Recognising Absurdity

Recognising Absurdity
through Compositional Practice
Comparing an Avant-Garde Style
with being avant garde

Critical Commentary

on the

Portfolio of Original Compositions

Alannah Marie Halay

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Abstract

'avant garde' and 'Avant Garde': one term denotes artistic progression, the other describes a fixed concept. These terms are easily and often confused, and this contributes to blurring the boundaries between being progressive and adhering to a style. Unknowingly adhering to the Avant-Garde style, under the false guise of being 'new', perpetuates a Sisyphean nature in Avant-Garde practice today. Such practice has become inward-looking, separated from the majority of society, and therefore fails to be the 'advance post' it proclaims. In Camus's terms, this is absurd.

Rather than proving and accepting this absurdity, I explore the unfolding of such absurdity through compositional practice, and attempt to avoid it. This involves recognising the absurdity (and maintaining an awareness of it) as well as examining and comparing the mechanics behind the formation of the Avant-Garde *style* with *being* avant garde by way of an introspective examination of my compositional process. This practice-led method is supported by theoretical, musicological, and analytical research into existing practice. My research is supplemented by the following topics: Meno's paradox; Heidegger's hermeneutic framework as a development of Meno's paradox; Adorno's notion of naïveté; *détournement* as a means of recognising absurdity through practice.

Examining my own compositional process, in relation to existing practice, allows me to propose that the Avant-Garde style is based on two interacting hermeneutic frameworks between 'unfamiliarity' and 'familiarity', and creative 'freedom' and 'restriction'. If one is to overcome these frameworks and be *genuinely* avant garde, subversion of technique cannot be an end in itself but should support the truth content of a musical work; this is because a musical work is defined by its context more than its constituent musical characteristics. Subversion must happen in relation to the context of a composition, not the composition itself. Adherence to an Avant-Garde context, perpetuated by the expectations of practitioners with a knowledge of that context, prevents compositional practice from moving beyond that context and being *genuinely* avant garde. All one can do now is recognise this absurdity. This is not a solution, but should pave the way for future developments in this area. For now, 'there is no longer any art that has remained inviolable.'[1]

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[1] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 432

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[1] *[Co]Valence* II is also discussed in chapter III as part of the *[Co]Valence* collection.

Chapter III

The *[Co]Valence* collection (2013–2016) is a c. thirty-minute work comprising nine pieces for various ensembles and solo instruments:

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[2] Alannah Marie Halay, '*Interstice* Now Available On iTunes', *Alannah-Marie: Composer, Sound Artist, Researcher* <http://alannah.co/2014/07/09/arnold-schoenbergs-string-quartet-no-2/> [accessed: 26/09/16]

List of Recordings

The following is a list of recordings (audio and video) that accompany this thesis on CD and DVD.

CD: Portfolio of Compositions

Track 1: *The Interlocutor* (ensemble) performed by Discord (03:05)

Track 2: *Graphite Pendulum* (clarinet in B♭ and fixed-media electronics) performed by Alannah Marie Halay (06:28)

Track 3: *Graphite Pendulum* (clarinet in B♭ and fixed-media electronics) performed by John Pearmain (06:31)

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Track 9: *Parallax Error* (any four-string bowed instrument) performed by Ellen Fallowfield on violoncello (02:40)

Track 10: *Parallax Error* (any four-string bowed instrument) performed by Katharina Gross on violoncello (03:10)

Track 11: *Parallax Error* (any four-string bowed instrument) performed by Dario Calderone on double bass (03:19)

Track 12: *'It sounds an isochronism.'* (piano and optional fixed-media electronics) performed by Alannah Marie Halay on piano, with fixed-media electronics (06:00)

Track 13: Two extracts of *'It sounds an isochronism.'*: comparing two versions (01:21)

Track 14: *[Co]Valence* II (flautist(s) and optional fixed-media electronics) performed by the University of Leeds Flute Ensemble, comprising thirteen flautists (03:04)

Track 15: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image* (chamber ensemble) performed by LSTwo Ensemble, conducted by Mic Spencer (07:02)

Track 16: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: ^{4}**B$_4$** (chamber ensemble) LSTwo Ensemble, conducted by Mic Spencer (07:40)

DVD: *Interstice* Demonstration Video

Video 1: *Interstice* Demonstration Video (03:06)

Introduction: 'avant garde' and 'Avant Garde'

This thesis is written with an awareness of the role that late capitalism/the spectacle plays in the production and interpretation of artworks.[1] It orients itself around the question of how one can achieve originality in a world where cultures of endism suggest that everything has been done. As Sim explains, Fukuyama, amongst '[m]any […] thinkers in recent years, such as the French postmodernist theorists Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard, [has] contributed to […] [a] debate that goes under the name of 'endism'. In its turn, endism is often considered to be one of the distinguishing features of the postmodern culture that we are constantly being informed we now inhabit.'[2] Likewise, Jameson writes that 'premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that (the end of ideology, art, or social class; the "crisis" of Leninism, social democracy, or the welfare state, etc., etc.); taken together, all of these perhaps constitute what is increasingly called postmodernism.'[3] Jameson's text highlights how genuine 'originality' is impossible within the current

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[1] Discussing such a topic in detail is beyond the scope of this thesis, and it has already been explored in detail in existing literature. It might be useful to note that the following texts, pertaining to this topic, have influenced the investigations and conclusions in this thesis: Theodor Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', in *Essays on Music,* trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 94–136. Part of this chapter is also available online: Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', transcribed by Andy Blunden, *Marxists.org* <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm> [accessed: 22/08/16]; Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211–244; Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (Eastbourne: Soul Bay, 2009) or, for an alternative translation, see: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Fredy Perlman [?] (Detroit: Black & Red, 2010); John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980); Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Dave Laing, *The Marxist Theory of Art* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978); Georg Lukács, 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), pp. 83–222; Karl Marx, 'Chapter One: The Commodity' in *Capital Volume 1*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 125–177; Karl Marx, 'Estranged Labour', in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* trans. and ed. by Martin Milligan (New York: Dover, 2007), pp. 67–83; George Steiner, 'Marxism and the Literary Critic', in *A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 37–53; George Steiner, 'Georg Lukács and his Devil's Pact', in *A Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 54–67; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[2] Stuart Sim, *Derrida and the End of History* (Delhi: Worldview, 2005), p. 8

[3] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 1. Jameson also adds that, what is termed postmodernism, is 'generally traced back to the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s.' (p. 1)

epoch, explaining how, now that the notion of 'progress' has been exhausted, all one can do is refer to the past. In his words:

> Adorno's prophetic diagnosis has been realized, albeit in a negative way: not Schönberg (the sterility of whose achieved system he already glimpsed) but Stravinsky is the true precursor of postmodern cultural production. For with the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style – what is as unique and unmistakable as your own fingerprints, as incomparable as your own body […] – the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture. This situation evidently determines what the architecture historians call "historicism", namely, the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion, and in general what Henri Lefebvre has called the increasing primacy of the "neo."[4]

In order to explore how one can engage with 'originality' in a culture where theories of endism predominate and where we are destined to repeat the past, this thesis approaches, and subsequently defines, 'avant garde' in two ways. These two ways also resemble the two ways in which I suggest one can be naïve (as explored alongside, and inspired by, Adorno's theories of 'naïveté' which I discuss further below). These two definitions are distinguished throughout this thesis as follows: 'avant garde' and 'Avant Garde'.

The first definition, avant garde, denotes a *genuine* act of being 'new' and moving creative practice 'forwards' that defies stylistic norms. This form of avant-garde practice, by definition, should be constantly becoming, renewing itself. This act of being *genuinely* avant garde (as in 'new') adheres to the idea that '"avant-garde" means the vanguard, an advance post, a spearhead or the first line of a moving army: a detachment which moves in front of the main body of armed forces – but remains ahead only to pave the way for the rest of the army.' In other words, '[t]he guard is seen as "advanced" on the assumption that "the rest will follow suit".'[5] For the purpose of this thesis, this form of 'avant garde' is synonymous with terms such as 'artistic', 'creative', 'originality', 'newness', 'innovation', 'progression', 'engaging with the unfamiliar', 'going beyond', 'moving forwards', and (as will be explained) 'naïveté'.

This definition resembles the type of naïveté that Adorno identifies as being progressive. It entails being naïve to what is culturally approved, progressing blindly

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[4] Ibid., pp. 17–18
[5] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 95

forwards, ignoring the rules of convention.[6] This type of naïveté cannot be consciously forced; it must result from 'the natural essence of the artist'.[7] As Adorno writes, '[a]s soon as naïveté is taken up as a point of view, it no longer exists.'[8] This is because it turns naïveté into a criterion, and therefore becomes the point at which this progressive type of naïveté blends into its opposite, an 'aspect of conformism.'[9] This evident conflict between desiring progression and inadvertently conforming to convention can be described, in Camus's terms, as absurd.[10] This second form of naïveté embodies this thesis's second definition of 'Avant Garde': the Avant Garde as a 'style'. I acknowledge that the term 'style' is vague and that there are multiple interpretations of this word.[11] It is hereby defined as a 'replication of patterning […] that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints'.[12] This is a phenomenon that arises over time and counteracts the intended 'avant-garde statements' of art, as elaborated by Kramer:

> [t]he parallel cases of Schoenberg and Stravinsky show how what once seemed a historical break came to be part of tradition's continuum. Pathbreaking works like *Pierrot lunaire*, op. 21, and *The Rite of Spring*, for example, were taken as avant-garde statements by their first audiences. This music surely sounded unusual if not bizarre to listeners still having trouble with Richard Strauss and Claude Debussy. The composers were thought to be deliberately debunking their heritage. They were accused of assaulting both their audiences and the institution of music. By the ends of their long careers, however, Schoenberg and Stravinsky – both of whom had continued to grow in depth and singularity – were generally understood to be well within the cultural mainstream.'[13]

This second definition of 'Avant Garde' can be described as a kind of petrification that arose after the failure of the historical avant gardes. Calinescu explains that:

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[6] I explain Adorno's concept of 'naïveté' in more detail in the Literature Review.

[7] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 427

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 8

[11] One can refer to Heinrich Christoph Koch's distinction between strict and free 'style' in late-eighteenth-century counterpoint where a strict 'style' is an adherence to the 'mechanical rules of composition' and a free (or 'galant') 'style' is one that structures its phrases more loosely. In this instance, both the opposing terms 'strict style' and 'free style' were both seen positively and negatively. More information can be found in Keith Chapin, 'Learned Style and Learned Styles', in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic* Theory, ed. by Danuta Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 301–329 (p. 304)

[12] Jennifer Judkins, 'Style' in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp. 134–143 (p. 135)

[13] Jonathan D. Kramer, 'Foreword', in *Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook*, ed. by Larry Sitsky (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp. xi–xix (p. xii)

> [t]he inner contradictions of the avant-garde as a cultural concept […] coincided, in the post-World War II period, with the unexpectedly large public success of avant-garde art, and with the parallel transformation of the term itself into a widely used (and misused) advertising catchword. The avant-garde, whose limited popularity had long rested exclusively on scandal, all of a sudden became one of the major cultural myths of the 1950s and the 1960s. Its offensive, insulting rhetoric came to be regarded as merely amusing, and its apocalyptic outcries were changed into comfortable and innocuous clichés.[14]

In order to elaborate on how these historical avant gardes failed and how they differ from the present Avant Garde, I shall outline the developments historically as follows.

Around the mid-nineteenth century, the rise of Aestheticism resulted in art becoming autonomous. Calinescu explains that 'movements characterized by their extreme aestheticism, such as the loosely defined *l'art pour l'art*, or the later *décadentisme* and *symbolisme*, can best be understood when regarded as intensely polemical reactions against the expanding modernity of the middle class, with its terre-à-terre outlook, utilitarian preconceptions, mediocre conformity, and baseness of taste.'[15] However, as Bürger asserts, art became institutionalised and subsequently separated from everyday life: 'Aestheticism had made the element that defines art as an institution the essential content of works.'[16] Nevertheless, as Calinescu writes, '[t]he idea of art's autonomy was by no means a novelty in the 1830s, when the battlecry of Art for Art's Sake became popular in France among circles of young Bohemian poets and painters.'[17] Bürger explains that '[t]he concept 'art as an institution' […] refers to the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works.'[18] This 'apparatus' includes the art market, which is made up of commodities: '[s]o far, artistic production has been a type of simple commodity production (even in late capitalist society), where the material means of production have a relatively minor bearing on the quality of the product. They do, however, have significance as regards its distribution and effectiveness.'[19] These commodities are solidified works that are, in Goehr's words, 'to

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[14] Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 119–120

[15] Ibid., pp. 43–44

[16] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 49

[17] Calinescu, p. 44

[18] Bürger, p. 22

[19] Ibid., p. 30

be valued and contemplated as permanently existing creations of composers/artists.'[20] Poggioli talks about the effects of these circumstances by way of 'alienation', which, inspired by Marx's work in this area, he describes as 'the feeling of uselessness and isolation of a person […] totally estranged from a society which has lost its sense of the human condition and its own historical mission.'[21] He writes that 'the modern writer or artist has yet to reconcile himself with the fact that bourgeois-capitalist society treats him not as a creator but, on one hand, as a parasite and consumer and, on the other, as a worker and producer. […] Putting him on a par with the labourer and industrial worker, it submits him to the risks of unemployment and overproduction, thus creating what Christopher Caudwell called "the false position of the poet as a producer for the market."'[22]

Once 'art as an institution' had been established, the historical avant gardes (such as the Dadaists) sought to rebel against it *with* art. In Bürger's words, '[t]he avant-garde turns against […] the distribution apparatus on which the work of art depends, and the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy.'[23] Ironically, however, such avant-garde practice was reliant on 'art as an institution': '[i]nstitution and work contents had to coincide to make it logically possible for the avant-garde to call art into question.'[24]

In the early twentieth-century (c. 1914–1918), Dadaism, as one of the historical avant gardes, made an attack on this distribution apparatus as follows: in place of 'works', it devised what can be termed 'manifestations'. Examples of such manifestations are Duchamp's 'Ready-Mades'. Due to the fact that, by their nature, these manifestations do not involve the 'special labour' of the artist, they reveal the work's existence as a commodity. However, the issue with the ready-mades is that they are nevertheless fragmentary and have, because of this, become commodified in the form of museum pieces. Bürger explains how such commodification is inevitable:

> Duchamp's Ready-Mades are not works of art but manifestations. Not from the form-content totality of the individual object Duchamp signs can one infer the meaning, but

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[20] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 174

[21] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde¸* trans. by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1968), p. 109

[22] Ibid., pp. 112–113

[23] Bürger, p. 22

[24] Ibid., p. 49

only from the contrast between mass-produced object on the one hand, and signature and art exhibit on the other. It is obvious that this kind of provocation cannot be repeated indefinitely. The provocation depends on what it turns against: here, it is the idea that the individual is the subject of artistic creation. Once the signed bottle drier has been accepted as an object that deserves a place in a museum, the provocation no longer provokes; it turns into its opposite. If an artist today signs a stove pipe and exhibits it, that artist certainly does not denounce the art market but adapts to it.[25]

When the once-rebellious 'manifestations' of the Dadaists were accepted into the institution of art in the form of museum pieces, they could no longer fulfil their original purpose of attacking the 'art as institution'. Such reification allowed pastiche to occur because now the Dadaist-style behaviours could be replicated as part of the contemporary institution of 'the neo-avant-garde'. Put simply, '[s]ince […] the protest of the historical avant-garde against art as institution is accepted as *art*, the gesture of protest of the neo-avant-garde becomes inauthentic.'[26]

The consequences of this did not go unnoticed: painter and poet, Francis Picabia, publicly withdrew from Dada, explaining that once it was taken as a 'serious' art form, Dada had contradicted its purpose and so ceased to be Dada but became an objectified movement.[27] According to Calinescu, '[i]f we admit that Dada's nihilism expresses an "archetypal" trait of the avant-garde, we can say that any true avantgarde [*sic*] movement (older or newer) has a profound built-in tendency ultimately to negate itself. When, symbolically, there is nothing left to destroy, the avant-garde is compelled by its own sense of consistency to commit suicide.'[28] In 1956, Debord wrote that 'the negation of the bourgeois conception of art and artistic genius has become pretty much old hat, [Duchamp's] drawing of a mustache on the *Mona Lisa* is no more interesting than the original version of that painting.'[29]

In short, the autonomy of the avant gardes permitted their aging and eventually subsumed them. The historical avant gardes became the Avant Gardes replete with styles, tendencies, specialists, and cut-off from their political goals. In other words, '[w]e have commercialized art […] The bourgeois floods the world with art products of a baseness hitherto unimaginable. Then, reacting against such an evident degradation of

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[25] Ibid., p. 52

[26] Ibid., p. 53

[27] Morgan Falconer (ed.), 'Dada', *TheArtStory.org website* <http://www.theartstory.org/movement-dada.htm> [accessed: 22/08/16]

[28] Calinescu, p. 123

[29] Guy Debord, 'Methods of Détournement', *The Situationist International Text Library* <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/3> [accessed: 27/12/15]

the artist's task, art withdraws from the market and becomes non-social […] It becomes "highbrow" art, culminating in personal fantasy. The art work ends as a fetish because it was a commodity. Both are equally signs of the decay of bourgeois civilization due to the contradictions in its foundation.'[30]

As such, 'Avant-Garde style', in this thesis, denotes the rationalisation of something previously 'free' (or 'unrestricted', rather). It is the generation of a rule-based system (at the price of its 'aesthetic coherence' as Adorno claimed of 'new music' in 1954).[31] To put it another way, this is the loss of a subversive goal and is 'naïveté of a second order: the uncertainty over what purpose it serves.'[32]

The musical characteristics of the 'Avant-Garde style' can be found in literature that describes and critiques post-war Avant-Garde practice, a practice evidently divided by attempts to engage with newness and attempts to react against such engagements with newness. As Lachenmann writes, '[t]he avant-garde was at that time encountering resistance on every side, and not least from proponents of a demand for Beauty that had seemingly been betrayed.'[33] Shortly after World War II, a 'splitting of the musical world into serialists and non-serialists' was 'further complicated by divisions among the serialists.'[34] Even for the non-serialists, in many cases the 1950s saw a time of 'no mellifluous melodies (however brief), no coherent harmonies and clear-cut forms', traits which had long been anticipated by the likes of Luigi Russolo, Francesco Pratella, Edgard Varèse, and John Cage. [35] Musical characteristics included 'percussive, mechanistic music' and 'atonality, microintervals, and complex rhythmic figurations', all of which were discussed and demonstrated in texts and works such as Russolo's *Arte dei Rumori* (1913), Pratella's *Manifesto of Futurist Musicians* (1912) Varèse's composition *Ionisation* (1931), and Cage's *First Construction in Metal* (1939).[36] Such characteristics expanded the typical (now traditional) harmonic/melodic language of Western music at that time. Meanwhile those explicitly concerned with serialism in the 1950s were concerned with developing the common (now traditional) compositional

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[30] Calinescu, p. 202
[31] Theodor Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', in *Essays on Music*, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 181–202 (p. 181)
[32] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 2
[33] Helmut Lachenmann, 'The "Beautiful" in Music Today', *Tempo*, 1.135 (1980), 20–24, p. 20
[34] Reginald Smith Brindle, *The New Music: The Avant Garde Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3–4
[35] Ibid., pp. 5–6
[36] Ibid.

structures and forms, of Western music at that time, with 'integral serialism', 'free twelve-note composition', and 'indeterminacy, random or aleatory music, music of chance, or simply improvisation (total, controlled, or otherwise)'. [37] Moreover, developments in improvisation and indeterminate music in turn propelled the development of typical (traditional) Western musical notation by integrating graphics and text.[38] Musical examples illustrating such compositional developments are John Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957–58) and Pierre Boulez's Third Piano Sonata (1955–57). Both these pieces expand what was typical in Western musical practice at the time by employing percussive, angular melodies, complex rhythmic figures, and, in the Cage example, elements of indeterminacy and graphic notation, handing over an increased degree of responsibility to the performer in deciding the sonic materials of the piece. Such practice was concerned with progression, and renewing musical practice: Cage wrote of Boulez's music that 'every event [is] a discovery. It is only secondarily 12-tone. Primarily it is all a matter of rhythmic "cellules." […] The twelve tones are then applied so as to not be chromatic or "serial" but to keep alive the individuality of each sound.'[39]

Further divisions amongst the serialists were caused by reactionary attempts to 'tame' the revolutionary serialism into what one might interpret as a less progressive vocabulary; these were undertaken by composers exploring the gap between tonality and atonality, blending musical serialism (as pioneered by Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg) with traditional (often Romantic) idioms. Composers included Wolfgang Fortner, Hans Werner Henze, Humphrey Searle, Mátyás Seiber, Wladimir Vogel, Rolf Liebermann, Luigi Dallapiccola, Mario Peragallo, Riccardo Malipiero, Riccardo Nielsen, and Roman Vlad.[40] Boulez argued against such reactionary practice, describing it as 'reminiscences of a dead world' and 'an *oeuvre* manifesting such contradictions' without 'rigorous technique'.[41] Adorno described such practice as 'the opposition to the idea of the rational organization of the work, to the "indifference" of its material dimensions to each other, that marks compositional procedures such as those of

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[37] Ibid., p. 60

[38] Ibid., pp. 81–87

[39] John Cage, *The Selected Letters of John Cage*, ed. by Laura Kuhn (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2016), p. 100

[40] Brindle, p. 5

[41] Pierre Boulez, 'Schoenberg is Dead', in *Notes of an Apprenticeship*, trans. by Herbert Weinstock (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1968), pp. 268–275 (p. 273)

Stravinsky and Hindemith as reactionary.'[42] This fusion with Romanticism during the 1950s was deemed reactionary rather than progressive because it was a return to a relatively recent (and therefore familiar) past. The same cannot be said for those working with Renaissance and Medieval sources, the unfamiliarity of which ensured that it remained strange such that it counted as expansion of a twentieth-century Western musical territory. Post-war Avant-Garde practice sought inspiration from Renaissance and Medieval practice because 'it can fit alongside or within an advanced modern idiom without being incongruous.'[43] Such 'excursion into archaism' was present in the works of Peter Maxwell Davies, Roger Smalley, John Tavener, and Charles Wuorinen.'[44] One might argue that seeking newness in the very old is an attempt to revitalise the present via a recuperation of the almost lost past. Renaissance and Medieval practice happened such a long time ago (such that they were near forgotten by the 1950s) that the music responsible for its recuperation would *sound* new even though its compositional scaffolding was actually very old.

This is not to say that a nearer past was never utilised within the musical practice of twentieth-century Avant-Garde circles *later on*, after the 1950s. The 'neo-Romantics revitalised Romantic idioms in the 1980s, and in 1986, Brindle claimed that Wolfgang Rihm represented the 'mainstream of German neo-romanticism.'[45] Referring to Rihm's *Tutuguri* II (1981−2) amongst his other works, Brindle explains that '[t]he textures tend to be dense, almost turgid, especially when coupled with harmony which is complex and based on cluster-like note-groups. Metre is usually well defined, […] his most intense melody emerges as isolated, singing notes, which stand out above dense textures'.[46] Whether this particular attempted blend between atonality and tonality was progressive or not is debateable. One might argue that such an attempt to blend the gap between atonality and tonality *was* progressive because, not only did it go against a traditional, Western, conception of harmony and tonality, but it also went against the rising fashion of atonal composition and obsession with 'progression' for the sake of it.

Newness was also sought via dramatic developments in timbral exploration, which were 'obtained by exploiting the various tonal possibilities of single instruments

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[42] Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. and ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp. 45−46
[43] Brindle, p. 139
[44] Ibid., pp. 140−141
[45] Ibid., pp. 192−193
[46] Ibid.

(for instance, in his string music Webern calls for rapid successions of contrasting sounds – bowing, pizzicato, tremolo, harmonics, flautato, etc. – giving a kaleidoscopic effect of fluctuating timbres).' This led to 'an increased use of solo instruments and mixed ensembles'.[47] Other examples of compositions that explored instrumental timbre with 'extensive variation' included Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, Roger Smalley's *Pulses*, Stockhausen's *Mikrophonie* I and *Stimmung*. [48] Timbral exploration was also sought by way of the human voice, which involved varying degrees of vibrato and tone, 'humming, singing with the mouth closed or the hand over the mouth, consonant noises, vowel sounds only, "breathed" tones, "rolled" sounds, unvoiced sounds, inhaled and exhaled noises, […] [s]peaking, whispering, and "Sprechstimme" (spoken song)'.[49] Examples of such exploratory vocal music included Luciano Berio's *Circles* (1960), *Passaggio* (1961–2) and *Sequenza* III (1966), György Ligeti's *Aventures* (1962), and Sylvano Bussotti's *Siciliano* (1962).[50] Such expanded instrumental resources necessarily looked for sounds that had not previously been used or been available within Western music, and the same can be said of post-war Avant-Garde electronic music. Although there is a distinction between French *musique concrète* (concrete music) and German *elektronische Musik* (electronic music), both were concerned with 'newness' in the sounds that were employed. For instance, *musique concrete*, pioneered by Pierre Schaeffer, involved a '"montage" of live sounds […] subjected to […] (1) tape manipulation and (2) electronic modification.' [51] It employed recorded sounds that were not obviously 'musical', such as the train sounds in Schaeffer's *Étude aux chemins de fer* (1948). Compared to this use of 'prepared sound material', *elektronische Musik* comprised synthetic sounds that did not exist in nature. Unlike concrete music, it was composed 'like traditional music, being first conceived in the mind of the composer, then written down, and finally realized in sound.'[52] Nevertheless, the newness in both these areas of electronic music consisted of sonic/timbral exploration.

Further attempts to expand what was available to the practice of Western art music in the post-war years took the form of 'inspiration from the orient', which is

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[47] Ibid., pp. 153–154
[48] Ibid., p. 154
[49] Ibid., p. 164
[50] Ibid., pp. 165–173
[51] Ibid., pp. 99–100
[52] Ibid., p. 104

evident in the general employment of gamelan sound by the likes of 'Henry Cowell, Alan Hovhaness, Lou Harrison, Harry Partch, and John Cage' who all 'experimented with percussion instruments which evoked oriental effects – gongs, glass bowls, pyrex dishes, tom-toms, indian drums – while, following Cowell's experiments, Cage evolved the prepared piano, with its gentle, naïve tone and percussive colourings.'[53] Oriental influence is also apparent in 'the extreme harmonic simplicity of Terry Riley's *In C*, the perpetual ostinatos and tonal immobility of his *A Rainbow in Curved Air* […]. The dispassionate immobility of Feldman's music'.[54] Such engagements with the Orient axiomatically expanded the range of what was available to Western music in terms of timbre and musical texture (of course, engagement with Oriental influences goes as far back as Debussy with his employment of whole tones and arabesque-type melodies).

Despite this dramatic expansion of the Western Avant Garde's musical language in the post-war years, in 1975, Brindle wrote, '[t]here have been many moments in the last decades when it seemed that music was reaching a dead end. The raw materials of music – intervals, melodic steps, harmony, etc. – appeared to lose all significance.'[55] His views had changed very little by 1986 when he wrote, '[s]umming up the general musical scene, it would seem that the major period of avant-gardism is past, and the most radical upheaval in musical history is over.'[56] Seemingly, Adorno agreed with such a sentiment: in 'The Aging of the New Music', he explained that the Avant Garde had acquired definitive characteristics, characteristics that had become sedimented as a result of a 'blind belief in progress'. Once newness was thematised, it *necessarily* became sedimented, which is to say the avant-garde's pursuit of newness causes it a particular *problem* with newness such that 'new materials' rapidly become materials which connote the *idea* of newness without actually being in any way new. As such, 'little progress has been made since the early twenties'.[57] Such a 'blind belief in progress' produced an undue focus on the technical level of the artwork that disregarded the critical faculty of the work. In short, this 'blind' form of practice missed the initial point of avant-garde practice. This is why, as Adorno wrote, '[t]he sounds remain the same. But the anxiety that gave shape to its great founding works has been repressed.

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[53] Ibid., pp. 133–135
[54] Ibid., p. 136
[55] Ibid., p. 186
[56] Ibid., pp. 201–202
[57] Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', p.182

[…] art that unconsciously obeys such repression and makes itself a game, because it has become too weak for seriousness, renounces its claim to truth, which is its only raison d'être.'[58] This is not helped by the apparent mind-set of practising musicians, as Adorno explained:

> [e]ven among those who were once leaders of New Music, more than one lagged behind [...] avant-garde claims, more than one lived to some degree beyond his spiritual-cultural means. The naïveté of the musical specialist, who attends to his metier without actually participating in objective spirit, is partially responsible for this. The rift between society and the New Music runs through modern musicians themselves in more ways than one. While they embrace New Music as if it were an unavoidable task, their own inculcated taste balks against it; their musical experience is not free from the element of the non-contemporaneous.[59]

As a result of this attitude amongst practitioners, the once innovative compositional approaches, such as twelve-tone technique, have become just that: technique. 'The opening up of new dimensions of sound ("parameters" was the magic word), with its implicit denial of the Beautiful reified as the Comfortable and Familiar, […] in time it led to […] musical thinking that was blindly technical and empiricist.'[60] 'Newness' has aged such that, by the time Adorno wrote 'The Aging of the New Music', it was noticeably nothing more than a 'New Music' fetish. In Adorno's words:

> [t]welve-tone technique has its justification only in the presentation of complex musical contents, which cannot otherwise be organized. Separated from this function, it degenerates into a deluded system. [...] In the leveling and neutralization of its material, the aging of the New Music becomes tangible: it is the arbitrariness of a radicalness for which nothing is any longer at stake. Without stakes in a double sense: neither emotionally, because through the inhibition vis-a-vis such chords and the happiness in them their substance, the power of expression, their relation to the subject has been lost; nor in actuality, for almost no one gets excited anymore about that twelve-tone technique that is served up at all musical festivals. It is tolerated as the private activity of specialists, a cultural necessity in some not quite clear fashion, entrusted wholly to the experts; no one is actually challenged, no one recognizes himself in it, or senses in it any binding claim to truth.[61]

Adorno is claiming that the autonomy of art has led '[a]rtworks [to] detach themselves from the empirical world and bring forth another world, one opposed to the empirical world as if this other world too were an autonomous entity. Thus, however tragic they

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[58] Ibid., p. 183
[59] Ibid., p.184
[60] Lachenmann, p. 21
[61] Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', pp.184-185

appear, artworks tend a priori toward affirmation.'[62] As Adorno writes, this 'affirmative essence has become insufferable'.[63] Therefore, '[a]rt must turn against itself […]. It can do this because through the ages by means of its form, art has turned against the status quo and what merely exists just as much as it has come to its aid by giving form to its elements. Art can no more be reduced to a general formula of consolation than to its opposite.'[64] Moreover, '[a]rt can be understood only by its law of movement […]. It is defined in relation to what it is not.'[65] Therefore, 'art should deal affirmatively with the negativity of experience. The negative element is held to be nothing more than the mark of that process of repression that obviously goes into the artwork.'[66]

Adorno believes that art must remain true to the time in which it is formed. Once this time has passed, so too has the truth of the artwork. For instance, '[w]hether art is abolished, perishes, or despairingly hangs on, it is not mandated that the content [*Gehalt*] of past art perish.'[67] 'Artworks are alive in that they speak in a fashion that is denied to natural objects and the subjects who make them.'[68] In other words, '[t]oday, the only works that count are those that are no longer works.'[69] Providing a musical example, Adorno writes that:

> [t]he genuinely revolutionary element in his [Schoenberg's] music is the transformation of the function of expression. Passions are no longer faked; on the contrary, undisguised, corporeal impulses of the unconscious, shocks, and traumas are registered in the medium of music. They attack the taboos of the form because these taboos submit the impulses to their censorship, rationalize them, and transpose them into images. […] Real suffering has left them behind in the artwork as a sign that it no longer recognizes its autonomy; their heteronomy defies the self-sufficient semblance of the music.[70]

All this is to say that Adorno thinks that art should have a social import and truth-content in order to maintain its claim to truth, which he says is its only raison d'être. It cannot excuse current society by being affirmative or positive (by adhering to fashions

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[62] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 2
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., p. 3
[66] Ibid., p. 10
[67] Ibid., p. 4
[68] Ibid., p. 6
[69] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, p. 30
[70] Ibid., p. 35

and norms, for example) and so must maintain dialectical 'contact' with society through this import. Art feeds back into society in a reciprocal manner.

From a historical overview of the post-war Avant Garde, and Adorno's critique of such, it is evident that, once 'newness' is established as the primary goal of Avant-Garde practice, it *necessarily* becomes a reified characteristic of that Avant-Garde practice that is, ironically, not in any way new. As Adorno pointed out: the treatment of atonality became rationalised (and so 'aged') a long time ago: 'almost no one gets excited anymore about that twelve-tone technique that is served up at all music festivals […] no one is actually challenged, no one recognizes himself in it, or senses in it any binding claim to truth.'[71] Adherence to a set of reified Avant-Garde characteristics under the false guise that it is 'new' is absurd in a Camusian sense.[72] I propose that a means of removing oneself from this absurd reification of any attempt to be 'new' (or 'original') is via an engagement with what Adorno calls 'naïveté'. Detail of Adorno's take on this in *Aesthetic Theory* is outlined in the Literature Review in this thesis.[73] My particular model of naïveté is extrapolated from Adorno's description of it in *Aesthetic Theory*. The dialectic Adorno proposes in *Aesthetic Theory* can be mapped onto what he writes about the failures of aging and the positives of a creative trajectory in *Philosophy of New Music*:

> [t]he question that twelve-tone composition poses to the composer is not how musical meaning can be organized but rather how organization can become meaningful. What Schoenberg has produced […] are progressive attempts at an answer to this question. […] What is domineering in these late gestures, however, responds to what is tyrannical in the origin of the system itself. Twelve-tone exactitude […] treats music according to the schema of fate. […] Twelve-tone technique is truly its fate. […] The subject rules over the music by means of a rational system in order to succumb to this rational system itself. […] Whereas this freedom is achieved in its disposal over the material, it becomes a determination of the material, a determination that […] subordinates the subject to its constraint.[74]

In contemporary compositional practice, it seems to me that the two ways in which one can be naïve collapse into one another so much so that what is considered as

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[71] Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', p. 185

[72] This thesis defines absurdity according to Albert Camus's definition in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which I explain in more detail in the Literature Review.

[73] Although set up in a different way, the following text demonstrates the dialectic that Adorno is working with in relation to the creative approaches of Valéry and Proust: Theodor Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum', in *Prisms*, trans. by Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1997) pp. 173-186 (esp. p. 80)

[74] Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, pp. 54–55

engaging with Adorno's (progressive) naïveté is actually an adherence to naïveté as a criterion of the Avant-Garde style. In other words, much practice, which claims to be avant garde (in the *genuine* sense), is absurd (in the Camusian sense) because, instead of being 'new', or engaging with something 'new', or presenting something 'new', and so moving creative practice 'forwards', it perpetuates a pointless existence by adhering to the Avant-Garde style. By default, this eschews its 'vanguard' meaning.

My intention in this PhD is to challenge what I perceive to be the Camusian absurdity of the Avant-Garde 'style' and attempt to renew its forward-moving (genuinely) avant-garde nature. My investigation involves examining how the Avant-Garde style is formed so that I can ascertain ways of avoiding succumbing to such a style and, instead, find ways of being what I perceive to be *genuinely* avant garde (and therefore lean towards the progressive element Adorno identified in naïveté). Second, I examine *why* a forced/conscious attempt to engage with Adorno's (progressive) naïveté is destined to turn it into its opposite and a criterion of the Avant-Garde style. As will become clear, my own failure to engage with progressive naïveté (and instead engage with its opposite: conformism) happens when the compositional approach focuses more on the technical aspects of the artwork than its truth content. This serves to exemplify the notion that '[t]he development of the culture industry has led to the predominance of the [...] technical detail over the work itself'.[75] Given the above, it can be demonstrated that the Avant-Garde style, conformist as it is, has become a conventional part of the culture industry.[76]

Finally, this thesis offers two potential ways in which the absurdity of composing in the Avant-Garde style can be challenged. The first is to *recognise* the absurdity so that it might encourage a future development out of it. This entails highlighting it in practice so that all those who engage with the artwork in question recognise the absurdity too. The second potential solution is to redefine originality. This involves forgoing the desire for that type of 'originality' that is portrayed as an essential criterion of Avant-Garde practice. As already mentioned, Adorno claimed that for art to engage with a progressive form of naïveté, that naïveté must not be forced because such

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[75] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', transcribed by Andy Blunden, *Marxists.org* <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm> [accessed: 22/08/16]

[76] The conformism, institutionalisation, and 'spectacle' of the Avant Garde is discussed in more detail in the Literature Review.

a mentality will result in 'a bloated concept of naïveté.'[77] As such, this solution involves redefining 'originality' not as a forced attempt to be 'new', but as the origination of an artwork, regardless of its technical nature, that arises from 'the natural essence of the artist'.[78]

Methodology

My methodology is based on a hermeneutic framework between practice and theory. It is inspired by the 'iterative cyclic web of practice-led research and research-led practice' put forward by Smith and Dean in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*.[79] Although my music is intended to function as music in itself (a listener does not *need* extra-musical knowledge in order to engage with it), it allows me to formulate hypotheses which I subsequently research via theory and further compositional practice. Theory is important in my practice-led investigations because it offers a context within which to situate my compositional approach. Likewise, my compositional practice contributes to the way in which I approach such theory.

This thesis presents its main argument hermeneutically, returning to the same conclusion at the end of each chapter: 'there is no longer any art that has remained inviolable.'[80] However, each time this concluding point is revisited, it is done so in light of a preceding investigation into how to avoid it. By portraying my argument in this manner, I intend to portray the Sisyphean absurdity of current practice as well as gradually arguing a way out of it.[81]

An overview of Investigations in Chapters I–V

In Chapter I, I explore how a style manifests as a result of certain aspects surrounding the production of a piece.[82] In order to do this, I observe the mechanics behind the

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[77] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, pp. 426–427

[78] Ibid., p. 427

[79] Hazel Smith, and Roger T. Dean (ed.s), *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 20

[80] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 432

[81] This 'Sisyphean absurdity', inspired by Camus, is explained in the Literature Review.

[82] This can be seen as a metaphysically materialist (in Marxist terms) stance. Marx claimed that it is the economic base which determines the cultural and ideological superstructure and, likewise, a certain type of consciousness (not the other way around): '[i]n the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter Into [*sic*] definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which

occurrence of three varied styles within a body of my own work.[83] This allows me to investigate the playing out of Meno's paradox in relation to the act of composing, and to understand how styles are formed despite attempts to 'go beyond' them.

In Chapter II, I explore whether engaging with Adorno's (progressive) naïveté is possible by consciously manipulating the mechanics behind the formation of the styles discussed in Chapter I. I compose music in a way that is conscious of these mechanisms, and explore how they play out in relation to one piece which relies on technique above a truth content, and one that attempts to abandon technique in favour of authenticity. 'Authenticity' is defined here (and throughout this thesis) as 'the natural essence of the artist'[84] that signifies 'something beyond the domain of objective language'.[85] It is 'modelled on the aesthetic ideal of creativity: spontaneous creation of one's self and life. Yet no creativity is possible without the social and cultural context that provides the raw material one uses – the conventions, ideas and institutions against which one must struggle to fashion one's authentic self.'[86]

In Chapter III, I explore the influence that the musical work has on the composer (and relatedly, the listener), and, in particular, how the musical work itself affects its receiver's perception of it. This allows me to examine how preconceived knowledge of the Avant-Garde's tradition influences current compositional practice, and *then* how that compositional practice can, in turn, influence preconceived knowledge and further compositional practice in a hermeneutic framework. This will allow me to understand whether such preconceived knowledge can be overcome (and likewise whether successful engagement with naïveté can be obtained) by either manipulating these compositional properties or at least understanding how they function in practice.

In Chapter IV, I explore how music can be used to challenge its context and therefore potentially promote a *future* change in that context. This is because, as

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arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.' Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', *Marxists.org* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Contribution_to_the_Critique_of_Political_Economy.pdf> [accessed: 22/09/16]

[83] As already mentioned, 'style' denotes a 'replication of patterning […] that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints'.

[84] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 427

[85] Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 1

[86] Ibid. p. 144

I attach this notion of authenticity to a personal conception of 'originality', which I propose in the concluding chapter of this thesis in light of my practice-led investigations.

demonstrated in Chapter III, musical works are defined by their context. This suggests that all attempts at subversion on the level of the musical work are futile because they will likely be overridden by the status of the work's prevailing context. Therefore, in order to engage with Adorno's (progressive) naïveté, subversion must happen on the level of context so that it can then happen in the musical work in the future practice of composition as a whole. As will become clear, this investigation demonstrates how a composition can point out its own absurdity in ways that can be useful for rethinking how one might be *genuinely* avant garde in a context governed by a particular Avant-Garde style.

In Chapter V, I attempt to write a composition that transgresses the Avant-Garde context that I propose is preventing genuine avant-garde practice. As such, Chapter V's investigation involves trying to go beyond seeing musical composition as a linear distribution between the composer to the listener by way of a performer or other technology. In order to do this, I generate an interactive composition that uses the Internet and significantly blurs (and continuously rearranges) the roles of composer, performer, and listener. As will become clear, the nature of social organisation prevents this rearrangement from happening fully, and this suggests that it is the current societal condition that is restraining genuinely avant-garde practice.

Conclusion to the Introduction

This PhD compares the Avant-Garde style with *being* avant garde. It aims to recognise the absurdity of the Avant-Garde style *through* compositional practice in order to challenge that absurdity. It can be argued that contemporary Avant-Garde practice, which claims to be avant garde (in the forward-moving sense), is absurd because, instead of being 'new', or engaging with something 'new', or presenting something 'new', it adheres to the Avant-Garde 'style' (which, in turn, highlights that Avant-Garde style). This Avant-Garde style is the result of a reification of genuine forward-moving avant-garde approaches (those that engaged with the 'new'), which have been *genuinely* avant garde in the past. Such a reification comprises the formation of a system (or 'style') that composers thereafter adhere to under the false guise of being 'new'.

As will become clear, all attempts to engage with Adorno's (progressive) naïveté (and therefore be avant garde) occur within an unavoidable Avant-Garde

context and spectacular social organisation that does not allow for progression.[87]
Therefore, my attempts to be progressively naïve either fail or, if they succeed, are
short-lived and 'age'. In Adorno's words, 'there is no longer any art that has remained
inviolable.'[88]

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[87] For information regarding the 'spectacle', see: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Fredy
Perlman [?] (Detroit: Black & Red, 2010), paragraph 23; for an alternative translation in a copy that has
page numbers, see: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (Eastbourne: Soul Bay,
2009), p. 29. The 'spectacle' is also discussed in the Literature Review.
[88] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 432

Literature Review: Absurdity versus Naïveté

In the 1960s, Adorno described Avant-Garde art as absurd:

> [t]he more ruthlessly artworks draw the consequences from the contemporary condition of consciousness, the more closely they themselves approximate meaninglessness. They thereby achieve a historically requisite truth, which, if art disowned it, would condemn art to doling out powerless consolation and to complicity with the status quo. At the same time, however, meaningless art has begun to forfeit its right to exist; in any case, there is no longer any art that has remained inviolable. To the question as to why it exists, art has no other response than what Goethe called the dregs of absurdity, which all art contains. This residue rises to the surface and denounces art. Just as it is rooted at least in part in fetishes, art, through its relentless progress, relapses back into fetishism and becomes a blind end in itself, revealing itself as untruth, a sort of collective delusion, as soon as its objective truth content, its meaning, begins to waver.[1]

Camus defines absurdity as the conflict (or 'divorce') between two principles: the object and its context. In his words: 'in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity.'[2] Camus explains that absurdity is an inherent condition of human life: it is the contrast between a human's longing for purpose and the actual meaninglessness of the world within which they live. He exemplifies this meaninglessness as '[r]ising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, according to the same rhythm'.[3] He writes that:

> [w]e get into the habit of living before acquiring the habit of thinking. In that race which daily hastens us towards death, the body maintains its irreparable lead. In short, the essence of that contradiction lies in what I shall call the act of eluding because it is both less and more than a diversion in the Pascalian sense. Eluding is the invariable game. The typical act of eluding [...] is hope. Hope of another life one must 'deserve' or trickery of those who live, not for life itself, but for some great idea that will transcend it, refine it, give it meaning, and betray it.[4]

Camus compares this meaningless mechanical way of living to that of Sisyphus's punishment. He writes that:

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[1] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 432
[2] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 7
[3] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, pp. 11–12
[4] Ibid., p. 8

> [t]he gods condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labour. […] The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks and this fate is no less absurd.[5]

One can argue that current Avant-Garde practice has adopted a Sisyphean nature in the way it seems to be inward-looking, separated from the majority of society, and so failing to be an 'advance post' that leads the way 'on the assumption that "the rest will follow suit"'.[6] Even in the mid-twentieth century, Adorno wrote that twelve-tone row was 'tolerated as the private activity of specialists, a cultural necessity in some not quite clear fashion, entrusted wholly to the experts'.[7] One can argue that, because current Avant-Garde practice is so insular, it is in danger of becoming as meaningless as Sisyphus's punishment as it strives towards *itself* rather than 'forwards' and 'beyond' towards another. In Critchley's words, there are 'no cognitive skyhooks upon which to hang a meaning'.[8] Even the *word* 'new' has lost its meaning and perpetuated this Sisyphean insular nature. To quote Dahlhaus, the term is 'vague' and 'self-contradictory' yet nevertheless 'serves to pinpoint the difference between certain twentieth-century works and the mass of the remainder'.[9] In other words, despite the term 'newness' denoting 'a never-recurring moment in time', it is also ascribed 'to a whole epoch covering half a century'.[10]

Evidence that Western Avant-Garde practice has formulated a 'style' can be found in much literature of the mid-twentieth century. In 1956, Debord wrote that 'the negation of the bourgeois conception of art and artistic genius has become pretty much old hat, [Duchamp's] drawing of a mustache on the *Mona Lisa* is no more interesting than the original version of that painting.'[11] It is not just visual art that became reified, but music also. The treatment of atonality became rationalised (and so 'aged') a long time ago: in 1954, Adorno claimed that 'almost no one gets excited anymore about that

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[5] Ibid., pp. 86–87

[6] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 95

[7] Theodor Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', in *Essays on Music*, trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 181–202 (p. 185)

[8] Simon Critchley, *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 80

[9] Carl Dahlhaus, '"New Music" as Historical Category', in *Schoenberg and the New Music,* trans. by Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.1–13 (p. 1)

[10] Ibid.

[11] Guy Debord, 'Methods of Détournement', *The Situationist International Text Library* <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/3> [accessed: 27/12/15]

twelve-tone technique that is served up at all music festivals […] no one is actually challenged, no one recognizes himself in it, or senses in it any binding claim to truth.'[12] Adorno explained that, because of this establishment of, and subsequent adherence to, a norm, 'new music' had 'aged'.[13] In short, 'new' art has become old and just like the art it once subverted.

Debord writes that the only way art can be subversive now is if it sheds itself of the outmoded 'previous "inspired" works' which have become 'obstacles' and 'dangerous habits'.[14] Similarly, Adorno suggested that one can overcome the act of adhering to the Avant-Garde style by engaging with the progressive element he identified in naïveté. This is a progressive mindset, which entails overcoming a 'narrow mind' that is overwhelmed by that which is 'culturally approved': '[n]aïveté toward art is a source of blindness; but whoever lacks it totally is truly narrow minded and trapped in what is foisted upon him.'[15]

There are two ways to be naïve: the first is to be naïve to what is culturally approved. This encourages the artist to progress blindly forwards, shedding the influence of 'previous "inspired" works' which have become 'obstacles'. However, this type of naïveté can easily blend into its opposite, and the second way in which to be naïve: once an engagement with naïveté is considered a necessary part of being progressive, then that engagement with naïveté becomes forced, relegated to a creative technique. It ceases to be progressive because it is now conscious of what it is doing. 'This binds art to a naïveté of a second order: the uncertainty over what purpose it serves.'[16] According to Adorno, '[t]he naïveté of artists […] degenerated into naïve pliancy vis-à-vis the culture industry.'[17] Naïveté became an 'aspect of conformism. The unqualified acceptance of social forms'.[18] As a result of this, the first type of naïveté, because it was now the 'opposite of established naiveté', was wrongly condemned as its own opposite 'according to the game rules of conventional society'.[19]

It is important to distinguish between these two types of naïveté in current compositional practice: ignoring convention is the desirable type of naïveté that allows

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[12] Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', p. 185
[13] Ibid., p. 181
[14] Debord, 'Methods of Détournement' <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/3>
[15] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 350
[16] Ibid., pp. 1–2
[17] Ibid., p. 427
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

the composer to be *genuinely* avant garde without falling victim to the obstacles of prevailing practice. However, blindly following Avant-Garde convention under the false guise that it is 'new' is an undesirable form of naïveté wherein the practitioners have lost sight of art's purpose. It is a meaningless adherence to a particular Avant-Garde style that has ceased to 'move forwards', and has therefore adopted the Sisyphean absurdity my practice is trying to overcome. To clarify, my PhD is researching how a musical work can engage with that first type of (progressive) naïveté in a world where the established convention is to engage with that 'naïveté of a second order'.

Within current compositional practice, generating a deliberate sense of naïveté in order to break free from what one already knows and encounter something 'new' and 'unfamiliar' is difficult for two reasons. First, since Adorno proposed the concept of naïveté as a means of overcoming the 'aging' of 'new' music, Avant-Garde practice has become so institutionalised that it has ceased to move forward and instead perpetuated itself pointlessly. As such, rather than having 'aged' (as was likely the case in Adorno's time when he purported the notion), today, I propose that 'new music' can be described as 'dead'. The following quote exemplifies my point:

> [a]s recently as the 1940s, art forms which shared punk's ugliness, dissonance, and bohemian roots – dada and surrealism in the visual arts, existentialism in philosophy, and serialism in music, to name but a few – were considered scandalous and offensive by middle-class culture. Whatever notoriety these art forms attained in their day, they were suppressed for being attempts to destroy aesthetic, political and moral values. Since then, middle-class culture has come to regard these works of art as "classics," as "realistic" perspectives on society, things to be studied in the universities and copied – minus their critical edge – by the advertising industry. As a result, our generation […] has grown up with the mistaken idea that these gestures of opposition are reified monuments to a dead culture, rather than starting points in our efforts to create a world without alienation or boredom.[20]

This notion has been acknowledged since at least the mid-twentieth century. In 1954, Adorno observed that twelve-tone technique was 'tolerated as the private activity of specialists, a cultural necessity in some not quite clear fashion, entrusted wholly to the experts'.[21] Fox writes that, by the 1970s, modernism was institutionalised in the United Kingdom by the 'boasting of a resident composer' in 'universities', the performances of new music by 'specialist new music ensembles', being toured to various regions by 'the

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[20] Bill Brown, 'An Introduction to the Situationist International', *NOT BORED!* <http://www.notbored.org/intro.html> [accessed: 18/09/16]
[21] Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', p. 185

Arts Council', and by being distributed further by 'Radio 3'. In America, new music was focused on in 'the academy'.[22] This suggests a closing-off of Avant-Garde art to those with the appropriate education to appreciate it ('universities', '*specialist*' ensembles, 'the academy'). This institutionalisation is referred to as the 'spectacle' in Situationist texts. The spectacle is 'a social relation among people, mediated by images.'[23] 'It is the self-portrait of power in the epoch of its totalitarian management of the conditions of existence'; in its most basic form it is 'mass media'.[24] Debord explains that '[i]n societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.'[25] Debord explains that the role of 'power', inherent within the spectacle, renders the phenomenon of the spectacle a 'specialized' activity that produces specialists. According to Debord, '[t]he oldest social specialization, the specialization of power, is at the root of the spectacle. The spectacle is thus a specialized activity which speaks for all the others.'[26]

The second reason why it is difficult to engage with naïveté, in order to break free from what one already knows, and encounter something 'new' and 'unfamiliar' is because pre-existing knowledge is deeply ingrained. One can refer to Meno's paradox to elaborate on this point. In Plato's *Meno*, Meno asks Socrates how one looks for that which they do not know. He queries that '[i]f you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?' Socrates replies with a statement that highlights the paradox: '[d]o you realize what a debater's argument you are bringing up, that a man cannot search either for what he knows or for what he does not know? He cannot search for what he knows – since he knows it, there is no need to search – nor for what he does not know, for he does not know what to look for.'[27]

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[22] Christopher Fox, 'Darmstadt and the Institutionalisation of Modernism', *Contemporary Music Review*, 26.1 (2007), 115–123, p. 118

[23] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Fredy Perlman [?] (Detroit: Black & Red, 2010), paragraph 4; for an alternative translation in a copy that has page numbers, see: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (Eastbourne: Soul Bay, 2009), p. 24

[24] Ibid., paragraph 24; Ibid., pp. 29–30

[25] Ibid., paragraph 1; Ibid., p. 24

[26] Ibid., paragraph 23; Ibid., p. 29

[27] Plato, 'Meno', 80d–e, trans. by G.M.A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 870–897 (p. 880)

Heidegger solved Meno's paradox by introducing the hermeneutic circle.[28] According to Dinkins, 'Meno's paradox is remarkably similar to the puzzle Heidegger (1962) tackles in the beginning of *Being and Time*.'[29] Dinkins writes that:

> [f]or Heidegger, an inquiry can make progress because everything ahead of us on the circle is already behind us as well. In other words, we can "recall" ideas we have not yet encountered. […] We can look for that which we do not know, and recognize it when we find it, because that which lies in front of us is also already behind us. We must simply recall what we have forgotten.[30]

Likewise, Braver writes that:

> Heidegger adapts a version of Plato's theory, albeit stripped of its mythological trappings. "Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way" […]. The very fact that we can ask the question at all, even in a confused way, means that we have *some* understanding of being, at least that it exists and can be questioned.[31]

Heidegger's hermeneutic framework also plays a significant function in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' where he explains that an artist is defined by the work they create: without the 'work of art', they would not be deemed the 'artist' of it. Likewise, the 'work of art' is defined by the actions of the 'artist': without the 'artist', the 'artwork' would not exist. He questions whether the notion of 'art' arises from the 'artist' and their 'artwork', or whether the 'artist' and their 'artwork' exist as such because they adhere to the notion of 'art'. He concludes that our interpretation of 'art' is based on what we already know 'art' to be. Our definition of 'art' 'already has in view the definitions that must suffice to establish that what we in advance take to be an artwork is one in fact.'[32] This self-referential understanding of the world was later developed by Gadamer who likewise questioned whether our interpretations of art arise from our experience of art or whether our interpretations adhere to our pre-existing notions of what art is.[33] We cannot know the answer to these questions; however, by interpreting the work of art as 'play', Gadamer revealed a symbiotic relationship between these

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[28] Christine Sorrell Dinkins, 'Shared Inquiry: Socratic-Hermeneutic Interpre-viewing', *Beyond Method: Philosophical Conversations in Healthcare Research and Scholarship*, ed. by Pamela M. Ironside (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), pp. 111–147 (p. 120)

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., pp. 120–121

[31] Lee Braver, *Heidegger: Thinking of Being* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), p. 10

[32] Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time to The Task of Thinking*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 139–212 (pp. 143–144)

[33] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 103

seemingly opposing concepts, and argued that the work of art is both autonomous *and* dependent on human interpretation.[34]

Both Heidegger's and Gadamer's development of Meno's paradox involve recognition of the paradox itself: both solutions involve remembering and being aware of what sort of knowledge is to be acquired in an iterative cycle. In this way, recognition removes the static aspect of the paradox and makes it productive (and progressive). In a similar way, Camus explained that recognising the absurdity of a mechanical Sisyphean way of being is the only means of overcoming it:

> [w]eariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. […] In itself weariness has something sickening about it. Here I must conclude that it is good. For everything begins with consciousness and nothing is worth anything except through it. […] Mere 'anxiety', as Heidegger says, is at the source of everything. [35]

As such, the key to overcoming absurdity is recognition. Regarding the work of art, therefore, a proposed means of recognising and highlighting an absurdity is via the application of *détournement*. *Détournement* is '[s]hort for "détournement of pre-existing aesthetic elements."'[36] It involves employing existing artworks (past or present) in the synthesis of a separate artistic situation. Apparently, 'there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of those means.'[37] Debord explains that:

> [a]ny elements, no matter where they are taken from, can be used to make new combinations. […] when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be, a relationship is always formed. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the juxtaposition of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater efficacy. It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting a work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of those fragments…[38]

Debord explains that it is 'necessary to conceive of a parodic serious stage where the accumulation of detourned [*sic*] elements, far from aiming at arousing indignation or laughter by alluding to some original work, will express our indifference toward a

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[34] Ibid., p. 112

[35] Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 12

[36] Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), p. 52

[37] Ibid.

[38] Guy Debord and Gil J Wolman, 'A User's Guide to Détournement', in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), pp. 14–21 (p. 15)

meaningless and forgotten original, and concern itself with rendering a certain sublimity.[39] As such, it is important to note that such parody is not intended to be comical, but to highlight the recognition of an absurdity.

In practice, *détournement* can be achieved by the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, or V-Effekt. This is primarily a theatre technique in which the 'familiar' is made 'unfamiliar' by distancing the audience from the theatrical spectacle. In the case of the Brechtian V-Effekt, notions of 'familiarity' and 'unfamiliarity' have been played with so that the 'familiar' is re-presented as something 'unfamiliar' and, as such, a distance between an audience and an artwork has been heightened. Material is presented in a non-realist, non-naturalist way so that the audience cannot emotionally relate to the characters presented on stage. In other words, they are estranged from them.[40] In music, this defamiliarising effect can be achieved via quotation and allusion, and is explored further in Chapter IV.

As a brief summary so far, this literature review provides the theoretical context behind my practical investigations. I have used Camus's definition of 'absurdity' and Meno's paradox to highlight the Sisyphean nature of current Avant-Garde practice. The hermeneutic framework (developed by Heidegger and Gadamer), *détournement* (as conceived by the Situationists), Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, and engaging with naïveté is a plausible solution to overcoming the Avant-Garde's absurdity. In what follows in this thesis, I approach my compositional practice with this literature review in mind in order to locate the source of the absurd and attempt to move beyond it into naïveté.

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[39] Debord, 'Methods of Détournement', <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/3>

[40] For more information, see: Bertolt Brecht, 'On Chinese Acting', trans. by and Eric Bentley, *The Tulane Drama Review*, 6.1 (1961), 130–139

Chapter I: Observing the Mechanics of an Avant-Garde Style

Aim

The aim of this chapter's investigation is to observe the mechanics behind the occurrence of three varied styles that occur within my own work.[1] This will allow me to investigate how Meno's paradox plays out in relation to the act of composing, and to understand how styles are formed despite attempts to 'go beyond' them. I can apply my findings to explain the mechanics involved in the formation of a broader, more general, Avant-Garde style. If successful, I can use this to determine a path towards being *genuinely* avant garde by way of the following principle: if one understands how the Avant-Garde style works, then one knows how not to fall into the traps of adhering to it.

Method

Analysis of these styles requires examination of the relationship between the composer and the composition. Only through practice can an examination of such a relationship be undertaken. Necessarily, this chapter's investigation is introspective and focuses on my personal compositional approach. However, as will become clear in later chapters, my findings will be applied to a wider musico-aesthetic context that concerns the overall formation of the Avant-Garde style. Analysing the mechanics behind the formation of three varied styles within my work is done by first comparing the compositional processes behind several compositions with their corresponding sonic outcomes, and then comparing these compositions with each other.

Prediction

Knowledge and 'familiarity' have a significant role in the formation of a composition, and it is the composer's creative approach that begets a composition's style. The establishment of a set of stylistic norms involves inadvertently becoming 'familiar' with (and, relatedly, reifying) that which was once 'unfamiliar'.

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[1] As mentioned in the Introduction, 'style' denotes a 'replication of patterning […] that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints'.

Style 1: *The Interlocutor* (2014) for ensemble

The first style is demonstrated by *The Interlocutor* (2014) for ensemble. This composition replicates the dynamics of interlocution by alternating between two different pulses, and between improvisatory and non-improvisatory moments. In the improvisatory moments, the performers are expected to interact with each other in the manner of a dialogue. This composition was written intuitively and as a result of certain aspects surrounding its production as follows.[2] *The Interlocutor* was composed for Discord to sight-read in a composition workshop.[3] This specialist ensemble requested a precise instrumental line-up of French horn, electric guitar, electric bass, piano (doubling keyboards), and electric violin, which confined my creative approach to an instrumental line-up that I had not chosen. However, this is not the only creative 'restriction' I felt when writing this piece: the limitations of the workshop setting meant that the piece could not be rehearsed and so I felt that notation and instrumental technique had to be as clear as possible so that time would not be wasted by the performers trying to understand an unconventional score. Therefore, my mode of notation is generally traditional (with some exceptions), and the instrumental techniques employed are common within what might, broadly, be termed 'new music', and therefore most likely 'familiar' to Discord.

Further limitations, relating to notation and the performers' approaches, revealed themselves during the workshop itself. Before the workshop, *The Interlocutor* comprised two contrasting sections defined by metric and textural characteristics: one in 1/4 and the other in a slower, sparser 4/4 time signature. These two main sections alternated throughout the piece (despite being briefly interrupted by an electric violin solo halfway through). I learned from working with Discord that the 1/4 time signature heightened the complexity of the pianist's music unnecessarily. The pianist became more concerned with counting and keeping in time with the other performers than bringing out the desired expression in the music. Conversely, the bass player claimed that he understood the overall 'feel' denoted by the 1/4 time signature: that of a repeated accented pulse that occurred throughout a complex stream of rhythmically precise

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[2] There was no rigorous pre-compositional process by which certain musical features were derived procedurally. Such a compositional approach is explored in Chapter III.
[3] A recording of Discord's sight-read performance of *The Interlocutor* is included on the accompanying CD (track 1).

notation. After some thought, I removed the time signatures, relying solely on articulation to communicate the desired pulse to the performers.

Ex.I.1: *The Interlocutor*, page 1 (version 1 with 1/4 time signature), pno. part

Ex.I.2: *The Interlocutor*, page 1 (version 2 with 1/4 time signature removed), pno. part

Despite the technically detailed piano passage above, my compositional process was still influenced by the time limitations of the workshop setting. As such, parts of *The Interlocutor* involve improvisatory passages, with the initial aim of making sight-reading the music easier for Discord who would not have to worry about specific rhythms (and in some cases pitch) in these improvisatory passages.

Ex.I.3: *The Interlocutor*, page 8 (version 2), hn., e. gtr,, and e. bass parts

Even with the aforementioned limitations on my creative process, I found working with specialist performers creatively 'freeing'. Discord's specialism allowed me to request detailed (sometimes complex) musical outcomes that were fulfilled during a workshop setting where the performers were sight-reading. As a result of this, *The Interlocutor* is technically demanding in places and is texturally detailed. For example, sight-reading the piano part (ex. I.1 and I.2) requires a high level of technical capability at speed: the rhythm is fast and the articulation is specific.

The Interlocutor's compositional process exemplifies a development of Meno's paradox into a productive hermeneutic framework: I cannot compose what I do not already know to be a composition until I engage with a factor that causes me to engage with what is 'unfamiliar' to me. In this instance, the 'factor' is a specialist ensemble with their own knowledge about how music 'should' be. This progression demonstrates two interrelated hermeneutic frameworks that lead to the formation of *The Interlocutor*'s style. The first hermeneutic framework is that between 'unfamiliarity' and 'familiarity', and the second is that between creative 'freedom' and 'restriction'.

Regarding the first hermeneutic framework, what was 'unfamiliar' to my compositional approach (composing for a specialist ensemble with their own interpretation of how music should be) becomes 'familiar' to my compositional approach: it becomes the typical way in which I compose for specialist ensembles with limited rehearsal time. This approach is then employed in later compositions written for other specialist ensembles who have their own preconceived knowledge, and so on. The second, nevertheless related, hermeneutic framework (between creative 'freedom' and 'restriction') is exemplified when my engagement with the 'restrictions' of what is 'unfamiliar' to my approach becomes a means of 'freeing' me from the limitations of my preconceived knowledge about how music should be. For instance, composing for a specialist ensemble, who would only sight-read my music in a workshop, forced me to compose something I would not have done had I taken a more 'familiar' approach (that I already had knowledge of).

These hermeneutic frameworks exemplify the creative 'restrictions' behind the composer-performer relationship in general. This relationship ensures that the composer writes music in line with the mindset of their peers, demonstrating why both composers *and* performers must share the same ideology if genuinely avant-garde art is to be produced. Therefore, writing music that 'goes beyond' an existing Avant-Garde style is difficult precisely because the production of music is inherently social. This network of

hermeneutic frameworks is not easily overcome because the frameworks themselves hermeneutically react with the composer-performer relationship: either the hermeneutic frameworks cause the relationship to be restrictive or this restrictive relationship is what perpetuates the aforementioned hermeneutic frameworks.

The formation of *The Interlocutor*'s compositional style is viewed as a style and not merely a description of this one work's characteristics because its sonic traits (and corresponding compositional approach) recurs in my practice. The piece leads to a 'replication of patterning […] that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints'.[4] For instance, *The Interlocutor*'s sonic characteristics and corresponding compositional approach can be applied to *The Carbon Loop* (2013) for seven percussionists and *angustia* (2015) for flute, accordion, violin, and optional fixed-media electronics.[5] Like *The Interlocutor*, these pieces are written with traditional notation because they are composed for specialist performers who had limited rehearsal time. They are also composed intuitively and as a result of certain aspects surrounding their production. For instance, *The Carbon Loop* was composed for percussion ensembles of the Musikhochschule Freiburg and the University of Leeds. Part of the ensemble, including the conductor, was based in Freiburg while the other part was based in Leeds. As such, the members of this ensemble were only able to rehearse together on the day of the concert. Similarly, *angustia* was composed for ensemble Trio Layers, a specialist ensemble based in Poland, to perform and then record on their upcoming CD. Due to the time constraints of recording their CD, I only had a short amount of time to compose the piece and likewise they only had a short amount of time to rehearse.[6]

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[4] Jennifer Judkins, 'Style' in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp. 134–143 (p. 135)

[5] *The Carbon Loop* (2013) for seven percussionists was premiered by percussion ensembles of the Musikhochschule Freiburg and the University of Leeds, England (11 May 2014).
angustia (2015) for flute, accordion, violin, and optional fixed-media electronics was premiered by Trio Layers (without the optional fixed-media electronics) in the Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz, Poland (20 November 2015). Recordings of both of these pieces are included on the accompanying CD (tracks 5 and 6, respectively).

[6] In this instance, it is the reproducibility of music that introduces a 'restriction' on the creative process. Benjamin talks about the effects of mechanical reproduction on the work of art in Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211–244; esp. p. 218: 'the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility.'

Style 2: *Graphite Pendulum* (2014) for solo clarinet in B♭ and fixed-media electronics

I am going to compare *The Interlocutor* with *Graphite Pendulum* (2014) for solo clarinet in B♭ and fixed-media electronics, which exemplifies the second style in my investigation. Similar to *The Interlocutor*, *Graphite Pendulum* was composed intuitively and as a result of certain aspects surrounding its production.[7] Unlike *The Interlocutor*, *Graphite Pendulum* was composed for myself to perform, and I decided its instrumentation. This piece is written for clarinet because, being a trained clarinettist, I am familiar with the instrument from a performer's perspective as well as from a composer's perspective. By performing the piece myself, I was, precisely, attempting to remove the creative 'restrictions' that I had experienced when writing *The Interlocutor* for other performers. Being the performer of this piece allowed me to experiment with notation and instrumental techniques that I knew I would understand. I was also able to experiment 'freely' (without having to consider another performer's approach) with an interaction between acoustic, pre-recorded and electronically modified sounds (ex. I.4).

Ex. I.4: *Graphite Pendulum*, bars 18–19

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[7] The extra-musical concept behind *Graphite Pendulum* is explained in Appendix B.

The interaction between acoustic, pre-recorded and electronically modified sounds is based on imitation, which not only happens between the live clarinet and fixed-media parts, but also *within* the fixed-media part itself (such as between left and right channels). In the above example, the right and left channels of the fixed-media electronics part imitate the live clarinet part's flutter-tongue sounds, while simultaneously there is imitation between these right and left channels themselves. In this way, the fixed-media electronics part functions as part of the score for the performer: they have to listen out for audible signifiers in this electronic part; these signifiers are also indicated in their physical score. The piece is reliant on this triggering function between the performer and technology.

Graphite Pendulum has more improvisatory moments than *The Interlocutor*. It also has a wider exploration of instrumental technique. This is because being the performer allowed me to experiment with such improvisatory moments and instrumental technique more so than in the limited workshop setting of *The Interlocutor*'s performance. This is reflected in *Graphite Pendulum*'s notation, which is less traditional and more specific to my approach to performing than that of *The Interlocutor*.

On the one hand, it can be argued that performing the piece *myself* provided a greater sense of compositional 'freedom' because it removed the limitations I had experienced when composing *The Interlocutor* for *other performers*. However, on the other hand, *Graphite Pendulum* can be viewed as the result of my own limited capabilities on the clarinet. I am not as skilled as a specialist performer in performance practice. Therefore, my attempts to remove one type of 'restriction' (that of other performers performing my music) introduced another type of 'restriction' (that of my own limited abilities as performer). This exemplifies the difficulty in overcoming a pre-existing style despite removing the 'restriction' of the composer-performer relationship. Removing this 'restriction' only heightened my engagement with my own preconceived knowledge. Meno's paradox was at play.

By comparing the compositional approaches, and corresponding characteristics, of *The Interlocutor* and *Graphite Pendulum*¸ I am made aware of a distinction between what can be described as two types of compositional 'styles' within my practice. The first 'style' is demonstrated by the characteristics of *The Interlocutor* with its mainly traditional notation, and less improvisation and instrumental exploration than *Graphite*

Pendulum. The second style is demonstrated by *Graphite Pendulum*, which involves more improvisation, and greater exploration of instrumental timbres and techniques than *The Interlocutor*. Its mode of notation results in music that is open to a wider range of interpretations by other performers.[8]

The second style (represented by *Graphite Pendulum*) is viewed as a style and not merely a description of this one work's characteristics because its sonic traits (and corresponding compositional approach) recurs in my practice. Like *The Interlocutor*, this piece leads to a 'replication of patterning […] that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints'.[9] For instance, *Graphite Pendulum*'s sonic characteristics and corresponding compositional approach can be applied to *To Rave in a Fifteenth-Century Discotheque from another Time Entirely.* (2015) for solo four-string bowed instrument and optional fixed-media electronics.[10] Like *Graphite Pendulum*, this piece was composed according to my own instrumental capabilities, and it experiments with notation and instrumental technique in addition to incorporating improvisation.[11]

Style 3: *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* (2015) for orchestra

I am going to compare *The Interlocutor* and *Graphite Pendulum* with a third composition, *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* (2015) for orchestra.[12] *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* was composed specifically for the Yorkshire Young Sinfonia to workshop in a summer school and perform in an evening concert. The whole event was to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3. The remit was to compose an orchestral piece that focused on extended instrumental techniques for performers between the ages of eleven and eighteen years. The compositional process behind *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* involves a blend of those 'restrictions' involved in the compositional processes behind *The Interlocutor* and

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[8] *Graphite Pendulum* was performed by John Pearmain at the Leeds University Union Music Society's 'guestLISZT' event, England (27 April 2016). Although the overall sound world of Pearmain's performance was recognisably *Graphite Pendulum*, there were notable differences between his approach to instrumental techniques, and the timbres produced, and mine. Recordings of both Pearmain's performance and my own are included in the accompanying CD (tracks 2 and 3).

[9] Judkins, 'Style', p. 135

[10] *To Rave in a Fifteenth-Century Discotheque from another Time Entirely.* (2015) for any solo four-string bowed instrument and optional fixed-media electronics was premiered by myself (on viola with accompanying fixed-media electronics) in the 'Centre Stage' concert series, England (21 February 2015). A recording of this piece is included on the accompanying CD (track 7).

[11] There is also an accompanying fixed-media electronics part; however, unlike *Graphite Pendulum,* this fixed-media electronics part is optional.

[12] Details regarding the pre-compositional process behind *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* (2015) for orchestra is included in Appendix A. Details regarding its extra-musical concept is included in Appendix B. A recording of *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* is included on the accompanying CD (track 4).

Graphite Pendulum and, as such, generates a third compositional approach (and likewise 'style') that is prevalent within a larger body of my work. This style can be described as an amalgamation of the styles of *The Interlocutor* and *Graphite Pendulum*. Its existence as a style is evidenced by its recurrence throughout my work. For instance, my approach is replicated in *[Co]Valence* II (2016) for flautist(s) and optional fixed-media electronics. [13] Like *Air, Earth, Water, Fire*, *[Co]Valence* II combines improvisatory passages and experimental notation with traditional performance practice and traditional modes of notation. This similarity between these pieces is the result of similar types of compositional 'restrictions' within the compositional processes: both pieces were composed for student-based ensembles who wanted to experiment with extended techniques and experimental notation. Despite this, both ensembles had a lot of time to rehearse and were guided by professional performers.

Like *The Interlocutor*, my creativity was confined by having to adhere to the prescribed instrumentation. Like *Graphite Pendulum*, I was limited to the use of certain types of instrumental techniques. Also like *Graphite Pendulum* (and unlike *The Interlocutor*), the piece would not be performed by professionals. Unlike both *The Interlocutor* and *Graphite Pendulum*, the performers of *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* would be rehearsed and conducted by a professional conductor and trained by professional performers over a number of days in a summer school. Therefore, despite not being professional, these performers had the benefit of rehearsal time, which would heighten the Yorkshire Young Sinfonia's understanding of *Air, Earth, Water, Fire*. This connection between the performer and the music reflects the situation behind *Graphite Pendulum* more than that of *The Interlocutor*.

As a result of the aforementioned similarities and differences, *Air, Earth, Water, Fire*'s notation can be described as a combination of the modes of notation employed in both *The Interlocutor* and *Graphite Pendulum*. *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* involves extended techniques and improvisatory passages similar to those in *Graphite Pendulum*. These passages are interspersed with more traditional modes of notation and performance techniques in a similar vein to *The Interlocutor* (see examples below).

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[13] *[Co]Valence* II for flautist(s) and fixed-media electronics was premiered by the University of Leeds Flute Ensemble (thirteen flautists) in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall, England (11 March 2016). A recoding of this piece is included on the accompanying CD (track 14). *[Co]Valence* II is discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

Ex.I.5: *Air, Earth, Water, Fire*, bars 26–30, tpt. I and II, perc., vln. I and II, vla., vc., and db. Parts

Ex.I.6: *Air, Earth, Water, Fire*, bars 42–47, tpt. I and II, perc., vln. I and II, vla., vc., and db. parts

Evaluation

The aforementioned investigations demonstrate how my engagement with 'unfamiliar' compositional approaches is based on my attempts to overcome creative 'restrictions'. This can also be seen as me overcoming the limitations of my own pre-existing knowledge because engaging with creative 'restrictions' resulted in music I would not have written had I taken a more 'familiar' compositional approach. I am by no means claiming that this, in itself, is new information. However, an awareness of this can be used to explain why genuinely avant-garde approaches are destined to 'age' and formulate the Avant-Garde style.

In all cases presented in this chapter, repeated approaches to overcoming the same types of creative 'restriction' (and likewise the limitations of my own knowledge) resulted in me becoming 'familiar' with those approaches. Therefore, I began adhering to my own knowledge about such approaches. In other words, the more I composed in a particular way, the more I lacked the 'source of blindness' and became more 'narrow minded and trapped in what [was] foisted upon' me.[14] This is the point at which I stopped engaging with what was 'unfamiliar' to me and began composing what I had become used to. In other words, I had generated a particular style and adhered to it. This suggests that the formation of all three styles in this chapter are dependent on my compositional approach 'aging' (wherein I begin inadvertently conforming to what I already know about the compositional approaches in question). This iterative process by which the 'unfamiliar' constantly becomes 'familiar' (a cycle which repeats itself when further 'unfamiliarities' are introduced in order to challenge prevailing 'familiarities') exemplifies the development of style in relation to a broader context of musical practice: 'as conventions are ultimately overused and run-through, new solutions take their place.'[15]

One explanation for this 'aging' is because my compositional process was insular: it focused on overcoming my own knowledge and was not conscious of my music's sociohistorical aspect (what is 'unfamiliar' to me might not be 'unfamiliar' to the broader context of Western Avant-Garde practice, for example). Furthermore, applying an Adornian perspective, I was focusing on being new on the level of compositional technique. This valorisation of technique, by Adorno's definition, ignores

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[14] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 350
[15] Judkins, 'Style', p. 142

the artwork's truth content. Meaning has become embedded in technical skill (which is the basis of stylistic adherence).

Another explanation for this 'aging' might be because of the unavoidable phenomenon of Meno's paradox (that which questions how we can possibly learn what we do not already know). For instance, in this chapter's investigations, all compositional 'restrictions' were related to 'familiarity' and knowledge. Certain logistical 'restrictions' prevented me from adhering to the limitations of my own knowledge (and what I was already 'familiar' with). This in turn highlighted pre-existing knowledge and 'familiarity' as a type of compositional 'restriction':[16] adhering to 'familiarity' and my own knowledge (whether consciously or not) suppressed my creativity and relegated my music to an adherence to a particular style. Conversely, that which was perceived as being 'restrictive' increased, rather than detracted from, compositional creativity because it forced me to experiment with the 'unfamiliar'.

From this, I propose that the formation of a style is based on two interrelated hermeneutic frameworks between what is 'familiar' and what is 'unfamiliar', and between creative 'freedom' and creative 'restrictions': initially perceived creative 'restrictions' become a means of 'freeing' the composer from the 'restrictions' of their own limited knowledge about composing. Vice versa, styles develop over time in accordance with becoming 'familiar' with the approaches taken to overcome perceived 'restrictions'.

This framework can be applied to the broader context of Avant-Garde practice to explain how it has generated the Avant-Garde style. Not only is adhering to a style under the guise of being 'new' and engaging with the 'unfamiliar' absurd, but it suggests that all attempted engagements with the 'unfamiliar' in the first place are destined to become an adherence to what is 'familiar'. In Adorno's words, 'there is no longer any art that has remained inviolable.'[17]

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[16] As a side note, this brings to mind Heidegger's 'violence of thought', discussed in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. See: Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time to The Task of Thinking*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 139–212 (esp. pp. 146–152)

[17] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 432

Chapter II: Manipulating the Mechanics of an Avant-Garde Style[1]

Aim

This chapter's investigation explores whether engaging with naïveté is made possible by consciously manipulating the mechanics behind the formation of the styles discussed in Chapter I. It involves composing music in a way that is conscious of these mechanics, and explores how they play out in relation to one piece which relies on technique above a truth content, and one that attempts to abandon technique in favour of authenticity.

Method

The two compositions discussed in this chapter denote two attempts to engage with naïveté by consciously manipulating the mechanics behind the formation of a style. Both attempts demonstrate two extreme ways of manipulating these mechanics: the first attempt tries to engage with naïveté by manipulating these mechanics on the level of technique. The second attempt tries to engage with naïveté by relinquishing technique as the main focus as much as is possible. Both compositions are written with the understanding that I would be the performer of them (*before* given to other performers to play). This removes the variable that comes about from the perspectives of two other performers, which can restrict my creative process.

Prediction

Neither of this investigation's attempts to manipulate the mechanics behind the formation of a style is successful at engaging with Adorno's form of progressive naïveté totally. Focusing on engaging with naïveté on the level of technique results in an adherence to the Avant-Garde style. Comparatively, attempting to relinquish technique as the composition's focus reveals that it is actually a necessary part of the artistic process. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that, in order to engage with Adorno's naïveté, subversion of technique should not be an end in itself, but should enter into a dialectical relationship with the work's truth content.

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[1] The pieces discussed in this chapter (*Parallax Error* and *'it sounds an isochronism.'*) are also discussed in: Alannah Marie Halay '(Per)Forming Art: Performance as a Compositional Technique' in *(Per)Forming Art: Performance as Research in Contemporary Artworks*, ed. by Alannah Marie Halay (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), pp. 37–51

Attempt 1: *Parallax Error* (2014) for any four-string bowed instrument

My first attempt to engage with Adorno's naïveté, by consciously manipulating the mechanics behind the formation of a style, focused solely on subverting technique. This first attempt is threefold. First, it explores subverting technique on the level of notation. Second, it explores subverting technique on the level of musical characteristics. Third, it explores subverting technique in relation to the physicality of an instrument.

The first exploration into subverting technique is done in relation to notation as follows: composing *Parallax Error* (2014) for any four-string bowed instrument involved experimenting with an instrument that I am not familiar with playing.[2] Although this piece can be performed on any four-string bowed instrument, my compositional process involved experimenting with a viola (an instrument, in fact, I have *no* training in). It is important to note at this stage that I am a pianist.

Here, I was attempting to manipulate the mechanics of style (the interrelated hermeneutic frameworks between 'familiarity' and 'unfamiliarity', and creative 'freedom' and 'restriction') by forcing myself to engage with something 'unfamiliar' (*playing* the viola) so that I could overcome (or 'free' myself from) the creative 'restriction' of my preconceived knowledge about notation.

This approach *did* affect my notation: because I am not a trained violist, and more comfortable with the piano, my viola-playing technique involved a separation of the right and left hands. This is reflected in *Parallax Error*'s notation, which has a separate staff for the right and left hands much like traditional piano-music notation.[3] This mode of notation is not unique amidst Avant-Garde practice in general: there exist other works that explore decoupling such as those of Aaron Cassidy and Klaus K. Hübler, amongst others.[4] It should be noted that the similarity of *Parallax Error*'s

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[2] A 'parallax error' is an error based on viewing an artefact from a different perspective, which produces an error in the interpretation of that artefact. A common example is reading a test tube measurement from a different angle and interpreting an incorrect reading. In other words, the reading (whether accurate or an error) is based on the interpreter's perspective. This notion resonates with my overall viewpoint that interpretation of a composition is based on the interpreter's perspective, which in turn is guided by preconceived ideas about what they are interpreting.

[3] *Parallax Error*'s decoupled hands can be regarded as a 'parallax error' both in relation to each other (where the music exists in-between the two right-hand and left-hand staffs), and in relation to normative viola technique.

[4] See: Aaron Cassidy, '*The Crutch of Memory* (2004) for indeterminate string instrument', *Aaron Cassidy* <http://aaroncassidy.com/music/crutchofmemory.htm> [accessed: 17/11/15]; for more information regarding the decoupled works of Hübler, see: Tanja Orning, 'The Ethics of Performance Practice in Complex Music after 1945', in *Transformations of Musical Modernism*, ed. by Erling E. Guildbrandsen

notation to existing notational approaches is despite it being unintentional. My deliberate attempts to manipulate the mechanics behind the formation of the Avant-Garde style in a way that meant I did not fall into the trap of adhering to that style (in terms of notation) nevertheless resulted in an adherence to existing Avant-Garde practice.

The second exploration into subverting technique is done in relation to musical characteristics as follows: my lack of training on the viola meant that I was not technically confident with performing specific notated pitches. This resulted in me focusing, instead, on non-normative performance techniques, unstable sounds, and quasi-improvisatory passages such as in the general direction to 'trail off' (ex. II.1).[5]

Ex. II.1: *Parallax Error*, line (1)

As such, pitch and rhythm became by-products of non-normative instrumental techniques and timbral exploration (which I also attempted to capture in the notation). In order to structure these 'performative experimentations' logically into a finished piece of music, I categorised the sonic results of my experiments with the viola into what I called 'sound objects'.[6] Then, from a collection of categorised 'sound objects', I

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and Julian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 299–318 (pp. 299–306). Other examples of decoupled work include James Dillon's *Überschreiten* (1986), Brian Ferneyhough's *Time and Motion* Study II (1976-77), and Helmut Lachenmann's *Pression* (1969). See: James Dillon, *Überschreiten* (London: Edition Peters, 1986); Brian Ferneyhough, *Time and Motion* Study II (London: Edition Peters, 1978); Helmut Lachenmann, *Pression: für einen Cellisten* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1980).

[5] I experimented with 'sounds' that I would not necessarily have discovered had I approached the viola like a violist. This reflects the conceptual framework of the 'parallax error': without the experience of technical training, my 'reading' of the viola is different from that of a trained violist.

[6] I am aware of Pierre Schaeffer's work regarding classifying sounds and the term 'sound object'. However, for the purpose of this commentary, the term 'sound object' is employed merely for ease of reference. For more information on this aspect of Schaeffer's work, see: Pierre Schaeffer, *In Search of Concrete Music*, trans. by Christine North and John Dack (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012). Moreover, there are other composers who consider the characteristics of sound, for example see:

built the piece's musical form. The structure of *Parallax Error* is in part intuitive and in part influenced by my capability to perform the instrumental techniques employed: for example, in line (6), it is practical for me (having no viola training) to follow the glissando with the direction to dampen the strings because this glissando technique leads comfortably into the following dampening technique (see ex. II.2 below).[7] This is not to say that I would not have composed such music for a trained violist. Rather, this was an influential factor during this particular compositional process at the time.

Ex. II.2: *Parallax Error*, line (6)

Here, I was attempting to manipulate the mechanics of style by forcing myself to engage with something 'unfamiliar' (*playing* the viola) so that I could overcome (or 'free' myself from) the creative 'restriction' of my preconceived knowledge about composing for bowed-string instruments. The 'unfamiliarity' I experienced when experimenting on the viola allowed me to view the composition as an arrangement of 'sound objects', structured into a piece of music according to my own capabilities. I was composing music I would not have done had I taken a more 'familiar' compositional approach.

However, *Parallax Error*'s musical characteristics are not unique amidst Avant-Garde practice in general. For instance, similarities can be drawn between this piece's timbral exploration and some of Lachenmann's work, in particular *Pression* (1969) for solo cello.[8] This similarity is unintentional, and like *Parallax Error*'s notation,

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Ansgar Beste, '"The Well-Prepared Instrumentation" – Investigating selected compositional concepts for instrumental noise music based on extended playing techniques', *Ansgar Beste* <http://www.ansgarbeste.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Ansgar-Beste-Academic-texts-1-Project-description-Oslo-2011-04-01.pdf> [accessed: 16/11/15]

[7] The lines are numbered for clarity, and the line numbers are bracketed because the overall music should be regarded as one continuous line by the performer.

[8] See: Helmut Lachenmann, *Pression: für einen Cellisten* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1980); a recording can be found here: Helmut Lachenmann, *Allegro Sostenuto, Pression, Intérieur III, Intérieur I*, Eduard Brunner, Walter Grimmer, Massimiliano Damerini, Johannes Beer (EMG, B004KKYVCY, 2011)

demonstrates how focusing on engaging with naïveté on the level of technique is destined to produce music that adheres to other Avant-Garde practice and therefore suggests the existence of the Avant-Garde style.

The third exploration into subverting technique is done in relation to the physicality of the instrument as follows. The rhythm and continuously shifting pulse of *Parallax Error* arises from a battle between the performer's attempt to perform the notated rhythms (which are intuitively derived through improvisation on the viola) and the logistics of the instrument, which frequently counteract the performer's actions. In cases where precise execution of intricate durations and articulation with *saltando* attacks is required, the performer must attempt to follow the notation as accurately as possible yet allow the *saltando* technique to reveal hidden unpredictable rhythms, articulation and, in some cases, pitch. This heightens the perspective that, like pitch, the specific rhythm, meter and tempo are viewed as a by-product of the instrumental techniques employed. In order to investigate this aspect of *Parallax Error* further, I asked three specialist string players to play through *Parallax Error* in various workshop settings.[9] The first took place in the University of Leeds in England by cellist Ellen Fallowfield who suggested ways in which the notation could represent both my desired sonic outcome, yet also acknowledge the behaviour of the cello. For example, in line (9), she suggested an exponential crescendo (ex. II.3) as opposed to the gradual one I had initially notated. This is because, due to the logistics of the cello, the crescendo would inevitably be exponential whether I notated it in that way or not.

Ex. II.3: *Parallax Error*, line (9)

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[9] *Parallax Error* was first workshopped by me in the University of Leeds, UK (20 June 2014) on viola, then subsequently by cellist Ellen Fallowfield in the University of Leeds (29 January 2015), cellist Katharina Gross in the Gaudeamus Muziekweek Academy, Utrecht (3 and 7 September 2015), and double-bassist Dario Calderone in the Gaudeamus Muziekweek Academy, Utrecht (8 September 2015). This piece was premiered by cellist Katharina Gross (as part of her *cellomondo* project) at the Gaudeamus Muziekweek, Utrecht (10 September 2016). Recordings of my interpretation and those of Ellen Fallowfield, Katharina Gross, and Dario Calderone are included on the accompanying CD (tracks 8, 9, 10, and 11, respectively).

Fallowfield's interpretation of *Parallax Error* on cello varied from mine on viola. Nevertheless, she performed something that was recognisably *Parallax Error*, fulfilling all actions requested in the score. At this point, I concluded that the overall varied sonic outcome, between Fallowfield's interpretations and my own, was due to the varied behaviour of the cello compared to the viola, and that this in itself could be deliberately manipulated as a compositional device.

The second workshop took place at the Gaudeamus Academy in the Netherlands with cellist Katharina Gross. Gross's approach to performing *Parallax Error* involved a desire to understand my thoughts about the piece. Once we had established that my view of the piece was one of a sense of 'flow' and 'interruption' (or 'starting' and 'stopping') and that the performer had to encounter a battle between their instrument and what was notated in the score, Gross performed *Parallax Error* in a similar way to how I had performed it on the viola. This caused me to reconsider my initial conclusion that the instrument was the sole contributing factor to the difference between Fallowfield's and my interpretations of *Parallax Error*. By comparing Fallowfield's interpretation with Gross's, I concluded that it was actually an individual performer's pre-existing knowledge about (or 'familiarity' with) a piece of music that affected their instrumental technique and subsequent interpretation of that music.

The third workshop of *Parallax Error* also took place at the Gaudeamus Academy in the Netherlands, but this time with double-bass player Dario Calderone. Calderone's interpretation of *Parallax Error* was different from Fallowfield's, Gross's, and my own but was nevertheless still recognisably *Parallax Error*. His instrument reacted differently from the viola and the cello: it was generally louder and so directions for *piano* dynamics were more difficult (albeit not impossible) to control than on the viola and cello. It was at this point that I reconsidered my previous conclusions, drawn from Fallowfield's and Gross's interpretations: after working with Calderone, I concluded that interpretation of a piece of music is influenced by a hermeneutic framework between a performer's preconceived knowledge about the piece and the physicality of their instrument. Their knowledge influences their instrumental technique, the logistics of which influences their interpretation, and so on.

In light of these three workshops, I can conclude that *Parallax Error* presents a battle between the performer's 'familiarity' with their instrument and their 'unfamiliarity' with its non-normative notation and instrumental techniques. These

'unfamiliar' factors contradict the performer's interpretation of the music (governed by potentially ingrained performance technique) and, in doing so, present a 'restriction' to their process. This 'restriction', in turn, affects their interpretation of the music (now governed by the behaviour of their instrument), and so on, in a hermeneutic framework. The only 'freedom' the performer experiences is that of overcoming the 'restrictions' of their own knowledge about how their instrument 'should' be performed and how the music they are performing 'should' be interpreted.

These workshops also demonstrate how the hermeneutic frameworks between 'unfamiliarity' and 'familiarity', and creative 'freedom' and 'restriction', which I encountered when experimenting with the viola (and subsequently composing *Parallax Error*), can also be experienced by a trained performer despite them having pre-existing knowledge about how their instrument 'should' be played.

However, the way in which *Parallax Error* employs the physicality of an instrument is not unique amidst Avant-Garde practice in general. Similarities can be drawn between this aspect of *Parallax Error* and the work of Cassidy, Hübler, and Lachenmann (amongst others). In fact, it can be said that this type of instrumental exploration (wherein the music manifests in the instrument's instability) is symptomatic of decoupled notation and vice versa. Like my previous attempts to subvert technique and engage with (progressive) naïveté, this similarity is unintentional, and therefore demonstrates how focusing on subversion of technique is more likely to produce music that adheres to general Avant-Garde practice than 'go beyond' it.

This investigation outlines how *Parallax Error*'s threefold attempt to subvert technique on the level of notation, musical characteristics, and the use of the instrument's physicality has failed in all three ways. The conclusion that can be made from this is as follows: *Parallax Error*'s compositional process allows me to engage with newness on a personal level: it persuades me to compose music I would not have composed had I taken a more 'familiar' compositional approach. However, *Parallax Error* is not unique in relation to overall Avant-Garde practice and can be likened to existing pieces such as that of Cassidy, Hübler, and Lachenmann. As such, *Parallax Error* serves to prove the existence of the Avant-Garde style rather than 'go beyond' it. This is despite my compositional approach focusing on subverting technique in order to engage with Adorno's naïveté. Therefore, my second attempt at manipulating the

mechanics of style, in order to engage with Adorno's naïveté, must challenge this insular nature of composition that valorises technique above the piece's truth content.

Attempt 2: *'It sounds an isochronism.'* (2015) for solo piano and optional fixed-media electronics

In my second conscious attempt to manipulate the mechanics behind the formation of a style (and so engage with Adorno's naïveté), I abandon technique as the main focus as much as is possible. It must be noted that relinquishing a focus on technique is not designed to relinquish the necessity of technique (that is, the means in which music is composed), rather, it means that technique is not to be considered as an end in itself. By doing this, I aim to weaken (if not remove) the creative 'restrictions' brought about by engaging with 'unfamiliar' instrumental techniques. Instead, I focus on composing 'freely' without worrying about what the resultant music sounds like (exactly what this entails is discussed later on in this chapter). By doing this, I am attempting to weaken (if not remove) the hermeneutic frameworks between 'familiarity' and 'unfamiliarity', and creative 'freedom' and 'restriction'. This second attempt to engage with naïveté comprises two parts: the first attempts to weaken the mechanics behind the formation of style on the level of performance technique (reflected in the notation); the second attempts to do this on the level of musical characteristics.

The first attempt to weaken the mechanics of style (and engage with Adorno's naïveté) is done on the level of performance technique as follows: *'It sounds an isochronism.'* (2015) for solo piano and optional fixed-media electronics was composed for myself to perform on an instrument that I am familiar with playing.[10] The piece incorporates improvisation, and was composed with 'familiar', normative instrumental techniques to ensure that my improvisations were not determined by 'unfamiliar' instrumental logistics (to be clear: 'unfamiliar' extended techniques were not employed).[11] This approach prevented me from experiencing the limited performance technique that I had experienced when composing *Parallax Error*. It also affected the way in which I notated *'It sounds an isochronism.'* (ex. II.4).

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[10] The phrase '[i]t sounds an isochronism' is a quotation from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. An 'isochronism' is the regulated occurrence of events.

[11] I am defining 'improvisation' as the act of producing 'something on the spur of the moment', but also as 'originative in a more fundamental sense, to the extent that improvisation is regarded as […] the primal core of artistic creative activity.' For more information, see: Garry Hagberg, 'Improvisation', *Oxford Art Online* <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t234/e0286?q=improvisation&search= quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit> [accessed: 24/09/16]

Ex. II.4: opening of *'It sounds an isochronism.'* (2015) for solo piano and fixed-media electronics

The notation is open to multiple interpretations: it is not strict, denoting specific musical attributes, but refers to more general sonic outcomes. Although I (as performer) have specific macro-level guidelines to follow, I am permitted to improvise 'freely' on a micro-level. As a result of this feature, I have performed two similar yet microscopically varied versions of *'It sounds an isochronism.'* in two separate performances. Both versions follow the instructions in the score, and both result in the same overall sonic effect (both versions sound like the same piece of music); however, as a result of the notation, the micro-level detail in each performance varies.[12]

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[12] A comparison of two performed versions of the opening of *'It sounds an isochronism.'* is included on the accompanying CD (track 13). Furthermore, that there can exist multiple versions of my own performances of *'It sounds an isochronism.'*, all of which are based on my pre-existing knowledge, suggests that *another* performer (who has a different perspective of this piece from my own) would interpret *'It sounds an isochronism.'* according to their own pre-existing knowledge of music and how the piece's notation should be realised (I can hypothesise that such pre-existing knowledge is perhaps influenced by education, up-bringing, culture and society; however, investigations into such sociology and psychology is a topic too vast to justifiably cover in this thesis alone). No doubt this would result in a more varied sonic outcome than every one of my own 'varied' versions. This then proposes the notion that *'It sounds an isochronism.'* becomes less variable the more often an individual performs it. In other words, a pre-existing knowledge of this piece's notation inflects the performance more and more with each rehearsal and/or performance. Also, I should add that the type of variation-in-performance I am referring to here is different from the inherent fluctuations that occur in each performance of the same piece of music. This is something that is discussed in relation to music ontology. For more information on

Despite trying to remove a focus on technique (by avoiding 'unfamiliar' instrumental logistics and their related creative 'restrictions') so that my attempt to engage with naïveté would not be thwarted by the mechanics of style that evidently thrive on a technical level, *'It sounds an isochronism.'* shares similarities with existing works *in terms of technique*. Similarities can be drawn between this piece's instrumental and compositional techniques and those of Lubomyr Melnyk: namely his 'Continuous Music' technique and his 'Bel Canto' technique.[13] Comparisons can also be made with Xenakis's *à R* (1987) which utilises two musical parameters from all of Ravel's output: chords and arpeggios.[14] *'It sounds an isochronism.'* is similar in the way that it focuses on chords and arpeggios (albeit not with Ravel in mind). Furthermore, there exist many pieces that integrate piano and electronics and so share similarities with the overall acoustic-electronic timbral sound world of *'It sounds an isochronism.'* Some examples include Nono's *...sofferte onde serene...* (1975–77), Davidovsky's *Synchronism* No. 6 (1970), Kreidler's *Piano Piece* 3 (2004), Lauren Sarah Hayes' *Socks and Ammo* (2011), and the work of Sarah Nicolls, such as her album *We're Inside and Outside* (2016).[15] Not only do these similarities suggest that *'It sounds an isochronism.'* is not *genuinely* avant garde (because it shares similar traits with a range of existing music), but they also demonstrate how technique is unavoidable (despite it being impossible to engage

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this topic, see: Roman Ingarden, *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity*, trans. by Adam Czerniawski, ed. by Jean G. Harrell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 9–23. As such, the variations I am referring to, in relation to my music, are more literal.

[13] Melnyk's 'Continuous Music' technique is 'based on a special technique wherein the two hands operate a steady stream of notes with incongruent and sustained patterns.' His 'Bel Canto' technique takes his 'Continuous Music' technique as a starting point and involves letting a melody emerge from the interaction of various arpeggiated patterns that are performed in the manner of his 'Continuous Music' technique. See: Lubomyr Melnyk, 'The Music of Lubomyr Melnyk: VOCALIZES and 13 for Solo Piano, ANTIPHONS 2, 4 and 6 for Strings and Piano', *Lubomyr Melnyk: Pianist/Composer, Continuous Music: a New Language for the Piano* <http://www.lubomyr.com/cd8.html> [accessed: 05/04/16]

[14] See: Iannis Xenakis, *á R* (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1989); Iannis Xenakis, *l'œuvre pour piano – the piano works*, Stéphanos Thomopoulos (Timpani, 1C1232, 2015)

[15] See: Luigi Nono, *...sofferte onde serene...*, Maurizio Pollini (Deutsche Grammophon, B00000E3Z2, 1997); Mario Davidovsky, *Synchronism No. 6 for Piano and Tape*, Aleck Karis, on *The Music of Mario Davidovsky*, vol. 3 (Bridge, B000ASAT4Y, 2006); Johannes Kreidler, 'piano piece #3 (2004)', *Johannes Kreidler Composer* <http://www.kreidler-net.de/english/works/klavierstueck3.htm> [accessed: 26/09/16]; Johannes Kreidler, 'piano piece #3', *Johannes Kreidler Composer* <http://ia902604.us.archive.org/22/items/JohannesKreidlerKlavierstueck3Score/kreidler__klavierstueck_3.pdf> [accessed: 26/09/16]; Lauren Sarah Hayes, 'Socks and Ammo', *Lauren Sarah Hayes* <http://elleesaich.tumblr.com/listen> [accessed: 05/04/16]; Sarah Nicolls, 'We're Inside and Outside – now available here!', *Sarah Nicolls* <http://sarahnicolls.com/album/> [accessed: 05/04/16]. A non-comprehensive list of existing piano and electronic music can be found here: Xenia Pestova, 'The Piano and Live Electronics Repertoire List', *eContact!* <http://econtact.ca/13_2/pestova_repertoirelist.html> [accessed: 19/05/16]

with naïveté on a technical level). From this, I propose that technique is necessary, but it should not be the sole focus.

The second attempt to abandon the mechanics of style was done on the level of musical characteristics as follows: by improvising 'freely' without the creative 'restrictions' of an 'unfamiliar' instrument, I aimed to compose authentically and 'in the moment' without worrying about following any precise rule pertaining to instrumental and/or existing compositional technique.[16] However, being allowed to improvise on the piano encouraged me to fall onto my ingrained training as a pianist and consequently my pre-existing 'familiarity' with Western classical idioms.[17] It is as Peters writes: 'from the first moment of an improvisation there is potential for the emergence of irony […]. The improvisation begins, but with this body, these materials, this instrument, these words, in this language, the contingency of what is there and available.'[18] In other words, my improvisations were guided by particular 'familiarities' which ironically provided a framework for my improvisation. As such, all my improvisations in *'It sounds an isochronism.'* draw on what I already know about the piano and Western classical tonality and improvisation. As a result of this (in my opinion), my performance involved fragmented stylistic allusions that occasionally interrupted each other to formulate an unregulated juxtaposition of 'genres', allusions to romantic cadenzas, Impressionism, folk harmonies, and Jazz-like improvisation.[19]

Alluding to traditional Western classical idioms within contemporary composition is a common technique of postmodernism and involves an engagement with the past: as Kramer writes, postmodernist compositions 'simultaneously embrace and repudiate history.'[20] A hardly exhaustive list of examples of such postmodernist music might include 'Zygmunt Krauze's Second Piano Concerto, John Adams's Violin Concerto, Henryk Górecki's Third Symphony, Alfred Schnittke's First Symphony, George Rochberg's Third Quartet, Steve Reich's *Tehillim*, John Corigliano's First

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[16] As explained in the Introduction, this thesis defines 'authenticity' as 'spontaneous creation of one's self and life'. See: Introduction, p. 5.

[17] This is not to say that other performers with different musical backgrounds (such as free improvisers, for example) would have the same results as me: my particular performance of this piece is personal to me and other performers with varied perspectives might find the situation different.

[18] Gary Peters, *The Philosophy of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 71

[19] A recording of my performance of *'It sounds an isochronism.'* is included on the accompanying CD (track 12).

[20] Jonathan D. Kramer, 'The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism' in *Postmodern Music Postmodern Thought*, ed. by Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 13–26 (p. 14)

Symphony, Bernard Rands's …*Body and Shadow*…, and Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia*.'[21] In fact, '[l]ong before postmodernism was widely recognized, and long before recording technology brought distant musics into the present, there were pieces that juxtaposed styles.' Examples include Ives's *Three Places in New England* (1911–14), Mahler's Seventh Symphony (1904–05), and Nielsen's *Sinfonia Semplice* (1924).[22]

The following conclusions can be made about *'It sounds an isochronism.'* It can be argued that *'It sounds an isochronism.'* is unconsciously stylistic because it is defined in relation to the styles it alludes to. It has failed to adhere to naïveté and instead adhered to the practice of postmodernism. However, despite its allusions to Western traditional idioms, *'It sounds an isochronism.'* cannot be said to adhere *fully* to any one particular style in the same way that *Parallax Error* does. Therefore, it can be argued that *'It sounds an isochronism.'* comes closer to engaging with naïveté than *Parallax Error* does. In fact, this piece's failure to engage with naïveté occurs on the technical level only, which highlights the futility of trying to be *genuinely* avant garde by subverting technique.

Evaluation

This chapter's investigation attempts to engage with naïveté by exploring two extreme avenues. The first attempt took place when composing *Parallax Error*, the compositional process of which focused on subversion of technique above truth content. It forced an engagement with the 'unfamiliar' by employing an instrument I am not

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[21] Ibid., pp. 13–14

Also see: Zygmunt Krauze, *Zygmunt Krauze Piano Concerto No 2, Part 1: Delphi*, online audio recording, YouTube, 17 May 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kv5BiSl8uE8> [accessed: 24/09/16]; John Adams, *Violin Concerto*, Chloë Hanslip, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. by Leonard Slatkin (Naxos, 8.559302, 2006); Henryk Górecki, *Symphony No. 3 (Symphony of Sorrowful Songs)*; *Three Olden Style Pieces*; Zofia Kilanowicz, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, cond. by Antoni Wit (Naxos, 8.550822, 2001); Alfred Schnittke, *Symphony No. 1*, Russian State Symphony Orchestra, cond. by Gennady Rozhdestvensky (Chandos, CHAN 9417, 1996); George Rochberg, *String Quartets Nos 3-6*, Concord String Quartet (New World, B00000I904, 2007); Steve Reich, *Tehillim*, ensemble of various vocalists and instrumentalists cond. by George Manahan (ECM New Series, B0000261K9, 2008); John Corigliano, *Symphony No.1 / Of Rage and Remembrance*, National Symphony Orchestra, cond. by Leonard Slatkin (RCA, B000003G1M, 1996); Bernard Rands, …*Body and Shadow*… on *New Music From Bowling Green*, Bowling Green Philharmonia, cond. by Emily Freeman Brown (Albany Records, B001HRBLSA, 2006); Luciano Berio, *Sinfonia*, Göteborgs Symfoniker, cond. by Peter Eötvös (Decca, B0009DBXKO, 2010).

[22] Ibid., p. 15

Also see: Charles Ives, *Three Places in New England*, Gilbert Kalish, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra (Deutsche Grammophon, B000027DE8, 1999); Gustav Mahler, *Symphonie No. 7*, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, cond. by Claudio Abbado (Deutsche Grammophon, B000001GNE, 1994); Carl Nielsen, *Symphony No. 6 'Sinfonia semplice'*, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, cond. by Michael Schønwandt (Naxos, 8.570737, 2008).

trained in. The second attempt took place when composing *'It sounds an isochronism.'*, the compositional process of which involved relinquishing technique as the main focus. It entailed improvising 'freely' (without worrying about the nature of the resultant music) on an instrument I am familiar with. Neither attempt was *entirely* successful at engaging with naïveté because both adhered to the norms of existing practice in some way.

The reason for *Parallax Error*'s failure is most likely because its compositional process considered subversion of technique as an end in itself. As proposed in Chapter I, defaulting to technical skill ignores truth content and develops an absurd unconscious mode of composing, which perpetuates the 'aging' of art forms. In Adorno's words:

> [a]rtisanal instruction that wants polemically to usurp the position of aesthetics ultimately develops into positivism, even when it includes sympathy with metaphysics. Advice on how best to compose a rondo is useless as soon as there are reasons – of which artisanal instruction is ignorant – why rondos can no longer be written.[23]

'It sounds an isochronism.''s failure to engage with naïveté occurred *only* on the level of technique, and, as such, two conclusions can be made about whether or not the piece as a whole succeeds at engaging with Adorno's naïveté. On one hand, it fails to engage with naïveté because it adheres to existing postmodernist practice in that it juxtaposes various styles. On the other hand, it engages with naïveté more so than *Parallax Error* for three reasons. First, its compositional process does not *focus* on subverting technique (despite the application of technique being necessary during its compositional process). Second, its inadvertent allusions to existing practice suggests an acknowledgement of contemporary Western compositional practice in light of its tradition. Third, despite its allusions to other styles, it does not adhere *fully* to any rules of those styles and so cannot be described in the same terms as any of them.

This suggests that subversion of technique cannot be an end in itself if one is to engage with Adorno's naïveté. Rather, subversion of technique has to support the truth content of the work. As Zuidervaart explains, the technical level of a work and its truth content are dialectical. [24] In explaining the Adornian concept of truth content in artworks, Zuidervaart writes that:

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23 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 425
24 Lambert Zuidervaart, 'Theodor W. Adorno', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno/> [accessed: 31/08/16]

> [a]ccording to Adorno, each artwork has its own import (Gehalt) by virtue of an internal dialectic between content (Inhalt) and form (Form). This import invites critical judgments about its truth or falsity. To do justice to the artwork and its import, such critical judgments need to grasp both the artwork's complex internal dynamics and the dynamics of the sociohistorical totality to which the artwork belongs. The artwork has an internal truth content to the extent that the artwork's import can be found internally and externally either true or false. Such truth content is not a metaphysical idea or essence hovering outside the artwork. But neither is it a merely human construct. It is historical but not arbitrary; nonpropositional, yet calling for propositional claims to be made about it; utopian in its reach, yet firmly tied to specific societal conditions. Truth content is the way in which an artwork simultaneously challenges the way things are and suggests how things could be better, but leaves things practically unchanged: "Art has truth as the semblance of the illusionless" (AT 132).[25]

This suggests that an essential facet of being genuinely avant garde is to write music that is conscious of its sociohistorical condition. Focusing on subversion of technique (under the false guise of being 'new') renders the compositional practice inward-looking, separated from the majority of society, and failing to be the 'advance post' it proclaims. Instead of being avant garde, artists fall into the trap of adhering to the Avant-Garde style, and so perpetuate the absurd Sisyphean nature in Avant-Garde practice today. It is inevitable that all attempts at subversion in this manner will fail to subvert artistic practice in general. Instead, these attempts will be consigned to exemplifying the Avant-Garde style. '[T]here is no longer any art that has remained inviolable.'[26]

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 432

Chapter III: The Compositional Act and the Musical Work

Aim

So far, my investigations have focused on the influence that the roles of composer, performer, and listener have on forming the musical work. This chapter's investigation, on the other hand, explores the influence the musical work has on the composer (and, in some ways, the listener). It adopts Gadamer's view that the properties of the work of art comprise 'play' and that an artwork is simultaneously autonomous and dependent on human interpretation. [1] It examines the playing-out of these properties *through practice*, but focuses on how the musical work itself affects its receiver's perception of it. By doing this, I intend to develop Chapter II's findings by examining further how preconceived knowledge of the Avant-Garde's tradition influences current compositional practice, and *then* how that compositional practice can, in turn, influence preconceived knowledge and further compositional practice in a hermeneutic framework. This will allow me to understand whether such preconceived knowledge can be overcome (and likewise whether successful engagement with naïveté can be obtained) by either manipulating these compositional properties or at least understanding how they function in practice.

Method

I explore this area by composing the *[Co]Valence* collection (2014–16). This collection is a series of compositions where each piece is essentially a re-ordered version of the first composition in the series, *[Co]Valence* Ia (2014). All pieces that follow *[Co]Valence* Ia have undergone a rigorous rearrangement and transcription process as will be explained. The only similarities between the pieces that follow *[Co]Valence* Ia are constituent musical motifs, phrases, notes, and so on; the differences lie in their arrangement.[2] This investigation does not focus on subversion of technique as an end in itself (which is destined to fail as proposed in Chapter II). Rather, it uses technique to demonstrate how the musical work is created as a concept, how compositions are

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[1] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 112
[2] Technically, every piece in the *[Co]Valence* collection can be played in any order (and need not *all* be played in the same event). However, these pieces were *composed* in a set order that is significant to this collection's formation and my overall research.

distinguished from one another, the relevance of a piece's context, how tradition manifests in current practice, and how compositional approaches 'age'.

Prediction

As will become clear, a composition is defined by its structure and presentation within a context more than its constituent notes, motifs, phrases (and so on) in themselves. Such context includes the traditional and cultural implications of the composition as triggered by instrumentation, performance site and/or an acknowledged compositional approach. This means that all acts of composing involve (re)arranging what already exists into a compositional form or a particular context. This blurs the distinction between self-borrowing, employing quotation and/or allusion (whether deliberately or not) and not doing so.

[Co]Valence Ia (2014) for String Quartet

I began my investigation with a composition for string quartet. The string quartet in general is a historically-embedded instrumental line-up. By writing for string quartet, I was forced to consider my compositional actions in relation to my own pre-conceived knowledge about the string quartet's history. The compositional process behind *[Co]Valence* I (2014) purposefully did not entail prior analysis of existing Avant-Garde string-quartet compositions. This is so that the compositional process could only be influenced by my already-existing *general* awareness of how the string quartet is treated in Avant-Garde and traditional compositional practices. In other words, I deliberately did not analyse existing string-quartet practice so that I could focus on my preconceived knowledge and its effects.

     [Co]Valence I comprises four versions (Ia, Ib, Ic, and Id), each version being a crude rearrangement of the first. In order to heighten the chances of a subconscious engagement with the string quartet's history and provide something that could be challenged via compositional practice in the following pieces of this collection, *[Co]Valence* Ia's compositional process involved a focus on *separate* detailed melodic lines laterally across individual sections. Composing each instrumental line separately heightened the possibility of moments occurring between the lines that might not have

arisen had I thought about all the lines *together* as a sectional unit.[3] By doing this, I found that separate melodic lines aligned in unplanned ways, which in turn allowed me to uncover vertical arrangements of pitches, rhythms, instrumental techniques and gestures that I could segment into 'blocks' of 'material' (notes, motifs, phrases, and so on) and rearrange in the later versions of *[Co]Valence* I (ex. III.1).

Ex. III.1: *[Co]Valence* Ia for string quartet, bars 1–3

Each line is composed separately (without considering the surrounding lines). Despite this, or because of it, there are vertical interactions that I did not consciously compose (and so did not acknowledge *before* they revealed themselves to me). Such vertical interactions include the unison movement on the fourth beat of bar one, and the 'question and answer' flourishes across the parts: for example, in bar two, violin I's line is answered immediately in violin II's line with a similar motif (albeit varied nonetheless). Furthermore, as a result of this compositional approach, *[Co]Valence* Ia does not include any solo passages. This is because deliberately writing solo passages would reduce the possibilities of unrelated interactions occurring between the four separate melodic lines.[4]

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[3] *[Co]Valence* Ia comprises distinct sections denoted by rehearsal marks; however, these do not affect the compositional approach: they were added after the fact as a means of segmenting the piece into crude 'building blocks' (of notes, motifs, and so on) that would later be rearranged in subsequent versions.

[4] I appreciate how one instrumental part can comprise two independent lines, such as the multiple interacting lines in the one cello part of James Dillon's *L'oeuvre au noir* (1990), for example; however, in such a solo part, both lines have to be composed in relation to one another to ensure that they can be performed on the one instrument practically.

As this compositional process of focusing on lateral lines rather than sectional 'blocks' continued throughout the piece, and as seemingly logical interactions between the individual lines occurred as a result of this, I began to incorporate (intuitively) consideration for the vertical so that the piece would be internally coherent as a whole. For instance, the overall chaotic interaction of separate melodic lines is interrupted by points of deliberate unison movement. An example of such unison is between violin I and II in bar eleven (ex. III.2).

Ex. III.2: *[Co]Valence* Ia for string quartet, bars 10–12

Here, the violin I and II parts share the same rhythmic durations and dynamics. A more obvious example of parts coming together is in bar fourteen (ex. III.3).

Ex. III.3: *[Co]Valence* Ia for string quartet, bars 13–17

Although a short unison moment, it stands out against the otherwise contrapuntal texture of the overall composition.

[Co]Valence Ib, Ic, and Id (2014), for String Quartet

Fig III.1 outlines how versions Ib, Ic, and Id of *[Co]Valence* I relate to version Ia.

Fig. III.1: Comparing the arrangement of sections in *[Co]Valence* Ia, Ib, Ic, and Id for string quartet

Each section of Ia (distinguished by rehearsal marks) is reordered to form subsequent versions. Ib is a basic reordering of these sections as outlined in the above diagram. Comparatively, in version Ic, as well as rearranging these sections, each section is split into two subsections that are also reordered. In a similar vein, in Id, each section is split into four subsections that are reordered. Although I only composed three subsequent versions after Ia, in theory a much larger number of rearrangements of Ia can generate a much larger number of subsequent versions that exponentially increases with each new version. For instance, each version is sectioned into five parts which can be arranged in any order (five factorial). This generates one-hundred-and-twenty possible rearrangements for Ia. As already mentioned, the sections in Ib, Ic, and Id are split into sub-sections which are also rearranged. As such, for Ib, there are ten subsequent parts that can be rearranged (ten factorial) and thus 3,628,800 possible arrangements, and so on for versions Ic and Id.

Various modifications were made to the subsequent reordered versions of Ia in order to make it practical for performers. For instance, in Ib, before rehearsal mark C, an extra bar was added to help the transition from pizzicato to arco (ex. III. 4).

Ex. III.4: *[Co]Valence* Ib for string quartet, bars 44–53

Pauses were also added to support a musical transition between various sections as well as instrumental practicality. For example, in Ib, a pause had to be included before rehearsal mark A (see ex. III.5 below).

Ex. III.5: *[Co]Valence* Ib for string quartet, bars 23–29

Likewise, in Id, an extra rest was added to bar 13 after the dampened pizzicati to help the practical aspects of transitioning from a pizzicato technique to an arco technique in the violin I and II parts. (ex. III.6).

Ex. III.6: *[Co]Valence* Id for string quartet, bars 13–17

The rearranged subsections of *[Co]Valence* Ic and Id are segmented into equal lengths as closely as possible (depending on the number of bars in each section and depending on what I regarded as a musical phrase). For instance, in Ic, the first section (bars 1–14) is split into two subsections, one of which is six bars long and the other of which is seven bars long. Basically, the first six bars of this first section are swapped with the seven bars that follow. This is because I regarded the first six bars and following seven bars as distinct phrases. Although I did not consider this at the time, such a handling of

musical phrases was probably influenced by my pre-existing knowledge of classical music. This also suggests that I was influenced by *[Co]Valence* I's classically formed structure: I was adhering to a sense of balance that was present.[5]

Once I was aware of my adherence to a classical sense of balance, I consciously tried to negate it. As such, in the final section of *[Co]Valence* Ic (bars 55–68), the first eight bars were placed after the six bars that followed (despite it being possible for this section to be divided into two equal parts of seven bars each). My reasons for dividing the bars in this way was based on my opinion that dividing this section exactly on the sixth bar interrupted what I regarded as a balanced musical phrase, and I was interested in the sonic effects of going against what felt natural for me to do when I did not think about it in relation to a historical context: perhaps these interrupted phrases would subtly usurp a particular expectation in the listener as they did me during my compositional process. Despite wanting to generate a sense of unpredictability via phrasing, an additional bar was added to the end. This decision was merely based on personal preference: I felt that this additional bar emphasised the piece's end with a variation in texture (from busier to sparser and sustained). Also, by allowing myself to do this, I was reinforcing my control over the piece and preventing it from becoming an alienated procedure that I could not control.

The table below outlines how the subsections of *[Co]Valence* Id are rearranged in relation to their initial arrangement in Ia and Ib.

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[5] This thesis defines 'classical' as that which has balance. As Lipten explains, the possible 'templates' for 'classical music' are 'a beginning-middle-end paradigm […] tension and resolution, directionality, balance, symmetry, order, meter, even harmony, melody and rhythm, as well as structure itself'. David Lipten, 'Semiotics and Musical Choice', in *The Aesthetic Discourse of the Arts: Breaking Barriers¸* ed. by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer-Science+Business Media, 2000), pp. 105–142 (p. 117). *[Co]Valence* I's structure is discussed further in the section '*[Co]Valence* I for string quartet: Conclusions' later on in this chapter.

Rehearsal mark					A				B				C				D			
Order of subsections as originally arranged in Ia and Ib	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Total no. of bars in this section	8				6				13				14				27			
Rearrangement of subsections	4	1	3	2	2	1	4	3	1	3	2	4	2	4	3	1	3	2	1	4
No. of bars in each subsection	2	2	2	2	1	2	1.5	1.5	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	6	8	6	7

Fig. III.2: Comparing the arrangement of subsections in each section of *[Co]Valence* Ia, Ib, and Id for string quartet

One point of this exercise is to ascertain what number of constituent notes, motifs, phrases, and so on, is influential in recognising a piece as a work by observing whether versions Ib, Ic, and Id are perceived as rearrangements of Ia. I cannot speak for the perception of other people; however, after composing and observing the aforementioned pieces, I can deduce that all seem like different pieces of music yet there are perceivable similarities between them. I cannot say for certain that versions Ia, Ib, Ic, and Id seem like mere rearrangements of each other: they can be regarded as individual pieces in their own right.

Whether they are perceived as different pieces or rearrangements of the same piece probably depends on their context. This theory can be explained via a look at some of the work of Bryn Harrison. According to Harrison, in much of his work, his 'intention has been to raise, for the listener, perceptual questions as to whether successive events are presented as exact repetitions or whether some kind of transformation has taken place.'[6] At the Royal Musical Association's Fiftieth Annual Conference in 2014, Harrison explained that his piano set of six miniatures is essentially

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[6] Bryn Harrison, 'Scanning the Temporal Surface: Aspects of Time, Memory and Repetition in my Recent Music', *Divergence Press* <http://divergencepress.com/Journal/JournalIssue/tabid/85/ID/8/Scanning-the-temporal-surface-aspects-of-time-memory-and-repetition-in-my-recent-music.aspx> [accessed: 19/05/16]

six repetitions of the same page of music; however, the typical listener does not notice this. In his words:

> Piano Set (six miniatures), written in 2005 consists, as the title suggests, of six discreet movements, each separated by a brief pause. What the audience isn't informed of, however, is that each of the short movements is in fact an exact duplication of the last. As the pianist turns each page to play the next miniature they are, essentially performing from the same sheet of music. During a round table discussion, following a performance of the piece at Goldsmith's several years ago and with the audience still unaware that each of the movements is a duplication of the last, much of the discussion revolved around perceptual differences between each of the movements. Someone remarked that they found it interesting that each of the miniatures started a fifth higher than the last. Another remarked on the ways in which the close proximity of the notes in the middle of each movement varied between one miniature and the next and one further commentator remarked upon the various tempi employed throughout the piece. When I revealed that each movement was in fact a duplication of the same page there was some bemusement in the room. However, I do not want to belittle these statements. In fact I feel there is some truths in what is being put forward here. The pitch centre is indeed disorientating and it would be unrealistic for instance to assume that any two of the miniatures would be performed in exactly the same way – they will always contain slight discrepancies in rhythmic placement and slight fluctuations in tempo. And this really forms the main point which I want to go on to discuss today which is that working with high levels of repetition does not necessarily mean that change is absent from the work but rather is conditioned by our experience of listening to the music. As the Scottish philosopher Hume has stated (and quoted by Deleuze) difference might be observed within the mind that contemplates it rather than directly within the object itself (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (Continuum, 2004), 90).[7]

Bryn Harrison's music suggests that the same material, presented within a different context, can be interpreted differently. This in turn suggests that not only can the structure of constituent motifs, phrases, notes, and so on be a governing factor in musical composition, but so can the prevailing context. Despite Harrison's *Piano Set (six miniatures)* (2005) being a repetition of the same piece of music six times, it is presented as six separate pieces in its title, its score (each repetition is on a separate page), and its performance (the audience can see the pianist turning the page and pausing between each piece in the same manner one would when performing classical music in multiple movements). *Piano Set (six miniatures)* is perceived as six separate pieces (and, actually, what is to say that it isn't?). Therefore, whether *[Co]Valence* I is seen as a collection of separate compositions or mere rearrangements of the same piece of music, the versions in *[Co]Valence* I can be presented (and therefore considered) as different pieces of music. Not only does this suggest that the musical characteristics

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[7] Bryn Harrison, 'Receiving the approaching memory: experiencing time in my recent music', *RMA 50th Annual Conference*, University of Leeds, 5 September 2014

(pitch, duration, articulation, and so on) are not the definitive feature of the music overall, but it also demonstrates why audience perception is an integral part of the musical work (and likewise why naïveté has to affect audience perception in order to produce a *totally* naïve piece of music). The act of composing is about structure and presentation within a context more than its constituent notes. Distinguishing one composition from another relies on the way in which compositions are presented and how they *perceivably* exist to the interpreter.

This notion brings to mind Heidegger's writings about mere 'things'. Heidegger explains that preconceived ideas about the 'thing' influence our own perception of the 'thing'. Our conceptual framework is formed from prior ideas about the 'thing' and, as such, it does not accommodate perception of the absolute 'being' of the 'thing'; that is, the 'thing-in-itself'. Heidegger explains why this is the case: our conceptual framework for comprehending the 'thing' comprises the core of the 'thing' *and* its surrounding characteristics. Therefore, it cannot be used as a conceptual framework for distinguishing between 'thingly beings' and 'non-thingly beings'. In this way, it does not help us to understand the 'being' of the absolute 'thing'.[8] Despite the apparent fact that 'things' (as we perceive them) tend to adhere to our conceptual framework about the 'thing' (that it contains a 'core' and surrounding properties), our conceptual framework does not put its finger on 'the thing as it is in its own being'. Our thoughts and reason (in the form of our conceptual framework) 'assault' the 'thing as it is in its own being'. In other words, 'thought' has played a part in the act of 'violence' upon the 'thing'. We are not making an observation of the 'thing's' absolute 'essence'.[9] This suggests that we observe things dimly and partially, a notion that can be used to argue that naïveté rests in a persistent dialogue/dialectic with the known. For instance, what is to say that an audience member is even capable of perceiving the whole artwork even if it did successfully engage with naïveté fully? After all, multiple performances of the exact same piece of music can be presented in different contexts and so perceived as different pieces of music. In the case of Harrison's *Piano Set (six miniatures)*, only the contextualisation of the music was used to distinguish between repetitions. The audience, who potentially perceive things dimly and partially, were observing the

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[8] Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time to The Task of Thinking*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 139–212 (p. 150)

[9] Heidegger writes, 'what something is, as it is, we call its essence'. See: 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 143.

music's contextualisation above its sonic properties.[10] This suggests that it is possible to be naïve in relation to select areas of composition. Therefore, if one observes things incompletely anyway, what is to say that such a limited engagement with naïveté, which tackles a limited experience of 'newness', is not a successful engagement with naïveté?

<p align="center">*[Co]Valence* I (2014) for string quartet: Conclusions</p>

The aim of *[Co]Valence* I was to heighten the chances of a subconscious engagement with the string quartet's history and provide an example of preconceived knowledge (and its influence to my compositional approach) that can be challenged via compositional practice in the following pieces of this collection. My preconceived knowledge about the string-quartet tradition most obviously manifests itself in the way I treat the instrumentation: there is very little difference from the classical way of treating the string quartet (this in part is due to my compositional process, which focuses on the interaction of melodic lines over timbral exploration). However, there are other attributes which suggest that I was influenced by the string quartet's history. *[Co]Valence* I is 'classically' formed in the sense that there is balance: in the main, the piece is structured into sections comprising an equal number of bars (apart from section C, labelled as such in version Ia). A relationship with the past can also be heard in *[Co]Valence* I's phrasing and figuration, and arguably pitch and rhythm: for instance, in version Ia, bars 15–17 (ex. III.3), consideration for phrasing can be likened to that of classical music (there is a sense of symmetrical balance). The quasi-imitative interaction between the four lines highlights a consideration for pitch and rhythm that can also be likened to classical compositional ways of handling pitch and rhythm (in terms of imitation). It can be argued that such phrasing and handling of pitch and rhythm encourages a certain expressive performance technique that brings to mind the expressiveness of romantic music.

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[10] The notion that the work of art is relational and nonlinear has been discussed exhaustively in existing literature. Select (but not exhaustive) examples include: Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977); Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002); Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. by James Faubion, trans. by Josué V. Harari (London: Penguin, 2000); Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004); Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time to The Task of Thinking*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 139–212; George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001)

[Co]Valence I's relationship with the past is emphasised when compared to existing Avant-Garde string-quartet compositions such as Horațiu Rădulescu's Streichquartett nr. 4 opus 33 (1976–87).[11] In this piece, Rădulescu challenges the string quartet's relationship with history in a number of ways: first, he challenges the four-part line up by composing for nine spatialised string quartets (eight of which can be live or pre-recorded).[12] Second, his treatment of pitch is not traditionally classical: he takes a spectral approach to the pitch content. His treatment of rhythm and phrasing results in a cosmic melange of overlapping sonorities: in other words, it is not classically balanced and phrased like *[Co]Valence* I is, nor does it incorporate the sort of figuration that encourages romantic expressivity. Rădulescu has introduced a varied approach to string quartet writing that seems to distance itself from the history of the string quartet more so than my composition does. Having said this, I am not claiming that Rădulescu is particularly unusual. In place of Rădulescu, I might have mentioned Michael von Biel. According to Linke and Barkin, Michael von Biel 'does not compose according to any of the older rules, recipes, or even the currently fashionable formulas.'[13] Regarding his second string quartet (1963), 'the most impressive thing was that the work produced really new sounds, some of which seemed beyond anything yet produced electronically.'[14]

Having said this, compared to Michael von Biel whose string-quartet music seemingly negates its tradition, there exist Avant-Garde string-quartet compositions that deliberately play with an awareness of traditional string-quartet practice. An example is Arnold Schoenberg's second string quartet (1908), which includes a soprano voice. Schoenberg is insistent that his second quartet is still a quartet despite including a soprano voice in one of the movements. In this way, his second quartet can be viewed as also antagonising the norms of the string quartet tradition. However, this interpretation of Schoenberg's second string quartet also relies on an awareness of string quartet practice. Comparisons can be drawn between this and Brian

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[11] Horatiu Radulescu, *Streichquartett nr. 4 Opus 33*, Arditti Quartet (20 jahre inventionen, RZ 4002, 2001)

[12] See sleeve note: Horatiu Rădulescu, *Streichquartett nr. 4 Opus 33*, Arditti Quartet (20 jahre inventionen, RZ 4002, 2001)

[13] Norbert Linke and Elain Barkin, 'The Younger German Composers', *Perspectives of New Music*, 2.2 (1964), 163–165, p. 163

[14] Ibid., p. 164

Also see: Michael von Biel, *Quartett Nr. 2 (Urfassung),* on *Michael Von Biel*, Pellegrini-Quartett (Edition RZ, Ed. RZ 2002, 2004)

Ferneyhough's fourth string quartet (1989–90), which also includes a soprano voice and, to some extent, could be said to rely on an awareness of Schoenberg's second string quartet.[15] In doing what Schoenberg had already done before, Ferneyhough generates another relationship with something historically embedded: Schoenberg's second quartet as well as the string-quartet tradition in general.[16]

From this, it can be argued that Rădulescu's compositional process in Streichquartett nr. 4 opus 33 (despite its sound world being removed from traditional compositional tropes) *is* influenced by traditional string quartet writing, perhaps even more so than *[Co]Valence* I, precisely *because* it seems to avoid it successfully. This argument outlines one way in which the goal of naïveté is problematic and potentially unachievable: for naïveté to be applicable here, a composer would have to be naïve about traditional string-quartet writing so much so that, if they inadvertently alluded to it, it would not matter because it would not be perceived as such.

[Co]Valence II: *144 musical fragments for flautist(s)* (2016)

The question still remains as to whether the influence of pre-existing knowledge on Avant-Garde practice can be overcome through practice itself. *[Co]Valence* I's most obvious connection with historical practice is its relationship to string quartet writing. *[Co]Valence* II (2016) is an attempt to challenge this connection by using an experimental line-up that has no traditional basis: an indefinite number of flutes and an optional fixed-media electronic accompaniment.

[Co]Valence II's compositional process entails selecting various musical fragments from *[Co]Valence* I and arranging them in a 12x12 matrix. The resultant 144 musical fragments in this matrix can be performed in any order by *any* number of flautists (of any flute type) simultaneously. Therefore, multiple versions of this piece are available from the one score. It would not even matter if two performers (for example) took the exact same route because, first, being statistically unlikely, this

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[15] See and compare: Brian Ferneyhough, *Fourth String Quartet* (London: Edition Peters, 1990); Brian Ferneyhough, *Second String Quartet*, *Adagissimo*, *Third String Quartet*, *Sonatas for String Quartet*, Arditti Quartet (Montaigne, MO 782002, 1994); Arnold Schoenberg, *String Quartet No. 2, Op. 10* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997); Arnold Schoenberg, *Complete String Quartets 1, 2, 3, 4*¸ New Vienna String Quartet (Philips, B00002DDWS, 1999).
For further information, also see: Alannah Marie Halay, 'Arnold Schoenberg's String Quartet No. 2', *Alannah-Marie: Composer, Sound Artist, Researcher* <http://alannah.co/2014/07/09/arnold-schoenbergs-string-quartet-no-2/> [accessed: 08/04/16]

[16] In my opinion, a relationship with something that is trying to break the invariable relationship with tradition will inevitably draw attention to the very tradition it is trying to escape from.

would make for an interesting sonic phenomenon that I would welcome. Second, should two performers take exactly the same route, there is a likelihood of these two parts being on a different type of flute. Third, even if two performers performing on the same flute type *did* take the exact same route, the likelihood that both parts would sound identical is very low because of the element of improvisation and sonic unpredictability in a number of musical fragments in the piece (such as multiphonics and haphazard key clicks). This approach results in a more experimental way of structuring Ia's constituent motifs, phrases, notes, and so on than the one I used to compose versions Ib, Ic, and Id (which involved my consciously rearranging constituent notes, a process that is unavoidably influenced by my preconceived knowledge in any case).

The result of *[Co]Valence* II is a melange of conflicting dynamics that provides the illusion of a continuously changing space where no musical line is more important than any other. Due to the nature of optional performance layouts one and two (explained in the score), and the mixture of various dynamics, different areas within the performance space become the focus at different points in the piece. There is also the chance for moments of unified dynamics if all flautists (should multiple flautists be performing the piece) simultaneously play certain musical fragments.[17]

The 12x12 matrix comprises melodic fragments, key clicks (both improvisatory and non-improvisatory), free rhythms, multiphonics, sustained pitches, lip pizzicati and breath sounds (all of which are derived from *[Co]Valence* I).[18] The occurrence of non-normative performance techniques in *[Co]Valence* II (despite each musical fragment being derived from the less experimental *[Co]Valence* I) is the result of necessary modifications to that which is practical for strings in order to make it practical for flutes. For instance, *[Co]Valence* I's pizzicati becomes key clicks in *[Co]Valence* II. Likewise, the string quadruple stops in I become multiphonics in II; the pitches (and number of pitches) of these chords are also modified between I and II in order to adhere to the capabilities of the flute. This, along with other modifications, is outlined in the following table.

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[17] In this respect, the overall sound world of *[Co]Valence* II can be likened to Rădulescu's Streichquartett nr. 4 opus 33.

[18] Every musical fragment within *[Co]Valence* II is varied from – yet shares similar tropes with – other musical fragments in the 12x12 matrix.

[Co]Valence movement	I (string quartet)	II (12 flutes)
modifications	pizzicato	key clicks
	chords	multiphonics (pitches had to be modified to suit the logistics of the flute)
	bowing (including various bow pressures and positions); timbral gradation (sul tasto blending into sul pont. for example).	audible breath (including a blend from audible breath to pitch); changes of air pressure (breath sounds blending into definite pitch, for example).
	glissando	glissando (albeit modified to suit the flute: the flautists are only asked to gliss. a microtone)
	molto vib. and trills	trills
	various pitches	semibreves with pauses

Table III. 1: a table of modifications across *[Co]Valence* I and *[Co]Valence* II[19]

Musical fragments are developed *within [Co]Valence* II also, and so, in some cases, they are modified further than the above table outlines. For instance, the same musical fragment may be repeated throughout the matrix but with varied pitches: as a crude example, the caesura semibreve notes are repeated yet developed throughout the matrix by changing the pitch (see ex. III.7).[20]

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[19] Additionally, when required, dynamics of select musical fragments are altered from *[Co]Valence* I to *[Co]Valence* II. This is because sometimes a particular dynamic is more appropriate for the flute than bowed string instrument in the context of *[Co]Valence* II's score.

[20] The integration of caesura semibreves was done with an acknowledgement of the potential overall sound world of *[Co]Valence* II. I wanted to incorporate various speeds and textures into the piece hence the inclusion of longer drawn-out pitches that present the opportunity to have thick legato chords amidst faster, more angular, fragments.

Ex. III.7: *[Co]Valence* II for flautist(s), columns 2–6, rows 1–4

Throughout *[Co]Valence* II, developments across repeated musical fragments are varied enough to avoid repetition yet slight enough to retain coherence amidst the matrix.[21]

[Co]Valence II for flautist(s): Conclusions

It can be argued that, because the arrangement of musical fragments in *[Co]Valence* II is being unpredictably played with in real-time, such a method is revealing potential musical lines to me that would not have arisen had I arranged these fragments like I do in the versions of *[Co]Valence* I. In this way, *[Co]Valence* II is allowing me to 'go beyond' the limitations of my own knowledge because the structure of constituent musical fragments in this piece is variable depending on the performer's chosen routes and is not directed by me.[22]

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[21] Furthermore, some musical fragments resemble each other *on the score* but result in varied sonic outcomes: an example is the rhythm of the improvisatory key-click musical fragments. These musical fragments will inevitably vary in each performance (even by the same performer, let alone by different performers).

[22] Having said this, I do aim to retain control of *[Co]Valence* II's resulting sound world: the 'rules' of the score are designed to persuade performers not to skip 'squares' or repeatedly perform the same musical fragment throughout the piece, and the integration of pauses into the score is intended to encourage the

[Co]Valence III (2016): multiple versions for a selection of instruments

Like the relationship between *[Co]Valence* I and II, *[Co]Valence* II feeds into the compositional process behind *[Co]Valence* III (2016), which involves constructing a single fixed musical line from *[Co]Valence* II's matrix. Another way of looking at this is to say that *[Co]Valence* II's performance involves a controlled 'playing out' of potential musical lines that can be subsequently used to construct a fixed musical line in *[Co]Valence* III.[23]

Like *[Co]Valence* I, *[Co]Valence* III comprises multiple versions (labelled 'a', 'b', and so on). However, unlike *[Co]Valence* I, each version in III is not a rearrangement of musical fragments, but the same piece of music transcribed for a different solo instrument. As such, *[Co]Valence* IIIa is written for solo female voice; *[Co]Valence* IIIb is a transcription of IIIa for percussion; likewise, IIIc is a transcription of IIIb for solo trombone. Although I only compose two subsequent versions after IIIa, in theory a much larger number of transcriptions of IIIa might generate a much larger number of subsequent versions. Comparisons can be made between this compositional approach and that employed by Berio when he composed his sequences of Sequenzas (1958–2002) and Chemins (1964–1996). As Tom Service writes:

> [t]he Sequenzas were themselves starting points for another series of works called Chemins, pathways through the material of the Sequenzas but exploded and amplified into new contexts, scored for larger instrumental groups or even for different solo instruments. Listen to what Berio does in Chemins II, based on the viola sequenza. It's a typical Berio strategy of writing upon writing, building up layer upon layer of meanings, and refusing the idea that a single piece can exhaust the possibilities of its musical material.[24]

According to Roberts:

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manifestation of my desired overlapping mellifluous sound world and avoid a potentially disjointed sparse one. Having rehearsed this piece multiple times with the University of Leeds Flute Ensemble (which comprised thirteen flautists all performing on 'C' flute), I can say that multiple performed 'versions' of *[Co]Valence* II (where each version in question is performed by the same number of flautists) are recognisably *[Co]Valence* II. This could be because, during these rehearsals, the instrumentation and basic principle behind structuring the constituent musical fragments stayed the same.

[23] Comparisons can be made between this approach and Peter Maxwell Davies' magic squares. However, a crucial distinction can be made: whereas Maxwell Davies' magic squares deal with pre-compositional technique, *[Co]Valence* II's matrix is played out in real-time as the composition itself. In other words, the boundaries between pre-composition and composition and perception of finished composition are blurred. Regarding Peter Maxwell Davies' approach, see: Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Robson, 1982), p. 73

[24] Tom Service, 'A Guide to Luciano Berio's Music', *The Guardian.com* <http://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/dec/10/contemporary-music-guide-luciano-berio> [accessed: 19/05/16]

> [t]he word *Sequenza* represents the idea of a highly complex and virtuosic composition for a solo instrument, whereas the word *Chemins* – inextricably linked to the solo *Sequenzas* – implies the transformation of an existing *Sequenza* into a completely different instrumental work, a transformation that treats the original solo material in a concerto-like manner, resulting in a work for soloist and instrumental group or orchestra. It is precisely this conceptual duality of solo and concerto that is fundamental to the existence of the various *Chemins*.[25]

Similarly, the *[Co]Valence* collection refuses 'the idea that a single piece can exhaust the possibilities of its musical material'. Like *[Co]Valence* II, *[Co]Valence* III involved modifying the 'material' (notes, articulation, and so on) in II so that it could suit the instrumental logistics in III. For instance, the flute 'haphazard key click' technique in *[Co]Valence* II was modified to 'tense muttering (as in Berio's *Sequenza* III)' in *[Co]Valence* IIIa. Definite key clicks were transcribed to percussive accents that subsequently became a trope during *[Co]Valence* IIIa's compositional process and influenced the piece's extra-musical concept: that of battling a diversion of thought (for example, see ex. III.8 below).

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[25] Paul Roberts, 'The *Chemins* Series', in *Berio's Sequenzas: Essays on Performance, Composition and Analysis*, ed. by Janet K. Halfyard (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 117–136 (p. 117)

Throughout: the main melody is interrupted by violent percussive consonants
(resulting in an overall schizophrenic dichotomy between expressive moments and percussive accents)

Ex. III.8: *[Co]Valence* IIIa for female voice, 0'00" to 0'55"

 [Co]Valence IIIa for solo voice is an overall schizophrenic dichotomy between expressive moments and percussive accents: percussive consonants (outlined in boxes) present sudden interruptions to the otherwise 'flowing' melodic line. The overall desired effect is of a solo performer theatrically thinking aloud (singing) to themselves whilst being distracted by other divergent thoughts (denoted by the percussive consonants). This extra-musical concept is used within all the versions that follow *[Co]Valence* IIIa; its resultant music is modified to suit the various instruments.

[Co]Valence III: Conclusions

[Co]Valence III and its transcriptions are not original within a broader context of Avant-Garde music. For instance, comparisons can be drawn between *[Co]Valence* III and Berio's Sequenzas.[26] This highlights the presence of the Avant-Garde style that I

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[26] *[Co]Valence* IIIa can be likened to Berio's third Sequenza (1965) in particular. See: Luciano Berio, *Sequenza III: per voce femminile* (London: Universal Edition, 1968); Luciano Berio, *Sequenzas I–XIV:*

have adhered to. Having said this, being forced to find solutions to instrumental impracticalities that arise during each transcription in IIIa, IIIb, and so on proves to be a useful method for exploring instrumental capabilities that I would not have otherwise encountered had I taken a more 'familiar' compositional approach. In this way I can engage with a personal form of 'newness' like I did when composing *Parallax Error* (for example).

[Co]Valence IV (2016) for String Quartet

Similar to *[Co]Valence* I, II, and III, my approach to composing *[Co]Valence* IV (2016) for string quartet involved using *[Co]Valence* III as pre-compositional material. Also like the aforementioned pieces in this collection, aspects of *[Co]Valence* III had to be modified to suit the logistics of *[Co]Valence* IV's instrumentation. For instance, the percussive 'interruptive' moments of *[Co]Valence* III were modified to pizzicati in *[Co]Valence* IV; the 'muttering' moments were modified to haphazard rattling on the string instruments' bodies; percussive scraping and breath sounds were modified to a 'light-bow-pressure-white-noise' effect:

Ex. III.9: *[Co]Valence* IV for string quartet, 2'15" to 2'30"

[Co]Valence IV: Conclusions

[Co]Valence IV is more removed from traditional string-quartet writing than *[Co]Valence* I. This is apparent in the mode of notation and certain instrumental techniques: for example, the cello line involves decoupling at times. Moreover, *[Co]Valence* IV involves more focus on gestures and non-traditional performance techniques than *[Co]Valence* I. Having said this, *[Co]Valence* IV for string quartet does not negate its own tradition and prevailing 'style' when compared to a broader context of Avant-Garde music in general. For instance, to some extent, certain comparisons can be drawn between the gestural sound world of *[Co]Valence* IV and Lachenmann's *Grido* (2002), primarily in terms of general instrumental technique and timbre.[27] Other examples, for the same reason, include the string works of Michael von Biel and Pierluigi Billone, such as von Biel's *Quartett mit Begleitung* (1965) for string quartet and cello, and Billone's *Muri* III b (2010) for String Quartet.[28]

Evaluation

The conclusions that can be drawn from this investigation are as follows. First, the difference between the compositional process of *[Co]Valence* Ia and that of *[Co]Valence* IV is the difference between composing with a subconscious pre-established comprehension of the Avant-Garde and its tradition, and composing with a deliberate derivation of already-written music. My approach to composing the *[Co]Valence* collection as a whole allowed me to engage with various instruments in ways I would not have done had I taken a different approach. It enabled me to re-write the same piece in a *less* historically-embedded way, albeit one that adheres to the Avant-Garde style (and so is historically-embedded in other ways).[29]

Second, the existence of something historically-embedded within current Avant-Garde practice, *in the first place*, suggests that current Avant-Garde practice has become ahistorical: crudely put, it has plateaued and ceased to move forward, looking back on

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[27] See: Helmut Lachenmann, *Grido; Reigen seliger Geister; Gran Torso*, Arditti Quartet (Kairos, 0012662KAI, 2007)

[28] See: Michael von Biel, *Michael von Biel: Quartett Mit Begleitung (Quartett Nr. 3)*, Magdalene Bröckel, Michael von Biel Johannes Fritsch Dagmar Apel, Egon Mayer (Sony DADC, A0100503441 – 0101, 2004); Pierluigi Billone, *Muri III b* ([Vienna(?)]: self-published, 2010)

[29] The rearrangement and transcription processes, used to compose the *[Co]Valence* collection, can be likened to the game of Chinese Whispers: each piece music arises via the translation of music from medium to medium (or from instrument to instrument).

its past. The reason for this is potentially due to the somewhat insular nature of attempting to engage with naïveté (as I experienced during the *[Co]Valence* collection's compositional process). This is when the hermeneutic frameworks between 'unfamiliarity' and 'familiarity', and creative 'freedom' and 'restriction' came into play.[30]

Third, every piece of music in the *[Co]Valence* collection is a restructuring of the same set of motifs, notes, phrases, and so on, yet this does not mean that these compositions are no more than rearrangements of the same piece of music. It is reasonable to regard all pieces as separate compositions because, as proposed, the act of composing is about structure and presentation within a context more than its constituent notes, motifs, phrases (and so on) in themselves. Therefore, whether a piece of music comprises a rearrangement of constituent features of another piece of music, or whether both pieces are exact repetitions of each other, they can be presented (and therefore considered) as different pieces of music if their contexts are different.

This demonstrates how the only aspect of composing that the composer is able to manipulate is its structure. This notion questions how musical allusion and direct quotation are to be viewed: one could argue that the use of even direct quotation contains the same basic principle as not using it (and so deriving notes, motifs, phrases, and so on, intuitively or via another process). This is because, as this chapter's investigation suggests, every conceivable composition is a rearrangement of what already exists; the only distinction between all musical works lies in their structure and context (and, basically, how they are perceived, which is influenced by a context, hermeneutically). It is as Debord noted in 1957:

> we must make sure that while any genuinely experimental attitude is usable, that word has very often been misused in the attempt to justify some artistic action within a present structure, that is, a structure previously discovered by others. The sole valid experimental proceeding is based on the accurate critique of existing conditions and the deliberate supersession of them. It must be understood once and for all that something that is only a personal expression within a framework created by others cannot be

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[30] As proposed in Chapter I, these frameworks make up the mechanics of the Avant-Garde style and cause any engagement with personal 'newness' to 'age'.

termed a creation. Creation is not the arrangement of objects and forms, it is the invention of new laws on that arrangement.[31]

In short, nothing is created but transferred into various states (much like the conservation of energy). Therefore, if all compositional processes entail a rearrangement of pre-existing notes as their basis, then is deliberately employing quotation and/or allusion just an honest way of writing music?[32]

From this, I propose that if one wants to engage with (progressive) naïveté and be *genuinely* avant garde then applying this subversive change on a compositional level is futile because musical works are defined by their contexts anyway. Today, it is the *context* of Avant-Garde practice that must be subverted, not the music itself. '[T]here is no longer any art that has remained inviolable.'[33]

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[31] Guy Debord, 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action', in *The Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1995), pp. 17–25 (p. 22) An alternative translation of this can be found here: Guy Debord, 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action', trans. by Ken Knabb, *Situationist International Online* <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html> [accessed: 25/09/16]: 'we must recall that while any genuinely experimental attitude is usable, that word has very often been misused in the attempt to justify artistic actions within an already-existing structure. The only valid experimental proceeding is based on the accurate critique of existing conditions and the deliberate supersession of them. It must be understood once and for all that something that is only a personal expression within a framework created by others cannot be termed a creation. Creation is not the arrangement of objects and forms, it is the invention of new laws on such arrangement.'

[32] 'Honest', here, means that the subject recognises a prevalent absurdity in current compositional practice (the impossibility of being totally 'new' and avant garde). This notion is discussed further in Chapter IV.

[33] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 432

Chapter IV: Subverting the Context by Recognising its Absurdity

Aim

This chapter researches, and explores through practice, how music can be used to challenge its context and therefore potentially promote a *future* change in that context. This is because, as demonstrated in Chapter III, musical works are defined by their context. This suggests that all attempts at subversion on the level of the musical work are futile because they will likely be overridden by the status of the work's prevailing context. Therefore, in order to engage with (progressive) naïveté, subversion must happen on the level of context so that it can then happen in the musical work in the future practice of composition in general.

Method

My exploration of the relationship between the perception of a piece of music and its context, and how this can be challenged, involves some musicological and analytical research in addition to composing *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image* (2013–14) for chamber ensemble, and *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: $^4\textbf{B}_4$ (2014–15) for chamber ensemble. My method for composing these pieces involved consciously ignoring the rules of established compositional norms. In other words, I viewed the whole compositional 'space' as a continuous expanse (emptied of stylistic boundaries) that I could traverse 'freely', even while acknowledging that some parts of this territory were and are more 'familiar' to me than others. In simple terms, I wrote music without worrying what particular 'style' (if any) it might allude to as much as I possibly could. A similar compositional approach is present in some of James Dillon's work. In an interview with Igor Toronyi-Lalic, Dillon claims that he 'doesn't think of music in terms of style. Either it has this visceral quality or it's got a cerebral attraction that fascinates [him].'[1] Furthermore, during a round table discussion at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Dillon explained that he does not like distinctions

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[1] Igor Toronyi-Lalic, 'theartsdesk Q&A: Composer James Dillon', *the arts desk.com* <http://www.theartsdesk.com/classical-music/theartsdesk-qa-composer-james-dillon> [accessed: 07/12/14]

between 'tonal', 'atonal', and 'microtonal'. For Dillon, composing involves a preconceived 'space of continuous frequency' that he likes to explore '*freely*'.[2]

Prediction

The nature of the Avant-Garde context (within which all musical works are expected to adhere to a particular Avant-Garde norm) prevents compositional practice from 'going beyond' such a context and being *genuinely* avant garde.[3] This adherence to a particular context under the false guise of being 'new' is absurd; however, as will become clear, this absurdity can be recognised by *détournement*, which involves making the 'familiar' 'unfamiliar' via various defamiliarisation techniques. It is likely that only by generating a consciousness of this absurdity can one rethink the concept of 'originality' (being *genuinely* avant garde). This would then support an engagement with (progressive) naïveté in the future practice of composition as a whole.

ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED I: *the title is an image* (2013–14) for chamber ensemble[4]

ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED I: *the title is an image* (2013–14) for chamber ensemble is the first in an ongoing series titled *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED*, which (taking further what was hypothesised in Chapter III) applies the principle behind the conservation of energy to compositional practice: the energy of a composition cannot be created, but transformed via (re)arrangements of already-existing compositional notes, articulation, dynamics, timbres, and so on. As a basic starting point, *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I is based on three musical textures and/or a hybrid of two or three of these musical textures: smooth legato phrasing, staccato figures, and gestural flourishes (ex. IV.1).

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[2] Michael Cherlin, James Dillon, Sumanth Gopinath, Mic Spencer, Robert Worby, 'Dillon: The String Quartets', *Round Table Discussion at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival*, University of Huddersfield, 30 November 2014

[3] This 'context' can be viewed as a 'spectacle' in Situationist terms. As mentioned in the Literature Review, '[t]he spectacle is […] a specialized activity which speaks for all the others.' See: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Fredy Perlman [?] (Detroit: Black & Red, 2010), paragraph 23; for an alternative translation in a copy that has page numbers, see: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (Eastbourne: Soul Bay, 2009), p. 29

[4] *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image* (2013–14) for chamber ensemble was premiered by LSTwo Ensemble in 2014. LSTwo Ensemble is the Leeds School of Music's new music ensemble, which that year comprised flute (doubling bass flute), Clarinet in B♭ (doubling bass clarinet in B♭), trombone, euphonium, percussion I and II, harp, violin I and II, and violoncello. A recording of their performance of this piece is included on the accompanying CD (track 15).

Example of legato phrasing (bars 1 – 4)

Example of a staccato figure (bar 4)

Example of a gestural flourish (bar 8)

Hybrid of legato phrasing and staccato
(bar 20)

Hybrid of staccato figure & gestural flourish
figure (bars 2–3)

Ex. IV.1: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*, select examples of musical textures

I distribute consonance and dissonance amidst these textures equally without worrying about what they might allude to. However, as an unintentional result of this approach, when analysed after the fact, *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I sometimes juxtaposes traditional tonality and atonality; the quasi-tonal romantic gestures jar with the harmonic language of its foundations. For example, in bar 37, the romantic gestural flourish (ex. IV.2) is accompanied by a pizzicato figure dominated by the interval of a major second in the harp, violin I and II, and violoncello parts of bars 36–37 (ex. IV.3).

Ex. IV.2: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*, bar 37, flute and clarinet parts

Ex. IV.3: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*, bars 36–37, harp, violin I and II, violoncello parts

It is not the harmonic language alone that creates this jarring between two established idioms. Some of these gestures allude to romantic music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A particular comparison can be made between the employment of gestural flourishes and orchestration in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I with some of Debussy's music. For example, the flute flourish amidst an otherwise sparse texture in bars 94–96 (ex. IV.4) might be compared to the opening of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894):

Ex. IV.4: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*, bars 94–96, bass flute, percussion I and II parts

Ex. IV.5: Claude Debussy, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 1–4, flute, oboe, clarinet, French horn, and harp parts[5]

Further similarities between traditional norms and *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I can be applied to the compositional structure: like *[Co]Valence* I (discussed in the previous chapter), *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I is classically structured in the sense that there is a balance between distinct sections and in terms of the placement of each sound event across time. For example, the placement of the aforementioned bass

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[5] Claude Debussy, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (New York: Dover, 1981), bars 1–4

As a point of interest, Paul Griffiths writes that, '[i]f modern music may be said to have had a definite beginning, then it started with this flute melody, the opening of *Prélude à 'L'après-midi d'un faune'* by Claude Debussy (1862–1918)' because of 'its lack of dependence on the system of major and minor keys'. This is 'not to say that it is atonal, or keyless, but merely that the old harmonic relationships are no longer of binding significance.' Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p. 7

flute passage across time is governed by a regulated 4/4 pulse that is even accentuated by the accompanying percussion passage (ex. IV.4).

That I can perceive a jarring between two idioms suggests that, despite my attempts to ignore pre-existing compositional norms, I have unintentionally highlighted them. This demonstrates Adorno's claim that '[w]hile [composers] embrace New Music as if it were an unavoidable task, their own inculcated taste balks against it; their musical experience is not free from the element of the non-contemporaneous.'[6] In other words, the contemporary composer is not free from a knowledge of their practice's tradition despite concerted efforts to be so. This also demonstrates Meno's paradox at play, and the difficulty of transcending preconceived knowledge.

My perception of a 'jarring' between two idioms could be due to combining extended techniques (associated with the Avant Garde) with the aforementioned consonance, romantic gestures, and classical phrasing associated with the Western Avant Garde's tradition. Another reason could be because the tonal moments did not fit the 'Avant Garde' context within which the premiere was situated. As such, *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I challenged its prevailing context: it highlighted the existence of the Avant-Garde style (which, as mentioned, is absurd) by not fully adhering to that Avant-Garde style.

There are examples of musical works in existing compositional practice that present a challenge to a prevailing context. It is reported that the audience at the premiere of Rihm's *Morphonie Sektor* IV (1974) reacted negatively to the music's employment of traditional idioms. Fuhrmann and Oswald write that:

> [t]he public reacted fiercely and at once: in 1974 Wolfgang Rihm had introduced himself to an instantly polarised audience with his orchestra piece Morphonie Sektor IV [*sic*]. The compositional message of the then 22-year-old was initially perceived as an enormous insult against all the established agreements of the last decades. Again, a composer seemed to be making unscrupulous use of grand gestures. He also did not attempt to avoid last century's field of musical language, defending the uncensored expression of radicalised subjectivity and insisting that music is dependent on communication. Rihm could and would not accept a musical language canon of the prohibited which had been a matter of course with music in the fifties and sixties; just as the view that material is dead and thus could no longer be used. Rihm was convinced

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[6] Theodor Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', in *Essays on Music,* trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), p. 184

that dead material per se does not exist. Just as he logically concluded that there was no constraint for composition technique to progress – in whatever sense.[7]

Like my perception of *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I, the audience members at *Morphonie Sektor* IV's premiere were reacting negatively to Rihm's employment of the traditional idiom in relation to their established conceptual frameworks for comprehending Avant-Garde music.

It can be argued that Rihm's *Morphonie Sektor* IV and the jarred/jarring encounter generated by *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I not only highlight the existence of traditional 'styles' and boundaries between such 'styles', but also that Avant-Garde music, whilst claiming to be 'new' and explore the 'unfamiliar', is itself a 'style' that its practitioners (both composers and listeners) are evidently 'familiar' with. This point is supported by the notion that deviation from the Avant-Garde style is perceptible.

ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED II: $^4\mathbf{B_4}$ (2014–15) for chamber ensemble

ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED II: $^4\mathbf{B_4}$ (2014–15) for chamber ensemble was composed in response to *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I. It aimed to create a more successful attempt than *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I at overcoming my preconceived knowledge and 'ignoring' (or at least smoothing out, or flattening) stylistic boundaries (and, as such, engaging with Adorno's naïveté). In order to fulfil this aim, I incorporated a similar compositional process to that discussed in the previous chapter: one that is mechanical and restricts intuitive 'freedom' somewhat, yet at the same time does not preclude intuition totally; in fact, it relies on creative intuition to function. In other words, this piece is an investigation into the dichotomy between the creative 'freedom' (if such a thing exists) to compose what I want and the 'restrictions' of following pre-defined self-imposed boundaries. I hoped that these compositional boundaries would soften the extent to which my preconceived knowledge of Western Avant-Garde's tradition comes out in my music (as demonstrated in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I).

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[7] Wolfgang Fuhrmann and Peter Oswald, 'Notes on the early Wolfgang Rihm' and '*Musik für drei Streicher*', trans. by Christoffer Lindner, CD liner notes to *Musik für drei Streicher*, trio recherche (KAIROS, 0012042KAI, 1999), p. 9

As a basic starting point, the compositional process involved inflicting compositional boundaries upon myself and then transgressing (or perhaps transcending) these boundaries. Basically, this compositional process presented creative boundaries that outlined a designated compositional 'space'. Then I explored all the possibilities within this designated 'space' whilst still respecting its boundaries. The means by which I transgressed/transcended these boundaries did not completely ignore them, but instead worked with them. Working with them included not using them at all: so long as every decision I made was done in relation to these boundaries, I could use them, not use them, or embellish them. I could not simply ignore them and compose something that I would have done had these boundaries not been in place.

One particular boundary comprised a pitch limitation with a rigorous pre-compositional process that allowed me only to use the pitch B4. My reasons for choosing the pitch B4 are as follows: first, the pitch range of the whole composition could be expanded roughly equally on either side of this central B4 pitch on the instruments I wrote this piece for.[8] My pre-compositional planning did not stop at pitch, but also incorporated considerations for structure, timbre/instrumentation, and rhythm. What follows is an outline regarding how I worked with pre-compositional boundaries to compose the rhythm, timbre, structure, and pitch in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II.

The rhythms that were applied to the piece are shown below. These were modified intuitively during the compositional process (comparisons can be made between these rhythms and the modifications in examples IV.6–11).

Fig. IV. 1: initial pre-compositional rhythmic material for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II

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[8] It also reflects an extra-musical concept. Information regarding this extra-musical concept is included in Appendix C.

The overall instrumentation was prescribed by the ensemble I was composing for (LSTwo, the Leeds School of Music's new music ensemble, which that year comprised flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, euphonium, percussion (1 player), piano, violin, and violoncello); therefore, I arranged the set instrumentation into pairs that would work together in a duet (such as in unison or canon). The various instrumental pairs provided a certain unique timbre to the piece: for example, a flute and clarinet pairing (especially in unison) has a timbre that varies from a flute and violin pairing.

Numbers assigned to instrumental groups:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Groups of Instrumental pairs	fl. & cl.	fl. & perc.	fl. & cello	fl. & vln.	fl. & sax.	fl. & pno.	fl. & euph.
	sax. & euph.	sax. & cello	sax. & vln.	cl. & euph.	cl. & perc.	cl. & sax.	cl. & cello
	perc. & pno	euph. & pno.	perc. (timp.) & euph.	perc. & cello	pno. & cello	euph. & cello	sax. & perc.
	violin & cello	cl. & vln.	pno. & cl.	sax. & pno.	vln. & euph.	perc. & vln.	pno. & vln.

Table IV. 1: predefined instrumental groups in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II

Seven groups of various pairings were generated (see table IV. 1 above), and distributed across a pre-planned compositional structure (see fig. IV. 2 below).
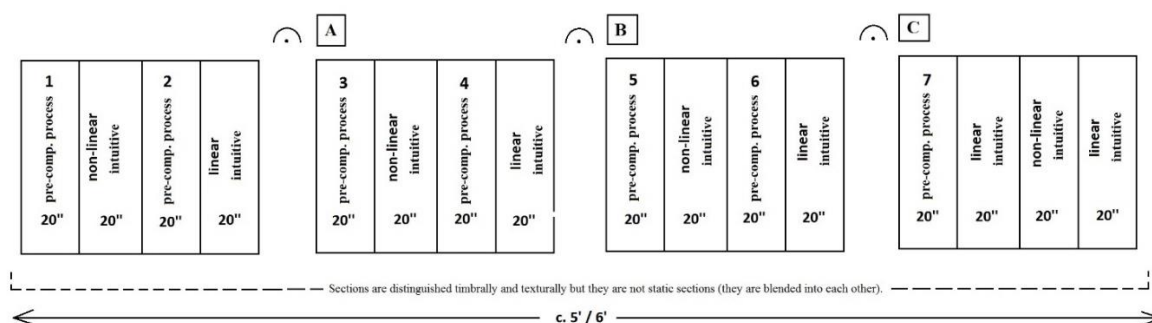
Fig. IV. 2: pre-compositional structure for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II

The term 'pre-comp. process' (as abbreviated in the diagram above) denotes applying a rigid adherence to the aforementioned durations, groups of instrumental pairings, and

pitch B4 (this does not happen in practice). The numbers in these sections refer to which group of instrumental pairings (outlined in table IV. 1) should be used. This detailed pre-compositional diagram was not followed exactly, but served as a guide. For instance, an introduction section was added because I felt that starting the piece with the rigid pre-compositional process seemed too strict and march-like, and I wanted this piece to begin with a subtler blend of sounds with pitch that was less determinate than that generated in the initial march-like opening. This introduction was intuitively composed but also based on the rest of the composition (for example, there is a preponderance of pitch B4). As such, the first section in the above diagram became the second section (designated by rehearsal mark A). Moreover, sections are not as drastically distinct as they appear in the diagram, instead they flow together or bleed into each other. An example of this can be found around rehearsal mark B in the score where the rigour of the previous section is continued into B. From this point, intuitive 'freedom' only comes into play in bar 45, in the piano part.

Considerations for the overall piece across time not only concerned structure, timbre and rhythms, but also pitch. As can be seen in fig. IV.3 below, an overall consideration for melodic movement (conjunct or angular, for example) and register throughout the whole piece as one unified unit was applied during the compositional process. This presented a dichotomy between adhering to a detailed pre-compositional plan and composing intuitively.
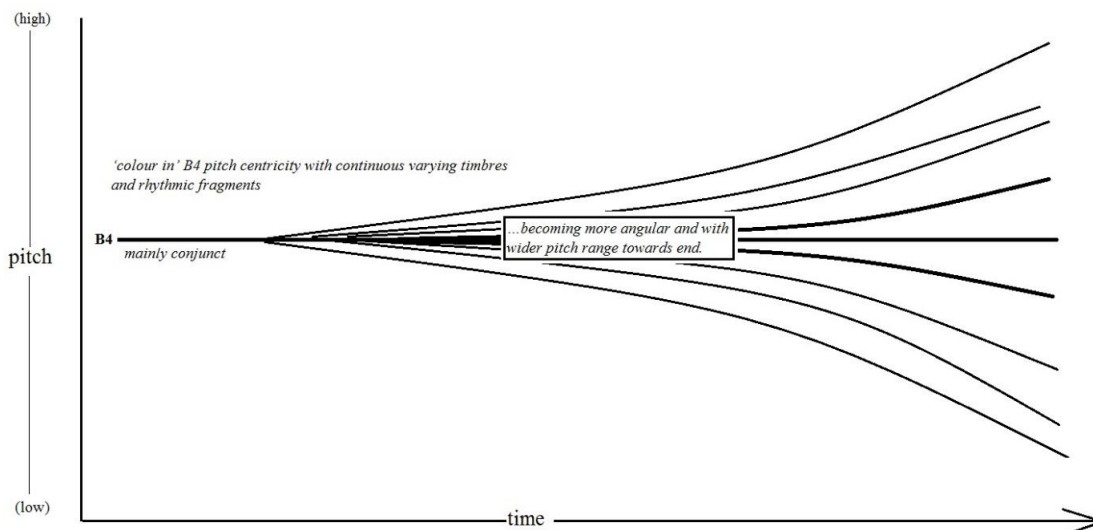
Fig. IV. 3: pitch distribution throughout *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II's timeline

It is through combining these two ways of approaching the composition that I am 'tricking' myself into composing something that is not influenced by my preconceived knowledge and, as such, is hopefully less evocative of traditional musical norms. However, I am also not restricted so much that the piece is effectively written *for me* by some pre-defined process: I am still forced to apply my intuition. In basic terms, through a combination of mechanical process and intuition, I am engaging with that which I may not have composed had I taken a different approach.

Comparisons can be made between my approach in this instance and that of Boulez in *Structure* Ia (1952) as purported by Ligeti in his article 'Decision and Automatism in *Structure* Ia'. Here, Ligeti explains that Boulez's process comprised three parts: 'Decision I', 'Automatism', and 'Decision II'. He writes that:

> in this case decision is not to be confused with freedom, nor automatism with compulsion. You stand before a row of automata, and are free to choose which one to throw into; but at the same time you are compelled to choose one of them; you build your own prison as you please, and once safely inside you are again free to do as you please. Not wholly free, then, but also not totally compelled. Thus automatism does not function as the counterpole to decision; choice and mechanism are united in the process of choosing one's mechanism.[9]

It can be said that all compositional approaches typically involve a varying degree of choice, which is dictated by an interaction between compositional intent and factors that are either out of the composer's control or intended to guide the composer's decisions. As mentioned, the process for composing *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II restricted me to a specific compositional structure comprising specific durations, timbres, and the pitch B4. My decision to transgress/transcend this intuitively (and thus to 'muddy' the preponderance of B4 in the piece) involved adding 'noise' elements to the sound via instrumental techniques. Examples of this include string instruments bowing on the bridge with a heavy bow pressure, but nevertheless allowing a muddied B4 pitch to ring through the gritty timbre, and by incorporating a Bartók pizzicato in the string parts (see ex. IV.6 and IV.7 below).

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[9] György Ligeti, 'Pierre Boulez: Decision and Automatism in Structure Ia', *die Reihe*, 4 (1960) 36–62, pp. 36–37

Ex. IV.6: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: ^{4}**B$_4$**, bar 49, cello part

Ex. IV.7: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: ^{4}**B$_4$**, bar 13, violin part

In the examples above, the specific register of B4 has been altered (ex. IV.7) and surrounding pitches have been added to blur the clarity of B4 (ex. IV.6). Adding surrounding pitches to blur a preponderant B4 pitch is principally the same as adding 'noise' via instrumental technique: it is basically 'adding' something in order to 'dilute' the resultant unison intervals of a totality of pitch B4. These nearby pitches were added either vertically on the same instrument and/or across instruments (ex. IV.8), but also horizontally via glissandi (ex. IV.9). This latter glissandi approach can also be seen as using instrumental technique to blur the clarity of B4.

Ex. IV.8: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: ^{4}**B$_4$**, bar 13, piano part

Ex. IV.9: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: ⁴**B₄**, bar 1, violin and cello parts

The preponderance of pitch B4 was further blurred by loosely interpreting the notion that I had to employ it: a transposing instrument can sound *their* B4, which would result in a different pitch once transposed to concert pitch. An example can be found in bars 20–22, clarinet part: the clarinet can sound a transposed B which results in an A at concert pitch. This is demonstrated in ex. IV. 10 below.

Ex. IV.10: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: ⁴**B₄**, bars 20–23, flute, clarinet in B♭, and alto saxophone parts

In this example, chromatic inflections have been incorporated (such as the A# in bar 21, clarinet part).

It was not just the pitch that presented a 'restriction' in this compositional process, but the set of durations. When the pre-defined durations were adhered to, the

composition seemed march-like with all the designated 'pairs' of instruments sounding in unison (and defeating the point of designating timbral pairs in the first place). In order to combat this, I added grace notes and additional durational values (occasionally) to make this unison march-like effect less robotic:

Ex. IV.11: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: $^4\mathbf{B_4}$, bars 40–43, flute and clarinet in B♭ parts

As can be seen in this example, grace notes, trills, and flutter tonguing have been added to the original set of durations (fig. IV. 1).

These pre-defined durational values were also transgressed/transcended by not being used at all. This is not to say that I ignored these durational boundaries: I simply did not employ them by incorporating moments of free rhythm instead (ex. IV.12).

Ex. IV.12: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: $^4\mathbf{B_4}$, bars 6–8, piano, violin, and cello parts

By applying these compositional boundaries, I can deduce that they did succeed in softening the extent to which my preconceived knowledge of Western Avant-Garde's tradition comes out in my music (as demonstrated in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I). However, they did not prevent it: the gestures and expression in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II are as romantic as those in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I. There

is an inadvertent allusion to Western Avant Garde's tradition, which serves to highlight, and likewise defamiliarise, the Avant-Garde style.

Similar to the aforementioned Rihm example, both *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I and II appear to ignore the rules of Avant-Garde practice, but this does not mean that these pieces are not avant garde in the sense that they are authentically creative. This leads to the following conclusions: if these pieces are not considered Avant Garde because of their allusions to traditional idioms, then perhaps authentic expression is overridden by some set of rules pertaining to the Avant-Garde style. If this is the case then I propose that Avant-Garde practice has become absurd in the sense that its meaning is not to create authentically, but, instead, to perpetuate itself. A potential way in which this can be overcome is via defamiliarisation.[10] Musical composition can be *deliberately* used to highlight the absurdity of the Avant Garde by highlighting its 'style' (as I believe my compositions do).

<div align="center">Examples of Defamiliarisation in Existing Practice</div>

Within some contemporary music, an absurdity within current Avant-Garde practice has been alluded to through defamiliarisation techniques. Such defamiliarisation techniques take advantage of an inherent collapse between 'unfamiliarity' and 'familiarity' and aim to make the 'familiar' seem 'unfamiliar'.[11] For the purpose of my research, I will focus on the Brechtian *V-Effekt* (also known as 'estrangement'), and *détournement* (as used in Situationist practices), both of which can be applied to music via direct quotation and allusion.

Simon Steen-Andersen's *Inszenierte Nacht* (2013), described by the composer as 'stagings of pieces by Bach, Schumann, Mozart and Ravel', demonstrates a successful employment of such defamiliarisation techniques.[12] For instance, he quotes and re-orchestrates 'Der Hölle Rache' from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791) with

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[10] As explained in the Introduction, 'authenticity' is defined in this thesis as the 'spontaneous creation of one's self and life' that struggles against 'conventions, ideas and institutions'. For more information, see: Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 144.

[11] As explained in Freud's 'The Uncanny', the 'unfamiliar' is not a straightforward binary opposition to the 'familiar', and in fact the two (at first) seemingly binary oppositions collapse into one another at a certain point such that it can be argued that the 'unfamiliar' is actually based on that which is long 'familiar'. See: Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"' in *Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. by Alix Strachey (rev. James Strachey) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 193–229 (esp. pp. 196–198)

[12] Simon Steen-Andersen, 'List of works', *Simon Steen-Andersen* <http://www.simonsteenandersen.dk/eng_CV.htm> [accessed: 03/06/16]

twentieth- and twenty-first-century electronic techniques such as the vocoder and 'techno' drum beats.[13] The directness of the quotation in this music not only highlights the boundaries between Avant-Garde music and that of the past, but it highlights the existence of the Avant-Garde 'style' in general and the boundaries that exist between this 'style' and other twentieth-century 'styles' such as 'techno'.

Similarly, it can be argued that Dillon attempts to highlight the absurdity of the Avant Garde via quotation and allusion in his *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (2014). Nepil writes that 'baroque influences merge with reminiscences of Miles Davis. Extended pauses allow the tension to mount',[14] and, according to Dixon:

> James Dillon calls this major work, premered [*sic*] at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival last November, a "Cubist Stabat Mater". He sets the hymn, but adds in more recent words, texts on related themes by Picasso, Kristeva and Rilke, among others. The music, too, acknowledges the passage of historical time, with subtle references to musical styles from down the centuries. If this all sounds like a recipe for Postmodern intellectualism and detachment, the results are surprisingly direct – a heartfelt and emphatic response to the image of the grieving mother. […] The sheer sense of unity seemed to have been achieved, by composer and performers alike, in spite of the work's diffuse conception. There is only one explicit musical quotation, from Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, but even this is only present to illustrate a thought from Julia Kristeva, her words intoned by the choir, but atomised to a phonetic level and beyond comprehension. The trumpet solos often came close to jazz improvisation, while the electric guitar, heavy laden with tremolo, was apparently intended to evoke gospel music. But all these references and allusions feed into a single, unified musical style, and through it a singular expression of grief. Dillon takes a broad cultural view of his subject, but brings it all back into a narrow emotive field, everything serving his lamentation, its emotion now refined to the utmost intensity.[15]

Through this mixture of various allusions and direct quotation, Dillon highlights the absurdity of Avant Garde practice by making the 'familiar' seem 'unfamiliar', and in doing so he highlights how Avant-Garde music has become a 'style'. After alluding to other genres and traditional idioms, culminating in a direct quotation of Pergolesi's

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[13] See: Simon Steen-Andersen, *Inszenierte Nacht*, online audio recording, YouTube, 23 August 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3rpb2errmA> [accessed: 11/02/16]

[14] Hannah Nepil, 'James Dillon's Stabat Mater Dolorosa, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London — review', *Financial Times* <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f14ffc7a-a223-11e4-aba2-00144feab7de.html> [accessed: 14/12/15]

It is worth noting that there is also a Charlie Mingus reference 'in part VII for solo double bass' in *L'évolution du vol*. See: Michael Spencer, 'Dillon's *L'évolution du vol*: An Evolution of Stylistics of a Flight from National Identity?', in *Musica Scotica: Proceedings from the 2005 and 2006 Conferences*, ed. by Heather Kelsall, Graham Hair, and Kenneth Elliot (Glasgow: Musica Scotica Trust, 2008), pp. 83–96 (p. 84).

[15] Gavin Dixon, 'James Dillon's Stabat Mater, London Sinfonietta, Volkov, QEH', *the arts desk.com* <http://www.theartsdesk.com/classical-music/james-dillons-stabat-mater-london-sinfonietta-volkov-qeh> [accessed: 14/12/15]

Stabat Mater (1736) (see Appendix C, ex. C.1), he presents what feels like a referential 'contemporary classical' idiom in movement V (see Appendix C, ex. C.2). It could be argued that, on one hand, this moment is simply one of the recapitulation-type passages that happen at the end of each movement; however, on the other hand, this Avant-Garde idiom is signposted as such because it contrasts not only with all preceding recapitulation passages, but also all preceding sections in general in its texture, tonal centricity, and dynamics. Whether Dillon intended to quote the Avant-Garde idiom or whether this was merely a recapitulation of preceding textures in this particular movement, the sensation of defamiliarisation is still present when I personally listen to this piece. For me, an audible comparison of this 'seemingly signposted Avant-Garde idiom' with the immediately-preceding tonally-centred sections suggests a sudden direct quotation (not just an allusion) of an Avant-Garde trope. The sense that Dillon might be trying to *quote* the Avant Garde is amplified by the fact that Pergolesi is quoted earlier on in the piece: quotation of other music has become an established norm by the point I hear this referential Avant-Garde moment. This particular interpretation is strengthened further by comparing it to the general argument surrounding Dillon's music: that, despite his claim that he does not think in terms of 'style', 'Dillon's musical language […] carries the weight of the musical tradition, and seems fully aware of its debt to the past.'[16] However, after encountering an apparent Avant-Garde quotation, I find it absurd to think that one must assume that Dillon thinks in terms of 'style' when much of the Avant-Garde community is doing just that: composing to and listening for the Avant-Garde style, which, incidentally, Dillon has highlighted in his *Stabat Mater dolorosa*. By presenting this Avant-Garde quotation as a *potential* cliché, not only does he highlight the current Avant-Garde's reification into a style (which he is also more than capable of composing in), but he also highlights the absurdity of adhering to it under the guise of being *genuinely* avant garde. This defamiliarises the Avant-Garde style and forces the listener to recognise it as absurd. For me, Dillon's *Stabat Mater dolorosa* demonstrates, through music, how adhering to the Avant-Garde style is no different from composing pastiche Baroque music today: both are absurd. Moreover, he invokes this by composing a piece that is not absurd, it does not adhere to the Avant-Garde style nor to the rules of Baroque music fully, and does not require an accompanying

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[16] Andrew Clements, 'I live cheaply', *Classical Music: The Guardian.com* <http://www.theguardian.com/ music/2006/may/10/classicalmusicandopera2 > [accessed: 17/02/16]

commentary for me to perceive this particular message. I propose that *Stabat Mater dolorosa* recognises an absurdity, prevalent in Avant-Garde practice, through music alone. By critiquing its context, it automatically situates itself outside that context.[17] In this way, *Stabat Mater dolorosa* is somewhat of an exemplar of practice that attempts to be genuinely avant garde.

Thus far it has been established that it is possible to make the 'familiar' 'unfamiliar' via the employment of quotation and allusion; however, if this is possible, then is it also possible to make the 'unfamiliar' 'familiar'? It can be argued that some of Lachenmann's music presents a 'faux alienation' in that it makes the 'unfamiliar' 'familiar'. In other words, although, like Dillon, Lachenmann employs traditional musical elements, he does so in a way that allows the listener to find 'familiarity' in the 'newness' of Avant-Garde practice rather than the 'unfamiliarity' in what was once 'familiar' within Avant-Garde practice to Avant-Garde specialists (as I have argued Dillon's music does).[18] Lachenmann does this in a number of ways. First, by presenting contemporary classical sounds within a traditional structure. For instance, in the second section of Lachenmann's *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied* (1980), ('the extensive *Siciliano* part') 'a dotted rhythm figure is brought to the forefront of the music, which marshals Lachenmann's defamiliarized sounds into a painfully familiar form.'[19] Likewise, in Lachenmann's sketches, 'one can […] witness a struggle with the familiar treatment of self-discovered instrumental tricks. The rejection of such dead ends, resistance against one's own ideas, resigned concessions to the prison walls behind which one's own creativity does its time.'[20] Similarly, in his *Accanto* (1976), 'Mozart's

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[17] Bolaños explains how Adorno believed that '[f]ar from being a means of reconciling the internal contradictions of society, art participates in the dialectical dynamism of society and culture; it realizes itself as a product of this dialectic and, as a result, mobilizes itself a counter-culture of well accepted culture or ideology. Yet, art remains negative—it is only through negativity that it escapes the naïve optimism of knowledge and the culture industry. Art in this sense becomes the nemesis of positive knowledge taken for granted by the culture industry as its patron. Inasmuch as art is a critique of ideology, it becomes a revelation of the real status of society as dystopia.' Paolo A. Bolaños, 'The Critical Role of Art: Adorno between Utopia and Dystopia', *Kritikē*, 1.1 (2007), 25–31, p. 26

[18] As I have mentioned, 'specialist' denotes composers, performers, and listeners of Avant-Garde music with a knowledge of Avant-Garde practice. More information regarding the nature of such specialism is discussed in the Literature Review (in relation to the 'spectacle' and the Situationists).

[19] Abigail Heathcote, 'Liberating sounds: philosophical perspectives on the music and writings of Helmut Lachenmann' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2003), p. 169
Also see: Helmut Lachenmann, *Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandlied*, Arditti String Quartet, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, cond. by Olaf Henzold (Naïve, MO 782130, 2000)

[20] Hans-Peter Jahn-Bossert, 'Fear of…? Essayistic Miniatures on *Grido*', trans. by Wieland Hoban, *Contemporary Music Review*, 24.1 (2005) 31–38, p. 36

concerto makes its decisive appearance in the texture'.[21] Discussing Lachenmann's most recent music, Williams suggests that:

> Lachenmann's focus has moved away from a preoccupation with noise to a concern with the energy of sounds, whether or not these are pitched or even contain tonal elements. He is now concerned less with referring to pre-existing music than with conveying traditional elements by means of the energy of sound production. This tendency is evident in his Third String Quartet, *Grido* (2002), in which there are plenty of conventional pitches.[22]

In *Grido* (2002), the instrumental techniques seem modern; however, on closer listening, the piece is almost 'classically' formed in the sense that there is balance and a particular harmonic framework. As Jahn-Bossert asserts, 'in *Grido*, there is such an interplay of intervallic constellations that one can speak of a harmonic principle.'[23] All this is to say that the sound events in *Grido* seemingly adhere to an established framework for comprehending classical music (at least where listeners who are aware of Western Classical Music are concerned).[24]

The second way in which Lachenmann's music makes the 'unfamiliar' 'familiar' is via repetition. Repetition of a musical event can make that musical event 'familiar' to the listener, not only because the musical event in question is repeated, but also because this act of repetition is a compositional technique that has been employed for centuries: examples include the ostinato and larger structures that comprise repeating sections such as the rondo. Therefore, this mode of repetition can be interpreted as alluding to traditional musical aspects that situate Lachenmann's 'new' sounds within a 'familiar' framework known by typical receivers of Western Classical music. In Jahn-Bossert's words:

> [t]he vocabulary he [Lachenmann] uses when composing for strings consists of a variety of harmonic and harmonic-like effects and their counterpart, an archive of sound variants produced through bow pressure, as well as chains of 16th or 32nd notes racing through the pitch space, or different positions of the bow upon the strings. In *Grido*, Helmut Lachenmann expands this vocabulary through archaisms from music history:

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[21] Alastair Williams, 'Mixing Mozart: Aesthetics and Tradition in Helmut Lachenmann's *Accanto*', *twentieth-century music*, 8.1 (2012), 71–97, p. 78

[22] Alastair Williams, *Music in Germany Since 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 121

[23] Hans-Peter Jahn-Bossert, 'Fear of…? Essayistic Miniatures on *Grido*', trans. by Wieland Hoban, *Contemporary Music Review*¸ 24.1 (2005) 31–38, p. 35

[24] See: Helmut Lachenmann, *Grido; Reigen seliger Geister; Gran Torso*, Arditti Quartet (Kairos, 0012662KAI, 2007); Helmut Lachenmann, String Quartet No. III: *Grido* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2015)

through endlessly repetitive chains of notes, through centres that could be interpreted harmonically as a result of their clearly defined consonant quality, and through chords comprising stacked fourths and fifths, which—particularly in the last third of the piece—come to supplant all other effects. One can interpret this installing of familiar chordal elements within an unconventional string quartet development as a move forward into the hinterland, into the reservations of its origin—a return to the forsaken with new insight.[25]

Jahn-Bossert goes on to argue that this is how Lachenmann estranges the receiver from the 'familiarity' of a well-known classical idiom. He describes Lachenmann's use of repetition in *Grido* as being 'provocatively alien,' adding that '[i]t is precisely the use of the 'familiar' that makes the 'familiar' a mystery'.[26] The notion that repetition has the potential to estrange is not unheard of within existing literature on defamiliarisation: Brecht argues that the use of repetition in representation highlights the distance between the act of representing and the subject matter that is being represented.[27]

Whether Lachenmann intended a faux alienation or not, a case can be made for arguing that his use of repetition allows the receivers to 'familiarise' themselves with the repeated sound-events in *Grido*. Lundy writes, '[i]t is well known that familiarity affects liking in general via the mere exposure effect […], and many studies have long demonstrated familiarity's impact on musical evaluation.'[28] Furthermore, Hargreaves explains that '[t]he objective familiarity of different pieces can be manipulated directly by repeated exposure, and this should produce roughly equivalent changes (i.e., increases) in rated levels of subjective familiarity if the pieces were initially 'unfamiliar' to the same degree.'[29] The reason for this is that 'increases in objective and subjective familiarity that occur with repetition also have the effect of lowering levels of subjective complexity'.[30]

Lachenmann's use of repetition is also significant because, as the quotation above suggests, repetition has the ability to either estrange or make the strange 'familiar' depending on how it is employed by the composer and interpreted by the receiver. It cannot be denied that there is a sense of faux alienation in Lachenmann's music, one that establishes a traditional, 'familiar', framework from 'typical' Avant-

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., pp. 35–36

[27] Bertolt Brecht, 'On Chinese Acting', trans. by and Eric Bentley, *The Tulane Drama Review*, 6.1 (1961), 130–139, pp. 131–132

[28] Duane E. Lundy, 'A Test of Consensus in Aesthetic Evaluation Among Professional Critics of Modern Music', *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, 28.2 (2010), 243–258, p. 246

[29] David J. Hargreaves, 'The Effects of Repetition on Liking for Music', *JRME*, 32.1 (1984), 35–47, p. 37

[30] Ibid.

Garde 'unfamiliar' sounds. Moreover, the aforementioned dialectical nature of repetition (that it can both estrange and make the 'unfamiliar' 'familiar' depending on how it is used and how it is perceived) adds to the sensation that things in Lachenmann's most recent music are both being 'distanced' and not actually that 'distanced' at the same time.

Comparing the function of repetition in Chapter III with that of Lachenmann's use of repetition discussed here highlights two types of repetition in compositional practice: the first is undetectable and helps demonstrate how the act of structuring is the most significant factor in composition and even takes precedence over the composition's characteristics (pitch, rhythm, and so on). [31] The second is the aforementioned repetition that makes the 'unfamiliar' seem 'familiar' (as in the later work of Lachenmann). There is a distinction between being able to detect repetition and not being able to detect it. This is not much different in principle from not being able to perceive a disguised musical quotation (unless it is pointed out by the composer or similar) compared with perceiving an obvious musical quotation.

Evaluation

The conclusions that can be drawn from this chapter's investigation are as follows. First, music that is situated within an Avant-Garde context can defamiliarise Avant-Garde practice (which claims to be *genuinely* avant garde yet adheres to the Avant-Garde style) via repetition, quotation and/or allusion. In doing so, such music can highlight how adherence to a particular style under the false guise of being 'new' is absurd because, in this sense, the Avant Garde's meaning is not to create authentically (and be that 'advance post' it claims to be), but, instead, to perpetuate itself pointlessly.

Second, in all this chapter's examples of existing musical works that successfully defamiliarise the Avant-Garde style, and therefore highlight its absurdity, the context being challenged is 'familiar' to its practitioners (such as composers, performers, and experienced listeners). Its practitioners have an understanding of the context such that when it is not adhered to it is noticeable. These practitioners are people with extensive knowledge of how Avant-Garde music 'should' be, all of whom bring particular preconceived ideas to the music that prevent it from 'going beyond'

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[31] See Chapter III for more information regarding how even the same composition can be repeated in full, undetected by an audience.

itself. This is why the audience were polarised at the premiere of Rihm's *Morphonie Sektor* IV, and were able to recognise that Rihm had seemingly 'ignored' the 'established agreements of the last decades'. This is also why I am able to perceive the referential Avant-Garde quotation in Dillon's *Stabat Mater dolorosa*. Basically, without this apparent Avant-Garde institution fuelling the knowledge of its specialist practitioners, defamiliarisation would not be as effective.

If the presence of an Avant-Garde institution prevents its practice from 'going beyond' itself, then it can be argued that the key to engaging with naïveté and being *genuinely* avant garde is connected in some way to deinstitutionalising avant-garde practice (that is, emancipating genuinely avant-garde practice from its institution). Likewise, the Avant-Garde style and its seemingly unavoidable entrapment is possibly the result of specialisation. '[T]here is no longer any art that has remained inviolable.'[32]

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[32] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 432

Chapter V: Subverting the Spectacle[1]

Aim

This chapter presents an attempt to engage with naïveté in a way that is not as private and insular as my previous attempts. This is done by generating a compositional form that 'goes beyond' the Avant-Garde context (comprising the sphere of specialist practitioners) within which current Avant-Garde practice is seemingly situated (as proposed in Chapter IV). This investigation explores whether it is possible to create a work with an autonomy that is separated from the closed-off sphere of specialist Avant-Garde practice, and whether, by doing so, it can succeed in engaging with naïveté and be *genuinely* avant garde.

Method

Interstice (2013–present) for iPhone app and the whole world attempts to tackle the specialist sphere of Avant-Garde practice by rearranging the immediate linear structure of composer to listener (hereby referred to as the composer-performer-listener relationship). By tackling the linearity of this relationship, it attempts to tackle the consumer-producer based societal system that produced it, and, in doing so, tries to maintain its claim to truth, or at least the possibility of it, by being separated from an evidently closed-off sphere of specialist Avant-Garde practice, within which 'newness' has become sedimented because of a 'blind belief in progress'.[2]

Prediction

As will become clear throughout this chapter, creating such an artwork is impossible because of the way in which current Western society is organised. Nevertheless, such an artwork can point out its own absurdity and, in turn, its problems in ways that can be

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[1] As mentioned in the Literature Review, '[t]he spectacle is […] a specialized activity which speaks for all the others.' See: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Fredy Perlman [?] (Detroit: Black & Red, 2010), paragraph 23; for an alternative translation in a copy that has page numbers, see: Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. by Ken Knabb (Eastbourne: Soul Bay, 2009), p. 29
[2] Theodor Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', in *Essays on Music,* trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), p.182
The notion of sedimented 'newness' is explained in more detail in the Introduction chapter of this thesis.

useful for rethinking how one might be *genuinely* avant garde in a context governed by a particular Avant-Garde style.

Pre-Compositional Research and Theoretical Framework

Existing literature on the development of Western civilization and its corresponding art suggests the way in which a society perceives itself is reflected in its art. Therefore, before challenging the consumer-producer based system of current Western society via art, it is important to acknowledge that the way in which society comprehends itself has changed over the course of centuries.[3]

Existing literature suggests that a common denominator of society and composition is 'space'. Therefore, I propose that 'space' is synonymous with compositional 'form' and societal structures in the sense that both constitute epistemological existence. An investigation of the history of interpreting societal 'space' and its distribution can potentially unravel the reasons behind our current comprehension of artistic 'space' and likewise artistic 'form'. Foucault, Lefebvre, and Soja, amongst others, suggest that society is based within a topological framework of separate, yet connected, abstract and concrete 'spaces'; each 'space' is created by a state of being, culture, tradition, or religion.[4] In contrast to societal 'spaces', musical 'spaces' have been defined from physical, abstract, sonic, and temporal perspectives by composers such as Stockhausen and Xenakis. Definitions include physical resonating 'spaces' within the boundaries of instrumental limitations, performance sites, and spatialisation; the physicality and abstract perception of the notated score; abstract pre-compositional planning and extra-musical concepts; sonic 'distances' and 'height' between pitches within boundaries of tuning systems and harmonic language; sonic

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[3] Select examples include (but are by no means exhaustive): Theodor Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1976); Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002); Arthur Danto, 'The Artworld', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61.19 (1964), 571–584; G. W. F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. by Bernard Bosanquet (London: Penguin, 2004); Bernard Norling, 'The Development of Western Civiliszation', *The History Teacher*, 1.3 (1968), 61–63

[4] Select sources include (but are by no means limited to): Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces' trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22–27; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009)

spatialisation through timbre, dynamics, spectromorphology, and localisation; the temporal framework, movement and speed of these elements.[5]

Regarding societal space and its development, what was once, in the Middle Ages, regarded as a hierarchical distribution of 'spaces of emplacement' (where the localisation of intersecting 'spaces' was the forefront of consideration) was, by the twentieth century, considered as a relational network of 'sites'. This transformation started in the seventeenth century, when 'emplacement' or 'localization' was replaced with notions of 'extension': that is, 'space' was considered as a particular point in an entity's movement (where 'stability' described the indefinite slowing down of an entity).[6] In contrast to this, as Foucault explains, twentieth-century 'space', regarded as a number of 'sites', was defined by 'relations of proximity between points of elements'.[7] Moreover, there was a preoccupation with demographical 'siting' and 'placement', and the storage of data via modern technology.[8] In other words, as Foucault claimed:

> [w]e are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment […] when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.[9]

In the twenty-first century, the Internet is still – if not more of – an influential factor in current attitudes and mentalities. Bourriaud explains that:

> [t]he technology reigning over the culture of our day and age is, needless to say, computing, which we might split into two branches. On the one hand, the computer itself and the changes it has introduced and still is introducing into our way of

[5] Select sources include (but are by no means limited to): Lelio Camilleri, 'Shaping Sounds, Shaping Spaces', *Popular Music*, 29.2 (2010), 199–211; Robert Normandeau, 'Timbre Spatialisation: The Medium is the Space', *Organised Sound*, 14.3 (2009), 277–285; Sven Sterken, 'Towards a Space-Time Art: Iannis Xenakis's Polytopes', *Perspectives of New Music*, 39.2 (2001), 262–273; Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Electronic and Instrumental Music', trans. by Ruth Koenig, *Die Reihe*, 5 (1961), 59–67; Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Music in Space', trans. by Ruth Koenig, *Die Reihe*, 5 (1961), 67-82; Trevor Wishart, *On Sonic Art*, ed. by Simon Emmerson, rev. edn (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996); Iannis Xenakis, *Formalized Music: Thought and Mathematics in Music* (USA: Pendragon Press, 1992); Iannis Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, ed. & trans. by Sharon Kanach (New York: Pendragon Press, 2008)
[6] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces' trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22–27, pp. 22–23 Foucault's article focuses on societal space from a twentieth-century perspective. For a useful overview of the hierarchical organisation of society in the Middle Ages, see: Bernard Norling, 'The Development of Western Civiliszation', *The History Teacher*, 1.3 (1968), 61–63
[7] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces' trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22–27, p. 23
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., p. 22

perceiving and processing data. On the other hand, the rapid progress of user-friendly technologies […]. The first […] is making amazing contributions to the way mentalities and attitudes are changing.[10]

It can be argued that modern technological advances of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where the Internet means that globalisation (and a nonlinear distribution of data) is more prevalent than it has ever been before, allow society to rethink even *the linearity* of music's composer-performer-listener relationship and, in turn, artistic 'form'. [11] This notion can be explored via the three sequential stages of music production (the relationship between composer, performer, and listener), and, most specifically, how this relationship can be linear and nonlinear within compositional practice.

Jason Freeman explains how the composer-performer-listener relationship is traditionally linear because, typically, each stage of the music-production process 'imagines' the following stage; that is: the composer imagines the performance of their piece, the performer imagines the listener listening to their performance. According to Freeman, the position of the listener is always last along this chain because it is the norm to expect both the composer and performer to 'imagine' the performer playing their music or the listener listening to a composer's composition or a performer's performance. As Freeman states, '[n]o one ever asks the listener to imagine […] because listeners rest at the final stage of the process.'[12] I can understand what Freeman is saying: that (from the composer's perspective) there is an obvious linear chain in which the music is passed down from composer to performer to listener where, in this way, the listener is tangibly the final stage. However, I do not agree that the listener does not 'imagine' any other stage of the compositional and/or performance process. For instance, when listening to a piece of music, it is wholly plausible that a listener would imagine the composer's intentions (there exist programme notes after all), *even if* the listener imagines wrongly.[13] The listeners play an active role in generating the

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[10] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002), p. 69

[11] For an insight into the effects of technological advances on globalisation and politics, see: Balliger, Robin, 'Politics', in *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*, ed. by Bruce Horner and Thomas Swiss (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 57–70

[12] Jason Freeman, 'Composer, Performer, Listener' in *Darmstädter Diskurse 1: Komponieren in der Gegenwart* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2006), pp. 132–138 (p. 132)

[13] For more information about how I use programme notes in some of my work, see Appendix B: 'Extra-musical concept for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*' and 'Extra-musical concept for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: ⁴**B₄**'.

music's meaningfulness. Nevertheless, Freeman's linear chain can be applied to the physical production line of music *from the composer's perspective*, and I will use his framework as a starting point for this chapter's investigation.

Freeman argues that challenging the composer-performer-listener relationship's inherent linearity can only be done via interactivity that employs the Internet.[14] He poses the following questions: first, how can the three sequential stages of music production be rearranged to occur 'simultaneously' or 'overlap' or 'dovetail' or 'interlock'? In other words, how can the production of music be made into a collaborative one? This leads to a second but related question: how can listeners (whether they have musical training or not) be given a collaborative role within music production?[15] It should be noted that 'collaborative' in this instance refers to subverting the linearity of the traditional state of the composer-performer-listener relationship in order to generate one that is nonlinear. If successful, this would give the listener a collaborative role by default.

<p align="center">*Interstice* (2013–present) for iPhone and the whole world[16]</p>

Interstice (2013–present) for iPhone and the whole world aims to challenge the traditional linearity of the composer-performer-listener relationship in an attempt to 'go beyond' a current comprehension of compositional form and so separate itself from the Avant-Garde spectacle. The piece is the result of a collaboration between a computer software developer and myself. It is an iPhone app that enables a global community to interact with a compositional 'form'. The app collects and stores heart-rate data via the internet. It requires people from all around the world (regardless of their education, culture, age, gender, and so on) to submit a representation of their heart-rate to an accumulating bank of human pulses by placing their finger on the camera light of their iPhone. The submitted heart-rates are translated into a generic 'heartbeat' sound which represents each person's heartbeat within the app. People are able hear any combination of thirty-two submitted heart-rates, at one time, via the app interface which is an

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[14] Freeman, p. 132

[15] Ibid., pp. 133–134

[16] Information regarding how to use *Interstice* and its pre-compositional material is featured in Appendix A. A video demonstrating how *Interstice* works is included on the accompanying DVD. An online version can be found here: Alannah Marie Halay and Samuel Halay, *Interstice Demonstration Video*, online video recording, YouTube, 01 July 2016 <https://youtu.be/i1RxwIz5PaY> [accessed: 01/07/16]

interactive three-dimensional representation of the earth. The app provides its users with the option to attach a compositional 'object' to their submitted heart-rate that is heard alongside their generic 'heartbeat' sound. These compositional 'objects' comprise very short musical fragments such as rhythmic motifs, timbres, and single pitches. This results in an overall sound world comprising a cacophony of overlapping 'sound objects' and percussive heartbeats of various pulse rates. A table of musical sound objects is featured in Appendix A, table A.2. I considered the desired overall cacophonous sound world of *Interstice* when composing the individual 'sound objects'. In order that each 'sound object' would be distinguishable even within an overall cacophony, I integrated different pitches, articulation, instrumental timbres, textures (such as chords or single notes), and instrumental techniques in order to distinguish between the different 'sound objects'. However, I still wanted the separate 'sound objects' to sound similar enough so that the whole sound world of *Interstice* sounded unified. As such, all 'sound objects' comprise orchestral instrumental timbres (with the *potential* exception of an electronically modified flute trill). Also, all 'sound objects' use Sibelius 7 program sound files. *Interstice* challenges the traditional linearity of the composer-performer-listener relationship as follows: the users of this app behave as both performers and audience, and I can say that 'performers' and 'audience' are active inside and outside a type of compositional 'space' (fig. V.1).

'performers' & 'audience'

'performers' & 'audience'

'performers' & 'audience'

input audience contribution (audience has performer's role)

output modified audience contribution (audience has audience's role)

output audible compositional (sonic) material (audience has audience's role)

via a medium
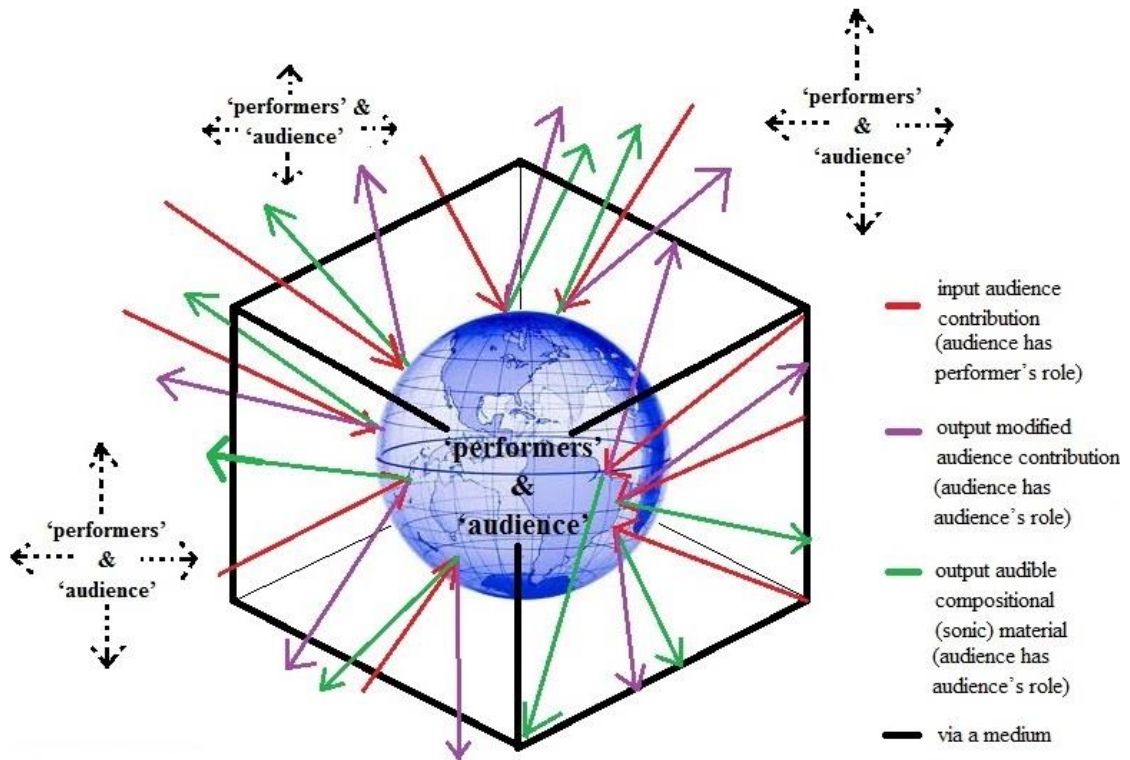
Image of globe from <http://rainbowlightfoundation.net/blog/?attachment_id=745> [accessed: 11/12/13]

Fig. V.1: An overview of *Interstice*'s compositional form

The 'medium' in this instance is the iPhone app. The performers and audience are actively interchangeable within the compositional process: the audience triggers (or performs) *Interstice*'s constituent sounds and so contributes to the structuring of these sounds. By doing this, they share part of the composer's role. Furthermore, they listen to the overall assemblage of sounds they have triggered, and therefore fulfil the role of the audience. This analysis of *Interstice*'s compositional form (also outlined in the above diagram) suggests that the audience can never have a composer's role *totally*. For instance, if the composer's role is concerned with the structuring of sounds above those sounds themselves (as proposed in Chapter III), then, in the instance of *Interstice*, the work as a whole would be the composer; as such, everyone (therefore *no particular individual*) would have the composer's role equally. This particular perspective poses the question as to whether a composer-as-producer even exists in this instance. Of course, this question can only be applied to the work once it is at play; by default, an overall composer had to create the situation in the first place.[17]

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[17] In actuality, the level of intervention the users of the *Interstice* app can exert is small. As overall composer, I was always able to predict in advance what the piece was going to do: it was going to

The attempted generation of a nonlinear composer-performer-listener relationship can be reduced to a linear producer-consumer relationship. This exemplifies the futility of attempting to generate a compositional form, within the current societal system, that 'goes beyond' current Avant-Garde practice. It is likely because the society we inhabit is one dominated by global capitalism (based on commodification and the consumer-producer relationship) that *Interstice*'s composer-performer-listener relationship can be reduced to a simple producer and consumer. This phenomenon is not unique to *Interstice*. Freeman explains how his own interactive project *Auracle* (2004–present), made with Max Neuhaus, Phil Burk, Kristjan Varnik, Sekhar Ramakrishnan and David Birchfield, blurs the distinction between the roles of composers, performers, and listeners: 'the "listeners" are as much composers and performers as listeners.'[18] He also explains that he and his colleagues are not 'composers' in the conventional sense. Thus far this strongly resembles the principle behind *Interstice*. By describing *Auracle* in software terms, Freeman logically reduces the three stages of composer, performer, and listener to two: developer and user. Similar to *Interstice*, *Auracle*'s attempt to make the three-stage linear music-production process more nonlinearly collaborative *still* results in a two-stage linear production process.[19]

Evaluation

Several conclusions can be made from composing *Interstice*. First, employing a popular everyday object (such as an iPhone) as a means to engage with individuals that are not necessarily Avant-Garde specialists does not guarantee that the audience automatically has the knowledge-based means to understand *Interstice* as an artwork. In other words, *Interstice* is not immediately accessible without an accompanying commentary; it relies on specialist understanding despite being physically removed from a specialist Avant-Garde context (such as the concert-hall setting) and situated within a popular everyday object that does not have connotations with Avant-Garde specialism. The reason for this is likely because the current Western societal system does not provide the immediate means for education for the vast majority in order that they should understand specialist

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generate a cacophony of heart-beat representations and 'sound objects' that would represent each audience member's/performer's situation on earth via an interactive interface and the Internet.

[18] Freeman, p. 136
Also see: Max Neuhaus, et al., 'Auracle', *Auracle* <http://auracle.org/index.html> [accessed: 26/09/16]
[19] Ibid., p.137

art, nor even that it should be relevant to them. Adorno wrote that '[t]he understanding of the meaning of a fleeting musical passage often depends on the intellective comprehension of its function in a whole that is not present; the purportedly immediate experience itself depends on what goes beyond pure immediacy.'[20]

Second, *Interstice* is not wholly unique in that there exist similar interactive compositions that aim to skew the linearity of the composer-performer-listener relationship. One example is Kaija Saariaho's 1997 composition *Mirrors* (for flute and cello) in which 'listeners isolate pre-recorded flute and cello phrases and rearrange them in time to form a version of the piece.'[21] Another example is a 2003 project by composer Sam Hayden, designer Gabi Braun, and the London Sinfonietta titled *3D Music*. In this work, listeners move around the performance space selecting pre-recorded 'musical clips to play'.[22] Moreover, there are musical examples which take nonlinearity and interactivity further by incorporating the internet: one example is John Yu's part of Tod Machover's 1996 *Brain Opera* in which 'listeners on the Internet move dots around a rectangular space to control high-level parameters of a generative music algorithm. During part of each performance of the piece, performers in the concert hall play together with the music generated by listeners on the Internet, and the dots are projected onto a video screen.'[23] A similar work is William Duckworth's *Cathedral Project* (beginning in 1997) in which Duckworth's 'virtual Pitch-Web instrument enables listeners to visually organize and trigger pre-recorded sounds, and to play along with his band during part of each of their live concerts.'[24] Furthermore, the use of the radio in Max Neuhaus's work of 1966–1977 (such as *Radio Net*) 'invited listeners to call a telephone number and make any sounds they wished. Their voices were automatically mixed together in various ways and used to control analog synthesis or delay processes.'[25] There is also Mariko Mori's 2003 installation titled *Wave UFO*, which 'takes the concept of Alvin Lucier's *Music for Solo Performer* to a new extreme: it wires up three listeners at a time and generates sound and images based on their brainwaves.'[26] Yet a further example is Nick Bryan-Kinn's 2004 project titled *Daisy-*

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[20] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 429
[21] Freeman, p. 134
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., p. 135
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

Phone in which 'listeners collaboratively edit the contents of a looping sequence from their computers or from their cell phones, using an intuitive graphical interface to change notes and rhythms.'[27] Finally, as already mentioned, there exists the interactive project by Jason Freeman, Max Neuhaus, Phil Burk, Kristjan Varnik, Sekhar Ramakrishnan and David Birchfield titled *Auracle*.[28] In Freeman's words:

> [l]isteners visit the project's web site and join an ensemble of other listeners. They make sounds with their voice – any kind of sounds at all – which are analysed by the software and shared over the Internet with other listeners. […] Each listener's voice controls a separate instrument within the ensemble. *Auracle* is a kind of online chat, but with abstract sounds instead of written text or streaming audio. We focus on vocal input because we want to enable everyone, regardless of their musical background, to subtly control the synthesized instruments and to create a huge range of gestures. We feel that voice input is better suited to this goal than mouse or keyboard control.[29]

Despite the existence of the aforementioned interactive works (amongst others) that challenge the linear production line from composer to listener, prevailing Western society manages to reduce this nonlinearity down to a linear relationship between a producer and consumer. The conclusion I can draw from this is that any brief success in achieving a type of nonlinear relationship between the composer, performer, and listener through interactive Internet projects is destined to 'age' once it is analysed (or comprehended) from within a societal framework founded on a producer-consumer relationship. Therefore, I can propose that it is the nature of Western social organisation, within which Western Avant-Garde practice is situated, that perpetuates the Avant-Garde style that is closed off from the majority of society.

From this, I can propose that the prevailing social organisation is perpetuating the main criterion of the Avant-Garde style (that of being *genuinely* avant garde) despite simultaneously preventing the Avant Garde from fulfilling that criterion. For instance, if, by chance, one happened to achieve naïveté *totally* and be genuinely avant garde, then it is likely that current society would market it as if it were a commodity so much so that it would not be avant garde anymore. This commodification of genuine avant-garde practice is idealised and simultaneously unattainable. If Western society remains functioning as it currently does, all (genuine) avant-garde practice is destined to endure a subsequent reification via commodification: 'art allies itself with repressed and

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

dominated nature in the progressively rationalized and integrated society. Yet industry makes even this resistance an institution and changes it into coin.'[30]

The reason for this phenomenon can be explained via Lydia Goehr's notion of the work-concept:

> [t]he idea that one first composed a work which then was publicly performed here and there hardly existed. It could not therefore regulate the public activities of composers. This idea hardly even regulated their private activities, when, as C. Ph. E. Bach put it, composers were able to produce compositions in 'complete freedom' and for their 'own use'. […] Public recognition was given instead to the extra-musical bodies or persons for whom the music was composed.[31]

Basically, the notion of a musical 'work' is a result of the commodification of music which coincided with the rise of a society dominated by the producer-consumer relationship. Before this, compositional technique was free of the 'work-concept'; instead, the work of composers was cooped up in ritual and controlled by other external factors. Basically, '[w]ith the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products.'[32] As Benjamin asserts:

> for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an even greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.[33]

As such,

> [m]usic began to be thought of as partitioned into works each of which embodied and revealed the Infinite or the Beautiful. Each work contained something valuable, something worthy of aesthetic or 'metaphysical' contemplation. Musical works also began to be marketed in the same way as other works of fine art and, in aesthetic terms, to be valued and contemplated as permanently existing creations of composers/artists.[34]

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[30] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 426
[31] Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 179
[32] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations,* trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 211–244 (p. 218)
[33] Ibid.
[34] Goehr, p. 174

The current Western societal system (dominated by the producer-consumer relationship) affects the way in which we view all art, even that which did not manifest in accordance with the work-concept:

> Bach did not intend to compose musical works. Only by adopting a modern perspective – a perspective foreign to Bach – would we say that he had. This implication proves to be correct as we examine with hindsight how the concepts governing musical practice before 1800 precluded the regulative function of the work-concept.[35]

The influence of the work-concept (and likewise a producer-consumer perspective of art) can be observed in a number of examples. For instance, despite Schoenberg's attempt to create a compositional approach ('twelve tone row') that was free from orthodoxy (he wrote that, '[w]hen I compose, I try to forget all theories and I continue composing only after having freed my mind of them. It seems to me urgent to warn my friends against orthodoxy.'[36]), composing with twelve tones became 'tolerated as the private activity of specialists, a cultural necessity in some not quite clear fashion, entrusted wholly to the experts'.[37]

Another example is that of the Dada movement which, once it was taken 'seriously', and as a 'serious' art form, had contradicted its purpose and so ceased to be Dada but an objectified movement. Francis Picabia emphasised this point when he said that '[t]he Dada spirit really only existed between 1913 and 1918 . . . In wishing to prolong it, Dada became closed . . . Dada, you see, was not serious... and if certain people take it seriously now, it's because it is dead! . . . One must be a nomad, pass through ideas like one passes through countries and cities.'[38] Therefore, in a bourgeois epoch it is inevitable that even anti-art becomes institutionalised as commodified 'art'.

From this, I propose that, no matter what the creative act, whether it be creating music in the manner C. P. E Bach described as composing with 'complete freedom' and for the composer's 'own use', or whether it be attempting to transcend orthodoxy as in Schoenberg's case; whether it be a single compositional technique or a whole movement, current Western society will commodify all *genuinely* avant garde acts: they will be reified into an 'object' or 'work' in accordance with the phenomenon of the work-concept. This brings to mind what Adorno wrote in *Aesthetic Theory*:

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[35] Ibid., p. 8
[36] Arnold Schoenberg, 'My Evolution', *The Musical Quarterly*, 75.4 (1991) 144 – 157, p. 156
[37] Adorno, 'The Aging of the New Music', p. 185
[38] Morgan Falconer (ed.), 'Dada', *TheArtStory.org website* <http://www.theartstory.org/ movement-dada.htm> [accessed: 22/08/16]

[a]rt and artworks are perishable, not simply because by their heteronomy they are dependent, but because right into the smallest detail of their autonomy, which sanctions the socially determined splitting off of spirit by the division of labor, they are not only art but something foreign and opposed to it. Admixed with art's own concept is the ferment of its abolition.[39]

Similar views are expressed amongst literature pertaining to the Situationist International:

[w]hat has happened since the 1940s is that aesthetic production has become fully integrated into commodity production generally. Rather than merely tolerating "art for art's sake," the capitalist imperative to produce fresh waves of ever-more novel-seeming goods, at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation. As a result of these changes in the cultural logic of capitalism, changes brought about by the movement from the monopoly stage to the multinational stage of capitalism, our sense of history, both personal and collective, has been completely eroded. We now live in a perpetual present. Under such conditions, it's nearly impossible to conceive of the future; any traditional attempt to oppose society's development are now secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by that very society.[40]

After composing *Interstice* and analysing it in relation to existing practice, I can propose that the only chance one has of engaging with naïveté and being *genuinely* avant garde is if Western society changes. The current societal state influences the Avant Garde's absurdity because, as this chapter's investigation demonstrates, a genuinely avant-garde act cannot exist forever (and is destined to 'age') if society remains functioning as it currently does. '[T]here is no longer any art that has remained inviolable.'[41]

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[39] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 5
[40] Bill Brown, 'An Introduction to the Situationist International', *NOT BORED!* <http://www.notbored.org/intro.html> [accessed: 18/09/16]
[41] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 432

Conclusion: Recognising Absurdity and Redefining 'Originality'

The conclusions that can be drawn from the investigations in this PhD are as follows. First, there is a difference between the Avant-Garde style and being avant garde. Second, because of a prevalent absurdity in current Avant-Garde practice, all attempts at being genuinely avant garde are destined to 'age'. Therefore, in a lot of cases, music that claims to be *genuinely* avant garde is actually adhering to the Avant-Garde style, despite having the intentions of being progressive. The perpetuation of the Avant-Garde style, under the false guise of engaging with the 'new' and 'unfamiliar', is absurd in Camusian terms.

The Avant-Garde style I have here identified is based on two interacting hermeneutic frameworks between 'unfamiliarity' and 'familiarity', and creative 'freedom' and 'restriction'. These two frameworks are influenced by the phenomenon of Meno's paradox which questions how one can ever acquire knowledge about what they do not already know. As explained in Chapter I, the unavoidable phenomenon of Meno's paradox and the mechanics behind the formation of style can lead one to become 'familiar' with what was once 'unfamiliar' and so, if engagement with the 'unfamiliar' is ever successfully achieved, it will inevitably 'age' into a 'familiar' norm. These interrelated hermeneutic frameworks explain why current Avant-Garde practice seems to have ceased moving 'forwards' and has instead fallen into an absurd system that renders it static, doomed to 'aging'.

As presumed from Chapter II's investigation, if one is to overcome these frameworks and be *genuinely* avant garde (and engage with progressive naïveté), subversion of technique should not be an end in itself, but should enter into a dialectical relationship with the work's truth content. This is because, as explained in Chapter III, a musical work is defined by its context more than its technical level (constituent notes, motifs, phrases, instrumental exploration, and so on); even the exact same piece of music can be contextualised as a different piece of music and perceived as such by an audience. In Chapter III, I proposed that all composition is a (re)arrangement of what already exists (and what the composer knows to already exist in accordance with Meno's paradox). '[S]omething that is only a personal expression within a framework created by others cannot be termed a creation. Creation is not the arrangement of objects

and forms, it is the invention of new laws on that arrangement.'[1] This means that *all* acts of composing involve (re)arranging what already exists into a compositional form or a particular context. This blurs the distinction between employing quotation and/or allusion (whether deliberately or not), re-using one's own musical 'material' such as notes, motifs, dynamics, and so on (self-quotation), and not doing either of these things but instead composing intuitively (for example). The difference between these modes of composition is in the way they are interpreted within a context. Therefore, subversion has to happen in relation to the Avant-Garde's context and not the technical level of individual musical works. As the investigations in Chapters IV and V suggest, the Avant-Garde context is perpetuated by the expectations of practitioners with a knowledge of that context. This in part prevents compositional practice from moving beyond that context and being *genuinely* avant garde.

A review of all investigations in this PhD allows me to propose that, at present, the Avant-Garde style reproduces itself through the reification and conventionalism of engagements with the 'unfamiliar', a condition that comes about as a result of the mechanics behind the formation of style (as discussed in Chapter I).[2] This condition perpetuates the Avant-Garde style and its absurdity, despite any attempt to be (genuinely) avant garde. Therefore, instead of blindly attempting to be 'new' by subverting compositional technique, a logical way out of this self-affirming perpetuation is to turn it into a productive hermeneutic framework. What follows in this chapter are two theoretical solutions to doing this: recognition of the Avant-Garde's absurdity, and redefining 'originality'.

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[1] Guy Debord, 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action', in *The Situationist International Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1995), pp. 17–25 (p. 22)

[2] Chapter I demonstrated how my attempts to engage with a progressive form of naiveté 'aged' as a result of the playing out of two interrelated hermeneutic circles between 'familiarity' and 'unfamiliarity', and creative 'freedom' and 'restriction'. I propose that it is these frameworks that make up the mechanics behind the formation of the Avant-Garde style.

Recognising Absurdity

Camus wrote that recognising an absurdity precedes overcoming it.[3] My findings in Chapter IV present a means in which the absurdity of the Avant-Garde style can be recognised through *détournement*, which involves making the 'familiar' 'unfamiliar' via various defamiliarisation techniques. Recognising the Avant-Garde's absurdity is not a solution in itself, but should pave the way for future development into changing the Avant-Garde context and achieving naïveté in its practice. Generating a consciousness of this absurdity can support the formation of a new concept of originality (being *genuinely* avant garde), which I discuss further below.

The theory behind why a recognition of the Avant-Garde style effectively challenges that style, and therefore supports future (genuinely) avant-garde practice is as follows. As already explained, truth content for Adorno is necessarily tied to an artwork's sociohistorical moment, otherwise art falls into meaninglessness (or absurdity). It is tied to 'both the artwork's complex internal dynamics and the dynamics of the sociohistorical totality to which the artwork belongs.'[4] As such, naïveté cannot be private and introspective for Adorno, but must be conscious of its sociohistorical moment. Likewise, as demonstrated in this PhD's investigations, introspective attempts to engage with naïveté fail because they focus on technique above truth content. However, reframing Adorno's argument in light of a Heideggerian progression of Meno's paradox (the hermeneutic framework), allows for the plausibility of a personal naïveté where the resultant artwork *is* conscious of its sociohistorical condition.[5] To put it simply, engagements with naïveté on a technical level can be turned into the artwork's truth content as follows.

The mechanics of the Avant-Garde style prevent *total* engagement with (progressive) naïveté; this is due to the phenomenon of Meno's paradox as already explained. However, if one were to deliberately use these (preventative) mechanics as a compositional technique in order to demonstrate, to an audience, the unavoidability of adhering to them and the related absurdity of this, one would be turning a personal

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[3] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 12

[4] Lambert Zuidervaart, 'Theodor W. Adorno', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno/> [accessed: 31/08/16]

[5] For more information regarding Heidegger's hermeneutic framework, see: Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time to The Task of Thinking*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 143–144 (more information is also included in this thesis' Literature Review).

engagement with naïveté (that focuses on technique) into a progressive naïveté that acknowledges the sociohistorical. This is because highlighting the absurdity of these mechanics would become the truth content of the work, which in turn would cease to be absurd because it would be demonstrating a consciousness of its own sociohistorical condition. By highlighting the absurdity of the mechanics behind the formation of style, the artwork in question *recognises* its own absurdity and is therefore conscious of its own context.

This also suggests that partial, introspective engagements with naïveté (that focus on subversion of technique) do not have to mean failure to engage with naïveté *properly*. Personal engagements with naïveté (that focus on the technical level of a composition) are inherently partial engagements because they are introspective and do not demonstrate awareness of the sociohistorical. For example, in Chapter II, when composing *Parallax Error*, I ensured I was naïve in my treatment of the instrument (and this naïveté was based on my personal knowledge about that instrument); however, I could not be naïve in relation to a body of existing compositional practice that explored string instruments in a similar way. As such, one can be naïve in a particular area of composition so long as other related facets rest unexamined at that point. Naïveté rests in a persistent dialogue/dialectic with the known.

Redefining 'Originality'

It is not only recognising absurdity that can help promote a move away from it. Another plausible solution is to redefine 'originality', which I can do in light of an overview of this PhD's investigations. This involves forgoing the desire for that type of 'originality' that is portrayed as an essential criterion of Avant-Garde practice (despite not being fulfilled in such practice). Adorno claimed that, for art to engage with a progressive form of naïveté, that naïveté must not be 'taken up as a point of view' (it must not be forced).[6] 'The result of this mentality is a bloated concept of naïveté.'[7] As such, I propose that 'originality' should be viewed as the nature of an artwork's origin rather than its newness as such.[8] It should be 'authentic' in the sense that it should be

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[6] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 427
[7] Ibid., p. 426
[8] This notion is explored in detail in: Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time to The Task of Thinking*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 139–212

'modelled on the aesthetic ideal of creativity', a 'spontaneous creation of one's self and life' that interacts with 'the conventions, ideas and institutions against which one must struggle to fashion one's authentic self.'[9]

From this, I propose that 'originality' is being able to employ any set of pitches and instrumental techniques without being restricted by their cultural and historical implications. The resultant music may indeed comprise inadvertent allusions to other genres and not sit well with an audience of certain expectations (as my practice in Chapters II and IV explores); however, no one would be able to claim that it adheres to the rules of any specific style. In other words, the music that is produced will be authentically creative and not restricted by prevailing stylistic and traditional norms, nor will it be a forced attempt to be 'new'.

What Now?

As should now be clear, this PhD explains why g*enuinely* avant-garde art cannot survive (if it even manages to exist in the first place) if its absurd context remains functioning as it currently does. While I can challenge its absurdity theoretically, and in relation to my own practice, it remains to be proven whether these theoretical perspectives can be effective in rethinking the consciousness surrounding Avant-Garde practice in general. In this way, this PhD paves the way for future research in this area. In short, 'there is no longer any art that has remained inviolable,'[10] but that does not mean it should stop trying.

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[9] Jacob Golomb, *In Search of Authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 144

[10] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 432

Appendices

Appendix A: Compositional Processes and Pre-Compositional 'Material'

Parallax Error (2014) for any four-stringed bowed instrument

Interstice (2013–present) for iPhone and the whole world

Air, Earth, Water, Fire (2015) for Orchestra

Appendix B: Extra-Musical Concepts and Material

Extra-musical concept *Graphite Pendulum* (2014) for solo B♭ clarinet and fixed-media

electronics

Extra-musical material for *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* (2015) for orchestra

Extra-musical concept for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*

(2013–14)

Extra-musical concept for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: $^{4}\mathbf{B_{4}}$ (2014–15)

Appendix C: Musical Examples

Examples from James Dillon's *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (London: Edition Peters, 2014)

Appendix A: Pre-Compositional and Compositional Processes

Parallax Error (2014) for any four-stringed bowed instrument[1]

Parallax Error is organised into eleven lines in the score, but should be regarded as one continuous line by the performer. *Parallax Error*'s categorised 'sound objects' are organised according to the following timbral characteristics: percussive, deliberate pitch (albeit unspecific), glissando, resonance, non-normative bowing (col legno bow or arco-bowing the body for example), 'noise', 'arco normale'. An analysis of *Parallax Error*'s overall structure is demonstrated in table A.1 below:

Sections	A–D			B–D	C–D		D
'Sound Object' Characteristics	Percussive	Deliberate pitch (albeit unspecific)	Glissando	Resonance	Bowed	'Noise'	'Arco normale'
Lines	(1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11)	(1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11)	(1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11)	(3), (5), (7), (8), (10), (11)	(6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11)	(6), (7), (8), (9), (11)	(7), (8), (9), (11)
Additional Description	The piece is predominantly percussive. N.B.: where present, pizzicato is regarded as being percussive.	Pitch, as a by-product, is intended throughout the piece. N.B.: where present, pizzicato is regarded as a medium for unspecific pitch.	There are glissandos throughout the piece.	Noticeable resonance first appears in line (3). This noticeable change in timbre (compared to previous lines) is what distinguishes section A from B. The pizzicato glissando in line (3) is conceived as an artificial synthetic-like form of resonance in addition to being a glissando.	Section C is defined by the bowing technique (albeit col legno and not normative).	The most prominent 'noise' timbre is in line (9); however, this is foreshadowed with the col legno bowing (which is effectively a sustained percussive sound) in line (6) and the first appearance of 'arco normale' bowing in line (7).	An additional section can be acknowledged in the recurrence of the initial glissando col legno 'characteristic' (see line (1)) in line (10). This alludes to traditional notions of the 'recapitulation'. The 'arco normale' in line (11) is foreshadowed with the 'arco normale' on the screws in lines (7), (8), and (9)

Table. A.1: a table demonstrating how characteristics of the 'sound objects' are intertwined throughout *Parallax Error*'s structure.[2]

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[1] *Parallax Error* is also discussed in the following publication: Alannah Marie Halay, '(Per)Forming Art: Performance as a Compositional Technique' in *(Per)Forming Art: Performance as Research in Contemporary Artworks*, ed. by Alannah Marie Halay (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), pp. 37–51 (pp. 38–46 and pp. 50–51)

[2] This table is also published in the following: Alannah Marie Halay, '(Per)Forming Art: Performance as a Compositional Technique' in *(Per)Forming Art: Performance as Research in Contemporary Artworks*, ed. by Alannah Marie Halay (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), pp. 37–51 (pp. 41–42)

Throughout the piece, each categorised 'sound object' has a variety of characteristics. As implied by the above table, characteristics reappear in different 'sound objects'. As such, the same characteristic is presented in a variety of different contexts throughout the piece. Examples of this include resonance from a col legno bow attacking the strings (for instance, see line (3), ex. A.1 below) compared with the resonance from releasing a dampening hand from the strings (see line (7), ex. A.2 below).

Ex. A.1: *The Parallax Error*, line (3)

In line (3), the percussively attacked fingerboard without dampened strings, the pizzicato glissando, and the resonance are all separate 'sound objects'. However, the combination of pizzicato glissando and the 'trail off' technique in line (4) is conceived as a single 'sound object'.

Ex. A.2: *The Parallax Error*, line (7)

In line (7), bowing the tail piece, and alternating between dampening and releasing the strings with the fingers are both separate 'sound objects'. On a more micro-level, I regard the dampening of the strings (to produce a percussive sound) and the releasing of the strings (to produce resonance) as two separate 'sound objects'. Here, these two gestures are 'logistically connected' (in the sense that they involve a similar performance technique) rather than semantically linked as in the previous line's col legno gesture.

Interstice (2013–present) for iPhone and the whole world[3]
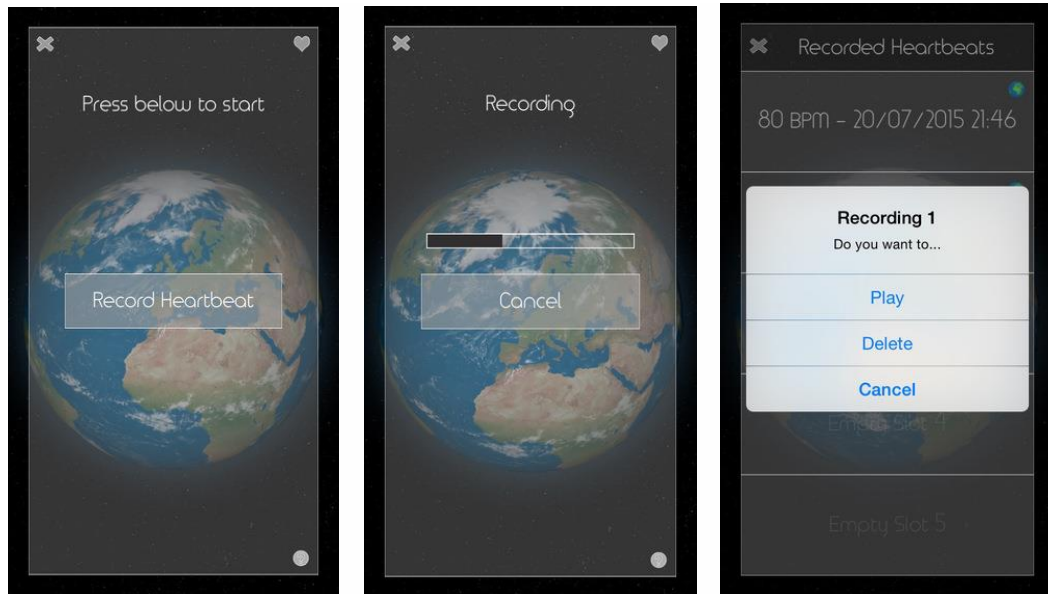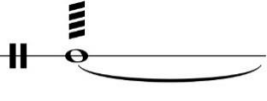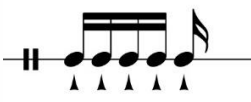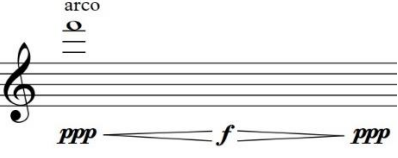
Ex. A.3: users can submit a representation of their heart-rate by placing their finger on the camera light of their iPhone
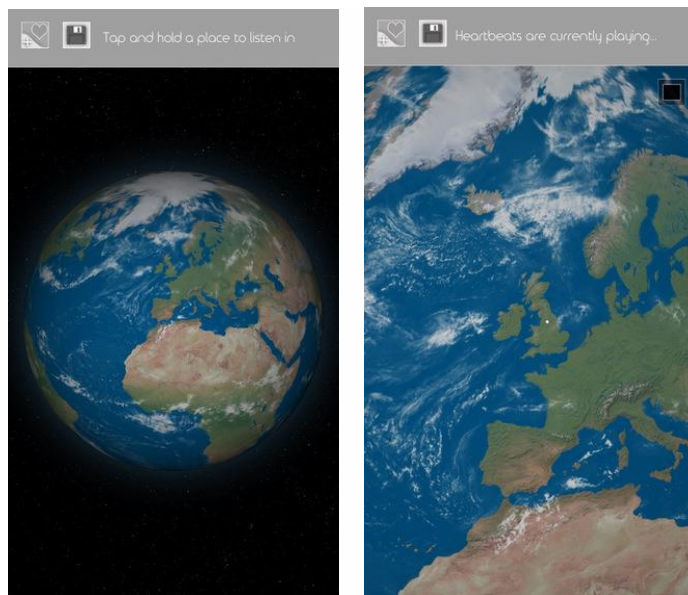
Ex. A.4: users are able hear any combination of 32 submitted heart-rates, at one time, via the 'app' interface which is an interactive three-dimensional representation of the earth

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[3] A video demonstrating how *Interstice* works is included on the accompanying DVD. An online version of this video can be found here: Alannah Marie Halay and Samuel Halay, *Interstice Demonstration Video*, online video recording, YouTube, 01 July 2016 <https://youtu.be/i1RxwIz5PaY> [accessed: 01/07/16]

No.	Instrument	Sonic Characteristics	Notation (in C)
1	Flute	Electronically modified trill	
2	Flute and piano	Chord, staccato	
3	Clarinet	Three pitches, staccato, sparse	
4	Trumpet	Long sustained note	
5	Cymbal	Tremolando, l.v.	
6	Snare Drum	Single attack, snare on	
7	Woodblock	Five staccato notes	
8	Timpani	Two notes	
9	Harp	Three chords	
10	Piano	Chord with sustain pedal	
11	Violin	Arco, pitch F	
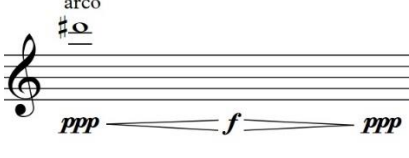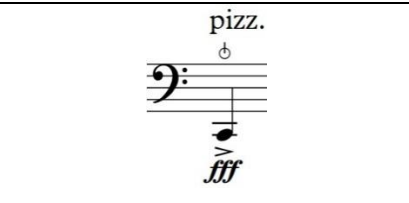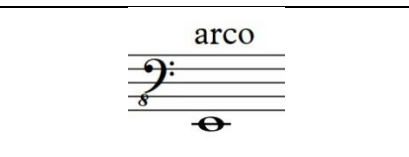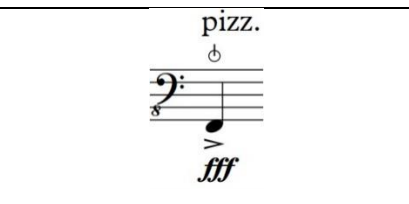
12	Violin	Arco, pitch D#	
13	Violoncello	Bartók pizzicato low	
14	Violoncello	Bartók pizzicato higher	
15	Double bass	arco long sustained note	
16	Double bass	Bartók pizzicato	

Table A.2: A table outlining the sixteen sound 'objects' in *Interstice*

Air, Earth, Water, Fire (2015) for Orchestra

'Air'	'Earth'	'Water'	'Fire'
• Breath sounds • Brushes • Arco/bowing the body • Scraping sounds • Col legno arco on body of instrument • Light bow pressure • Air tones	• Key/valve clicks/rattles (wind) • Tapping on body (strings) tapping with fingers, wood of bow and hair of bow • Tapping (percussion), clicks from mallets/sticks • Rumbling superball mallet on the drum (aim for overall rumbling effect) • Pitched Tapping: lip pizzicato, smack tone, slap tongue, dead strokes on marimba, string pizzicato (including Bartók pizzicato)	• Flutter tongue (pitched) • Pitched tremolando in strings • String glissandi (ord. finger pressure) • Timpani glissando and tremolando • Tremolando in bass drum • Heavy/light bow pressure • Overblowing	• 'Shiny' sounds • Harmonic finger glissandi • Bowed tam-tam • Bowed vibraphone • Light bow pressure • Unstable, volatile sounds: high pitch range on bassoon for example; high pitches on double bass; overblowing

Table A.3: A table outlining the pre-compositional organisation of various sound effects into the theoretical properties they represent.[4]

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[4] It should be noted that this is not an analytical representation of the finished composition, but a pre-compositional plan that was used during the compositional process.

Section:	Air			
	(16 bars)			
No. of bars:	4	4	4	4
	General	Blend	Specific	Blend
Extra pre-compositional information:	General intro. to a plethora of 'air' sounds (see table): bow hair sounds; scraping perc.; col legno bowing (*arco/ tratto*), etc.	Rhythmic chaos (blend of 'air' sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section)	Clearly defined (specific) 'air' sounds (see table); clear rhythmic material (less cacophonous that 'general' section)	Rhythmic chaos (blend of air sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section)
Section:	Earth			
	(16 bars)			
No. of bars:	4	4	4	4
	General	Blend	Specific	Blend
Extra pre-compositional information:	Chaotic: general introduction to 'earth' sounds including tapping sounds: key clicks, col legno, finger tapping on string-instrument bodies, overall percussive; bass drum rumbling sounds	Blend of 'earth' sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section	Clearly defined (specific) 'earth' sounds (see table); clear rhythmic material (less cacophonous that 'general' section)	blend of 'earth' sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section
Section:	Water			
	(16 bars)			
No. of bars:	4	4	4	4
	General	Blend	Specific	Blend
Extra pre-compositional information:	General intro. to a plethora of 'water' sounds (see table)	Blend of 'water' sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section	Clearly defined (specific) 'water' sounds (see table); clear rhythmic material (less cacophonous that 'general' section)	Blend of 'water' sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section
Section:	Fire			
	(16 bars)			
No. of bars:	4	4	4	4
	General	Blend	Specific	Blend
Extra pre-compositional information:	General intro. to a plethora of 'fire' sounds (see table)	Blend of 'fire' sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section	Clearly defined (specific) 'fire' sounds (see table); clear rhythmic material (less cacophonous that 'general' section)	Blend of 'fire' sounds with intuitive developments that foreshadow following section (which involves the sonic representation of all theoretical properties)
Section:	CODA			
	(16 bars)			
No. of bars:	To be decided during the compositional process.			
	Mixture of: general, blend, and specific.			
Extra pre-compositional information:	Intuitively blend content of previous sections to form music that comprises an equal blend of the world's theoretical properties (that is: 'air', 'earth', 'water', and 'fire') and as such can be deemed unified according to those theoretical properties (in accordance with the piece's extra-musical concept).			

Table A.4: A table outlining the pre-compositional distribution of sonic events (outlined in table A.3) into a compositional structure.[5]

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[5] It should be noted that this is not an analytical representation of the finished composition, but a pre-compositional plan that was used during the compositional process.

Appendix B: Extra-Musical Concepts and Material

Extra-musical material for *Graphite Pendulum* (2014) for solo B♭ clarinet and fixed-media electronics

The temporal plane and structure of *Graphite Pendulum* is influenced by the properties of graphite (pictured below).
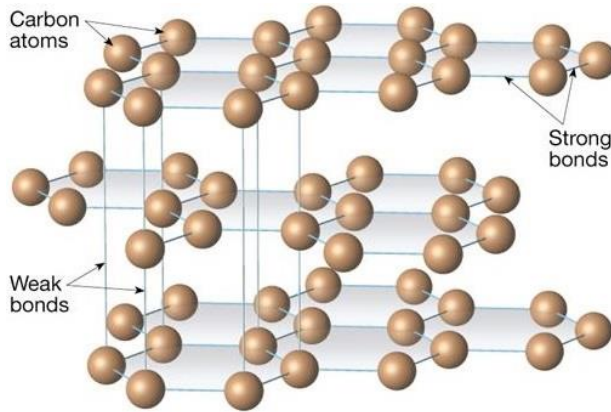
Fig. B.1: Diagram of Graphite[1]

On a basic level, graphite comprises strong bonds that form sheets, comparatively these strongly bonded sheets are held together by weaker bonds. As such, the sheets slide over each other slightly.
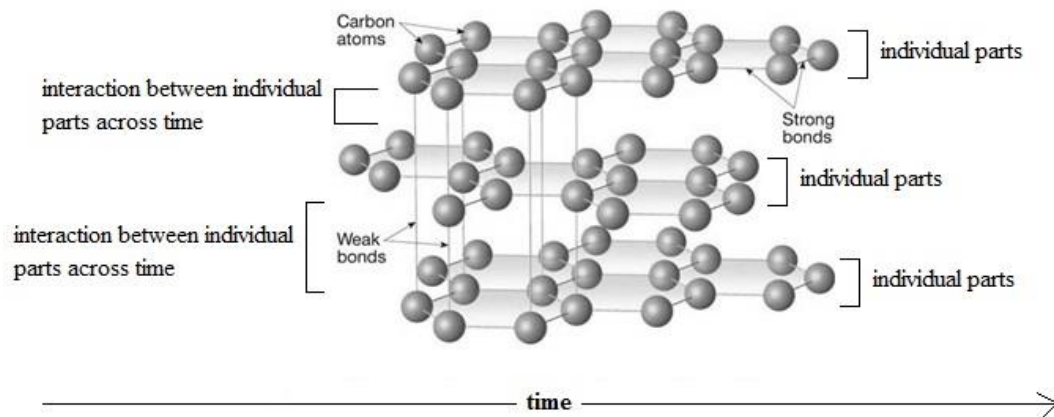
Fig. B.2: The structure of graphite and *Graphite Pendulum*[2]

The above diagram demonstrates the similarities between the structure of graphite and the structure of *Graphite Pendulum*.

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[1] Terry J. Boroughs, 'Minerals', in *Geology with Terry J. Boroughs* <http://web.arc.losrios.edu/~borougt/MineralogyDiagrams.htm> [accessed: 07/10/14]

[2] Diagram of graphite from: Terry J. Boroughs, 'Minerals', in *Geology with Terry J. Boroughs* <http://web.arc.losrios.edu/~borougt/MineralogyDiagrams.htm> [accessed: 07/10/14]; modified by Alannah Marie Halay

Extra-musical concept for *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* (2015) for orchestra

The compositional process behind *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* (2015) for orchestra was fuelled by the following hypothetical notion: I theorised that the substance of music shares physical properties with the substance of earth ('earth' here simply denotes that which is not music). As such, both the substance of music and the substance of 'earth' are space and both are tangible matter. The distinction between music and 'earth' lies in the different states of the material and/or space that make up their substances and structures. Taking this notion as a starting point, I theorised that the principles that are applied to the properties that make up the world's substance can be applied to those of a piece of music (in particular the formation of it). Without wanting to go into complex detail of earth's physical and chemical properties, I focused on earth's theoretical properties (air, earth, water, and fire) and, more specifically, the interaction of these. As such, the composition *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* (2015) for orchestra explores four timbral domains that are each likened to the four states of matter as theorised by the ancient Greeks. 'Air' is represented by audible breath, brush strokes, and scraping. 'Earth' is represented by percussive rumbling characterised by a combination of tapping, knocking, key clicks, and pizzicati. 'Water' is represented by definite pitch, tremolandi, and glissandi. 'Fire' is characterised by instrumental techniques that result in unstable (or 'volatile') audible sounds such as harmonic glissandi, bowed percussion, and pitches that lie outside an instrument's tessitura. Generally, these four timbral 'states' are separated into four consecutive sections; however, they do overlap at times before fully interacting in the final section. I arranged these sections according to what I felt reflected the physical behaviour of instruments. Taking the violin as an example, a light bow pressure (denoting 'air') becomes a heavier bow pressure (denoting earth); this then leads onto a more fluid note with periodicity and vibrato (denoting 'water') before becoming unstable and volatile via a heavy bow pressure (denoting 'fire').

This approach encouraged me to focus on timbre rather than specific pitch and rhythm during the compositional process (most of the time). Not only did this encourage me to think about the compositional 'material' with which I compose in a particular way (one that focuses on timbre over specific pitch and rhythm), but it also served to be appropriate for the ensemble I wrote this piece for (the Yorkshire Young Sinfonia, which comprises children between the ages of ten and eighteen). Focusing on timbral exploration above specific pitches and rhythms proved to be an appropriate introduction to avant-garde practice to those who were otherwise 'unfamiliar' with it (more information about this aspect of *Air, Earth, Water, Fire* is included in Chapter I).[3]

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[3] Focusing on timbre as the 'building blocks' of a composition, and drawing comparisons between this and the properties of earth, is not uncommon in existing compositional practice. This approach is also present in Lachenmann's *Air* (1968): Williams explains that 'Lachenmann writes of whipped air, rubbed hide, broken wood, struck metal and squeaking strings, as well as the oscillating air columns of wind instruments. As the element through which sound travels, the word 'air' therefore touches on some of the central preoccupations of Lachenmann's notion of 'musique concrète instrumentale' by alluding to the mechanical and kinetic conditions of sound production.' See: Alastair Williams, *Music in Germany Since 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 81 Also see: Helmut Lachenmann, *Air: Musik für großes Orchester und Schlagzeug-Solo* (Wiesbaden:

Extra-musical concept for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*
(2013–14)

Below is a programme note which also features within the score:

> 'Energy' is neither created nor destroyed. It is transformed.
> A 'title' is an 'image'.
> An 'image' is a 'representation': a mental formation.

Ex. B.1: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image* programme note

Programme Note Explanation:

Energy cannot be created; it can only be transformed between states. I think the same can be said for any creative process: the artist cannot create an artwork; they can only transform what already exists into an 'original' encounter.[4] Moreover, the receiver's interpretation of such an encounter is based on what already exists (their preconceived conceptual frameworks): they interpret signifiers of the artwork according to pre-established ideas about the meanings of those signifiers. As such, on the micro-level and macro-level, the artist 'creates' and the receiver interprets the work of art by comparing it with an already-existing paradigm.

Furthermore, the title of an artwork is not actually the artwork, but a representation of the artwork only. It potentially influences interpretation and is therefore an act of 'violence' on perception of the absolute essence of the piece. As such, it can be said that the title of an artwork presents an additional conceptual framework from which the receiver, once aware of the title, invariably bases the artwork on.

Finally, the title *the title is an image* attempts to play with the receiver's preconceived conceptual frameworks: it aims to cause confusion because people wonder if the title really is an image instead of words 'the title is an image'. It also has additional extra-musical meaning: a person's title is their image; it is not necessarily who they truly are.

Breitkopf & Härtel, 1994); Helmut Lachenmann, *Air – Musik für großes Orchester mit Schagzeug-Solo (1968–69)*, Rückblick Moderne (Col Legno, WWE 8 CD 20041, 1999)

[4] This notion is discussed in Chapter III: 'every conceivable composition is a rearrangement of what already exists; the only distinction between all musical works lies in their structure and context (and, basically, how they are perceived, which is influenced by a context, hermeneutically). In short, nothing is created but transferred into various states (much like the conservation of energy).'

Extra-musical concept for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: [4]**B4** (2014–15)

It was requested by the 'University of Leeds International Concert Series' team that I provide a programme note for *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: [4]**B4**. Below is a programme note which also features within this piece's score:

> 'Energy' is neither created nor destroyed. It is transformed.

> **For** (preposition): because of.

> **Be** (intransitive)
> 1. to exist
> 2. to occupy a place
> 3. to occur, to take place

> **B** (personality theory): a personality type of someone who is frequently reflective, relaxed and able to engage in leisure activities without worrying about work. They may take an interest in contemplating ideas and concepts.

> **B** (music): the seventh note in the C major scale.

> **B4** (music): the note above middle C

> **Before** (preposition):
> 1. earlier (in time)
> 2. in front of (in space)

> **Fore** (obsolete): former; occurring earlier

Ex. B.2: *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: [4]**B4** programme note

Programme Note Explanation:

In some ways, this programme note is deliberately obscure because I do not feel that the piece needs a programme note at all. I do not want the audience to think that they know what the piece is about *from* the programme note and before the piece has been performed. The *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* collection aims to tackle the influence of the receivers' preconceived ideas about a piece of music, and providing a programme note would be like providing some preconceived ideas for the receivers to use to influence their interpretation of my piece. Furthermore, I believe that *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: [4]**B4** is self-evident and does not need an accompanying explanatory commentary in order to listen to it: to an audience 'familiar' with Avant-Garde practice and Western Classical Music as a whole (like the typical audience of a 'University of Leeds International Concert Series' concert) there is nothing overtly remarkable about this piece, it has a clear structure that crescendos throughout, it goes from non-definite pitch to more definite pitch.

The programme note presents its message in a quasi-algebraic way so that it can logically portray something that is too complex to be explained in standard sentences without the programme note being convoluting. *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* II: $^4\textbf{B}_\textbf{4}$ is dedicated to someone called 'B' who died in 2014 and who often went by 'B4'. As such, this piece is also dedicated to the time *before* (now) when B was still alive. It is also written for the pitch 'B' (and specially B4) which I used in order to create an equal blend between traditional and contemporary musical norms more successfully than I had done in *ENERGY CANNOT BE CREATED* I: *the title is an image*.[5]

The quasi-algebraic nature of the programme note also serves another purpose: I did not want to be explicit about the dedication of the piece and the nature of this programme note obscures this facet of its message for those who did not know 'B'.

There is another reason for this structure of the programme note: I think that music says something in a way that words cannot. As such, rather than providing an explicit programme note, the vagueness of this one persuades the listener to think about the piece in a certain way. The words and letters in this programme note will guide the listener's approach but the obscurity of this programme note should persuade them to let the music speak for itself.

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[5] This piece's pitches, and blend between traditional and contemporary musical norms, is discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

Appendix C: Musical Examples

Examples from James Dillon's *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (London: Edition Peters, 2014)

Ex. C.1: direct quotation of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* (1736) in James Dillon's *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, movement II, bars 135–140[1]

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[1] James Dillon, *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (London: Edition Peters, 2014), p.40

Ex. C.2: A 'contemporary classical' idiom in James Dillon's *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, movement IV, bars 205–211[2]

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[2] Ibid., p.77

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