordering (shown on the right of staff (ii)). Chords II and III occupy a mere two measures but, because of

common tones and interval structure, they nonetheless facilitate a subtle transition from chord I to chord VI, creating a sense of motion that breaks up what would otherwise be static repetition.

Ritornello 7 creates a sense of ending to the piece. However, it is not a convincing closing off. There is something about the way the music fades out, the way it dissolves, rather than firmly concludes, that leaves a question mark over the sense of finality that a clear ending gesture might otherwise achieve. Others have noted this feature of Carter's music more generally.⁴⁶⁶ In Chapter 7, I will explore one way in which the lack of a sense of finality has an effect on the experience of the musical form. However, within the narrative I have been telling here, the return to a clear "rain" texture in Ritornello 7 does create the matching side of a formal frame that was opened in Ritornello 1. The transformation of the "rain" texture in between this frame, from chordal to melodic and back to chordal texture, creates a dynamic process of change. This in turn lends an arch-shaped trajectory to the otherwise cyclic ritornello form. The fact that the ritornellos sections are explicitly *not* points of stability but rather following a forward motion (albeit an interrupted one) exemplifies the important re-interpretation of ritornello form that Carter has made in the *Boston Concerto*.

5.3 The "drama" of the concertinos

The concertinos are the dialectical partner of the ritornellos in that they contain all that is excluded from the ritornellos: extended lyrical lines, small instrument groups, strongly expressive phrases, counterpoint, dialogue; as well as long sustained notes, and near motionlessness. As far as sonority is concerned, the instrumental families keep to themselves in that each concertino consists of only one family: 1) woodwind (flutes/clarinets), 2) keyboard (vibes, piano, harp), 3) low strings (violas, basses), 4) brass choir, 5) double reeds (oboes, English horn, bassoons), 6) high strings (violins, cellos).⁴⁶⁷ These groupings contribute to the homogeneous sonority of the concertinos and contrast sharply with the ritornello sections. Like the ritornellos, however, the concertinos also contain elements of their opposite. The most obvious element is the bursts of *pizzicato* and *staccato* chords (or rhythmically activated staccato figures) that accompany every concertino. However, there is also a transformation of line to chord

⁴⁶⁶ See Guy Capuzzo, "Texture and Process in Four Carter Works with Quiet Endings," *Elliott Carter Studies Online* 3 (forthcoming), <http://studies.elliottcarter.org/>.

⁴⁶⁷ Unlike many other compositions, Carter does not give the percussion family a section.

across the concertino strand that is not unlike the ritornello strand but reversed so that melodic lines transform into chords at the mid point and return to an intensified polyphony for the last sections. This feature as well as the progressive changes in expressive quality and registral space give the concertino strand its own trajectory across the piece. I will approach the analysis of this strand by way of broad description rather than through detailed score analysis in order to maintain a narrative flow to my interpretation of the musical “drama.”⁴⁶⁸ Alan Theisen has undertaken important work on the pitch analysis of these sections.⁴⁶⁹

Concertinos 1, 2 and 3

In the first half of the piece, the concertino strand begins relatively high with the slow, gentle meandering of flute and clarinet trios in Concertino 1 and moves to the equally slow sustain of the attacking pitched percussion instruments in Concertino 2. Concertinos 1 and 2 are quite homogeneous—gentle and rhythmically consistent in their slowly unfolding of gestures. They form a perfect contrast to the rhythmically active and varied “rain” texture of Ritornellos 1 and 2, making the alternation of ritornello and concertino sections in the first half of the piece clearly demarcated.

In Concertino 3, a new expressiveness is introduced with the low strings. The composite melodies that the woodwinds and the keyboards unfurled predominantly together now give way to a lush, continuous counterpoint in the violas and basses in which two lines take it in turns to recede and advance within the dialogue. The basses and violas speak very complementary languages as if advancing the same argument or telling the same story, mostly leaving space for each other to speak although there are moments of greater polyphony where both lines take off on their own course simultaneously (see for example mm. 157-159). The deep resonance of the basses and their relatively fast leaping around the lower register lend a dramatic and somewhat urgent edge to the music in Concertino 3.

⁴⁶⁸ On different ways of providing an account of ‘unity’ in a composition, see Fred Maus, “Concepts of Musical Unity,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 172 including fn.4.

⁴⁶⁹ Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*.”

Concertinos 4, 5 and 6

Concertino 4 presents a complete contrast to the preceding concertinos: a brass chorale across the entire eleven voices of the brass section. The voices are grouped into mostly two, sometimes three, rhythmic layers and move as if in slow motion. The result is a texture that sounds much more chordal than it does melodic or contrapuntal. This concertino marks the still point of the whole piece and its darkest colour. Till this point the spatial motion of the concertino strand has been descending (see above **Example 5.2**). While the horns and trumpets in Concertino 4 certainly do play up high in their tessitura (especially in the second half of the movement), the quality of the section is kept dark, with the relatively low register of the chords with an emphasis on the low end of the tuba and trombone. Central ‘still points’ are a feature of many of Carter’s compositions, from his music of the 1950s right through to his late music. In his first book, Schiff names such designs “inverted arch form” and describes them as follows:

Carter’s music often reverses the arching formal curve heard in both Wagnerian and Bartokian music. Instead of building to a climax and then receding, his music will begin at a moment of great intensity, as if it were ‘tuning in’ on musical activity that had already begun. The music will gradually slow to a central still point, and then revive, gaining in energy until it reaches or surpasses the opening moment. Such a parabolic form obviously reverses the cumulative construction found in most other music.⁴⁷⁰

In Carter’s later music, some very clear examples are *Symphonia* with its central *Adagio tenebroso*; the slow, still central section of the Clarinet Quintet; and a similar middle movement in the Clarinet Concerto. While the still points slow down the musical motion, not all still points in Carter’s music are ‘dark.’ *Esprit Rude/Esprit Doux* has a very light (and high) still point that is more like a floating daydream. And the tiny central song “Una Colomba” in the song cycle *Tempo e Tempi* has a similar quality of reverie and other-worldliness.

Concertinos 5 and 6 that follow the still point of the *Boston Concerto* revive the energy levels of the piece but each in a very different way. In Concertino 5, the double reeds (oboes with English horn and bassoons) talk to each other in much lighter and higher tones. They have a gentle exchange, often waiting for each other to speak at the start but getting more entwined as the discussion goes on. The lines themselves are much less

⁴⁷⁰ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 48.

sustained than those of their woodwinds relations in Concertino 1 and the faster rhythmic values throughout make them lighter on their feet and give this concertino an energetic lift after the slow brass section. Concertino 6, on the other hand, brings a sweeping but intense energy to the music and fully restores the linear texture to the concertino strand.

Concertino 6 is marked “Maestoso—molto espressivo” in the violins and cellos, and projects a romantic and wistful character. This impassioned trio between violins I, violins II and cellos has the longest continuous lines of any of the concertino. The registral space continues to climb upward, the cellos playing in their high register a lot of the time. The large intervals moving in long arches also contribute to the expressiveness of the movement. This concertino is 40 measures long and has a dramatic climatic rise that begins after its mid point at m. 325. After initially building up energy towards m. 325, the motion halts when the first violins initiate a series of five accented held A5s set within a field of shifting sustained pitches (**Example 5.12a**). The A5 moves from violins I (m. 325) to violins II (m. 326) to cellos (m. 327) and back again to violins II (m. 329) and violins I (m. 330).

Example 5.12a – Boston Concerto, Concertino 6 repeated-note passage, mm. 325-330

Out of this relative stasis emerges a counterpoint of three faster string lines. These lines leap dramatically toward the final climatic *fortissimo* held notes that are the last intensely expressive statement of the piece (mm. 342-344). It is only in retrospect, however, that this last passage seems to signal a kind of ending. Bayan Northcott, in his liner notes to the recording, perceptively notes this moment:

At the close of this episode, one expects a culminating full orchestral climax, only to hear the rain music sputter away to nothing. Retrospectively, one realizes the transcendental string episode was the climax.⁴⁷¹

Many of the sections in the piece end with dynamic swells or intensification of expression and this string concertino passage fits easily within that pattern. The string climax is therefore noticeable but not in a particularly exceptional way—the music at this point could just as easily continue on with its ritornello-concertino alternating pattern. To my ear, it is really the way in which the final tutti “rain” chord leaps in at the upbeat to m. 345 that suggests that the piece is approaching closure. All other motion between sections has involved some kind of transitional or linking passage. Here, however, the ritornello “rain” suddenly appears as if out of nowhere, or perhaps as if it had always been there but just out of our sonic reach.

Despite its suddenness, this moment has been gently prepared in the preceding few measures: after fifteen measures of hearing no other instruments at all but the violins and cellos, this string reverie is arrested by two *forte staccatissimo* bursts from the orchestra (brass, piano and violas) at mm. 339 and 340 (see **Example 5.12b**). Three measures later, during the last of the string trio’s sustained chord, brass with bassoons punch out repeated *forte* chords that end with a single *fortissimo* triplet eighth note chord (beat 4 of m. 344). The *fortissimo* attack is instantly followed by a *piano* attack on the next triplet of the beat and leads into the full orchestral “rain” texture (beat 1, m. 345). It is this tiny moment of juxtaposition between the end of the string trio, the loud brass reiterations and the sudden, instant presence of the soft “rain” that creates a dramatic moment signalling something that only after the fact we can hear perhaps as closure, perhaps as transformation, perhaps as renewal. Line and chord are contrasted in the most vivid way at this moment and this clarity suggests both a coming-full-circle but also, like with all circles, the possibility of beginning again. To my ear, this is one of the most arresting moments of the piece.

⁴⁷¹ Bayan Northcott, “Boston Concerto (2002),” (Liner notes for The Music of Elliott Carter Volume 7. Bridge Records 9184, 2005, compact disc, September 2005).

The image displays a musical score for Example 5.12b, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system (mm. 339-345) features parts for (Brass+Piano), (Vlns. 1), (Vlns. 2), and (Cellos). The (Brass+Piano) part has two circled measures with dynamic markings *f*. The string parts show a crescendo from *f* to *ff-f*. The second system (mm. 346-355) is for the 'Orchestra minus strings' and includes parts for (Guiro), (Brass+Bsns.), (Viola 1), (Viola 2), and (Basses). The Guiro part is marked *p* and *staccatissimo*. The Brass+Bsns. part has circled measures with *f* and *ff* markings. The Viola and Bass parts are marked *pizz.* and *p*. The score includes performance instructions such as 'Tempo primo' and 'Orchestra minus strings'.

Example 5.12b – Boston Concerto, Concertino 6 to Ritornello 7 passage, mm. 339-345

Overall, the ‘gradual brightening’ that John Link has noted (mentioned above), has at least in part been shaped by a long-range registral motion of the concertino strand, defined in large part by the range of the instrumental group of each section. In Concertino 1, the registral focus is up high in the trios of flutes and clarinets. In Concertino 2 the registral focus shifts downwards to the mid-range of the vibraphone, harp and piano but with dramatic single notes or widely spaced chords as high as C#7 (mm. 114-115) and as low as A#0 (mm. 98-99) in the piano. In Concertino 3, the

‘lower’ strings (violas and basses) drop the higher end of the registral span of the orchestra (violas reaching a climactic C#6 only once in m. 158), but at the same time the basses in particular are playing in their upper register most of the time, giving a slightly strained brightness to the registral shift downwards. In Concertino 4, the focus moves to the darkest and lowest sonorities of the trombones and tuba (which underpin many of the chords with the notes E1 and F#1). While the trumpets do swell upwards (as high as Bb5 at one point, m. 211-212), these swell are climatic points, not the trumpet’s predominant register which sits around the fourth octave and below. Following the central Concertino 4, the motion heads upward again in register and in lightness of character through the double reeds of Concertino 5 (reaching as high as G6, m. 251) and the violins and cellos of Concertino 6 (which soar as high as an E8 sounding as a harmonic).

5.4 Form and continuity

The independent discontinuous trajectories of the ritornello and concertino strands discussed above are of course not experienced in isolation as they are presented here. I argue that the long-range trajectories of each individual strand do form an important part of the musical experience, one that we might only become aware of after multiple listenings. However, the continuity from one movement to the next, from ritornello to concertino, plays as much (or probably more) of a part in the experience of the unfolding form of the *Boston Concerto*. One example of local temporal flow across sectional boundaries is the tempo modulations that Carter composes between sections to facilitate the smooth tempo shifts away from and back to consistent quarter note=90MM of the ritornellos (see Table 5.1). The moment-to-moment continuity of the music affects the immediate experience of “living time” and exemplifies the presence of a musical “flow” that can be traced across the fractured continuity of *tutti* and *sol* divisions.

I will discuss what I consider to be two important aspects of the moment-to-moment continuity. The first is the way in which Carter creates transitions or “linking” at moments surrounding the switch between ritornello to concertino. “Linking” is a compositional technique that appears in much of Carter’s music regardless of stylistic

period and has been discussed in the literature especially in relation to pitch.⁴⁷²

However, I extend it here to include timbre as well. The second aspect of moment-to-moment continuity concerns a broader impression: what Carter called the “total” continuity effect. Here I interpret the changing degree of contrast between successive ritornello-to-concertino sections as important to how the flow across the trajectory of the whole piece is experienced. I will first give some examples of timbral and pitch “linking” across sections before turning to a description of the “total” formal effect.

5.4.a “Linking” between movements

Carter employs different kinds of “linking” strategies, such as using timbre/orchestration and rhythmic character to bridge more abrupt changes between sections. The use of timbral elements as a simple sonic bridge is in one sense quite subtle since the large contrasting timbral effects between sections tend to grab attention while the small consistent elements are registered possibly less consciously, especially during the early listening experiences. For example, the timbral element of the temple block as a bridge between the first ritornello and concertino (from m. 21 to m. 37) might go by almost unnoticed. However, without it, the sonic gap between the sections would be widened. The temple blocks appear first in m. 21 of Ritornello 1 and continue intermittently. They are joined by wood blocks in the last the “rain” chord of Ritornello 1. Then temple and wood blocks come in again in Concertino 1 after the flutes begin in m. 29. They sound briefly in Concertino 1 a number of times until m. 37 before they disappear. Similarly, the marimba sneaks into Concertino 1 from m. 49, dotting the background with single soft chords that become more present with *fortes* in m. 64 and m. 67 ahead of the linking melodic line of mm. 72-74 that introduces the marimba’s prominent role in Ritornello 2 that follows (refer to **Example 5.6** above). Concertino 3 links to Ritornello 4 in a similar way: the flutes, piccolo and xylophone make their appearance towards the end of Concertino 3 with subtle sprinkles of notes (mm. 158-166) ahead of their solo line that features in Ritornello 4. Another example of timbral linking is the harp at the end of Concertino 2 moving into Ritornello 3 from mm. 116-117 (see **Example 5.13** below). Here the harp has a distinctive descending glissando

⁴⁷² I define this concept of linking in Boland, “‘Linking’ and ‘Morphing’: Harmonic Flow in Elliott Carter’s *Con Leggerzza Pensosa*.” For other analyses that draw on “linking” see Capuzzo, *Elliott Carter’s What Next?: Communication, Cooperation, and Separation*; and Brenda Ravenscroft, “An Adventure in Form: Elliott Carter’s “Like a Bulwark” (2009),” *Elliott Carter Studies Online* 2 (2017), studies.elliottcarter.org/volume02/02Ravenscroft/02Ravenscroft.html.

that ends in an oscillating figure on a ATH, three notes in each hand.⁴⁷³ The repeated plucked notes give a sonic resemblance of the *pizzicato* strings associated with the “rain” texture, and indeed two measures later *pizzicato* string begin their gradual ‘drips and drops’ initiating Ritornello 3.

Thus timbral linking aids the transitions between a number of successive movements: temple and wood blocks from Ritornello 1 to Concertino 1; marimba from Concertino 1 to Ritornello 2; plucked strings from Concertino 2 to Ritornello 3; and a timbral cluster of flutes, piccolo and xylophone from Concertino 3 to Ritornello 4. As well as simple timbral linking Carter uses another strategy, namely pitch linking, to bridge some transitions.

The harp glissando passage, as well as being a timbral link, is a good example of pitch linking. In the above passage, a chain of ATHs and TTCs connects Concertino 1 to Ritornello 2 (see **Example 5.13**). Two measures before the harps glissando, we find a number of ATHs formed between instruments that together make a fixed register TTC: T1 ATH between vibraphone and piano, T6 ATH in the harp and T6 ATH a second time between harp and piano. The last two pitches of the TTC are supplied by the piano in a widely spaced compound pitch interval 7 (F#5 and C#7 circled in m. 115). The next aggregate is formed by a combination of the harp’s T0I ATH and the vibraphone’s appregiated T7 ATH chord in m. 118. But these combined ATHs give only 10 pitches of the twelve-tone aggregate. The ‘missing’ pcs to complete a chromatic aggregate are once again F# and C#. The F# is actually heard paired with its lower interval 7 partner B, as the huge interval F#6-B1 in the piano at m.118. However, the F# and C# are also paired together, played *pizzicato* as F#4 in violin 1 and C#4 in violin 2 in the next string passage that begins Ritornello 3 (circled in m. 120). Through these two aggregate completing pcs the strings are linked to the TTC harmony of the preceding passage. Aggregate formation continues in the strings at the start of Ritornello 3. The six *pizzicato* pitches in the violins at m. 220 make a T8I ATH and violins and violas continue with the literal complement across mm. 220-221 to give another fixed pitch TTC. Thus aggregate completion with ATH partitions becomes a linking strategy at the boundary of these two sections.

⁴⁷³ A special tuning for the harp is required to play this passage, see Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*,” 78-9.

m. 114 (Vib.)

(Piano)

(Harp)

T1 (35)

T01 (35)

T01 (35)

T01 (35)

T6 (35)

TTC

(Piano)

(Vln.1) pizz.

(Vln.2) pizz.

(Vla.) pizz.

T7 (35)

T81 (35)

literal complement

aggregate completing pitches

(TTC)

TTC

Example 5.13 – Boston Concerto, Concertino 2 to Ritornello 3 harp glissando and linking passage, mm. 114-121

Not only are ATH and TTC formations used as a linking strategy in this transitional passage but interval class also plays a role. As we've seen, twice the aggregate completing pcs were C# and F#, placing an emphasis on ic 5. Furthermore, just prior to the strings taking over, the piano plays a *fortissimo* two-note chord on its own, sounding another even more widely-spaced compound pitch interval 7 between B1 and F#6 (see m. 118 in **Example 5.13**). Interval class 5 is in fact the defining ic of the whole concertino, found especially prominently in the piano's rapid gestures mm. 94-95 and mm. 98-101), and contributes to the open sound of this concertino.⁴⁷⁴ Looking more closely at the measures surrounding the linking harp glissando, we find ic 5 (as pitch intervals 5 and 7 and their compounds) dominating the sonic landscape in the vibraphone, piano and harp (see **Example 5.14**). The notation in this example is a representation of the intervals only since these intervals occur in the music either as simultaneities or as registral extremes in a rhythmically active gesture. The next ritornello continues this ic 5 emphasis, albeit for a fleeting moment, in two of its first intervals: vertically with C#4-F#4 between first and second violins; and linearly with C4-G4 in first violins (m. 120). The linking between Concertino 2 and Ritornello 3 is thus a mixture of timbral, interval and pitch techniques, where aggregate completion crosses sectional boundaries provides a subtle background harmonic flow.

Con.2
mm. 114-119

Rit.3 m.120

hrp pno vibr pno vibr pno vin I+II vin I

Example 5.14 – Boston Concerto, ic 5 linking between Concertino 2 and Ritornello 3, mm. 114-120

Timbre and pitch linking is also found at the dramatic shift from Ritornello 4's high *Klangfarbenmelodie* in the piccolo and xylophone to Concertino 4's dark brass chords. This is the point of the greatest transformation of materials in each strand: the chordal texture of the ritornellos has just become linear and the lines of the concertinos are about to become chords. The separation between the two strands at this moment is marked by almost two beats of complete silence, the only silence in the piece. Nevertheless, one small "linking" gesture bridges the gap almost unnoticeably. In m.

⁴⁷⁴ Theisen also notes the ic5s and the C# in m.120 that completes the pc aggregate that starts in m.116. "A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter's *Boston Concerto*," 77-81.

189, the low woodwinds (bassoons and contrabassoon) play a soft low three-note chord which gives a fleeting sonic foretaste of the brass choral to follow. Cellos and basses punctuate the onset of this chord with a with a brief sixteenth-note *pizzicato* doubling of the chord notes, slightly disguising the woodwind timbre (see also discussion above at **Example 5.8d**). This is a very understated moment beneath the fading, ascending xylophone line. The low double reeds are not brass instruments like in the concertino that will follow (this ritornello excludes brass all together). However, their sonority in the lower register is not dissimilar to a soft, low brass sound. The bassoon chord is a member of 3-5 [016] and links harmonically to the [016] that is played by the trombones and tuba two beats later at the start of Concertino 4. This brass [016] trichord forms a T5I ATH harmony with the horns who play the literal complement, a [048] trichord. This is a subtle moment where the ear makes a connection despite itself, half noticing the low woodwind chord because it is somewhat out of place in what has just preceded it, and noticing it again retrospectively a measure later because of its similarity to the sonic world that has just opened up.

The musical score for Example 5.15 shows the transition from Ritornello 4 to Concertino 4. It features several staves: Xylophone, Basses pizz., Bassoons, Contra bassoon, Horns, Trombones, and Tuba. The key signature changes from 4 flats to 2 flats, and the time signature changes from 4/4 to 2/2. The bassoon chord is labeled T11 [016] and the brass chord is labeled T4I [016].

Example 5.15 – Boston Concerto, Ritornello 4 bassoon chord linking to Concertino 4 brass chord, mm. 189-190

For the last example of pitch linking, I shall revisit the striking end of Concertino 6 and beginning of Ritornello 7 discussed above at **Example 5.12b**. The motion between these last two movements could be thought of more as a collision than a transition. Yet

harmonically the two movements are linked. The last string passage of Concertino 6 ends on three sustained high notes in the first violins, second violins and cellos, followed by a descending three note line in the cello—a passage of six pitches (see score extract at **Example 5.12b** above and reduction at **Example 5.16** below). The first orchestral chord of Ritornello 7 follows immediately on from this passage without a linking or transitional gesture such as those that we have seen throughout the piece. This Ritornello 7 chord is an All-Interval TTC and the six pitches of the final string gesture share the same registral placement as in this TTC. At the ‘collision’ point in m. 344, the *forte* and *fortissimo* brass and woodwind attacks similarly play ATHs that share 4 and 5 pitches with the AI TTC that follows. Thus, by the time the “rain” of Ritornello 7 quietly but suddenly showers down, its actual pitches have been circulating for a few measures ahead of it. This linking creates a smooth harmonic transition between an otherwise abrupt and dramatic shift in texture, timbre and dynamics.

The image shows a musical score extract for Example 5.16. It consists of two staves: the upper staff for violins I + II and the lower staff for cellos. The upper staff begins with a melodic line in measures 342-5, then a chord in measure 344, and another chord in measure 345. The lower staff has a descending line in measures 342-5, then a chord in measure 344, and another chord in measure 345. A dashed line labeled 'TTC' spans the chords in measures 344 and 345. Dynamics include 'ff' and 'p staccissimo'. A 'Rit. 7' marking is above the second chord.

Example 5.16 – *Boston Concerto*, Concerto 6 to Ritornello 7 TTC linking, mm. 342-345

5.4.b “Total” continuity effect

What Carter referred to as “the ‘total’ continuity effect” in his 1971 *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds* interview was specifically in relation to how simultaneously flowing strands in the music combined to make a single sonic image at any point in their individual trajectories. For the *Boston Concerto* I would like to borrow this phrase to refer to the large scale continuity that is experienced as the piece moves between two textural stands. Thus, rather than the “total” continuity effect arising from the combining of simultaneous strands, I will examine a “total” continuity effect that comes about from alternating strands. While on the one hand the continuity is all too obvious (‘this’ followed by ‘that’ and back to ‘this’ again), on the other hand the total effect of

the piece is hard to grasp precisely because of its fragmentary continuity. The obvious experience of the piece's continuity is that of an exposé of orchestral instrument families, each instrument group returning to the thematic tutti texture before the next group launches into its display, thereby weaving together two strands of continuity. This recalls the idea of "montage" that Carter borrowed from Eisenstein (discussed in Chapter 2). But, as Eisenstein advocated, the continuity of montage must be deliberately construed. Carter's sonic "montage" continuity has been carefully composed and lends a specific experience to its unfolding. To examine this aspect of the form, I will firstly revisit my narrative of the formal drama of the piece, this time threading together section by section an experience of the immediate flow of the music. Secondly, I will examine moments of connection that reach forward and backward across large stretches of the piece to show the subtle way that memory influences the experience of the total continuity effect.

Continuity and flow

The opening sound of the piece is captivating, delicate and intricate: the repetitions, the strummed strings, the *pizzicato* and *staccato* pitch reiterations. The texture is active yet clear, not muddled by overlapping activity. The sudden change to Concertino 1 with its harmonically similar but texturally and timbrally contrasting woodwinds is arresting. The woodwind music here remains meditative, slow and gentle throughout. The lines are clear and easily distinguished, not dense in their polyphony. When the first return comes with Ritornello 2, it is a textural leap back to rhythmic busy-ness, back to something familiar, yet changed. With the next shift to the plucked/struck keyboard strings of Concertino 2 begins the sense of a pattern: this is a new texture, a new timbre, but expressively it remains gentle and slow, clear and transparent. The arrival of Ritornello 3 continues the expectation of changed return, now to even greater activity, greater polyphony and less chordal material. From Ritornello 1 to the end of Ritornello 3 then, a pattern of alternation and gentle, gradual variation is set up—the premise of the piece is established.

The first rather contrasting dramatic moment comes at the end of Ritornello 3 with a single sustained *sff* viola note (A4) that cuts in at the end of the orchestral tutti chord and is held for near 4 beats accompanied by orchestral silence (mm. 139-140). It is a real interruption compared to the linking and bridging that knitted together the

transitions between sections till this point. It momentarily halts the musical flow completely, like a call to attention that hushes a mass of voices. The bass and viola duo of basses and violas that follow in Concertino 3 is the most lyrical counterpoint to this moment, intensifying the dramatic expression of the concertino strand and registrally shifting the sonic space down.

This shift down is then reversed by the following section, Ritornello 4. In fact, as the piece reaches its mid point, the spatial and expressive contrast between the ritornello and concertino strands becomes more pronounced. In the central Ritornello 4, the registral space dramatically shifts up to the flighty heights of the piccolo and xylophone melody. Brass, low woodwinds and low strings are omitted from this ritornello altogether. The thematic rain texture now moves in high melodic lines within a soft, sparse sprinkling background. As the music becomes more intense, the line moves higher till it reaches its highest and softest note at its close (in the xylophone, m. 196). This dramatic fading away is followed by a brief moment of tutti silence. The deep, glacial motion of the brass chorale of Concertino 4 that follows represents the greatest contrast between sections: the *ppp* C8 note of the xylophone is followed by a brass chord with lowest pitch E1 in the tuba. In fact, the contrasts at the centre of the piece between Ritornello 4 and Concertino 4 are like mirror opposites: fast, light, high, short lines juxtapose slow, dark, low (and mid-low), long chordal sonority. As discussed above, the motion is completely slowed in the brass concertino, creating a midway still point in the overall form. Within this concertino there are swells and expressive movement, intensifying towards the end.⁴⁷⁵ Then another dramatic transition gesture from the piano (with its repeating Ab4, see **Example 5.9a**) leads back suddenly to the soft but sprightly *pizzicato* strings of rain texture of Ritornello 5. Thus, in the middle portion of the piece the strands have been most divergent and the moment-to-moment continuity the most fractured.

The final third of the piece continues with a greater congruence between strands. Concertino 5's meandering double reeds pick up some of the energy of the preceding Ritornello 5 while in turn moving quite seamlessly into the timbrally similar Ritornello 6 where the entire woodwind section dominates the "rain" texture. It is if the strands are now attempting a *rapprochement* after their greatest moment of differentiation. But the attempt is not sustained: the expressive final string trio of Concertino 6 silences the

⁴⁷⁵ Theisen's analyses show this well, see *ibid.*, 95-101.

entire orchestra for two blocks of 15 measures at a time (one tiny five-note contrabassoon gesture in m. 316 aside). It weaves its impassioned trio of lines towards a last climatic *fortissimo* chord which is in turn suddenly silenced by the *piano* burst of quiet, showering rain from Ritornello 7 which finally peters out to a single pitch, almost inaudible, as the piece's last sound.

Continuity and memory

The narrative above attempts to map an experience of the musical flow from moment to moment. But what also becomes significant in the 'total' continuity effect is the subtle workings of memory. Throughout this dramatic journey, along the ins and outs of strands of music, are scattered sonic 'crumbs' like the trail Hansel and Gretel leave to aid them in finding their way back home. In *Boston Concerto* these sonic 'crumbs' seem to tease the memory as they neither lead back to anything concretely familiar nor are they substantial enough to function as easily graspable reference points.

Nonetheless, they are noticeable, especially on repeated listening, and so do have an effect on how the piece can be experienced. One simple example is the use of the wind chimes. This distinctive sound is used once at the very opening of the piece. It occurs only once again at the central section of the piece, in the transition from the end of the brass chorale into the following strings-only ritornello (m. 219). Like at the opening, here at the centre of the piece the wood chimes again initiate a gesture: the piano's wide leaping notes that lead to its single repeated A^b_4 (see **Example 5.9a**). The occurrence of the wood chimes at this point seems to suggest some connection with the opening measure, but nothing tangible eventuates.⁴⁷⁶ The string ritornello (Ritornello 5) that follows is of course a return to the 'rain' texture but this 'rain' is very different from the full orchestral 'rain' of the opening. Despite these similarities, the wind chimes triggering a memory of the first sounds of the piece and with this triggering the suggestion of 'starting anew' makes its way into the listening experience on some level. The memory of the opening is strengthened by the recurrence of the strummed string chords that follow immediately after the wood chimes, a sonority that has been absent from the ritornellos since Ritornello 1. Nonetheless, the absence of the full orchestra makes Ritornello 5 quite distinct from the beginning of the piece. Another reference to the opening sounds of the piece occurs at the beginning of the final Ritornello 7 (m. 344) where the guiro, which also accompanied the wood chimes in m.1, is given its

⁴⁷⁶ Theisen calls this point a 'reboot' without referring to the wood chimes, *ibid.*, 95.

second hearing.⁴⁷⁷ This long-range recalling of a timbral element from the opening of the piece at its conclusion contributes to the sense of cyclic completion, albeit in a very subtle, understated manner. This is of course in keeping with the fleeting nature of all the theme-like references that we have been discussing.

EXAMPLE 5.17a – Boston Concerto, string harmonics in Concertino 1, mm. 59-61

⁴⁷⁷ A third occurrence is soon after at mm. 349-350.

Example 5.17b – Boston Concerto, string harmonics across concertino strand

Another subtle, almost ethereal, long-range triggering of memory occurs between the two woodwind concertinos, Concertino 1 with its trios of flutes and clarinets and Concertino 5 with the double reed family. The trigger is not found in the main music but rather in the accompaniment. In Concertino 1 (see m. 60 in **Example 5.17a**), the strings play two measures of a *ppp* muted arco chord that gently accompanies the flutes and clarinets. Despite its soft dynamic, the chord stands out in the sparse texture because of its harmonic contrast to the woodwind harmonies. These have been chains of ATHs partitioned into AITs all the way through this concertino. While the chord played by the strings is also an AIT ([0146]), three of the four pitch classes are different from the flutes and clarinets in these measures and more importantly the interval spacing is very contrasting. The flutes and clarinets together are playing close positioned AITs, with the [0137] chords giving a particularly ‘triadic’ feel. Against this harmony, the widely spaced string chord with its framing pitch interval class 11 and central pitch interval class 9 gives a dissonant flavour. The chimerical quality of this string chord, appearing almost imperceptibly from nowhere to colour the sonic background, leaves an impression on the memory albeit a transitory one.

This memory is triggered again most strongly in Concertino 5 but both Concertino 2 and Concertino 3 also include a number of similar moments: Concertino 2 has three single muted, *tasto* sustained notes (m. 98 in the cellos, m. 101 and m. 111 in the violas); and Concertino 3 two muted chords (between cellos and second violins in m. 145 and m. 155). These notes and chords are far more deeply ‘disguised’ in the texture, but are not entirely inaudible. By Concertino 5 the soft string element is brought to the surface: Concertino 5 already has a strong timbral parallel with Concertino 1, but it is further strengthened by the recall of the Concertino 1 string chord which is triggered by soft harmonics and muted notes between first violins and basses (doubled by very soft

piano and harp attacks) appearing five times throughout Concertino 5. This element in the texture is subtle, nothing like a thematic reference, but it carries with it the sense that this encounter is not altogether unfamiliar: it becomes a moment of indistinct memory recall, something ephemeral and hard to place, something we might call delicate and insubstantial.⁴⁷⁸

More substantial in its presence but equally fleeting is the play on memory of a number of trumpet ‘motives.’ The trumpets and horns frequently play reiterated fast semiquaver sextuplets in the ritornellos and, like the strummed string chords, these brass figures are a general hallmark of the ‘rain’ texture. There are, however, a number of places where a sense of memory recall jumps out of the texture more strongly than other moments because of the placement these motives in the musical flow, their dynamics or other distinguishing features. In m. 90 one such moment stands out. This is the last measure of Ritornello 2. The trumpets play a brief rising staccato gesture in triplet quavers, immediately triggering a memory (see m. 90, **Example 5.18**). In search of the moment of recall, we arrive back at Ritornello 1 where the trumpet ‘bugle call’ sounded the first melodic line of the piece (see m. 14-15, **Example 5.18**). Measure 90 gives us a fragment of that melody transposed down by ic4 and now in close harmonisation with its trumpet partners.

Much further along in the piece, the first utterance by the trumpets in Ritornello 6 jolts the memory again: a quick succession of reiterated D5 and Eb5 notes (see m. 283 on lowest staff in **Example 5.18**). And again we find the reference back in Ritornello 1, this time at m. 8 where trumpet 1 has an extended staccato line of the same pitch reiterations, here at a slightly slower speed of semiquavers instead of sextuplet semiquavers. Both times the reiterations are broken by an ic 4, the ascending ic 4 in the first statement becomes two descending ic 4s in its later reiteration. At m. 8 the line is a realisation of T2 of [014] while at m. 283 the pitches are the same only with an E-natural added, expanding the set to T2 of [0124]. Finally the trichord is expanded to T2 ATH with the addition of two last pitches. These figures are not motives in the traditional sense but they do share sufficient pitch and interval similarities to trigger a

⁴⁷⁸ Jeff Nichols identifies a similar experience with the Variations for Orchestra: “I suggest that the music here enacts a process of recognition, or rather of *déjà vu* – that is, the feeling of recognizing something whose precise identity remains inaccessible to the conscious mind.” Nichols, “Mistaken Identities in Carter’s *Variations for Orchestra*”, para.10. Nichols’s observation is far-reaching in that it locates Carter’s approach to playing with musical memory, and indeed the idea of ‘recognisable musical objects’ that Whittall identifies with a “late-modern thematicism” in Carter, at the very beginning of Carter’s mature period.

memory, even at such a temporal distance from each other. Such moments produce a feeling of familiarity that is nonetheless not entirely secure.

The image displays four musical excerpts for trumpets, illustrating motifs and their transformations. Each excerpt is annotated with fingering, dynamics, and transformation labels.

- m.14 (Tpt. 1):** Shows a melodic line with a circled motif containing notes 4 and 5. A transformation label $T8$ with a circled 35 is indicated below.
- m.90 (Tpts 1, 2, 3):** Shows a similar melodic line with a circled motif containing notes 4 and 5. A transformation label $T8$ with a circled 35 is indicated below.
- m.8 (Tpt. 1):** Shows a rhythmic pattern with dynamics *p*, *mf*, and *p*. A transformation label $T2 \{0,1,4\}$ is indicated below.
- m.283 (Tpt. 1):** Shows a rhythmic pattern with dynamics *p* and *mf*. Transformation labels $T2 \{0,1,2,4\}$ and $T2$ with a circled 35 are indicated below.

Example 5.18 – Boston Concerto, motives in trumpets

Throughout Ritornello 6 the trumpets play similar figures.⁴⁷⁹ In the transition between Ritornello 6 and Concertino 6, the first trumpet's linking gesture stands out strongly (see m. 305, fifth staff in **Example 5.19**). Its repeated A4s to a regular pulse briefly trigger a memory of an earlier moment in the piece that has already been discussed, namely the piano's repeated Ab4 in m. 220 (see third staff in **Example 5.19** and also above at **Example 5.9a**). As discussed earlier, this piano gesture of reiterated single notes within a regular pulse stream fans out forward into Ritornello 5, where it reappears as a regular reiterated D5 in the basses (see fourth staff in **Example 5.19**). However, as can be seen it also reaches further to the linking passage at the end of Ritornello 6. What for me is very interesting is that when I arrive at the piano's Ab4, I find it hard to ignore the strong feeling that my memory is *already* being triggered. In other words, I have already heard something like this before. In other words, the piano motif is not new but is in fact already pointing backwards to a previous passage in the music. The timbral connection I seek is found back hidden away in Concertino 2 which features the piano, harp and vibraphone. Here a curious fleeting moment occurs when the piano repeats an accented B3 to a pulsing crotchet triplet (see **Example 5.19** first staff, mm. 107-108). This B3 repetition stands out for its rhythmic regularity in an otherwise rhythmically irregular landscape as well as for the tenuto accents and the accented chord series in the piano that it initiates and by which it is engulfed. Again, the moment is over within seconds (crotchet triplets are moving at MM108). The connection to the later in m. 220 in the piano are not experienced as solid or definite in the way the appearance of a traditional thematic element might be. Nevertheless, a sense of familiarity, a questioning of memory ("ah, where do I know that from?"), occurs at the Ab4 piano gesture and to my ears the fleetingness of the moment does not need to detract from its ability to function as a reference.

A similar prior momentary reference is heard at the start of Ritornello 3. The trumpets play a reiterated chord that recalls the later reiterations of the piano (see m. 124, second staff in **Example 5.19**). This phrase has an accelerating rhythm at the end but begins with an even pulse. The first trumpet's high G5s stand out in this chord which is harmonized by the other two trumpets and accompanied by a repeated chord to a triplet rhythm in the three horns. The chords are almost cluster-like with the G5 projected above. While the moment is noticeable, it also vanishes again before much can be made

⁴⁷⁹ See also the discussion in Theisen, "A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter's *Boston Concerto*," 110-16.

of it. In retrospect, however, both these fleeting moments, in the piano (Concertino 2) and the trumpet (Ritornello 3), add up to the sense of familiarity that comes when the piano's emphatic *Ab*4 appears later (at the start of Ritornello 5).

The image displays a musical score for Example 5.19, titled "Boston Concerto, repeated-note motif". A central circle labeled "motif" is connected by dashed lines to six different musical excerpts:

- m. 105 (Con. 2 Piano):** Shows a piano part with a repeated-note motif in the right hand, marked with dynamics *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, and *mf*. The left hand has a similar motif. A "reduction" of the bass line is shown below.
- m. 124 (Rit. 3 Brass):** Shows a brass part with a repeated-note motif, marked with dynamics *mf*, *p cresc.*, and *f*.
- m. 220 (Rit. 5 Piano):** Shows a piano part with a repeated-note motif, marked with dynamics *f* and *mf*.
- m. 231 (Rit. 5 Basses):** Shows a basses part with a repeated-note motif, marked with dynamics *f* and *mf*.
- m. 305 (Rit. 6 Trumpet):** Shows a trumpet part with a repeated-note motif, marked with dynamics *p* and *f*.
- m. 325 (Con. 6 Strings):** Shows a strings part with a repeated-note motif, marked with dynamics *f*, *f-mf*, *mf espr.*, *f sub. espr.*, and *sf sub. dim. espr.*.

Example 5.19 – Boston Concerto, repeated-note motif

Further on, the trumpet's *A*4s that link Ritornello 6 and Concertino 6 in m. 305 are no less momentary. This gesture triggers a memory but it is also gone before much thought

can be given to it. As the music continues into Concertino 6, however, we find another group of the reiterations that is quite extended this time: from m. 326-340 the strings pass around an accented, sustained A5 (discussed above **Example 5.12**), slowed down and without definite pulse, as if in a half day-dream (see sixth staff in **Example 5.19**). The repetitions still the lyrical movement of the counterpoint in this extended passage and there is time to reflect on the pitch reiterations, even if the ephemeral nature of the previous moments make remembering any definite earlier references nearly impossible. To me, it is precisely the quality of the ephemeral that connects all these linking moments.⁴⁸⁰

The examples discussed in this section are not the only moments that play with memory and that evoke a sense of indeterminate reference.⁴⁸¹ However, from these examples we get a sense of the complexity of the flow of the sonic experience. Carter's notion of "living experience of time" is not a uni-directional thing and the music itself is able to capture this multi-directionality: the experience of unfolding time in the *Boston Concerto* incorporates not only cyclic return, linear transformation, and composite unfolding of strands but also forward-and-backward consciousness of time through the triggering of moments of recall in a musical rendering of the "lived experience" of memory.

In this analysis of the form of the *Boston Concerto*, I have presented a narrative of the way discontinuous trajectories of two distinct types of material (ritornello and concertino) proceed each through a process of transformation. In addition, I have read a moment-to-moment flow into the textural discontinuity by way of the notion of timbral and pitch linking. Furthermore, I have shown that disjunct moments of musical similarity provide a different kind of temporal experience: a telescoping together of temporally separated events that changes the flow from a purely unidirectional experience to one that can metaphorically move forward and backward in time.

⁴⁸⁰ Without wanting to make too much of this possibly arbitrary collection of motivic "recall" moments, it is nevertheless interesting to observe that the pitches together from the set {G, Ab, A, B, D}, a member of the set class [0,1,2,4,7]. With the addition of the piano's D# of m. 108, the set becomes an ATH.

⁴⁸¹ Others include, for example, chords at m. 12-13 and m. 294; and also sparse texture and rhythms at m. 12, m. 20-23 and m. 86.

In my narrative, I have drawn on a number of metaphors. Some are associated with the piece's accompanying poem, such as "inside drama" and "outside rain," the psychological versus the physical, and idea of the transformed and the untouched. Others are metaphors of motion: directed linear motion in a melodic line, static motion in a repeated chord, the motion of transformation from line to chord and the reverse, as well as the forward and backward motion that memory evokes.

By way of description and interpretation I have presented an experience of the *Boston Concerto* that tells the story of a ritornello form "reformed" by its musical content. In doing so I have attempted to illustrate the workings of a number of aesthetic principles of Carter's including the notion of temporal flow, of "constant growth and change," of a dialectic between content and form, and of the familiar that nevertheless remaining surprising. I have also attempted to demonstrate the way limited pitch class sets offer Carter a plentiful sound palette, and the way repetition is used ironically by way of semblance rather than literalness.

In the analysis of the *ASKO Concerto* that follows, both differences and similarities between the two pieces will illustrate Carter's responsiveness to the particular materials of each composition from within a consistent aesthetic position.

Chapter 6

ASKO Concerto - Analysis

6.1 Overview of *ASKO Concerto*

Carter's *ASKO Concerto* (2000) for chamber ensemble was commissioned by the Dutch ASKO ensemble, a 16-member group consisting of five woodwinds, three brass, five strings, harp, piano and percussion.⁴⁸² Carter completed this piece two years prior to the *Boston Concerto* and while following the same ritornello formal scheme, the *ASKO Concerto* has a very different expressive quality.⁴⁸³ The *ASKO Concerto* divides chord and line between ritornellos and concertinos like the *Boston Concerto*. However, the ritornellos of the *ASKO Concerto* consist mostly of loud and widely-spaced sustained tutti chords while the concertinos consist of duos or trios of instruments from different families in a continuous counterpoint of melodic lines. Each concertino has a unique expressive character and every instrument from the larger ensemble appears in only one concertino. **Table 6.1** lays out the orchestration and pattern of alternation between ritornello and concertino material in the *ASKO Concerto*.

The concertinos start out alternating between duos and trios but this pattern is broken at the end with a quintet followed by a bassoon solo.⁴⁸⁴ Continuing the comparison between the orchestration of the two concertos, it is worth noting that the quintet of the *ASKO's* Concertino 5 (piccolo/xylophone/celeste/harp/violin2) resembles the *Boston's* climactic central Ritornello 4 *Klangfarbenmelodie* that moves between piccolo, xylophone and *pizzicato* violins (with harp present in the texture). Both textures are light and a little frantic and both divide a fast line between piccolo and xylophone. The *ASKO Concerto* concertinos include very short *staccato* or *pizzicato* chords by other instruments that are not part of the concertino grouping, something we also saw in the *Boston Concerto*. In the *Boston Concerto* these chords were discussed with reference to

⁴⁸² Since 2008 the ASKO and Schönberg ensembles have merged into a group of larger forces, now called the *Asko|Schönberg Ensemble*. See <http://www.askoschoenberg.nl/>

⁴⁸³ Theisen suggests that the *ASKO concerto* “could be regarded as a chamber ‘trial-run’ of the *Boston Concerto*” in Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*,” 52. While I don’t share this view, there are certainly intertextual elements in both piece—see especially my discussion below on the trumpet melody.

⁴⁸⁴ Carter later extracted the bassoon line and turned it into a free-standing piece for solo bassoon entitled *Retracing* (2002).

the rain of the William's poem. However, it is significant to note that this idea was already present in the earlier *ASKO Concerto*, highlighting the tenuous link in Carter's composition between text and music.

Section	mm.	Orchestration	Expressive marking	Tempo
Ritornello 1	1	tutti	<i>Quasi maestoso</i>	♩ = 96
Concertino 1	20	trio- oboe/horn/viola	<i>Giocososo</i>	♩ = 96
Ritornello 2	56	tutti	<i>Quasi maestoso</i>	♩ = 96
Concertino 2	73	duo- clarinet/double bass	<i>Allegretto lyrico</i>	♩ = 115+
Ritornello 3	112	tutti	<i>Quasi maestoso</i>	♩ = 96
Concertino 3	125	trio-bass clarinet/ trombone/cello	<i>Tranquillo</i>	♩ = 60
Ritornello 4	162	tutti	<i>Agitato</i>	♩ = 90
Concertino 4	169	duo-trumpet/violin1	<i>con intensità</i>	♩ = 54
Ritornello 5	213	tutti	<i>Quasi maestoso</i>	♩ = 54
Concertino 5	221	quintet-piccolo/xylophone/ celeste/harp/violin2	<i>Leggierissimo</i>	♩ = 144
Ritornello 6	262	tutti	<i>ff - f</i>	♩ = 144
Concertino 6	268	solo-bassoon	<i>con umóre</i>	♩ = 96
Ritornello 7	292- 296	tutti	<i>ff - f</i>	♩ = 96

Table 6.1 – ASKO Concerto, formal sections

The returning tutti sections are the most obvious feature of the formal design in the *ASKO Concerto*, as they are in the *Boston Concerto*. Similarly, the *ASKO Concerto* also has a sense of forward motion in addition to the cyclic organisation. Furthermore, the opposition of the horizontal and the vertical are present in the linear and chordal textures of the concertino and ritornello strands respectively, as they are in the *Boston Concerto*. However unlike the *Boston Concerto*, there is no process of transformation from chord to line or vice versa within a strand. Rather Carter achieves the effect of a large-scale trajectory in the *ASKO* by interleaving two additional formal processes, a spatial one that organizes the long, unfurling lines of the concertino strand and a temporal one that organizes the much more static chordal textures of the ritornello strand. The ritornellos, which consist of temporally static but registrally expansive chords, undergo a process of temporal shrinking, becoming shorter and shorter. The concertinos, which consist of lines in motion within relatively confined registral space, undergo a process of registral shift, moving upwards to an extreme height before dropping back to a low register. These processes give this particular instance of

ritornello form its own unique temporal flow. It is helpful to see a graphic representation of the two strands unfolding over time, which can be found below at **Example 6.7** in section 6.4 *Two formal processes*.

In the analysis that follows, I will first examine the nature of the returning material in the ritornello strand with particular emphasis on Carter's use of repetition: how a distinct identity is forged for the ritornello material that relies on a reprise of material in the sense of "going back over" or "re-covering" rather than literally "repeating." I will then turn to a close examination of the opening ritornello to show how important pitch and rhythmic features of the piece's form are established at the beginning of the piece. Finally I will analyse more closely the way in which the two formal processes in the concertino and ritornello strands unfold and come together towards the end of the piece, drawing the differentiated strands into each other while nevertheless maintaining the chord-line and spatial-temporal oppositions.

6.2 'Thematic' material in the ritornello sections

Throughout the *ASKO*'s ritornello sections, the tutti ensemble plays predominantly *Quasi maestoso*, forming a chordal texture of loud, sustained tutti gestures that might be mistaken for literal repetitions on first listening because of their similarity.⁴⁸⁵ None of the chords are in fact repetitions with one exception that we will encounter below. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the tutti chords are of the same type: "Link" chords, which are the subset of the All-Interval (AI) twelve-tone series which has the All-Trichord Hexachord (ATH) as adjacent notes.⁴⁸⁶ While Carter does not give special attention to the ATH property of these "Link" chords, he does consistently highlight a five-note subset of the ATH, pentad 31 (5-19 [01367]).⁴⁸⁷ In a number of his pre-compositional sketch pages, Carter singles out pentad 31 and pentad 36 (5-28 [02368]) together with their aggregate forming partners, septads 31 (7-19 [0123679]) and 36 (7-28 [0135679]), as principle harmonies for the *ASKO* Concerto.⁴⁸⁸ Pentad 31 is a subset

⁴⁸⁵ Even in the last two ritornellos, where the indication is not explicitly given in the score, the *maestoso* character is maintained.

⁴⁸⁶ Carter, *Harmony Book*, 358-61.

⁴⁸⁷ As in the previous chapter, after this initial reference I will refer to these set classes (as well as most other set classes) using Carter's numbering. Transposition levels refer to transpositions of the prime form of the set class. For a full correspondence of Carter's numbering with Forte's, see *ibid.*, 23-26.

⁴⁸⁸ *ASKO* Concerto folder, Elliott Carter Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation. It should be noted that the pitches of these sets that are extracted from the AI chords are only very occasionally contiguous. In other words, they are not necessarily subsets of the adjacent-note ATHs found in these Link chords.

of the ATH and pentad 36 is a subset of the ATH complementary hexachord 36 (6-z43 [012568]). Both pentads 31 and 36 as well as septads 31 and 36 contain both All-Interval Tetrachords (AIT 18 and 23) and are notably the only ones in their respective classes to do so.

In a succinct sketch, transcribed in **Example 6.1**, Carter shows the shared AIT pitch class content for the two pentads and the two septads by adding single pitches and trichords respectively to the initial AIT collections (Carter labels the sets above the staff; the labels below are my addition). Thus, Carter focuses on a limited sonic field of specific five-note and seven-note set class collections, while his favoured ATH and AITs remain the foundational pitch language for the piece.

The musical sketch shows two staves of music. Above the staff, labels indicate the sets used: 31, 36, (31)⁷, (36)⁷, 31, 36, 31, 36. Below the staff, labels indicate the AIT collections: AIT 18 [0146], (31)⁷, (36)⁷, (31)⁷, (36)⁷, AIT 23 [0137], (31)⁷, (36)⁷, (31)⁷, (36)⁷, (31)⁷, (36)⁷.

Example 6.1 – ASKO Concerto, Carter’s sketch of pitch materials

These pitch-class collections are made explicit in the orchestration of the first tutti chords of each ritornello (see **Example 6.2**). After each full tutti chord attack, a smaller group of instruments sustains one of these five- or seven-note subsets of the AI Twelve Tone Chord (TTC). Pitches are kept in fixed register thus maintaining a static harmonic field with changing instrumental colour. This is particularly clear at the opening of the piece where the same AI chord is reiterated three times. Furthermore, the opening gesture of each ritornello is orchestrated in the same way: the woodwind and string families are not blended but always used as alternating sonorities, creating a coloristic distinction between the complementary harmonies.

Example 6.2 – ASKO Concerto, opening TTCs across the ritornello strand

Sonority is used thematically: there is no traditional thematic material but the common harmonic source and its rhythmic and timbral realisations function in a thematic way. The one exception to the non-repetition principle is the first chord of Ritornello 2 which is in fact identical in its vertical arrangement of pitches to the piece’s opening chord although the orchestration differs. With this repetition Carter establishes the idea of “return” literally in the first two ritornellos, setting up a pattern from which he immediately diverges.

The succession of AI TTCs in each ritornello is unique (see **Example 6.3**). However, the sonic congruence between them is strong and varied repetition across stretches of the piece can be observed: the chords across Ritornellos 3 and 4 (labelled W, X, Y, Y’, Z) can be read as returning transposed and reordered across Ritornello 5 and 6 (as

T10(W), X, T4I(Z), T8(Y)).⁴⁸⁹ Thus, the chord vocabulary is more limited than it might seem, strengthening the similarity of the timbral manifestation of the chords with harmonic similarity.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano, each system containing three measures labeled R.1 through R.7. The notation is in a key signature of one flat (B-flat major/C minor).
 System 1 (R.1-R.4):
 - R.1: Chord P. A slur is under R.1 and R.2.
 - R.2: Chord P.
 - R.3: Chords W and X. A note in R.3 is labeled '(not AI)'.
 - R.4: Chords Y, Y', and Z. A note in R.4 is labeled '(not AI)'. A note in R.4 is labeled '(top hexachord intervals reversed)'.
 System 2 (R.5-R.7):
 - R.5: Chords Tt(W) and X.
 - R.6: Chords T4I(Z) and T8(Y).
 - R.7: Chord (not AI).
 Dashed lines connect notes between R.4 and R.7, indicating intervallic relationships.

Example 6.3 – ASKO Concerto, TTCs across all the ritornellos

The idea of reprise that is not literal but rather quasi-thematic is manifest in another feature as well: a melodic line in the trumpet found in Ritornello 1, 2 and 3. In these first three ritornellos, the chords shown in **Example 6.3** are connected by a counterpoint of melodic lines that use pitch material external to the chords.⁴⁹⁰ Each of these lines, doubled by various instruments, moves at its own speed articulated by regularly spaced note attacks and together they create a polyrhythmic counterpoint. The trumpet line (mostly doubled by the oboe) makes a particularly clear varied return. Its line stands out each time because of the dynamics and timbre which project it out above the tutti texture. Furthermore emphasis is created by the line's more active rhythm and the way it leads each time into the closing chords of the section. **Example 6.4a** shows the trumpet line in Ritornellos 1, 2 and 3.

⁴⁸⁹ This means that the interval succession from high to low of a chord is maintained (or inverted) but the chord itself transposed.

⁴⁹⁰ From Ritornello 4 onward the chords represent the entire pitch material of the section.

Example 6.4a – ASKO Concerto, trumpet *Scheinthemen* in Ritornellos 1-3

The phrases have a strong rhythmic congruence: attacks every 4 quintuplet eighth-notes at quarter note = 96, with faster single quintuplet eighths at the beginning or end of the phrase. They also share contour similarities (or inversions) and pitch boundaries: D4 is the lowest pitch in phrases one and two; A#5 the highest pitch of phrase two and three. Furthermore, the phrases string together a number of literal pitch motives. The second phrase begins with a compressed version of phrase one, bringing motives A and B from the start and end of the first phrase together at the beginning of phrase two, as A and B retrograded. This second phrase is then extended, ending with motives C and D, which are picked up again at the beginning of phrase three, starting with motif D followed by motif C. The motives connect the phrases, their particular arrangement creating a kind of long-distance continuity from one phrase to the next. It is interesting to consider these melodic lines in relation to Arnold Whittall’s claim for a “late-modern thematicism” in Carter’s music. Whittall proposes the idea of *Scheinthemen* as a way of thinking about “musical material shaped into lines that suggest some kind of thematic identity” but which nonetheless eludes structural features of traditional thematicism.⁴⁹¹ In these trumpet lines the thematic “appearance” is strong. There is a kind of allusion of returning to something previously heard, but the reiterations lack the sort of relationships that facilitate the recognition of more obvious themes or motives (for

⁴⁹¹ Whittall, “The search for order: Carter’s *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism,” 66.

example, transformation by canonical operators, or a Schoenbergian developing variation). This slightly illusive approach to theme is congruent with the thematic treatment of sonority in the chords at the opening of each ritornello. While avoiding literal repetition, the quasi-thematic trumpet lines as well as the opening ritornello chords make an aural link across sectional boundaries in a theme-like manner but it is a reprise—a going over the same material—rather than a repetition. These *Scheinthemen* also recall the examples of memory triggering that were identified in the *Boston Concerto*—the presence of something not immediately graspable but nonetheless something that niggles at the listener’s memory.

Boston Concerto

ASKO Concerto

Example 6.4b – *Scheinthemen*: trumpet lines in *Boston Concerto* m. 14 and *ASKO Concerto* m. 211

Surprisingly, the *Scheinthemen* of the trumpet in the *ASKO Concerto* also trigger a memory from the *Boston Concerto*. Listening backwards and forwards between the *ASKO* and *Boston* concertos, a moment of recall is triggered, an intertextual reference: the idea of a bugle call, a call to attention. As we saw in the previous chapter, the *Boston Concerto* makes use of the trumpet to project the first real melodic fragment of the piece in Ritornello 1 (mm. 14-15). **Example 6.4b** shows this trumpet solo. Below is shown the trumpet (doubled by violin 1 in the score) at the end of the *ASKO*’s Concertino 4 (mm. 211-212). The *ASKO*’s trumpet line ends with a near-transposition

of the *Boston*'s trumpet line. While not being related by true transposition, the three reiterated accented pitches (A5 and A#5 respectively) and the ascent that leads to them (both [014]s with the same interval contour) connect the two melodies in the manner of thematic likeness. As I discussed in Chapter 3.3.a: *Repetition*, this intertextual reference illustrates the notion of “shuffling of the deck of cards” (Noubel) or “reduce, reuse, recycle” (Link), where Carter’s material can find a re-contextualized place in more than one compositional setting.

As we have seen, the ritornello strand creates its clear sonic identity by way of the theme-like treatment of both chords and lines. Before examining the formal trajectory of the piece, I will turn to a detailed analysis of the opening ritornello. It is here that we find many elements that support Carter’s famous claim that “[w]hether the composer is conscious of it or not, a field of operations with its principles of motion and of interaction is stated or suggested at the beginning of a work.”⁴⁹² These first materials suggest and set up features, “patterns of action” and other types of processes that unfold over the rest of the piece. The opening ritornello introduces pitch material that becomes prominent throughout the other ritornellos and vertical and horizontal pitch relations that recur throughout, as well as the idea of accelerating pulse streams so important for the formal trajectory of the ritornello strand and the piece’s ending.

6.3 Ritornello 1: “field of operations”

The opposition of chord and line defines this opening ritornello: a single held chord, repeated three times, is followed by a polyrhythmic unfolding of melodic lines that lead to a second held chord. What follows is a detailed look at the materials that make up the melodic lines and their relationship to the framing chords.

After the static reiterations of the piece’s opening AI chord (refer back to **Example 6.2**), the texture of Ritornello 1 is rhythmically activated by the successive entry of five melodic lines and one series of low chords, each moving at its own regular pulse rate (indicated to the left of each staff in **Example 6.5**). As the entries of the lines accumulate, the pulse rate of each new line increases compared to the previous one,

⁴⁹² Carter, “Shop Talk by an American Composer (1960),” 218. Recall the discussion in Chapter 1 about Adorno’s view that the unfolding of a composition is the working out of a problem.

beginning with 5 quavers between attacks, then 4 quavers, 5 triplet quavers, 4 quintuplet quavers, and finally 2 triplet quavers. This gives the entire passage the effect of accelerating towards the next static chord.⁴⁹³ This acceleration process sets up in miniature the formal process of the entire ritornello strand. The first ritornello can be heard as a more polyphonic and condensed version of the acceleration that leads into the final ritornello which is to be discussed below (at **Example 6.10**). This semblance between opening and closing ritornello creates something of a symmetrical frame to the piece.

Harmonically, the counterpoint of lines in this passage slots together a limited set class vocabulary into a mosaic of tightly interlaced motifs. The quasi-thematic role of Pentad 31 (so prominent in the AI chords of every ritornello) is first established here in these opening melodic lines. As can be seen in the first measure of **Example 6.5**, the passage begins with a pentad 31 chord sustained in the strings, mimicking the opening sustained chords. As the polyrhythmic lines enter one by one, a new pentad 31 is introduced each time (indicated on the example with dashed lines, and given on the analytical staff below), ordered to unfold one of the AITs and in some cases an ATH (both indicated with solid lines). In line one and two, the pentad 31s are embedded within chords. In the third and fourth lines, the clarinet/violins followed by the trumpet/oboe each open with a clear melodic statement of pentad 31. The clarinet paces out its regular 5 triplet eighths, while the trumpet enters with a faster quintuplet flurry. Their two pentads share four of their five pitches (indicated by open note heads on the analytical staff) and the sets are arranged to begin on the same pitch (E4). Additionally, they share inverted interval contours (<- ++ -> <+ - - +>) and have the same ascending intervals (<-3, +8, +6, -7> and <+6, -1, -2, +8> respectively). The thematic ‘allusion’ between the beginning of these two melodies is strong, the trumpet/oboe presenting a kind of compressed version of the clarinet/violins. The quasi-thematic role of pentad 31 is further emphasized when the following bass clarinet/trombone line enters. Although this line does not literally state a pentad 31, it does trace a march-like ascent through all of the trumpet/oboe’s first six pitches two octaves below (filling in F and C on its way), and thus emphasizes the sonority common to the two previous entries. While these lines

⁴⁹³ It is interesting to compare this technique with the ‘polyrhythmic canon’ technique in Carter’s *Holiday Overture* that Bernard discusses in Bernard, “The true significance of Elliott Carter’s early music,” 12-14.

do not develop or repeat a pentad 31 theme as such, they each present a different shaping of the same sonority, creating reprise without literal repetition.

As already noted, the first clear melodic statement of pentad 31 appears in the clarinet/violins line (mm. 11-13). This melody is realised with the pc set {1, 3, 4, 9, t}. This pc set is not new to the passage. As shown in staff (i) of **Example 6.6**, we hear this pc set sustained by brass, piano and harp as a subset of the second opening chord (mm. 5-6); the set reappears as dyads in the oboe/viola line (mm. 9-10); and as already mentioned, the trumpet/oboe's pentad 31 (m. 13) shares with it four of its five pitches. The multiple occurrences of {1, 3, 4, 9, t} are different enough in their realization to be not heard as a theme but they create a kind of thematic allusion (similar to the trumpet melodies discussed above) as well as making an explicit connection between the sound of chord and line.

(i) Rit.1

opening AI chord

ob/bsn/vla cl/vlins tpt/ob

{4, t, 9, 1, 3} {1, 3, 9, 4, t} {4, 1, 9, 3, t} {4, t, 9, 7, 3}

31

(ii)

cl/vlins tpt/ob (bsn)

3 8 6 5 7 1 2 4 t 9 8 6 1 2 4 2 e 9 7 t 3

opening AI chord closing AI chord

31 32 35 36

Example 6.6 – ASKO Concerto, Ritornello 1 motivic sets and TTCs

With vertical as well as linear emphasis given to pentad 31, it is worth considering the set relationships between the melodic lines and the AI chords which frame them. Staff (ii) in **Example 6.6** shows that the clarinet/violins and the trumpet/oboe lines also unfold linear aggregates without pitch repetition. The clarinet/violins unfold hexachord 35 followed by hexachord 36. The trumpet/oboe actually play an eleven-note line, with

pentad 31 followed by hexachord 32. However, the ‘missing’ pc that creates hexachord 31 and completes the aggregate, a C4, is heard in the bassoon, sustained during the trumpet/oboe’s quintuplet flurry. Both these hexachordal pairs are found as vertical hexachords in the framing AI chords of the ritornello (hexachords 31/32 in the opening chord and hexachords 35/36 in the closing chord). The similarity between the vertical and horizontal is also extended to intervals: the linear aggregates are arranged into a near all-interval ordering and, like the AI chords, do not include compound intervals.⁴⁹⁴ Even though the lines and chords are not related by any obvious systematic transformational process, they are connected by shared features—common hexachordal set types, subset emphasis and interval diversity. The AI chords present a temporally static yet *spatial* expansive arrangement of intervals and hexachords, while the linear aggregates present an expansive *temporal* treatment of the same material within a comparatively confined registral space. This opening passage, then, presents on a small scale the opposition of materials that on the large scale create the identity of the ritornello and concertino strands respectively.

In summary, the chord types, their particular orchestration and their rhythmic realisation give the ritornello strand its unique sonic identity, enhanced by the thematic semblance of the trumpet’s melodies in the polyrhythmic sections of the first three ritornellos. The tutti ensemble playing, while not repetitious, is clearly fixed within the bounds of this material and is relatively static. The concertino strand with which the ritornellos alternate is, by contrast, varied and expressive. In the section that follows I will examine the way these two strands unfold independently as well as how they work together, giving a unique dramatic shape to the ritornello framework of the piece.

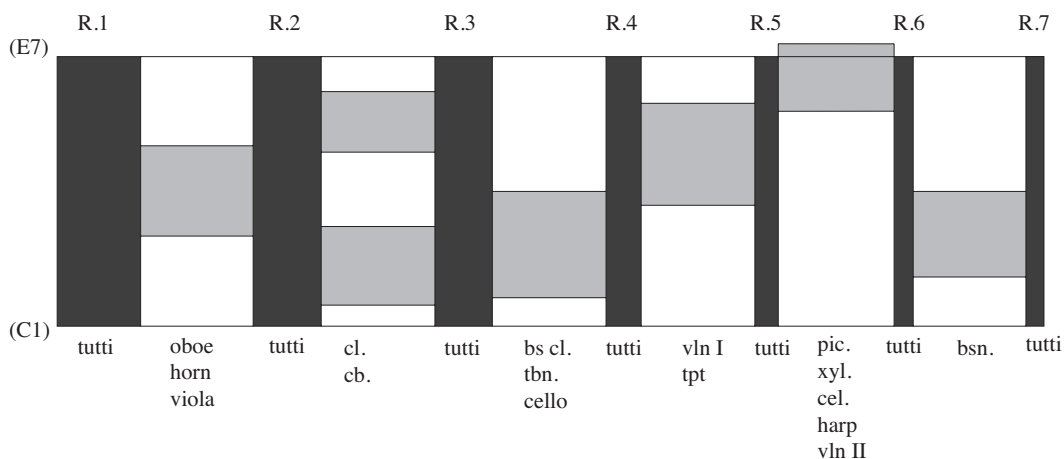
6.4 Two formal processes - motion through space and time

While the ritornellos are characterized by their thematic use of harmonies, tone colour and *Scheinthemen*, the concertinos are defined by the constantly varied motion and interaction of long melodic lines which creates the impression of being led through the twists and turns of a series of different musical conversations. The expressive character of each concertino is built around the timbre and register of the different instrumental

⁴⁹⁴ Despite each line repeating one of their intervals, the sound of the two lines avoids emphasizing any particular interval, just like the AI chords do. On maximal diversity and modifying constraints in Carter’s pitch organization see, for example, Guy Capuzzo, “The Complementary Union Property in the Music of Elliott Carter,” *Journal of Music Theory* 48, no. 1 (2004).

combinations and this plays a particularly significant role in the concertino strand's formal process.

With his well-known penchant for exhausting combinatorial possibilities, Carter divides the sixteen-player ASKO ensemble into six separate concertinos in such a way that the registral spaces of high, mid and low, as well as all their pairings (high/low, high/mid, and low/mid) are covered by one of the concertino sections (see **Example 6.7**). These three registral spaces are first introduced in Concertinos 1 and 2. The first Concertino opens with a mid-range trio of oboe, horn and viola. In the second concertino, this space becomes enclosed by the high/low registral extremes of the duo for clarinet and contrabass. The next three concertinos follow an ascending trajectory, moving from the low register trio of bass clarinet, trombone and cellos, though the mid/high range of the trumpet and first violin duo, to the sparkling heights of the quintet concertino for piccolo, xylophone, celeste, harp and second violin. This quiet, although rhythmically active and intense quintet gives way to the solo bassoon “cadenza” which brings the drama back down to earth, both in terms of its mid/low register as well as its humorous character (marked *con umóre* in the score).



Example 6.7 – ASKO Concerto, temporal and spatial structures of the form

In effect, the spatial trajectory of the concertino strand is directed towards this dramatic moment of the bassoon's solo entry: the concertino sections have gradually climbed the vertical space—the piccolo reaching its highest note (A#7) towards the end of its last melodic line (m. 260), and the xylophone stretching up to B7 in its solo melody which ends the section (m. 261)—leaving the registral space of the next concertino with nowhere to move but down. And Carter makes the most of the drama of this moment by

contrasting the largest concertino ensemble (quintet) playing in the highest register with the smallest (solo) playing in a considerably lower range on a bass instrument. The motion through registral space from one concertino to the next is, of course, not continuous since the small ensemble groupings are periodically drawn back into the full ensemble for the ritornello tutti. Nevertheless, the gradual “lightening” over the course of the piece due to this registral ascent is clearly noticeable and something we also encountered in the *Boston Concerto*.

While the concertino strand moves through registral space, the ritornello strand is undergoing a different trajectory. The ritornellos’ *fortissimo* tutti chords reach from the high down to the low extremes of the ensemble’s pitch space, neutralizing the spatial definition created by each concertino. The registral differentiation between these chords is very slight since the fixed five and a half octave span of each All-Interval (AI) chord needs the extreme registers of the high and low instruments.⁴⁹⁵ This is illustrated in **Example 6.8** which shows the outer voices of the ritornello chords (compressed by an octave either side for ease of reading).⁴⁹⁶

Example 6.8 – ASKO Concerto, registral boundaries of the ritornello strand

The wide span of the AI chords means there is little room for shifts in vertical placement of the chords. Instead, the *temporal* dimension is harnessed to structure the continuity of the ritornello strand. The structuring principle here is fairly straightforward and quite easily perceived: over the course of the piece, the duration of each ritornello becomes shorter. Whereas the concertinos remain more or less constant

⁴⁹⁵ See “Registral Constraints in All-Interval Rows in Elliott Carter’s *Changes*,” *Intégral* 21 (2007): 80.

⁴⁹⁶ It is interesting to note the symmetrical placement of the outer-voice dyad C7-G#1. This dyad occurs as outer voices in the first and last chord of the piece, and also as the only repeated outer-voice dyad in the central ritornello, suggesting a deliberate shaping of chordal registers supporting the form.

averaging around one and a half minutes, the ritornellos start out at around 43 seconds and gradually reduce in duration to approximately seven seconds for Ritornello 6, with the final ritornello so short that it is more of a tutti cadence than a section as such. The resulting formal shape of the ritornello strand is akin to the temporal equivalent of a funnel or wedge, longest at one end and shortest at the other (see **Example 6.7**). The ritornellos in fact begin to lose their ‘return’ function as their durations diminish, becoming instead more integrated into the concertino strand: the chords that fly by from Ritornello 4 onwards are perceived more as punctuations or transitions between concertinos than fully fledged sections.

It is in their changed role as ‘transitions’ between concertinos that the slight difference in registral span of the ritornello chords take on greater significance. The registral spacing of Ritornello 5’s first chord dips downwards and then the following chords climb upwards again and reach a high point in the penultimate Ritornello 6 (see **Example 6.8**). The first chord of Ritornello 6 stretches up to the highest pitch of all the ritornello sections (E7), descending a semitone in the second chord (Eb7), and finally dropping an interval 7 (the largest interval between outer voices) to G#6 in the last chord. The low note of this last chord (D1) is also the lowest pitch yet of an AI chord (with the descent continuing in Ritornello 7). This ritornello comes at that significant point in the musical drama in between the high quintet of Concertino 5 and the low solo bassoon cadenza of Concertino 6 mentioned above. It is so short that it functions as a kind of pivot between concertinos and mimics the registral shift downwards of the concertino strand, moving from highest chord to lowest chord of the ritornello strand so far. The descending range of the AI chords in Ritornello 6 thus supports the shift that occurs in the concertino strand. This pivot moment initiates a *rapprochement* between the formal processes of the two strands.

From this point onwards, the two formal processes—the concertino strand’s registral motion and ritornello strand’s temporal shrinking—become intertwined. As the bassoon cadenza of Concertino 6 begins, twelve-tone chords continue regularly to punctuate the bassoon melody with brief staccato bursts, as if the chords had been ejected from the previous ritornello that was too short to contain them and had now spilt over into the following concertino. For the first half of the bassoon solo, these chords are evenly spaced every 16 triplet-eighth notes (mm. 268-275). **Example 6.9** shows the chord progression from Ritornello 6 into the first half of the bassoon concertino.

Ritornello 6
mm. 262-267

Bassoon Solo
mm. 268-275

16 x ♩^3

Bassoon tremolos

AI TTC

literal complement

AI TTC

AI TTC

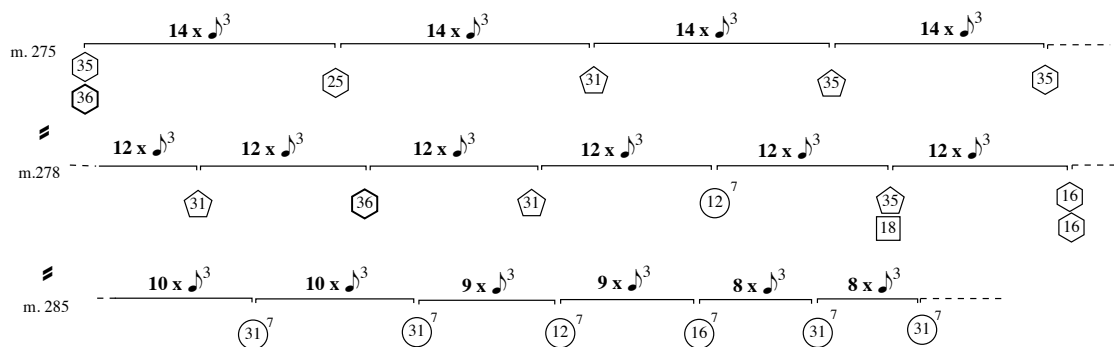
AI TTC

EXAMPLE 6.9 - ASKO Concerto, reduction of chords and their pulse stream in Concertino 6, first half

The TTC chords coincide with the tremolos that the bassoon plays in its melody and the chords require the bassoon's pitches to be full twelve-tone aggregates, in this way creating a connection between the vertical and the linear components of the texture. The featuring of tremolos in the solo bassoon line is in itself interesting since tremolos have up until now been a feature solely of the ritornello chords. Thus, while the chord-line opposition between bassoon and ensemble remains clearly audible, it is nonetheless mediated by the sharing of the pitch material between melody and chord and by the melodic reference to the chordal tremolo sonority.

Halfway through the bassoon solo, the chords thin out to hexachords and pentads (from m. 276), thickening again a few measures before Ritornello 7 (m. 290). As can be seen in **Example 6.10**, the familiar sets predominate in the staccato chords all the way to the end of the piece, including the hexachords 35 and 36, pentad 31, septad 31, and a few other hexachords and septads which are also supersets of the main set repertoire. The speed of the chords also changes. In the first half of the bassoon solo the staccato chords

were evenly spaced. However, from the half-way point (m. 276) into the final Ritornello 7 and on to the end of the piece, the pulse stream of the chords gradually accelerates.



EXAMPLE 6.10 - ASKO Concerto, reduction of the chords and their pulse stream in Concertino 6, second half

At first there is only a slight speeding up with four attacks spaced at 14 triplet eighths apart. These are followed by five attacks at 12 triplet eighths, four attacks at 7 triplet eighths, two attacks at 9 sixteenth notes, two at 8 sixteenths, two at 7 sixteenths, two at 6 sixteenths and one attack at 4 sixteenths.⁴⁹⁷ The effect is one of forward propulsion, imbuing the vertical dimension that had been delineated by the previously *static* AI ritornello chords with a horizontal impulse.⁴⁹⁸ The accelerating chords can be heard as the end result of the gradual process of temporal shrinking in the ritornello strand. This shrinking has led to a transformation in the function of the tutti chords: the sustained chordal material used to define an entire strand in the piece becomes so truncated it turns into a rhythmic pulse of which pulse acceleration is a further extension. The chords are not so much accompanying the solo bassoon line as they are layered over (or under) it. It is as if the ritornello and concertino strands are still following their own continuities only now simultaneously instead of in alternation.

After establishing an alternating ritornello-concertino pattern, then overlaying the material of the two strands in the bassoon concertino, Carter's final dramatic gesture of the piece has chord and line each take on characteristics of the other. This happens as the solo bassoon line flows seamlessly into the final Ritornello 7. This section is so

⁴⁹⁷ The last part of this series is indicated at the top of the staff below in **Example 6.11**.

⁴⁹⁸ Recall the accelerating polyrhythmic lines at the very beginning of the piece in Ritornello 1. There does not appear to be any specific relationship between speeds at which the lines move at the beginning of the piece and the acceleration rate of these later chords.

short that it functions less as a section and more as a cadential passage both to the bassoon solo and to the entire piece (see **Example 6.11**).

One particular set type, pentad 31 (that was so prominent in the opening ritornello) is central to the transformational process that chord and line undergo. In m. 292, the bassoon draws its pitches A3, B3, D4, Eb4 and G#4—comprising the pentad 31 as pc set {9, e, 2, 3, 8}—from the surrounding TTCs in the ensemble, making a final melodic statement before merging with the tremolos of woodwind, brass and percussion in m. 294. The bassoon line and TTCs are reproduced on the analytical staff in the **Example 6.11**. The strings do not participate in the final chord's tremolos but instead hold a widely spread sustained chord till the end of the piece. Like the bassoon line, this string chord forms a pentad 31. However, it stakes out its own territory as pc set {6, t, 1, 7, 0} having no overlapping pcs with the bassoon's set. These distinct sonic identities of bassoon line and string chord are, at the same time, presented as fully merged in the single ten-note chord of m. 293, where the harp plays the bassoon's pc set and the piano, woodwind and brass play the strings' pc set. Thus throughout this last passage, the same pitch material is shaped into both line and chord in a gesture of “merging” of materials. However, the merging ends with a twist. While the bassoon line disappears in the last three measures engulfed by the dominant texture of a sustained TTC, the piece does not conclude with the static chord alone: projected out of the widely spaced string chord are the last accelerating staccato attacks (mm. 296-297) from the rest of the ensemble. These attacks continue the accelerating pulse stream that began at the start of the bassoon concertino and follow the piece's linear impulse through to its conclusion. The piece thus concludes with a transformation of materials. Static chords are set into linear motion, while the last mobile line merges with the shimmering held chord. The spatial chords and the temporal lines transform in effect into their opposites.

The formal processes encountered in the design of *ASKO Concerto* take oppositions of musical material—pentad/septad, time/space, line/chord—and interweave them such that the cyclical nature of the ritornello form gains a number of linear impulses that distort the ritornello principle in interesting ways. The unfolding processes of shrinking time and climbing space in a sense reach their limit at Ritornello 6, where a transformational process is set in motion leading the piece to its end. It is instructive to recall from Chapter 3 Parks' idea of "kinetic form" in relation to Debussy's music once again. According to Parks, "kinetic form" manifests itself through "tendencies," for example:

a series of entrances separated by ever-shorter durations; [a series] of ever-expanding register extremes across a fluctuant register-field; or of ever contracting formal units ... ; a coordinated series of any type, even embracing several parameters at once. Kinetic formal units are defined by the boundaries of tendencies of increase or decrease in any musical parameter and may be perceived as a sense of motion towards or receding from these boundaries. A kinetic tendency may interact with other organizing features to capture the listener's attention and induce a sense of activity which has, as its object, a goal or goals⁴⁹⁹

The motion across the *ASKO Concerto* corresponds very nicely with this definition. The ritornellos can be understood as being driven by a kinetic tendency of "ever contracting formal units," while the concertinos move towards "ever-expanding registral extremes." At the moment where these extremes are reached for the piece, a transformation of material takes place that is dramatic in its breaking of the pattern as well as in its reshaping of essentially the same material as before but now with different relationships to each other.

In fact, we can say finally that form in the both the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos arises from Carter's reshaping of the traditional ritornello principle to enable the "kinetic tendencies" of the musical content of each piece to unfold secondary formal processes. In the *ASKO Concerto* the process involves the diminishing of time occupied by the ritornello chords which threaten to disappear completely, combined with the ascension of the concertino lines through space towards inaudibility. In the *Boston Concerto* the

⁴⁹⁹ Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy*, 233.

process involves the transformation of chordal and linear textures in each strand to a maximal point of extremes where the melodic concertinos become chordal and the chordal ritornellos become melodic before returning again transformed yet recognisable. The tensions implicit in these processes create a forward trajectory to each piece that projects across the repetitive ritornello design.

I have aimed to demonstrate in these analyses that repetition, sonority and the reuse of particular pitch materials shape the *Boston* and *AKSO* concertos in important ways. They are the materials which challenge and interact with the form's framework. The reworking of the historical ritornello form finds place in the processes of these materials. In the following part of this study, I subject the perspective gained from these analyses to a second reflection. Rather than just examining the internal processes of the pieces, I reinterpret the understanding of each piece's construction through the lens of mediated social content and sedimented historical content.

PART 3. SECOND REFLECTION ON FORM

Chapter 7

A critical interpretation of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos

In this part of the study I engage with the category of critical analysis as a second reflection on what has been undertaken in the descriptive and interpretive analysis (as outlined in Chapter 4.1: *Circles of analysis*). Adorno claimed that a second reflection must be a socio-historical reflection and a philosophical critique of the structure of a composition.⁵⁰⁰ His aim was to uncover the truth content of a piece of music. A piece that unquestioningly reproduced the domination of society over the individual subject in its internal relations lacked truth content and was in effect an instrument of that domination. By contrast, the extent to which “modern music ... uses that domination as a means of expressing the suffering of the subject affected by it,” it could be considered to hold truth content.⁵⁰¹ Witkin notes that “[f]or Adorno, the dream of truth and integrity is to be sought here, in the structure of the music.”⁵⁰² But as Max Paddison so powerfully argues, a nuanced understanding of mediation is required to comprehend properly the idea of truth content.⁵⁰³ If we accept that we cannot escape mediation—that there is no such thing pure thought or pure material—then seeking a fuller understanding of the mediated nature of the object of an inquiry becomes an empowering pursuit. As discussed in Chapter 1.3: *Music dialectics and Adorno’s legacy* and again in Chapter 4.1: *Circle of analyses*, there have been diverse approaches within the discipline of music analysis to the linking of the social and the material.

Paddison has written on a general level of theory about mediation, distilled in his essay “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation” which is informed by Adorno’s aesthetic theory but not limited to it. His work provides a structuring framework that guides my reflections in Part 3 of this study, although I find some challenges in applying Paddison’s theory as an analytical model as such. The levels of mediation that he defines operate at the *formal* level, the *social* level and the *historical* level. The formal level involves the dialectic of content and form mediating social

⁵⁰⁰ Adorno, “On the Problem of Musical Analysis,” 176-77.

⁵⁰¹ Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 15.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Paddison, “Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking?,” 223.

critique. The social level involves mediation in the spheres of production, reproduction, distribution and consumption, in other words, composition, performance, reception and marketing of the work. At the historical level, mediation involves a dialectic between the formal and social levels, in other words, between music as autonomous artwork and music as cultural commodity. Mediation is to be understood as working on these three levels simultaneously. The categories are useful for structuring thinking about the complexities of mediation but at the same time their level of generality presents problems for actual examples of music analysis because, in the analysis of a particular composition, these universal levels of mediation are perhaps not all uniquely recoverable. For example, the historical level is concerned with the condition of art in late capitalism manifest as the dialectic of the “commodity” character and the “autonomy” character inherent in all new art work. To a large extent this condition must be analysed in the same way regardless of the particularities of the individual work: for example, much of what Paddison has to say about Ferneyhough’s “radical extension of autonomy” in his musical thought as manifest in his writings and his music can apply, with some adaptations, to Carter.⁵⁰⁴ As with Adorno’s technical analysis, the challenge (rather than the stumbling block) for the analyst becomes how to shape the discussion of concrete examples of music analysis at this critical or second reflection level.

Taking up Paddison’s levels of mediation, I will trace a path that revisits firstly the relationship between form and content on the structural level of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos, attempting a critical evaluation of the experience of the musical relations in terms of a dialectic of subject and object, or individual material ‘needs’ and formal ‘demands.’ The next reflection turns to the historical meanings embedded in the contemporary use of both the concerto genre and the ritornello form in terms of their sedimented social practices. Here, I situate Carter’s concertos within a dialectic of autonomous historical material and contextualized cultural commodity. The final reflection takes up the notion of the work as cultural commodity and moves to a broader discussion of Carter as a composer of music which partakes of the social structures of cultural exchange, situating both the composer and the music in a dialectic with the social world through the music’s modes of production and consumption.

⁵⁰⁴ “Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-garde,” 113-20.

7.1 Mediated social critique—the dialectic of form and content revisited

The organisation of materials in Carter's two concertos examined in Part 2, each in their own particularized way, suggest an ideal: a collective orchestra that makes room for individual instruments to be expressive while nonetheless constraining that freedom within the bounds of a repetitive structure articulated by the collective. In a sense, Carter's utopian democracy is dramatized in a real-life way in performance by giving the ensemble of musicians a musical script that directs the individual performers to play out these utopian relations.⁵⁰⁵ In the *Boston Concerto*, the musical form democratically allots time and space to all sections of the orchestra to 'have their say,' while the orchestra constituting the whole collective intersperses its own voice with a unique sound as well as providing the structuring frame that facilitates the moves from one section of individuals to the next. In the *ASKO Concerto*, individual instruments group together to make unique dialogues and then re-group as a collective which, like in the *Boston Concerto*, has its own unique sound. The collective ensemble passes the word on each time to a new group of individual players, democratically organising the unfolding of interactions. In the *ASKO Concerto*, the small groups of individual instruments have the most to say in terms of the length of time they are allotted but their collective regrouping—brief as these moments become—remains essential to the piece's form. The democratic conceit of the form in both concertos is utopian. But to what extent is it critical? To what extent does the organisation of musical materials in these pieces comment on, subvert, or otherwise critique the power relations between individual and collective through their materials? To what extent has the subjective been constituted in this music so as not to conceal the dialectic of form and content, subject and object?

In the *Boston Concerto*, the ritornello material of the collective orchestra is clearly the dominating sonic feature of the music. Structurally, the persistent return to its distinctive sonority, that has a quasi-thematic effect, establishes the ritornellos as the stable organising force of the piece. Furthermore, while in the concertino sections the individual families of the orchestra all have their chance to be heard, their right to express themselves remains bounded by the form of the piece: once they have said their bit, their voice as a group is muted and does not return again. There is a sense in which the concertinos acquiesce to the ritornellos. This is in contrast to Carter's Concerto for

⁵⁰⁵ See the quote below by Carter on his compositions as "auditory scenarios" in Bayan Northcott, "Crosstalk," *New Statesman* 86, no. 2230 (14th December 1973).

Orchestra, for example, where the four layers of different instrumental groupings are all continually interacting with each other. This calls into question how ‘authentically’ each concertino—each group of individuals—has been represented. There is no further room for the material to follow its unique path and instead accommodates its return to the collective without protest. This aspect is especially apparent in the way the form quite quickly becomes predictable, in that the expectation that the music will move back to the ‘rain’ texture and then on to the next instrumental section is fulfilled over and over again, even if the specific utterances themselves can not be foretold. The sensuousness of the ‘rain’ texture, as we have noted previously, becomes attractive in itself and brings with it a kind of longing for its return that taps into a deception or phantasm of pleasure.⁵⁰⁶

Nevertheless, it is also precisely the constant move *away* from the mesmerising ‘rain’ music that counterbalances the repressive potential of the ritornellos; but also the way in which content unfolds in both ritornello and concertino sections, in other words, the way the materials behave. Firstly, opposing the bounded expressions of the concertinos are the moments of ‘recall’ or referencing of small, subtle sound objects as we saw in the analysis of Chapter 5. These *Scheinthemen* suggest the fragile persistence of the subjective that occasionally comes to the surface as a reminder that there is more than the expected and predictable at work. In fleeting moments of undefined remembering, a gap appears in the rhetoric of the formal structure to give a glimpse of something that was otherwise forgotten. I suggest that it is precisely the subtlety—the transient, uncertain quality—of these ‘recall’ gestures that imbues them with a critical force, in the spirit of “utopian lightness” discussed in Chapter 3. Secondly, the expressive gestures of individuals are not limited to the space allocated to them in the concertino sections. The musical material of the ritornellos is itself laden with interjections from individual instruments: rather than a dominating collective, this music presents—amidst its defining spatially expansive tutti chords—an ever-changing, multi-coloured, multi-perspective array of individuals, full of musical gestures that are unexpected and surprising (recall the trumpet solo of Ritornello 1, the marimba solo of Ritornello 2, the complete fragmentation of tutti chords in Ritornello 3, the *Klangfarbenmelodie* of

⁵⁰⁶ A interesting web of ideas springs from this observation relating to Adorno’s dialectic of history and nature and his critique of immediacy and stasis in musical representations of nature. However, this extends beyond the scope of this study. Discussions can be found in Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music*; and Witkin, *Adorno on Music*. Especially informative is Julian Johnson’s chapter “Webern, Nature and Modernism” in Julian Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 212-36.

Ritornello 4). The collective ritornello music becomes the space in which the expression of individuals takes flight, instead of these expressive moments occurring within the more homogenous timbres, and often more restrained lines, of the concertino material, the place where historically such subjective utterances would be expected. A dialectic is at work here between ritornello content and concertino content, each expressing qualities of its oppositional partner as they follow their respective trajectories through the musical time of the piece.⁵⁰⁷

The *ASKO Concerto* takes a different approach to a similar premise. While there is a clear delineation between ritornello and concertino sections, the listening experience is dominated by concertino playing. The groups of soloists take up most of the clock time of the piece while the ritornello sections shrink away to mere tutti punctuations. The listening experience is of a whole lot of little chamber episodes interspersed by the ensemble coming together very briefly to switch to the next combination of soloists, except towards the end. I contend that it is the ending—the way the ensemble chords penetrate the final solo bassoon concertino—that hold the key to a level of critique that might be read into the *ASKO Concerto*. By bringing together the tutti chords and the bassoon solo at the end of the piece, the entire premise of the form (alternation of collective and individuals) is brought into question. As the only concertino in the piece approaching a true ‘solo’ section, it is in fact denied the space for the full subjective expression of its individuality because of the intruding tutti chords. While the other concertinos do include staccato interjections from the ensemble, the chords that penetrate the bassoon solo are present from the beginning of the section and gradually encroach on the bassoon’s voice. The chords become denser, louder and quicker, pressing in on and engulfing the bassoon, whose final phrase really does merge into the collective chords. Carter’s intention was a light-hearted one, the awkwardly leaping and fluttering bassoon solo is to be played “con umóre” and the increasingly violent slicing chords that chop into the bassoon solo are deliberately dramatic. As a kind of caricature, the bassoon’s melody seems to constrain its free expression. To my ears at least, when this section is played as *Retracings* for solo bassoon the experience is quite different—the lyrical nature of the line is much more obvious, perhaps because as a solo performance there is greater room for expressive nuance that is not possible in the ensemble situation where the melody is being driven on by the insistent beat of the

⁵⁰⁷ Jeff Nichols also finds a similar dialectical treatment of theme and accompaniment in the much earlier *Variations for Orchestra* (1955) in Nichols, “Mistaken Identities in Carter’s *Variations for Orchestra*”.

chords. Thus, the final section of the *ASKO concerto* might be read as an ironic commentary on freedom of expression:⁵⁰⁸ while most of the piece suggests a successful balance between the concertinos' individual voices and the collective voice in the ritornellos, the false nature of the balance is exposed at the end where the collective chords and the individual solo line vie for the upper hand only to end up entwined in a cadence.

In the reading of the two pieces I have given here, I argue for a dialectical treatment of content and form which mediates a critique of object-subject relations. The orchestration in each piece dramatizes the notions of collective and individual, recalling Carter's oft-quoted statement: "I regard my scores as scenarios, auditory scenarios, for performers to act out on their instruments, dramatizing the players as individuals and participants in the ensemble."⁵⁰⁹ The line and chord materials associated with the individual instrumental music and collective ensemble music respectively engage in a dialectical interplay that allows such auditory scenarios to be manifest musically and to shape the unfolding form of the piece.

As discussed in Chapter 2, for Carter the specific way musical form and content took account of the temporal dimension of a piece was crucially linked to the way temporality shaped lived experience. In Chapter 3, I explored the notion that repetition, at this late point in modernity, had taken on new significance in the lived experience of time compared to the first two thirds of the twentieth century. The temporal experience of late modernity cannot avoid repetition but no reprise is necessarily identical. Carter's treatment of ritornello form in the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos addresses precisely this type of altered repetition within the experience of the flow of time. However, an aesthetic of "infinite reprise" presents one significant problem: the ending. Adorno referred to this as "the problem of closure" in new musical form.⁵¹⁰ As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, for Adorno traditional closed forms presented what had become a false notion of a unified whole. Open forms, by contrast, avoided the necessity to tie up

⁵⁰⁸ On the role of irony in modernist art for Adorno see Witkin, *Adorno on Music*, 100; and Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 56. For a discussion of irony in Carter's music see Capuzzo, *Elliott Carter's What Next?: Communication, Cooperation, and Separation*, 19 and 84-98.

⁵⁰⁹ Bayan Northcott, "Crosstalk," *New Statesman* 86, no. 2230 (14th December 1973). See also Chau-Yee Lo, "Dramatizing the Harpsichord: The Harpsichord Music of Elliott Carter," *Mitteilung der Paul Sacher Stiftung* 17 (March 2004).

⁵¹⁰ Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 181

loose ends or could even avoid altogether the suggestion that ending is inevitable.⁵¹¹ For Adorno, a work's "inability to close" was tied closely to its authenticity. Quoting Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, Paddison elaborates:

What characterizes 'modernist' art for Adorno is that the *inability to close* is 'turned into a freely chosen principle and expression.' ... Thus, Adorno's notions of 'authenticity' and of 'consistency' would seem to favour a nominalistic form 'from below' which freely chooses to go against the tendency of such forms towards integration and closure by denying the reconciliation of opposites and remaining deliberately open and fragmentary. This is seen as acting as an immanent critique of totality, of the universal, and of a wholeness which is seen as false.⁵¹²

As we saw in the discussion of Berg's Op.1 in Chapter 1, Berg's refusal to treat the musical threads in his Sonata to a neat resolution or to a recapitulation, as the form demanded, was considered by Adorno to be an authentic expression of the fragmentation and dissolution of the false totality that sonata form now represented. I argue that in Carter's two concertos, the materials that are set up in opposition to each other go through a process of transformation in which they express qualities of their opposite but never resolve into each other. Opposition in these two Carter concertos is not reconciled. Neither do these pieces close decisively. The ritornello form is itself an open form having its origins in the rondo which does not include a specific gesture of ending but rather the idea of a possible never-ending. As Paddison notes

... open forms, including the traditional ones like the rondo, act as a critique of the appearance of unity and closure which characterizes 'closed' forms. Through the elements of arbitrariness in the structure of open forms (for example, further sections could always be added, or existing sections could be taken away), they throw into question the idea of 'necessity' and inevitability which characterizes the nominalism of closed forms.⁵¹³

In Carter's two concertos, the sense of a possible never-ending return to the sonic worlds of the ritornellos keeps the form open and the refusal to merge the musical content of opposing streams into any grand closing gesture supports the utopian notions we encountered in Chapter 3 of music's inexhaustibility, that it "goes on and on without stopping."

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 181-2

⁵¹² Ibid., 181-2. Quote from Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 221.

⁵¹³ Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*, 181.

These ideas are remarkably well illustrated by the endings of both of Carter's concertos. In the analysis of the *Boston Concerto*, I discussed the arresting moment of transition from the final string concertino to the final ritornello (Concertino 6 to Ritornello 7). At this moment of juncture, arguably the most expressive melodic lines of all the concertinos in the piece are juxtaposed with the most neutral rendering of the 'rain' texture in any of the ritornellos. There is no "linking" or transition passage between these two sharply contrasting sections as there has been in the foregoing moves between sections. This moment dramatically exemplifies the notion of irreconcilable opposites: while both strands have gone through a process of transformation over the unfolding of the piece, they end up back where they started, not unchanged but not synthesized either. This brings the piece in one sense full-circle, completing a frame around the piece made up of the opening and closing ritornellos which are the clearest "rain" textures employing full orchestral chords throughout the whole section. However, as previously noted, the final ritornello does not make an expressive gesture of closure. There is no convincing finality to the piece, no synthesising climax or summation of materials, no processes that round off the musical experience. Instead, the soft fading out of the rain sound seems to imply that the form could be ongoing, that the whole process could be repeated and varied *ad infinitum* like the rain itself. This again brings to mind the connection made in Chapter 3 between Carter's forms and Beckett's *Il faut continuer* as well as Calvino's "persistence of what seems most fated to perish," where maintaining a permanent or irreconcilable gap between opposites becomes the only way of continuing. Williams's poem associated with the piece also contains this imagery. The "worldly" objects of the outside are being transformed by the continually falling and flowing rain water. The inside is forever excluded from this wet exterior but finds its dialectical partner in the "unworldly" psychological interior where instead of water, it is love "falling endlessly /from /her thoughts." There is no reconciliation possible, just a continuous flow of opposites.

In the *ASKO Concerto*, opposites are equally irreconcilable but the processes at work are quite different. Rather than an arch-shaped transformation and return such as that of the *Boston Concerto*, the transformation of materials reaches its fullest at the end of the *ASKO Concerto*. As discussed above as well as in the Chapter 6, the single line in the solo bassoon is confronted by the incessant tutti chords. Chords which have been quite static throughout the piece are now put into motion against the single line. There is no suggestion of a melody-and-accompaniment type relationship. Instead each continues

despite the other. When the bassoon line reaches its end, it does in fact merge with the final sustained chord; however, the piece does not end with this merging. The linear impulse that set the tutti chords in motion is carried on by accelerating woodwind, brass and percussion attacks now from within a static string chord. The superimposition of bassoon line and tutti chord is transformed in the very last bars into a superimposition of a new concertino grouping pulsing forward within a sustained chord. In other words, the material opposition is maintained but in transformed form: what was the linear component in the bassoon is transferred to the trio of instruments that were part of the chordal component. The “gap” is not closed. Rather the piece ends at the point at which another transformation could occur: the accelerating staccato line in the woodwind, brass and percussion could potentially flourish into a three part counterpoint of a new concertino section.

7.2 Genre and sedimented historical meaning

In the previous section, I considered the mediation of social critique at the *formal* level of the music. I would now like to turn to the *historical* level of mediation to consider layers of sedimented cultural meaning in the form and genre of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos as well as the dialectic of the work as autonomous artefact and as cultural product. While Paddison’s model suggests that an analysis might first be made of mediation at the *social* level, in order to bring the formal and social together as “historical antinomies” at the level of historical meditation, I will leave the social level of mediation till last as I understand this level to be operating analytically in the most general terms of the three levels. Paddison also says that mediation must be “understood *simultaneously* on these three ‘levels’,” suggesting that an analytical second reflection need not following one single linear path through these levels. In this section then, I begin by considering one aspect of Paddison’s category of *historical mediation*: the text “in its relation to historically handed-down musical materials.” Paddison certainly says that “[t]his level of mediation revisits the formal level.” However, as indicated, historical mediation differs from mediation at the formal level in that it considers autonomous form in its oppositional relationship to its social context as “cultural commodity and institutional product.” In order to address this dialectic more precisely in relation to these two particular instances of music, I will complicate Paddison’s model slightly by introducing below Tia DeNora’s understanding of the social

meditation of music as historical *praxis*—as what was actually done—contrasting it with Paddison’s historical mediation of music as “philosophy of history” for reasons I will discuss below. This will then lead into the last section of the chapter, where mediation at the *social level* will be considered in terms of the “situated” composer and the music as cultural product.

Carter titled his two pieces *concertos* and named them both after the musical ensembles for which they were written, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the ASKO Ensemble. I have used the term *ritornello form* to describe the form of both pieces. While seemingly uncomplicated titles and descriptions, they carry with them a semantic ‘load’ which connects directly to the layers of history embedded in the materials. As Arnold Whittall notes: “one of the most interesting consequences of the modernist aesthetic is the play of expectations that the use—or avoidance—of a generic title can create.”⁵¹⁴ The solo concerto, and its twentieth century adaptation to a concerto for *orchestra*, carries with it expectations of form, instrumentation and materials, which are part of its historical meaning and which inevitably bring a piece with such a title into a questioning relationship with the past.⁵¹⁵ That relationship to the past is not merely located in the form’s structure but in the social meaning mediated by that form.⁵¹⁶ A provocative questioning of the relevance of the historical concerto to the present day is put forward by the contemporary music ensemble *Sequitur*, in the program note to one of their CDs, which includes a recording of Carter’s Double Concerto for Piano and Harpischord:

On this disc, [members of *Sequitur*] re-examine the contemporary American concerto. Although it dates back to Baroque composers in the late 17th century, the concerto reached its artistic pinnacle with Romantic composers of the 19th and early 20th century. But what does the concerto mean in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when personal freedoms are threatened both by indiscriminate acts of terrorism and by responses that many find necessary in order to preserve safety and stability? For starters, the paradigm of “us versus them”—the message behind the concertino and ripieno of the Baroque concerto grosso as well as the heroic romantic solo concerto—seems outmoded. We shun the model of a group controlling an individual, just as we shun this model turned inside out. And our view of an individual

⁵¹⁴ Arnold Whittall, “The concerto since 1945,” in *Cambridge Companion to the Concerto*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 161.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Recall the discussion in Chapter 2 on the socially embedded meaning in rondo form in Adorno, “Form in the New Music. Translated by Rodney Livingstone,” 201.

now is rarely one of hero, or anti-hero, or even of complete self-determination. All of these ideas affect the concerto of today, where the role of the soloist is not always clearly defined, where other players may rise as soloists at times and then disappear again into the fabric, where sub-groups may compete with the soloist and with each other for prominence, where the soloist may not be poised to interact and hopefully to triumph. Even the word “concerto” may be suspect: Only Elliott Carter’s work among the four on this disc employs the word “concerto” in its title.⁵¹⁷

This performance group tackles questions about the social and historical meanings carried forth in the music they perform by way of the defining metaphors that have culturally come to be associated with the concerto as a genre and with the musical drama and materials normative of its forms: metaphors of the individual in relation to the group as manifest in the relationship of soloist(s) and orchestral group. The program note both observes and suggests the need for transformation of these norms in order that the genre remains a relevant means of expression in the present context. It identifies a dialectic of social and individual demands as it sees this constituted today, alluding to the complexity of this dialect compared to earlier periods in history. Questions of power, violence, control and freedom are presented as intrinsically embedded in the concerto genre today. This text is informative in so far as it exemplifies a range of commonly accepted understandings of what constitutes present-day lived experience from a standpoint of early twenty-first century Western (American) politics: the perceived threat to a perceived individual freedom from various quarters, the lack of clarity of the position of the individual within the greater social fabric, in fact the lack of a sense of social cohesion beyond that imposed by those who “preserve safety and stability.” Sequitur stakes out this ideological position for the concerto genre in the modern age, claiming a critical role for the concerto in its changed relationships between traditional protagonists. The observation about Carter preserving the word “concerto” in the title of his work refers to his very first concerto from the 1960s (all other pieces on the disc are from the years surrounding the year 2000) but as we know Carter does indeed continue to use the word in his titles right up to some of his last concertos.⁵¹⁸ Carter was certainly far from the only twentieth-century composer to do

⁵¹⁷ Program note at

http://www.albanyrecords.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Session_ID=fb25ac085625ae0da7d19395914446d9&Screen=PROD&Product_Code=TROY607&Store_Code=AR&search=sequitur&offset=&filter_cat=&PowerSearch_Begin_Only=&sort=&range_low=&range_high= (accessed 25 August, 2017)

⁵¹⁸ Although notably, in the last decade of his life he composed a series of works that were concertos in all but their title: *Dialogues* (2003), *Dialogues II* (2010), and *Two Controversies and Conversation* (2011)

this but many composers also chose to part from the association with tradition in their titles.⁵¹⁹

The contextualisation found in *Sequitur*'s note is problematic in a number of ways but what is most interesting for my discussion here is its stark contrast with the program note for the *Boston Concerto* by Paul Griffiths available on the Boosey and Hawkes website. Griffiths's note does not provide any context beyond the music itself. Of the form of this piece, Griffiths writes:

Coming so soon after the *Symphonia*—and from a composer now in his nineties—this was an extraordinary flourish of orchestral rejuvenation. The pattern is similar to that of the intervening *ASKO Concerto*: music of one kind, often using rather full resources, is interleaved with episodes of different sorts for different ensembles. Among the latter are inventions for flutes plus clarinets and for single reeds, a slowly revolving brass object and a passionate strain from strings. The abiding spirit, however, is that of the rapid, shimmering main music—rain music, recalling a poem by William Carlos Williams in which love is seen, like showers, to “bathe every open object of the world.”⁵²⁰

What is striking about this note—given here in its complete form—is the lack of any historical references, or even any musical terminology (‘episodes’ coming closest) to describe the form and effect of the piece. It is as if Griffiths makes a deliberate effort to avoid conjuring up any associations with known forms or genres, or any context outside of the work itself, almost awkwardly describing the alternations of musical material as if such a thing were completely novel. Yet terms such as ‘concerto grosso,’ ‘Baroque concerto,’ ‘ritornello sections,’ ‘ripieno music’ have come to be associated with the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos in most published reviews and CD notes. Commentators have opened up a conversation with history, as it were. By using a range of these terms, they tap into collective knowledge of the musical past vividly evoked by the immediately audible formal processes of Carter's two compositions.

⁵¹⁹ The other titles on this recording are Harold Meltzer's *Virginal* 2002 (harpsichord soloist), David Rakowski's *Locking Horns* 2002 (horn soloist) and Thea Musgrave's 1999 *Lamenting with Ariadne* (viola soloist).

⁵²⁰ Program note at <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Elliott-Carter-Boston-Concerto/26247> (accessed 25 August, 2017)

One example is Bayan Northcott's CD notes to the Bridge recording.⁵²¹ Northcott draws attention to the form of these pieces (and Carter's Cello Concerto) as follows:

One of [Carter's] favorite schemata has been a kind of concerto grosso form ... In their very different ways, the ASKO Concerto (2000), the Cello Concerto (2001) and the Boston Concerto (2002), all comprise variants of this formal idea. [underline mine]

But he also refers to the deviation from expectations in Carter's realisation of this form in the *Boston Concerto*:

But the rain image also suggested a striking reversal of the concerto grosso form-scheme. Where one would naturally expect the fullest, weightiest textures to occur in the tutti links—as indeed they do in the ASKO Concerto and, to a degree, in the Cello Concerto—the tuttis of the Boston Concerto prove immaterial, evanescent, with the work's more sustained writing confined to the intervening episodes for various subsections of the orchestra.⁵²²

Northcott's use of the term 'concerto grosso' references the Baroque period and the expectations for orchestration that originated around that era and continued throughout the Classical-Romantic period, expectations still with us today. The term 'concerto grosso' evokes the image of alternating large and small instrumental groups, with the large group returning constantly to a kind of 'refrain.' While the terminology is technically imprecise (as I will clarify below), the image will be immediate even for a general audience, possibly due to the over-popularized and commercialized *Brandenburg Concertos* of Bach and *The Four Seasons* of Vivaldi. The scheme of alternation that Carter uses is clearly audible on first listening; however Northcott's explicit references to music practice of a past era will no doubt have an influence on the listening experience of those listeners who read the CD notes.

Another example is the 2002 New York performance under Oliver Knussen of the *ASKO Concerto* (perhaps the American premiere) reviewed in the *New York Times* by Anthony Tommasini. Tommasini references not only the genre but also the historical period and introduces the term 'ritornello':

⁵²¹ The Bridge CD with recordings of the *Boston Concerto* and the *AKSO Concerto* (recorded live at its world premiere in Het Concertgebouw, Amsterdam) was released in 2005.

⁵²² Northcott, "Boston Concerto (2002)." (Liner notes for *The Music of Elliott Carter Volume 7*. Bridge Records 9184, 2005, compact disc, September 2005).

The [ASKO] concerto, ingeniously scored for 16 instruments, is Mr. Carter's homage to the Baroque concerto grosso. Ritornello sections for the entire ensemble, initiated with slicing chords and driving rhythms, are alternated with flightier episodes for diverse groups of soloists.⁵²³ [underlines mine]

Similarly, Rodney Lister, in *Tempo*, reviews the premiere of the *Boston Concerto* introducing the term 'ripieno' as well as the explicit reference to Bach:

The title of the work deliberately evokes Bach's Brandenburg Concerti, and Carter describes it as a sort of concerto grosso. Set in the progress of the transparent and shimmering ripieno music, . . . , are six episodes of long-breathed lyrical music featuring different sections of the orchestra.⁵²⁴ [Underlines mine]

Northcott, Tommasini, Lister and others offer past practice as understood in the present as a lens through which to hear Carter's 'new' music. It appears, however, that Carter himself was the one to introduce the connection between the *Boston Concerto* and the Baroque 'concerto grosso,' writing in his own program note to the premiere:

[The piece] throws a spotlight on each of the remarkable sections of the orchestra, surrounding them with short orchestral pizzicato sections for the entire group, not unlike the plan of a concerto grosso.⁵²⁵ [underline mine]

Interestingly, neither Carter nor other writers refer to this piece as a 'concerto for orchestra' although clearly the idea described here of putting different orchestral sections in the "spotlight" lies at the foundation of the concerto for orchestra genre (the twentieth-century adaptation of the solo concerto). It seems that the Baroque feature of 'return' is more noteworthy. The Boston Symphony Orchestra program note to the 2008 Tanglewood performance elaborates further:

This transparent and shimmering texture is heard in the pizzicato strings and fluttering winds that open the work and returns throughout like the ritornello passage of a concerto grosso, the Baroque genre from which Carter borrowed the idea. (Both the form and the name of the Boston Concerto were suggested by Bach's Brandenburgs).⁵²⁶ [underlines mine]

⁵²³ Anthony Tommasini, "Catching up with Elliott Carter," *The New York Times Music Review* (April 27, 2002), <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/27/arts/music-review-catching-up-with-elliott-carter.html>.

⁵²⁴ Lister, "Boston, Symphony Hall: Harbison's 'Requiem' and Carter's 'Boston Concerto'," *Tempo* 62, no. 225: 38.

⁵²⁵ Elliott Carter, "*Boston Concerto* (2002)," (Program notes. Boston Symphony Orchestra. Ingo Metzmacher. Boston: Symphony Hall, April 3, 4 & 5, 2003), 31.

⁵²⁶ "Notes," (Boston Symphony Orchestra. Oliver Knussen. Tanglewood festival of Contemporary Music: Seiji Ozawa Hall, July 24, 2008. Program Notes), 86. The Boston Concerto ends on the pitch B4.

In this note, the connection to the Baroque period is not left to choice of terminology but actually established with the link to Bach's concertos; presumably this information came from Carter himself. While it might not be very fruitful to pursue too far any direct influence of the *Brandenburg Concertos* on the *Boston Concerto*, there certainly is value in considering a number of principles that have accompanied the use of ritornello form from the past to the present, and how the meanings sedimented in these principles reverberate on some level when listening to the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos.

To begin, it is interesting to consider the change of meaning that the term 'concerto grosso' itself has undergone over time. Michael Talbot notes the terminological imprecision that today accompanies the term 'concerto grosso.' Talking about the growing popularity of the 'new' concerto genre at the end of the seventeenth century, he observes that the term 'concerto grosso' had a different implied meaning for composers at that time:

Gregori's recourse to the expression *Concerti Grossi* in a title prompts a reflection on the use of the term in historical and analytical writing today. It means, quite simply, 'large ensemble', and by extension 'works (concertos) for large ensemble'. As employed by Gregori and Baroque composers in general, it has nothing to do with the use, or non-use, of soloists, or with the number of soloists. It is really not a technical term at all, but simply conveys the idea that many players participate. So the opposition between a 'concerto grosso' (with plural soloists) and a 'solo concerto' (with only one) is unfortunate in terminological respects, even though the differentiation itself may be valid for the purposes of analysis.⁵²⁷

In other words, concerto grosso was originally a generic term with a literal meaning implying nothing more about the music than the size of its ensemble. Over time it came to identify a composition with more specifically defined features, such as the number of soloists and the form of the piece. The first concerti grossi of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century by composers such as Torelli, Albinoni, Gregori and Corelli did alternate between small and large ensembles but did not include a ritornello form. Rather composers used a range of formal devices from the earlier developed instrumental compositions such as the sonata and sinfonia. It was not until Vivaldi's

In Chapter 5, I suggest this could be a reference to the title of the piece but equally (or coincidentally) the reference might be to Bach and Brandenburg.

⁵²⁷ Talbot, "The Italian Concerto in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century," in *Cambridge Companion to the Concerto*, 41.

innovations with the *solo* concerto that ritornello form became a main feature of the fast movements of a concerto. Thus orchestration and form became linked.

Carter's two concertos adopt the early Baroque *orchestration* principle of alternating a concerto grosso ensemble with a concertino ensemble. But in Carter's concertos, the concertinos change their ensemble make-up each time, unlike the early Baroque concertino in which the instrumental group was fixed.⁵²⁸ As mentioned above, Carter's approach follows the notion of the twentieth-century concerto for orchestra that each section of the orchestra receives a "spotlight" instead of featuring one soloist or a small unchanging group of soloists like we find in Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*. As for the *form*, the twentieth-century concerto for orchestra genre has remained true to the modernist aesthetic of experimentation, resulting in almost as many formal approaches as there are compositions. In contrast to Carter's Concerto for Orchestra, the timbral distinctions between ritornello and concertino material of the *Boston* and *ASKO*'s ritornello form do come closer to a number of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* (especially No.2) with their highly delineated sonorities distinguishing tutti and concertino material. But there are also similarities to Vivaldi's solo concertos, where the clarity between the soloist's material and the returning thematic material of the ritornellos is of paramount importance. The ritornellos in Vivaldi's concertos were novel at the time and Talbot offers an insightful and concise description of their function and content:

A ritornello section, which stabilizes a tonal area, exposes the primary thematic materials, and treats the audience to a full orchestral sound, is an assembly of thematic units that recurs, generally in closed periods, in a least three tonalities (including a final tonic statement). Unlike the refrain of a rondo, a ritornello is a highly flexible structure amenable to modification on any restatement. It can be shortened by losing its beginning, middle or end; its units can be shuffled around or presented in new forms; it can be supplemented by newly introduced material. Generally speaking, Vivaldi likes to make the first ritornello statement the longest, and find various ways of abridging the remainder.⁵²⁹ [underlines mine]

From this abstracted description, and leaving aside the tonal and thematic considerations, a number of treatments of the musical material (underlined) stand out as

⁵²⁸ Sociological reasons for the origin of the concerto grosso are interesting, see *ibid.*, 35-37 and 41-42. Talbot discusses how one reason for its origin was the physical characteristics of the church in Bologna; another reason, originating in Rome, reflected the professional/non-professional status of the musicians.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

having resonance with Carter's treatment of the musical material in his ritornello sections. Repetition in Baroque ritornello sections appears not to be as fixed as models of the form might imply. The treatment of material is much less rigid than, for example, the later sonata form would become. The flexibility of this historical form lends itself to reinterpretation in a contemporary musical idiom. Where Vivaldi (and others) would use "theme" as the basic distinguishing material for the ritornelli, Carter instead uses sonority in a similar way, as a "highly flexible structure amenable to modification on any restatement" which is also freely "supplemented by newly introduced material" in any of the ritornelli (as Talbot notes in the above quote). A sense of directed motion was in fact also one of the features of the Baroque concerto grosso, where typically the ritornello's thematic material was transposed through a large-scale tonal scheme that moved away from and back to the tonic.⁵³⁰ Carter's directed motion is achieved by very different means but still shares the idea of forward motion within a cyclic pattern that originated in the Baroque.

From an Adornian perspective, both Carter's ritornello form and the various manifestations of ritornello form in the Baroque era engage with sedimented social content within the cyclic form, a social content that has its origins in the oldest type of social dancing found in many cultures, namely round or circle dancing. Adorno says:

... the rondo evokes a spiritualised form of the round dance, with its distinction between couplet and refrain. In. To grasp it as a form always meant sensing this form, moulding to it, varying it. The contrasts between tutti and solo hidden in the rondo, between the individual and the totality, were made dynamic with the concerto and became essential for the decisive form of the modern age, the sonata.⁵³¹

Rondo form that once existed for the purpose of social, ritualistic dancing later internalised the social purpose into the tensions between the form and the new musical content. In Adorno's words:

The secret content embedded in the form animates the subtlest nuances of the musical flow, even in forms which have already become very free. Individual events increasingly turned into content. Not the least part of musicality meant the alibi to

⁵³⁰ See for example Claude Palisca, *Baroque Music* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 148; McVeigh, *The Italian Solo Concerto 1700-1760: Rhetorical Strategies and Style History*, 6.

⁵³¹ Adorno, "Form in the New Music. Translated by Rodney Livingstone," 201.

rediscover the sublimated contents in the form, as well as to respond to the changes in their function, their migration into specific [musical] instance.⁵³²

The manner in which this response of form to content takes place in music differs in each era. Thus, abstract commonalities in the handling of tensions between cyclic and linear continuity within ritornello form might be found between Baroque composers and modernists; yet the musical as well as social “problems” which faced composers of Bach's time were distinctly different from those in Carter's world and thus the musical means with which this dialectical engagement occurs are clearly quite different. Karol Berger's non-dialectical reading of the difference between Bach's handling of linearity compared to that of composers from the classical period onwards is equally relevant in this discussion, particularly since Berger ties the musical to a change in social world view of temporality from cyclic to linear.⁵³³

This contemplation of features of Carter's concertos in the light of its historical antecedents illustrates how so-called autonomous features of the work are in fact rooted in past practices on a *formal* level. However, meditation at the *historical level*, Paddison suggests, must not address the purely formal construct but be a reflection on “the ‘autonomy’ of the musical work ... as *ideological* through situating it in its heteronomous social context as a commodity and as a product of the institutions of art” [italics mine].⁵³⁴ In other words, while the work may appear to be only about its musical form, it inevitably contains “sublimated cultural norms” carried within the historical layers of the material itself. Most significantly it will have a “commodity character” dialectically opposing its “autonomy character.” While Paddison does not model how to undertake an analysis of a specific work in these terms in “Theory of Mediation,” it is possible to reflect on historical practice connected with the concerto which highlights the way commodity form and autonomy form continue to go hand-in-hand in an unquestioned manner.⁵³⁵ However, as Klumpenhouwer and Agawu have warned, transferring social metaphors onto musical materials is misreading Adorno and can produce dubious narratives.⁵³⁶ Tia DeNora expresses a similar caution but at the same

⁵³² Ibid., 201-2.

⁵³³ Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: an essay on the origins of musical modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

⁵³⁴ Paddison, “Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation,” 272-73.

⁵³⁵ Paddison models such an analysis in a general way in relation to the music of Brian Ferneyhough and Frank Zappa in *ibid.*

⁵³⁶ Recall the discussion in Chapter 1.3e and 1.3f.

time models a more fruitful way to connect the musical and the social in her essay “The concerto and society” with examples of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. In light of Carter’s comment that “both the form and the name of the *Boston Concerto* were suggested by Bach’s *Brandenburgs*,” DeNora’s critique of an analysis of social mediation in Bach’s Fifth *Brandenburg Concerto* is a particularly relevant example to consider here.

DeNora approaches the problem of mediation from a sociological stand point, arguing that it is not so much a narrative of “the history of ideas, politics, economics” that should be read from a *particular* musical work but the “*actual* mechanics through which music plays a mediating role in social life.”⁵³⁷ The most significant mechanics reveal themselves

... at the *local* level [where] large-scale social trends are mediated by what is ‘do-able’—by material culture, by the specific concerns of the patrons and other local contextual issues such as occasion and dedicatee, and by an individual composer’s particular appropriation of ideas, models and working materials.⁵³⁸

In other words, DeNora is critical of analyses that detach concerns about practical music making from the form the music take and instead only link form to the social by way of abstract ideas. She argues for example that Susan McClary’s “narrative analysis”—which reads social “values” directly into musical materials of Bach’s Fifth Concerto, in particular the extended solo harpsichord cadenza—gets the level at which social mediation occurs wrong.⁵³⁹ To McClary the use of the harpsichord as solo instrument in this piece “musically presents (and in an extreme form) then-emerging notions of individual freedom of expression” encountered in the developing form of solo concerto and that this was against the current social convention in which “social harmony and individual expression are mutually compatible.”⁵⁴⁰ But, DeNora argues, if the focus is changed to “local” social reasons that Bach gave the harpsichord this extended solo role, a different picture emerges, one that reads Bach’s piece as comfortably situated within the local norms of the day. The displaying of a newly purchased harpsichord with two keyboards, the dedication of the piece to the Elector of Musgrave, and the then-current practice of virtuoso improvisation all add up to a picture in which the solo

⁵³⁷ Tia DeNora, “The concerto and society,” in *Cambridge Companion to the Concerto*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

harpsichord cadenza can easily be situated “within the musical culture of Bach’s world” rather than against cultural norms, as McClary argues. Drawing in Paddison’s notion of historical mediation, it is possible to identify a dialectic between the “autonomy character” of the piece, its musical particularity (and especially the remarkable cadenza), and the “commodity character” of the piece, determined by the socio-cultural practices of exchange just identified. In other words, the socio-cultural demands of that historical period shaped the music-formal demands of that specific piece.

Historical mediation of this sort can also be read into the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos. Both the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos were composed for and commissioned by musical groups and, in line with long-standing social practice such as Bach’s dedications, Carter dedicated the pieces to these respective commissioning groups. But the materials and the form of the pieces were also shaped in a way to highlight the performance prowess of all the individual players and sections in the ensembles—a practice historically originating at the very birth of the concerto as exemplified in Bach’s Fifth Concerto. The *Boston Concerto* was a ‘thank you’ piece that Carter wrote because of the significant role the Boston Symphony Orchestra played in Carter’s early musical experiences.⁵⁴¹ The ‘extraordinary’ sound of the rain music very uniquely shows off the orchestra as a whole, making it sound strange and beautiful in a way that is novel and arresting, mesmerising even—more so in a live performance (particularly by the Boston Symphony itself) than on the recording. It is as if the music is saying: this is no ordinary orchestra. Similarly, as Carter says in his program note, the concertinos are written to highlight each “remarkable” section of the orchestra. In the same vein, Carter wrote the *ASKO Concerto* specifically for the sixteen-instrument combination of the ASKO ensemble as a tribute to the group which has regularly performed Carter’s music.⁵⁴² It is likewise constructed in such a way as to show off each of the individual instrumentalists: while the ensemble comes together in the ritornello sections, temporally the solos dominate in this piece, making it a genuine showcase piece for the group’s individual members. Thus, it could be argued that the social impetus for both these pieces motivated the fundamental form that the pieces would take. With the historical tradition of dedication originating with the concerto genre itself, the sedimentation of history is recoverable in the formal model of the pieces which immanently mediates a social practice of dedication and display.

⁵⁴¹ See program note at <https://www.elliottcarter.com/compositions/boston-concerto/>

⁵⁴² See program note at <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Elliott-Carter-Asko-Concerto/15100>

At the same time, it is possible to comment more generally on the “commodity character” of these pieces. If the dedications were a thank-you for the promotion of Carter’s music, they are also a commercial exchange. Carter’s two pieces arose from commissions from two highly mainstream ensembles—one with a reputation in the earlier twenty-first century of straddling the divide between ‘classical’ and ‘new’ symphonic repertoire and audiences (especially under the artistic direction of James Levine); the other, one of the most prominent European chamber ensembles for contemporary music. Needless to say, the funding available to these groups means they fall into the expected structures of the arts economy of Western culture today, including government funding and private patronage along with a reputation that attracts paying audiences. All performances of Carter’s mature music have involved music institutions and their commercial structures that collectively form part of sanctioned high culture today. Beyond pointing to that fact, however, I find it difficult to make a sustained critique of the “commodity character” of these particular pieces. I do not find that there is anything particularly unique about these pieces, given the historical situation of modernism, that has not been generically analysed frequently enough and that these pieces do not share with others of their type. I am loath to project onto the material of the individual pieces more than I believe they should have to carry—that is, I do not want to project into these pieces narratives of metaphorical social resistance any more than of commodification, keeping firmly in mind DeNora’s comment that “In short, there is no one-to-one connection between musical forms and the world of ideas.”⁵⁴³ However, it is possible to consider more generally Carter’s music and position as a composer in relation to mechanisms of production and consumption, in other words how Carter’s music is mediated at what Paddison calls the *social* level.

7.3 Composition and the “situated” composer

On Paddison’s level of *social* mediation, the composer is dialectically engaged in the sphere of production. The composer is the labourer, working with musical materials to produce the work of art, an object of consumption that appears autonomous. Of this level of mediation Paddison says:

⁵⁴³ DeNora, “The concerto and society,” 21. See also Klumpenhouwer’s objection to analyses that give musical materials a false agency in Klumpenhouwer, “Late Capitalism, Late Marxism and the Study of Music,” 390-92.

The mediation of music and society is dominated by the commodity form, as mediated labour which is no longer aware of its origins in labour. The apparent autonomy of the commodity form has, of course powerful affinities with the apparent autonomy of art. This level would also focus on the kinds of institutions through which music operates and by which it is shaped.⁵⁴⁴

The apparent autonomy of the consumer product and the apparent autonomy of the art object share characteristics, as Paddison points out. However, the commercial exchange of music-as-performance is not as simple as that of an object-as-product and involves a complex of institutions and organisations in its social mediation. John Link provides a critical assessment of the often-ignored influence of music institutions on the creation of new music, in this case around the last decades of the twentieth century which inaugurated Carter's late musical style. Link argues that, in welcoming the rise of the more accessible Minimalist and New Romantic styles in the concert hall, there was:

... a still-prevalent critical tendency to view the enormous changes taking place in contemporary concert music in the early 1980s as a proliferation of fresh new styles that swept away the hermetic narcissism of the post-war modernists. In addition to ignoring the aesthetic changes affecting modernist composers at the time, this narrative overlooks the importance of institutional changes that cut across stylistic boundaries.⁵⁴⁵

In other words, while the new musical styles appeared to proliferate 'purely' as a musical reaction to modernism, in fact these changes were socially mediated. As Link argues, resources dwindled and rehearsal time shrank. Music of composers who had benefited from the somewhat contested Cold War patronage of modernism was now too expensive to rehearse due to the greater time needed to adequately perform unfamiliar styles and playing techniques compared to the 'postmodern' repertoire. The simplification of means found in Carter's late style, Link argues, was partially a response to the desire to have compositions performed more frequently by orchestras and chamber groups operating under tighter financial constraints. This view is supported by Carter's assessment of writing for orchestra in 1991:

"I feel that the orchestra is a lost cause: it's too expensive and too much trouble. If you write very original music, nowadays the orchestras in America haven't time to rehearse it. They try sometimes, and with a good deal of good will they can raise the

⁵⁴⁴ Paddison, "Music and Social Relations: Towards a Theory of Mediation," 267.

⁵⁴⁵ Link, "Elliott Carter's Late Music," 41-42.

thousands of dollars it takes to have the extra rehearsals. And then the public doesn't see why they should have bothered to do it when they hear the music."⁵⁴⁶

A few years later Carter seems to have resolved this feeling as he embarked on the first piece in what was to become his late symphonic masterwork *Symphonia: Sum Fluxae Pretium Spei*. Thus, characteristics of Carter's late-style music could be read as stylistic changes that were mediated by social values expressed in commodity terms.

Carter's career certainly provides enough evidence of the fact that 'difficulty' plays a considerable part in the decision by music institutions to program a piece. From Koussevitsky's refusal to program Carter's *Holiday Overture*,⁵⁴⁷ to the lack of success of Carter's music for the ballets *Pocahontas* and *The Minotaur*,⁵⁴⁸ the challenge of the Concerto for Orchestra to its commissioning conductor Leonard Bernstein,⁵⁴⁹ and the general reluctance in the 1970s and 80s to program many of Carter's pieces more than once despite his place among the 'elite' of modern composers,⁵⁵⁰ Carter's mature music has a history of occupying a contested space because of its 'difficulty.' This points to the dominating influence of commercial values that underpins music practice, determined by socio-cultural values that permeate decisions about artistic value and commercial risk involved in programming 'difficult' music. In the Cold War period of so-called cultural diplomacy, these risks were determined quite differently from the early twenty-first century. Carter's String Quartet No.1 provides a good example. Martin Brody puts on record the political machination of the staging of the 1954 European première of Carter's First String Quartet, the piece that launched Carter as an international figure in the new music world in spite of its 'difficulty.'⁵⁵¹ The First String Quartet won the prestigious Liège Prize only to be disqualified because of already having been performed and being under contract for publication at the time of the awarding.⁵⁵² After this already controversial beginning to its international recognition, the piece was programmed in a new music festival in Rome only to have the contracted

⁵⁴⁶ Ford, *Composer to Composer: conversations about contemporary music*, 8.

⁵⁴⁷ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 115. Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 58.

⁵⁴⁸ Considered "unduly thick" according to Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 96.

⁵⁴⁹ Richard Derby, "Elliott Carter's Visit to the University of California Santa Barbara, April 16, 1976," *Elliott Carter Studies Online* 1 (2016).

⁵⁵⁰ Ford, *Composer to Composer: conversations about contemporary music*, 8. Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 28.

⁵⁵¹ Brody, "Cold War Genius: Music and Cultural Diplomacy at the American Academy in Rome." Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 24.

⁵⁵² Guberman, "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War," 151-58.

quartet, the Parrenin Quartet, pull out of playing it because of it being “trop difficile.”⁵⁵³ Wheels were set in motion by the Cold War cultural conspirator and friend of Carter’s, Nicholas Nabokov and his funding apparatus, ensuring the Parrenin Quartet performed the piece after all. All the risks were deemed to be worth it for the political gain that having Carter’s piece on the program would have for cultural power brokers in Rome at that important immediate post-war period. It is hard to conceive of such a dramatic story being told about the significance of a piece of new modernist music today. The system of cultural and political values around new music has changed.

The reputation of being a composer of ‘difficult’ music followed Carter all his career, sometimes working in his personal favour and sometimes not. As noted, Link sees the simplification in Carter’s late style as partially a response to the consequences of that reputation. Link’s interpretation provides an interesting angle on the dialectic between composer-as-subject and music-as-object. In Paddison’s terminology, the sphere of reproduction and distribution (of performance, recording, music events) feeds back to the composer’s relationship to the sphere of production (composing, musical materials) since the composer him/herself operates within the social world that is responsible for the reproduction/distribution of the work and from this situated position can’t help but form a response to these (changing) social values. In fact according to Adorno it is precisely the composer’s response to the socio-historical nature of musical materials that forms a critique (or not) of those social values.⁵⁵⁴ But if Carter’s response was to simplify his means purely to gain access to performance opportunities, it would of course be entirely un-dialectical and would have doubtfully resulted in the (still complicated) music that Carter actually wrote. As Link says, such an assessment “risks portraying Carter as a composer in the grip of irresistible forces, compromising his ideals to reduce his and his performers’ workload and court popular acclaim.”⁵⁵⁵ Likewise, as I have argued in my analysis of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos, Carter’s late musical style does not equate to a capitulation to ideology despite its use of repetition and traditional forms, precisely because of the dialectical manner in which Carter engages with his materials. Link notes that the constraints imposed by Carter’s simplified techniques (relative to his earlier music) were “a powerful imaginative stimulus, both inspiring new aesthetic directions and placing earlier achievements in a

⁵⁵³ Brody, “Cold War Genius: Music and Cultural Diplomacy at the American Academy in Rome,” 385.

⁵⁵⁴ Recall the discussion in Chapter 2.2.

⁵⁵⁵ Link, “Elliott Carter’s Late Music,” 45.

new context.”⁵⁵⁶ Similarly in Chapter 3, I argued that the way Carter uses repetition, sonority and “recycling” of materials in his late music takes on a critical dimension rather than being solely a response to the aesthetic values of the day or the demands of commissioning bodies.

On the other side of the equation, Carter himself was actively involved in music institutions and the promotion of new music through organisation such as the International Society for Contemporary Music throughout a good deal of his life. The long-lasting personal connections and friendship that Carter formed with important people involved with such institutions were also significant for his music (for example, Daniel Barenboim, Oliver Knussen, Pierre Boulez, William Glock). This involvement brought Carter himself into the arena of the politics of promoting the aesthetic value of particular new musical directions. Meyer and Shreffler claim that Carter worked “tirelessly to improve conditions for composers and to support performances in a cultural environment that was not always supportive of complex post-tonal music.”⁵⁵⁷ While these efforts clearly had significant benefits for the promotion of Carter’s own music, much of this work, they argue, had a different purpose:

Carter’s lifelong participation in the “civic life” of new music can be explained by his conviction that cultural life does not come from the random coalescence of individual efforts, but rather from people working together to mould tastes and to give direction to musical life.⁵⁵⁸

There is evidence that Carter felt an obligation actively to encourage “a sense of a public discourse and collective ownership of culture.”⁵⁵⁹ Thus the picture is complicated by the dynamic relationship of the composer to his environment—a multi-faceted subject dialectically engaged with a social world that facilitates but also shapes artistic expression. In considering such interactions it is worth heeding Martin Brody’s warning that

... in exploring the ideologies, institutions, and systems of Cold War patronage, we need to be ever mindful of the perils of reifying the idea of artistic autonomy and its antithesis. We need, rather, a dynamic, nuanced model of the transaction between

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 8.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 8.

composers and their patrons, one that articulates the space between the vanishing points of an utterly co-opted and a pristinely independent artist.⁵⁶⁰

The balance Brody calls for recognizes that commercial transactions are also socio-cultural (and ideological) transactions and the aesthetic finds itself in a dialectical relationship with these transactions. This is as true for the period of cold-war cultural politics as it is for the period of late-capitalist cultural pluralism. Carter was never naive about this relationship and in fact it was a driving force behind all the changing ways that he engaged with the materials of music over the span of his career. As I have argued throughout Part 1 of this thesis, Carter was consciously aiming to communicate a musical ‘message’ to a broad audience, to engage with society through music. The means for achieving this goal changed as socio-cultural values and institutions changed and as the historical meaning of musical materials also changed.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, his efforts to promote the value of new music to the broader society, Carter also grappled with the apparent social uselessness of composing new music at various points in his career.⁵⁶¹ One such time is documented on a private cassette recording that Carter made in November 1960.⁵⁶² This recording is significant because it shows Carter thinking unguardedly about how to formulate in words what is a complex and often perplexing problem of the value of music to society. He approaches the questions he asks himself from a very personal and experiential perspective. He begins the tape by stating: “The question of what a composition is in terms of our kind of society, what kind of an object it is, is a very interesting one, I think.” He goes on to explore what he calls “trade value” and its opposite, “good-turn value,” in objects, activities and music in society. Through this monologue, Carter is clearly trying to justify the sense of intrinsic value for society that he feels adheres to new musical composition but which is hard to rationalize in commodity terms: “Now composition seems to me to have very little trade value, certainly in America it has almost none. But its value, so to speak, as a good turn, is immense.” Taking an example of the boy scout who helps an old lady cross the road, Carter argues that there is nothing to be gained in commercial terms from this act but rather that the boy “is giving a kind of demonstration of his beliefs that kindness and help to other people is an activity that

⁵⁶⁰ Brody, “Cold War Genius: Music and Cultural Diplomacy at the American Academy in Rome,” 387.

⁵⁶¹ Recall discussion in Chapter 1.2.

⁵⁶² The cassette recording is held in the Elliott Carter Archive at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel. I made the transcription in 2008. I have edited out hesitations and partial utterances. It is reproduced here with kind permission from the Amphion Foundation and the Paul Sacher Stiftung.

is part of the operation of society and expresses his belief in the society itself and its continuation.” Similarly, the good-turn value in new music lies in its contribution to social beliefs and it is almost impossible to imagine

a culture without these, so to speak, fundamental works [of art] that raise the spirit and encourage the ideals of people and make them feel that what they are connected with as a society is something that is worth while and not something that is just concerned with materialistic aims.

Of even greater interest is the way Carter describes the conviction required of the composer producing these works of music (or art):

Now the good turn, of course, on this level can only be done if a person himself who is doing it thoroughly believes in the good turn. That he could not understand life without such good turns being done. That is, that a man doesn't make up his mind, as I have described, to do this kind of good turn and then do it; he feels that society itself could not go on unless there were such things as its basis and, like most musicians of the past, represents such a high standard of this particular quality of inspiration, let us say, that he feels that more should be created and he hopes that perhaps he can do it and therefore supply further useful works that help people to live their lives in more understanding and more happy, inspired and living way. This good turn aspect therefore has the other side that the individual who is doing this good turn cannot help do the good turn.

Therefore musical composition is in this sense of enormous importance and since ... it is assumed that the citizens in America do this thing without any encouragement on the part of society ... or any real understanding of this operation on the part of the society ... it is most important to realize therefore that a work of music particularly is done as ... a kind of good turn to the society ... It has nothing to do actually with publicity, it has to do with something in the souls of individuals.

The composer is seen as working for society without necessarily gaining appreciation or acceptance from that society. The mission of a composer is in this sense a selfless one, done for the greater good. The strength with which Carter talks about the conviction required of an artistic person to follow their calling suggests that in the process of formulating his ideas in this private unedited recording, Carter may have been drawing considerably on his own personal experience of becoming a composer and particularly the conflict between himself and his family over the worthiness of his chosen career.

“Biographical material is dangerous,” warns Julian Johnson in his book *Webern and the Transformation of Nature* because “its immediacy is both beguiling and opaque at the same time.” But, he continues, “... its real importance lies in the relationship it exhibits to a wider social *milieu* whose partial realisation it is.” For example, in the case of Webern’s preoccupation with the idea of nature in his music, Johnson says:

The social is mediated by the individual: Webern’s apparently personal expressions of enthusiasm for nature and subjective fusion of scientific and metaphysical ideas are a case study in social ideas. It is because the ideas and experience of nature are socially formed that they are worthy of analysis. This is not to take anything away from the subjective intensity of the experience. On the contrary, it redeems the experience as being of objective significance and in this it is like art itself, which embodies and reworks social ideas only through the mediation of an individual, subjective agency. The tension between the two goes to the heart of central questions about the claims of art, its social role and status.⁵⁶³

Relating Johnson’s analysis to Carter, we can see the conflict between Carter’s personal conviction about the ‘good’ of becoming a composer of new music and the lack of meaning that this had for the hardworking business family in which he grew up as a personal experience that embodied the social shifts that were occurring in America at that time. Carter himself was fully conscious of and self-reflective on the matter of the interrelation between the social and the personal. In 1989 (at the age of 80) in interview with Enzo Restagno, Carter insightfully said: “My family’s hostility remains a private fact ... or rather the reflection of a social situation which it would probably be hard for you to imagine.”⁵⁶⁴ Ten years later, in interview with Meyer and Shreffler for their centenary book (Carter was almost 100), he said of the conflict with his parents: “[Material success] was what they were concerned with. They came from poor families, both of them, so ... they were naturally concerned with that. I don’t hold it against them. Obviously my life is a revolt against all of this.”⁵⁶⁵ The generational difference between parents and child articulated here highlights the upward mobility that was becoming possible in America in the early part of the century. The relationship of economic mobility to culture is made vivid by Johnson in his discussion of the contrasting careers of Webern and Webern’s father, a highly successful mining engineer

⁵⁶³ Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12-13.

⁵⁶⁴ Restagno, *Elliott Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre Musica 1989*, 16.

⁵⁶⁵ Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 24.

turned government administrator and finally commissioner in the Ministry for Agriculture:

The difference between their careers typifies a generational difference in which the wealth of an industrial patriarchy made possible the aesthetic culture of its offspring, an economic fact which goes to the heart of understanding Viennese culture of this period. In this way Webern senior and Webern junior exemplify the truism that the cultural network is not separable from the economic network.⁵⁶⁶

While Carter was from the generation after Webern, this scenario rings true for Carter and his family in 1910s and 20s New York. We see a similar connection between Carter and his father, who ultimately enabled the cultural pursuits of his son's as the ultimate progression in the line of social mobility: from a poor grandfather who built up a lace-importing business from nothing as a young man after fighting in the Civil War, to a father who had to buy the business from the grandfather at a loss and struggled to bring it back to being what it once was ("the best lace curtain business in New York at that time"), to the son who, now no longer needing to struggle to attain material wealth, can turn his attention to a higher cultural pursuit.⁵⁶⁷ Carter's father is portrayed (in the few paragraphs that are in print about him) as a businessman but also "an idealist and pacifist with socialist sympathies" and as a hard-working man who was not necessarily steeped in wealth but who was nonetheless well-off thanks to his own efforts, especially in the first decades of the century when the lace trade was booming.⁵⁶⁸ Carter's early experiences in the cultural world of modern music in 1920s New York and his Harvard education were clearly made possible because of his middle-class upbringing. That Carter's father permitted his son's boyhood acquaintance with the much older Charles Ives would surely have had to do with Ives' standing in the business world as a successful businessman for whom music composition was something to be done in earnest but in his spare time.⁵⁶⁹ When Carter chose composition as his main career, however, he was met with disapproval from his father, who had been grooming him to take over the family business.⁵⁷⁰ Carter's father would have been voicing the

⁵⁶⁶ Johnson, *Webern and the Transformation of Nature*, 14.

⁵⁶⁷ A description of Carter's family and his early years is in Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 22-24.

⁵⁶⁸ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 14. See also descriptions in Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter*, 5-6; and Restagno, *Elliott Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre Musica 1989*, 6-7.

⁵⁶⁹ Although, Carter tells the story that his parents stopped their life-insurance with Ives's company when they found out he was a composer (Frank Scheffer, "Time is Music: Elliott Carter and John Cage," (Sine Film/Video, DVD, 1988), 0'19"-0'45").

⁵⁷⁰ Schiff says of Carter Sr: "His sympathies did not extend to musical composition." Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 14.

disapproval of a stratum of society at that time who could not see the value or relevance of pursuing something as arcane as new music composition. The American context differed in that sense starkly from Webern's Viennese cultural milieu. But ironically, it was also Carter's father who steeped his son in European culture from a young age, taking him on transatlantic boat trips and teaching him French, in other words preparing him, in his innocence perhaps, for a life in the high arts. Carter Sr.'s disapproval of this trajectory expressed itself materially, by giving his son only minimal financial support while studying in France in the 1930s.⁵⁷¹ Reports on the inheritance Carter Sr. left his son are mixed: Schiff reports that Carter Sr. left his business to his employees on his death rather than to his only son, although Meyer and Shreffler tell a different story.⁵⁷² But probably worse than limited financial support was that his father did not attend performances of Carter's music.⁵⁷³ There is a sense in the archival tape recording that Carter is working through a personal justification for his choice of a composing career, making a case for it not being a frivolous pastime turned into an occupation, but rather a labour of "immense" significance to society, perhaps couching its value in terms that a socialist business owner like his father might conceivably appreciate. The theme of the individual's particular contribution to society at large was a broader social question manifest as a personal dilemma that Carter turned into an overarching motivation for the shaping of the materials of his music, as we have seen in the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3. Thus, this dialectic between the composer and the musical materials can be seen as socially mediated, springing directly from a lived personal experience that was at the same time symptomatic of that period in social history.⁵⁷⁴

The socio-cultural situation at the turn of the twenty-first century, however, was significantly changed compared to seventy years earlier during the depression of the

⁵⁷¹ Carter said in 1989: "With five hundred dollars [per year] I had very little to spare, so I often worked as a copiest. Nevertheless, you could live fairly well on very little, and life in Paris, with its restaurants and cafes, was very pleasant." Restagno, *Elliott Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre Musica 1989*, 12. Schiff reports "His father promptly cut his allowance to five hundred dollars a year. The punishment involved sacrifices if not squalor—Carter says his teeth never recovered from those years of neglect." Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 16.

⁵⁷² Schiff notes that "... when he died he left the company to its employees." *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 24. Carter did inherit a portfolio of properties in New York, which he sold and invested in the Amphion Foundation to promote performances of new music, in Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*, 24.

⁵⁷³ Wierzbicki, *Elliott Carter*, 6. Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 14.

⁵⁷⁴ While Carter's specific situation was a personal one, it did not exist in isolation. As discussed in Chapter 1, particularly in the 1930s depression and during World War II many composers questioned the relevance of writing, as Carter put it, "advanced modern music with its elite audience," Edwards, *Flawed Words*, 59-60. Charles Seeger and Ruth Crawford, for example, stopped composing altogether (see Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger*, 198.)

1930 and even to forty years earlier at the start of the 1960s when Carter made the tape recording. Paddison, in his chapter “Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-garde,” addresses the socio-cultural condition of music at the turn of the twenty-first century. He argues that the view of art accompanying a modernist aesthetic that it must resist commodification dissolved into a view of art “which is accommodating and assimilated, and which embraces and celebrates commodification.”⁵⁷⁵ A concomitant change was the post-modern rejection of the idea of history, progress and future utopias, and indeed of the possibility of “The New.” This rejection he links to the treatment of time in the arts, postmodernism attempting to be timeless, against modernism requiring a sense of overarching continuity despite expressing a fractured experience of time. What Paddison takes to task most about the postmodern attitude in the arts is its inability to be critical of the social totality in which it so willingly immerses itself—critical reflection becomes impossible as all positions are relative, including the historical:

What is noticeably lacking is any sense of a critical self-reflection at work at a structural level in the relation to styles and forms of the past, or any acknowledgement that the interaction is with material made up of ideologically loaded handed-down gestures which are dynamic in character ... In its rejection of the critical, oppositional, self-reflexive work of art, postmodernist art risks becoming merely a celebration of the commercialization of culture and the commodification of art.⁵⁷⁶

Unlike some postmodern styles, Carter’s music responds much more dialectically to the change in socio-cultural values and musical styles at the turn of this century. The simplification of means in Carter’s late music does not embrace notions of the end of history or the end of art, nor does it embrace the commodification of art. Instead, it takes its own material and re-shapes it, and in doing so Carter’s music responds critically to the notion of postmodern stasis which is expressed through techniques that make time stand still, such as repetition and untransformed historical forms. Paddison describes musical postmodernism as adopting “a conception of time which is a-teleological, with emphasis on the present moment, the ‘now’ either as the extension of the moment over large, unarticulated periods, or as the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents—in both cases, however, without the tension created by assumptions concerning an underlying sense of continuity.”⁵⁷⁷ Carter’s late music

⁵⁷⁵ Paddison, “Postmodernism and the Survival of the Avant-garde,” 205.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

remains laden with precisely this tension between continuity and repetition. Yet, in its changed way of expressing this temporal tension, it also recognizes that the critical potential of musical materials is not fixed by modernism nor is it necessary for the path of new music to lead to complete social alienation for the sake of holding onto reified notions of what oppositional or resistant music should sound like. In the composition of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos Carter is unwilling to reject the present any more than the historical. Both pieces engage with material concepts characteristic of postmodernism but through an historical lens, in other words they use features and gestures that show a semblance of the postmodern but are re-formed critically into an ongoing tension or dialectic between content and form, with a modernist view of temporality as “polyphonic” and discontinuous, “plotted against an underlying assumption of continuity.”⁵⁷⁸ In this way, these pieces could claim to resist their commodity character despite being embedded in the social exchange that makes music performance, production and distribution possible.

Carter clearly saw new music composition as something powerfully transformative, standing in direct opposition to the monotony and boredom of consumer culture. In the tape recording Carter says that, in the face of a work of music, “the desire to be, so to say, a consumer, quickly becomes surfeited.” He continues:

Why should people earn money to buy new washing machines and new television sets and to be generally the kind of consumers we're encouraged to be, merely to gain a comfortable life and then to retire in boredom once they have gotten it. It's more important that they have something that spurs them on ... whether these new comforts be gotten or not. And it is these works, this sort of ... radiant energy or vitamin pill that, let us say, shines out in the culture and gives every part of it a certain direction and purpose.⁵⁷⁹

This positive image of music composition, which Carter recorded in 1960, seems more in line with his statement in 2008 that he hoped people would take away “happiness” from hearing his music, than it does with Schiff’s description of this cold-war period in Carter’s career initiating “a mood of anxiety ... the ironic despair of black comedy.”⁵⁸⁰ And Carter’s optimism certainly runs as a theme throughout his career. As we have seen above Whittall notes Carter’s lack of melancholy which sets his ongoing modernist

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Cassette recording (1960), Elliott Carter Archive, Paul Sacher Stiftung.

⁵⁸⁰ Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 193.

project apart from an Adornian bleakness.⁵⁸¹ The later music and earlier music remain connected by Carter's own ideal, a modernist one that is at once critical and optimistic for music's possibilities. But Carter was not alone in this view. Both Brody and Cohen observe a similar optimism in Stefan Wolpe's aesthetic, for example.⁵⁸² In the face of the many social catastrophes that have challenged us already and that are still awaiting us in the twenty-first century, this attitude is perhaps evidence that resistance can be found in a positive view of continuing to pursue the things that are most human in all our endeavours.

To sum up, in reflecting on social mediation I have remained at the level of *praxis* in DeNora's terms rather than attempting to narrate the social directly from the materials of Carter's compositions. I have explored various avenues through which the composer-subject stands in relationship to the social: through the mechanisms of production and distribution of the musical commodity in the form of music institutions; through the dialectic of the social and the autonomous nature of the musical object with which the composer must grapple, as we saw in Carter's framing of new music as a "good turn" to society; and through the socio-historical situation into which the composer is born that in the case of Carter manifested itself as social mobility within his family line, out of poverty into a cultural elite. More broadly, Paddison's model of three levels of mediation that I have followed throughout this chapter has given access to a network of extra-musical considerations which have allowed a critical reflection on the musical materials of the specific pieces, my analytical approach to them as well as broader social factors that "intentionlessly" shaped Carter's compositional aesthetic.

⁵⁸¹ Whittall, "The search for order: Carter's *Symphonia* and late-modern thematicism," 71-2.

⁵⁸² Brody, "'Where to Act, How to Move'"; and Cohen, *Stephan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora*, Introduction.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The wide recognition of Elliott Carter's position as one of the most significant and innovative modernist composers of the twentieth century is frequently accompanied by a familiar narrative of his musical career, development, style, techniques, influences and aesthetic position. Samuel Wilson argues that with such established composers (he cites Boulez as his example) there exists an "ossification" in the knowledge we have of their music and thought.⁵⁸³ While this "concretisation of knowledge" can be valuable, it means that a certain amount of breaking-up or breaking-through of the well-known narratives is needed before a fresh or critical contribution can be made to the discourse. This has certainly been the case with respect to the received knowledge around Carter's music and biography for many decades. In recent years, however, a number of significant studies have broken through the solid, familiar narrative that accompanied (and often still accompanies) descriptions of Carter's music. John Link challenges the popular image of Carter as uncompromising modernist in his assessment and interpretation of Carter's late-late music. Link shows that the last twenty years of Carter's career involved him rethinking and responding to the changing musical world at the turn of the new century. Matthew Guberman examines Carter's active role in engaging with funding bodies, performers and audiences during the Cold War years that demonstrates Carter to be far from the lone, heroic individualist labouring away in isolation and indifference to the world around him. Instead Guberman paints a picture of Carter as a motivated self-promoter, adapting to circumstances to benefit his career and responding consciously to the political climate.⁵⁸⁴ Felix Meyer and Anne Shreffler's *Centennial Portrait* provides critical commentary on material in the Carter archive, also portraying a composer who took in many influences beyond those included in standard biographical narratives.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ Wilson, "An Aesthetics of Past-Present Relations," 22-23.

⁵⁸⁴ Guberman, "Composing Freedom: Elliott Carter's 'Self-Reinvention' and the Early Cold War."

⁵⁸⁵ Meyer and Shreffler, *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents*.

My contribution in this study widens the critique in a different direction. I draw Carter's music and writings into a discourse about musical modernism that has typically been reserved for European or ex-patriot European composers, often ones who have claimed affiliations or sympathy with Adorno's thinking even if not accepting of all of his premises (Ligeti, Nono, Wolpe, Rhim for example). What I have offered here differs from other Carter studies in that I place Carter's aesthetic into contact with an Adornian tradition of philosophical aesthetics. While Carter himself claimed his philosophical influences to be closer to home in Alfred North Whitehead, and to lie more in literature than music aesthetics, I have shown that this does not preclude drawing lines of connection between Carter's musical thinking and that of Adorno's, the most influential philosopher on music of the twentieth century. Adorno was after all a contemporary of Carter's, his senior by only 5 years, and both were steeped in the modernism of the early twentieth-century cosmopolitan art world. Adorno died at the end of the decade in which Carter had just begun to write the music that was later to gain such international acclaim. Adorno might not have heard any of Carter's music. By contrast, most of Adorno's work was available to Carter and Carter had read everything that was published in the 1960s and 1970s. What this study shows, however, is that much of Carter's own writings that exhibit the greatest parallels with Adorno's thinking were completed before Carter claims to have read any of Adorno's work. Of most interest therefore in what I have shown in this dissertation is the mutual influence of a modernist mentality towards new musical composition that lay at the very fabric of the social and artistic milieu at that point in history.⁵⁸⁶ In examining parallels between Adorno's and Carter's writings, I have not looked for direct influence but rather for interpretations of Adorno's philosophical formulations that can illuminate Carter's musical aesthetics. I have focussed on Carter's notions of a message carried within music that must nonetheless remain a "self-sufficient thing;" of new music needing to maintain a dialectical relationship to its history; of the importance of temporal flow in new music in order to remain true to human experience; and of the need for music to arise from both expression and construction, in other words, to contain a dialectic of freedom and relationship, or as Martin Brody so pointedly says of Wolpe's late music, a "dialogue of mutuality and mutability."⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁶ This mentality crossed international boundaries through figures such as Carter and Adorno who reached in opposite directions across the Atlantic absorbing ideas and carrying them back and forth between the United States and Europe.

⁵⁸⁷ Brody, "'Where to Act, How to Move,'" 208.

For Carter, the political dimension of such an aesthetic, I have argued, remained located within the music itself, as a utopian impulse accessible only through listening to the musical interactions—the “auditory scenarios”—that Carter lets unfold. My claim is that Carter’s musical realisation of these scenarios changed in response to a changing social world but that the dialectic itself did not alter from Carter’s earliest pieces to his late, late musical style. The lightness of Carter’s late music responds to a late century modernism that has bounced off its postmodern Other to seek new ways of resisting both total social alienation and complete absorption into the psychology of a consumerist twenty-first century. The elements of repetition, sonority and regeneration of the past have been harnessed by Carter in his late music to work against a negative dialectic that fears for the continuation of expressive subjectivity. Working with notions of lightness, fragility, effervescence, and a continual remaking of materials and form, Carter’s late music replaces the narrative of the cathartic opposition of chaos and order with a narrative of the persistence of the most fragile and therefore most human.

In my analyses of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos, I have aimed to show how my construal of these features of Carter’s compositional aesthetic are at work in the materials and form of each piece. The formal premise of both pieces lies in a critical reinterpretation of the inherited ritornello form—a form to which repetition is intrinsic. The content of each piece works against the repetitive nature of the form by weaving in an overarching continuity. The trajectory is unfolded through the interaction of the materials themselves which are partitioned into line and chord, time and space—dialectical partners in a tussle with the cyclical drive of the form and with their own kinetic drive toward their temporal and spatial extremes. With the analyses of the *Boston* Concerto and the *ASKO* Concerto I make a significant contribution to the growing body of large-scale analyses of Carter’s orchestral music.⁵⁸⁸ In particular, I offer an important original conception of flow and continuity in the music as well as conceptually framing line and chord, space and time as dialectical opposites whose interaction defines the form of the piece as a process of material transformation.

⁵⁸⁸ Other recent important large scale analyses include Capuzzo, *Elliott Carter’s What Next?: Communication, Cooperation, and Separation*; Coulembier, “Analyzing simultaneous time layers in selected compositions by Elliott Carter and Claus-Steffen Manhkopf.”; and Theisen, “A Multifaceted Approach to Analyzing Form in Elliott Carter’s *Boston Concerto*.”

In subjecting the analyses to a ‘second reflection,’ I have tried to respond to the idea that ‘technical’ analysis and ‘critical’ analysis might be best undertaken as somewhat separated activities to prevent falling into the trap of a deterministic analytical model or of giving the musical structure a metaphorical agency it does not actually possess. At the same time a degree of mutual influence is perhaps necessary, since, as Marion Guck demonstrates, we need linguistic metaphors to translate the otherwise inaccessible musical experiences.⁵⁸⁹ In the same way, we need linguistic metaphors to show musical structures as homologous to social structures. In other words, the categorisation of different types of analytical methods is also somewhat illusory, something I have aimed to acknowledge in the notion of a ‘circle of analyses’ where the seemingly discrete methods nonetheless flow around into each other, with thoughts about musical structure influencing thoughts about mediated social content and vice versa.

Nevertheless, by embarking on a separate critical reflection I have still attempted to open up the analyses to interpretations that are released from the need for empirical demonstration and that can create an imaginative linguistic interaction with the experience of the musical content. Thus the demands of form and content of the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos are narrated as mediating a critique of individual and social interaction that concludes with a utopia of survival as its resolution. Furthermore, historical social relations are found mediated in the concerto genre, where the dialectic of commodity form and autonomy form of the music finds its origins in an historical context of musical patronage, dedication and virtuosity. And finally, the composer’s dialectic with the musical materials is told as a creative response to a lived personal dilemma that was at the same time symptomatic of a period in social history where participating in the advancement of modernist culture was seen by an earlier generation to be in conflict with contributing to the social good. In these ‘second reflections’ I pursue ways of drawing the outside in without burdening the music with metaphorical meaning but rather by showing the materials as mediating the outside on different levels of specificity.

⁵⁸⁹ Guck, “Analytical Fictions.” Refer back to discussion in Chapter 4.

Limitations and further directions

Nothing about this study can claim to be complete: I have not aimed to provide definitive technical analyses nor indeed to link Carter's compositional aesthetic conclusively or singularly to Adorno's theory of new music. Simon Jarvis comments that "[t]he self sufficiency of the analysis of a single musical work or movement is itself illusory ... Indeed it is in Adorno's view one of the primary virtues of the essay form that it frees the critic from the delusory and impoverished goal of 'coverage'."⁵⁹⁰ Thus like any study, the current one has its limitations and it is in the spirit of critical reflection to attempt to "stand outside" the work presented here and to attempt to locate some contradictory terms within the conclusions I have drawn.

Firstly, a more complete picture of Carter's compositional aesthetic would certainly be gained by drawing connections between the myriad influences that Carter himself identifies and that undoubtedly played a role in the cultural milieu of Carter's earlier decades. Jonathan Bernard has already made important inroads into this exploration.⁵⁹¹ As already mentioned, the world of New York political activists and intellectuals that Brody critically investigates in relation to Milton Babbitt is no doubt relevant to offering a more nuanced narrative of the development of Carter's ideas about music and politics. Further investigation into primary sources would no doubt also be valuable in this regard. My study has relied, with only one exception, on secondary sources. The use of the Carter archive at the Paul Sacher Stiftung containing Carter's letters and unpublished writing offers much potential for researching such questions.

Secondly, a further probing into the influences on Carter's notion of the temporal in music would seem to me necessary for any continuation of the work I have offered here. Alfred North Whitehead was certainly influential on Carter in this respect and markedly different in his notions of time from Adorno. It is also, I believe, in the finer conception of the temporal that Adorno and Carter can be shown to part ways. Robert Witkin argues that Adorno's understanding of the temporal is critically bound to his sociological model, in which a system of true social interaction must arise from the "emergent character of the present." This means that it is only by people freely and spontaneously interacting that change and development, society and history, become

⁵⁹⁰ Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, 132-33.

⁵⁹¹ Bernard, "Elliott Carter and the Modern Meaning of Time."

possible. As Witkin says: “This emergence, this temporality, is integral to sociality which Adorno sees in terms of the ‘going out’ from the self to the other and in the mediation of the self by the other. Temporality is constructed by social relations.”

Witkin shows that Adorno was suspicious of the artistic exploration of the unconscious, the primitive, the non-rational, arguing that the historical dimension, and thus the freedom of subjective expression and action, is eliminated in the representation of such pre-determined collective emotional drives, leaving them open to totalitarian and authoritarian misuse. This lay at the heart of Adorno’s critique of primitivism in Stravinsky and in the Cubist movement.

Witkin, on the other hand, argues that much of this avant-garde art, far from opening a crack to totalitarianism, in fact opened the audience’s sense apparatus to a new awareness of the act of seeing (Witkin approaches the question through the visual arts). Rather than taking seeing for granted, this movement of modernist art made the *act of seeing* itself the topic of exploration by making the individual aware of the internal, or *intra-active*, processes that are taken for granted in the act of looking at an object—what he has called “machineries for sensibility.” To achieve this awareness in the audience, the relationship of subject to object is manipulated through a collapsing of the temporal dimension (e.g. showing all view-points at once in a Cubist painting; bringing separate objects together into the same time-frame; non-linear narratives and stream of consciousness writing). By doing so, a greater understanding of the “second nature” that has become our constructed way of seeing can be opened up from which a new sociality can develop.

While it is certainly the case, as I have argued in this study, that progressive temporality in music was an important means of expressing lived human experience for Carter, it is also true that Carter saw temporal simultaneity an especially important part of that lived human experience and this connects Carter in some respects to Surrealist notions of the collapsing of linear time onto a single moment. Carter did not tolerate the overlaying of obviously unrelated musics. However, many of the influences that Carter names on his thinking about time and especially time in dream-states—for example Jean Cocteau’s film *Le Sang d’une Poète*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Proust’s *À La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Beckett’s plays—deal with temporal experience as non-linear and intra-personal, drawing the reader/viewer into a heightened consciousness of their perception of time itself. While I have argued that stasis is an untenable musical state for Carter, and that

temporal progress, movement and change are the only means of a true human expression, the subtler complications that simultaneous musical layering and its momentary static effect bring to the question of temporality have not been explored or critiqued in this study. Similarly, this study has spoken about the illusion of repetition in the *Boston* and *ASKO* concertos, however it has only touched on how illusory repetition and uncertain points of memory recall, or distant referencing, might bring to the listener a “reflective awareness of one’s [listening].” These domains present important lines of questioning for further research.

The analytical interpretations I have presented in this study are significant for the field of interdisciplinary music study and the task of linking empirical analysis to social context. In the first part of this dissertation I have interpreted facets of Carter’s compositional aesthetic as articulated in his writings and interviews through the lens of an Adornian aesthetics of modernist music, showing how Adorno’s philosophical apparatus can be harnessed as conceptual and analytical tools to shed greater light on the meanings of Carter’s musical concerns. In particular I have shown that Adorno’s conception of the socially mediated nature of music has importance in understanding the way Carter conceived of the social role that his compositions played. Carter’s claim that his music communicated an important message is easily dismissed by younger generations of listeners who look for an all too obvious connection between music and rational meaning. I have demonstrated that Carter’s notion of artistic communication comes from the modernist mentality that locates the message firmly within the artistic means themselves and as such Adorno’s dialectical reasoning about the social mediation of music helps to reclaim the critical and communicative dimensions of Carter’s compositions that can be too quickly judged—in the contemporary landscape of pluralism—as recalcitrant or even out-dated formalism.

An important contribution of this study is its multi-dimensional character. I have presented analyses of Carter’s writings from a philosophical perspective, I have offered analyses of large-scale compositions from a technical perspective, and I have presented a critical interpretation of both the formal and the social levels of mediation that these compositions contain as well as a broad interpretation of the situated nature of the composer in a dialectic with the musical materials from a particular socio-historical

position. In other words, I have suggested ways in which the nodes on the circle of analysis are both discrete and permeable as well as showing, in a sense, that the circle is never complete. I would like, rather boldly, to think that I have managed to come some way towards achieving what Kofi Agawu claims Adorno has made possible for the analysis of music: to suspend certainty for provisionality and take the risk that “what has been said may be false, incomplete, or inadequate, and that there is always more to say and especially to ask.” Agawu claims Adorno offers “an ethical stance” that is framed by “an embrace . . . of a simple yet powerful belief that it is possible—indeed desirable—for one musician-writer to write something that other musicians find edifying.”⁵⁹² Elliott Carter’s music continues to offer a tantalising richness in the depth and variety of its expression and the complexities of its construction. My hope is that what I have to offer in this study will stimulate others to write about Carter’s music in whatever ethical and edifying way that provokes the imagination.

⁵⁹² Agawu, “What Adorno Makes Possible for Music Analysis,” 55.

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