

Invoking Music in Literature:
The Instrumental, the Sonic, and the Structural

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Author's Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to demonstrate how we might use musical context as an interpretative tool to offer new readings of literary works. It does this by exploring literary texts that can be seen to invoke particular elements of music. The three main chapters each focus on a different invocation of music in literature: the instrumental, the sonic, and the structural. This thesis draws on broad aspects of musical, literary, and philosophical theory, and applies these to critical readings of examples of literature.

Chapter one explores the shared creative and compositional processes of writing music and literature. It looks at how creativity manifests in the art of writers and composers and whether such a connection can have an impact on how audiences engage with such work. This chapter also reflects on the relationship artists share with their tool of artistic production, particularly how this relationship is presented in the work of Wallace Stevens.

Chapter two considers the use of sound in theatre, suggesting that one may interpret its presence as forming part of a broader semiotic system. Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is presented as a primary example of how trumpets can be used on – and off – stage to convey action, and meaning, without dialogue.

Chapter three probes the fundamental connections between musical structure and literary form. It looks at the historical conceptions of both media and maps how a shared heritage can lead to a mutually productive relationship between distinct forms. It offers perspectives on how considerations of musical structure may be effectively employed in critical readings of literature, particularly in the poetry of Grace Hazard Conkling and the prose of Angela Carter.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to demonstrate how one may use the musical invocations of a literary work to produce a reading which challenges existing scholarship or lays the foundations for an innovative interpretation of the text.

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Table of Figures.....	ix
Introduction – A Fusion of the Muses	1
Overture	1
Part I: Programme	5
Part II: Prolegomenon – a comparison of the arts and literature review	12
Chapter One – The Keys to Creativity: Typing and Playing in the Work of Wallace Stevens.....	47
A Prelude to Poetry and Playing	47
1.1 – The Poet Stevens	49
1.2 – Sense and Spirit	52
1.3 – Romantic (and Imaginary) Music/Creativity	61
1.4 – Typing the Music of Poetry	79
1.5 – Peter Quince, Musically Misunderstood	112
Conclusion.....	125
Chapter Two – Trumpets and False Alarums: The Sound, the Symbol, and the Unseen in Shakespeare's <i>Troilus and Cressida</i>	128
Prelude	128
2.1 – The Sound of Shakespeare	131
2.2 – Received loudly, but not clearly	133
2.3 – Heard but Unseen	141
2.4 – Sign(ed), Sealed, and Delivered	152
2.5 – Cymbals/Symbols.....	154
2.6 – Words, Words, Mere Words: Beyond Semiotics	166
Conclusion.....	170
Chapter Three – Scores and Stories: The Use of Musical Structure in Literary Form	172
Deoxyribonucleic acid jazz	172
3.1 – Overture: Against the Grain	173
3.2 – Variations on (a) Form	178
3.3 – Conkling's Sym-phoney Poetry	194
3.4 – Prose and Considerations thereof	236
Conclusion.....	266
Conclusion and Coda	268
Conclusion.....	268
Coda.....	272
4.1 – Clinching	272
4.2 – Louise Bogan – Musical Melting-pot.....	273
4.3 – Musical nomenclature	275
4.4 – Song for a Slight Voice	277
A Final Note	284
Bibliography	287

Table of Figures

Fig. 1 – Calvin Brown's Diagram mapping art's path from creation to reception.....	37
Fig. 2 – A cross-section of a typewriter's mechanical action.	94
Fig. 3 – A cross-section of a pianoforte's mechanical action.	95
Fig. 4 – A cross-section of a harpsichord's mechanical operation.	95
Fig. 5 – A cross-section of a clavichord's mechanical operation.	96
Fig. 6 – An Illustration of William Church's Patent Design for a type-setter.	100
Fig. 7 – Iser's diagram of signification and interpretation.....	157
Fig. 8 – Lines and concords in Puttenham's text.	185
Fig. 9 – Examples of 'proportion in figure' from Puttenham's text.	187
Fig. 10 – Steele's 'Peculiar Symbols' annotating an example of prosody.....	202
Fig. 11 – Steele's 'Peculiar Symbols' and their meaning.	203
Fig. 12 – Steele's 'Peculiar Symbols' annotating Garrick's performance as Hamlet.	203
Fig. 13 – Say's use of musical notes for poetic feet.....	204
Fig. 14 – A chart outlining the structure and musical elements of Carter's 'the Bloody Chamber'.....	256
Fig. 15 – A Venn Diagram Illustrating the Shared Musical Invocations in the Work of Louise Bogan.	276

Note: This thesis contains several examples of musical score throughout – these have been treated as text quotations would be, rather than as figures or images, unless otherwise stated.

Introduction – A Fusion of the Muses

Overture

Music and literature are often considered distinct art forms. There are, however, times where the two are combined in a single work. This thesis argues that invocations of music in literature can be used to produce innovative ways of reading a text. Namely, that we can use the tools of artistic creativity to explore the connection between playing, typing, music, and literature; that the sonic can be used to develop and enhance an additional semiotic layer to a literary text; and, that musical structure can form a fundamental element of a work of poetry or prose. My work will demonstrate how, through acknowledging and analysing the musical aspects of a literary composition, one can attain a more nuanced interpretation of that literary work. By this I mean that, rather than engaging with instruments and musical references in a literary text as symbols of something else, it treats them as signals of a wider musicality in the work – one that we can use to better understand its structural and sonic elements. It will explore the synergetic relationship between music and literature, particularly how the former may be invoked in the latter and, subsequently, how such manifestations can be used to better read – and inform our understanding of – a text, beyond what is merely written.

The outcomes of this work will contribute to an analytical process for using the musical elements present in a literary text, whether in an overt or latent sense, to produce new ways of reading the material. In exploring the relationship between music and literature, and how they may synergistically manifest in a text, this thesis represents a clear contribution to the field of musico-literary analysis. As a result, this work draws music theory into dialogue with literary theory and thus enhances our understanding of how, and why, a text may engage with musical elements such as harmony, structure,

musical style, melodic rhythm, and references to instruments and the sounds they make. Drawing on these musical elements, in a literary reading, allows us to identify common features between the two ostensibly different forms of music and literature, that often transcend the individual works being discussed. Thus, the case studies that form the focus of this thesis not only produce new readings of specific texts, they demonstrate approaches – specifically in terms of the sonic, the structural, and the instrumental – that could be replicated in the analysis of other works.

Throughout this thesis, I will show how one can use three different types of musical invocation to produce a new reading of a text or, indeed, challenge an existing interpretation of a work of literature.

There are myriad ways in which music can feature in works of literature; in this thesis I have divided the relationship between the two forms into three main groups which represent the broadest ways in which music may be invoked in literature. These invocations are as follows:

The sonic; invocations which pertain to the aural, oral, or sound more generally.

The instrumental; a connection which relates to, and invokes, instruments or tools of musical production.

The structural; an invocation in which a work of literature engages with musical structure – be that in form, content, or both.

These categories have been established to allow the explorations of this project to cover as broad a range of the synergies of music and literature as feasible. It also means it is easier to identify the ways in which a work of literature is engaging with, or invoking, particular aspects of music. Each of them allows for rich philosophical and critical

Introduction

reflection at the level of the text while also accommodating detailed analysis at a much smaller scale, at the level of the line and the word.

Naturally, there are instances of musical invocation that simultaneously engage in more than one of the categories outlined above. Nevertheless, making a distinction between the different ways literature may call upon elements of music is to the benefit of this thesis; even if a text's relationship with music occupies more than one of the invocational groupings above, the categories allow for more straightforward analytical conclusions to be drawn and offer parity when considering the relationship between music and literature across numerous examples.

There is an academic precedent for dividing music's relationship with writing into different groups along the same spectrum. For example, Calvin Brown, in his seminal work *Music and Literature*, views the relationship between music and literature as a collaborative one: In his introduction, he divides the book into four main discursive sections; in the first (chapters 1-4), he outlines 'the elements which music and literature have in common'; in the second (chapters 5-8), he considers how the two come together in vocal music; in the third section (chapters 9-17), he discusses the influence of music on literature and 'the attempts of writers to model their work on musical compositions'; and, in the fourth (chapters 18-22), he muses on 'the effects of literature on music', with a particular focus on program music.¹

One may note a correlation between the thematic groupings of Brown's chapters and the invocations I have outlined for the enquiries of this thesis; it is reasonable to suggest that section two of Brown's work engages with the sonic while his last two sections are occupied with the structural. Thus, the invocations I have established for the

¹ Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature* (Athens (GA): University of Georgia Press, 1948), p. xi.

explorations of this thesis follow a general historical pattern for writing about musicality in literature. Examples of how others have interpreted the ways music and literature intertwine will be explored later in this introduction.

It is in relation to the instrument that my thesis makes the most substantial contribution to the scholarly corpus. Where previous scholarship in this field has tended to look at music and literature from a sonic and structural perspective, my thesis develops a theoretical framework for a third category – the instrumental. My use of the instrumental throughout this thesis allows me to consider the way authors may signal the musicality of their texts, and engage in broader debates about artistic creativity, which are typically outside the scope of existing studies. The structure of my thesis reflects the fundamental position of the instrumental; this invocation of music is explored first, allowing it to be used as a point of reference when discussing the sonic and the structural in the subsequent chapters.

Establishing these invocations both identifies the core areas of enquiry and indicates the overall structure of the thesis. This work is organised into three main chapters, each considering a different type of musical invocation. These chapters, in turn, are largely divided into two sections: a first which establishes previous scholarship and critical perspectives on the nature of the invocation in question, and a second to explore such invocation in relation to an example of literature. Thus, each chapter negotiates a discourse between context and case study in order to demonstrate the degree to which each different aspect of musical invocation manifests in literature. Additionally, the main body of the thesis is preceded by an introductory chapter and followed by a concluding coda.

Introduction

As the ‘programme’ section (below) will detail, this thesis addresses a wide range of texts. The literary works examined in the chapters ahead are diverse in form and broad in historical span. They have been included because although they have received prior scholarly attention in terms of musico-literary analysis, there are notable shortcomings which my work seeks to rectify. Equally, some texts have been chosen because they help demonstrate how one particular type of musical invocation may look, while others help challenge previous critical positions within the academy. While the primary materials have been selected on the basis of their own merits, they collectively contribute to the ambitious scope of the overall project; it is beneficial for the argument of this thesis that the use of musical invocation as a critical tool can be illustrated by examples from each major literary form – poetry, prose, and drama. Much like the rationale behind the development and delineation of the project’s three focal invocations, the motivation for such a diverse selection of texts is to offer the reader a comprehensive investigation of the numerous ways music is manifest in literature. Again, previous academic efforts will be explored later in this introductory chapter and will continue to illuminate the motivations behind the range of texts discussed within this thesis.

Part I: Programme

This introductory chapter not only aims to outline the organisational shape of the thesis, but also to establish a picture of the scholarly environment in which its work is immersed. It is formed of two parts: The first serves to present a programme of this thesis’s content; the second – which includes a literature review – will introduce the reader to a number of similar academic projects that share the interests of this project; it will also expand on some broad theoretic drives that can provide the thesis with important foundational context. I will compare a number of different texts that deal with simultaneous ideas of

music and literature while outlining the suitability of each text in relation to my own methodology and critical perspective. As a result, this literature review will be comprised of works that have directly influenced this research project and those that have provided more cautionary indications of how the project should – and should not – be conducted.

Following these opening sections, chapter one of the thesis will explore the compositional practices of both literature and music. It will also probe the nature of creativity and show how the two art forms share a genesis in their embryonic relationships with the artist. The chapter will look at what it means to press the keys of keyboard – be that of a typewriter or of a piano. Fittingly, the literal processes of writing music and literature become the starting point for the investigations of this thesis.

The opening lines of Wallace Stevens's 1915 poem 'Peter Quince at the Clavier' read 'Just as my fingers on these keys / Make music, so the self-same sounds / On my spirit make a music, too'.² It is perhaps this phrase that best frames the tone of the opening chapter. It is the pressing of keys, to paraphrase Heidegger's work on typewriters, which transfers the origin of an act's essence – in this case writing, or playing – from the hand to a machine.³ With Heidegger's position used to approach the connection between writing – in a contemporary sense – and playing, I consider how these ideas are framed in Wallace Stevens's work and address the implications such perspectives have for the creative process more generally. The clavier itself is ripe for a comparison of this Heideggerian nature, too, as Quince's instrument operates almost

² Wallace Stevens, 'Peter Quince at the Clavier', in *Harmonium* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp. 112-114, p. 112.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), p.80.

Introduction

identically to a harp, or a lyre, in that the strings are plucked, but his fingers – in this instance – are only able to create sound through a system of keys and levers.

This chapter is also concerned with the act of composition more generally; I examine what might be responsible for the creative spark of the artistic mind and whether such creativity can be considered a universal faculty tapped into, or drawn upon, by practitioners of music and poetry. There is also a discussion about what grounds there may be for aligning notions of the mind and the spirit with those of the brain and the body. Thus, consideration is given to when the physical world may cease to provide the answers for such discussions. The limits of language are a frequent theme throughout this thesis, but this chapter, in particular, is also eager to explore the limits of creative imagination.

Chapter two moves its focus to a different invocation of music in literature – the sonic. The most pertinent case employed for exploration is the use of the sonic in dramatic texts. Here, the use of sound and music is regarded as an extension of modes of – what are traditionally regarded as – language. Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1602) provides this project with an appropriate location for exploring how music and sound can be used to establish a non-verbal, but still aural, linguistic system. Subsequently, the second chapter of this thesis looks at how Shakespeare's use of trumpet signals creates a semiotic system beyond the use of traditional dialogue. The employment of trumpets is identified as a source of musical-to-physical semiotic interchange, one that offers up off-stage – and unseen – actions for interpretation. As a result, this chapter's exploration of semiotic discourse engages with the 'sound as symbol' paradigm. To help ground my discussion, and to aid in illustrating the connection between musicality and physicality I draw in *Troilus and Cressida*, I employ an example from opera. Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (c.1688) is used to

contextualise the use of sonic signals in a medium where such operations are more typically expected.

Additionally, the chapter calls on a number of Shakespeare's other works, namely *Macbeth* (c.1610) and *Hamlet* (c.1602). The 'knocking at the gate' scene in *Macbeth* is highlighted as further example – when considered alongside the use of trumpets in *Troilus and Cressida* – of semiotic discourse that explores the liminal territories between sound and space. Drew Daniel's notion of 'perceptual communities' is used to talk about how various characters are able to interpret the same sound differently and the effect this then has on the audience. The fundamental question being explored in this chapter is one that is asked of non-verbal language: are sounds and music fit for communication in literature? The limitation of the linguistic form has long been the subject of intense discussion. Indeed, as Ludwig Wittgenstein puts it, 'The limits of my language means the limits of my world'.⁴ I propose that music may alleviate language of its usual boundaries and grant the opportunity to enhance a text's potential for interpretation; not necessarily through any conscious decision on behalf of the author or playwright, but by virtue of the fundamental link between the two art forms. That is not to say literature considered without music is redundant, but simply that reading literature with the nuances of musical composition in mind may provide the basis for a deeper level of interpretation. The position suggested by this thesis is that by considering the connections between writing and musical composition – from both the perspective of the audience and the artist – one may gain a greater understanding of both. Subsequently, this project engages with – and contributes to – critical frameworks which

⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), §5.6, p. 88.

Introduction

one may employ to approach texts, of both musical and literary disposition, in order to produce innovative readings.

Chapters one and two, then, broach the multi-modal manner in which forms of literature can be delivered to an audience and address the impact invocations of music have on such reception; this becomes particularly evident in poetry and drama. The transition between composition and performance is a vital one – it forms the bridge between the artist and their audience. In a masterclass on Macbeth’s ‘Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow’ speech, actor Ian McKellen disparages the perspective that ‘Shakespeare’s verse is music, and all you have to find out is the tune and everything will be alright’. Instead, he suggests, ‘if you look after the sense, the sounds will look after themselves’.⁵ He elaborates this position by recalling an experience he had while sat in the audience of a performance of Beethoven’s late sonatas by pianist Maurizio Pollini. McKellen tells his own audience that ‘for five miraculous seconds, he didn’t know whether [Pollini] was putting the music into the piano, or whether he was taking it out of the piano’. Finally, he suggests that ‘acting at its best, of Shakespeare, is of that nature’, and that ‘the actor is the playwright and the character simultaneously’.⁶ Indeed, composition, performance, and reception – in terms of a text – are significant positions for the explorations of this thesis; reference to the value and relevance of these perspectives will be made throughout.

The third and final chapter of the main body of this thesis will explore the close connection between musical and literary structures. I will show how the formulation of

⁵ BBC, c.1979, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGbZCgHQ9m8>>, [00:00:09-00:00:30], [Accessed on 06/06/2012].

⁶ Ibid, [00:00:40-00:00:50]. Such a perspective also draws some similarity with Roland Barthes’s suggestion that there are *two* musics. The first, he proposes, is the music one listens to, the other, the music one plays. The distinction between playing and listening reiterates the vital role played by the performer and the audience, and then – by extension – the composer: Roland Barthes, ‘Musica Practica’, in *Image – Music – Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 149-164, p. 149.

literary forms – most prominently within poetry – emerged from the same compositional processes as music. I will also demonstrate how – by considering the structures of music – one can gain a new perspective on the structures of literary narratives.

One recurring result of the theoretical approaches and textual examples I explore in this thesis is the blurred distinction between form and content in literature, and, fittingly, chapter three presents an exploration of ostensibly non-musical forms that operate in a musical manner. The central focus of this chapter will be on the poetry of Grace Hazard Conkling, but it will also feature the short fiction work of Angela Carter, primarily that of the titular story from her 1979 collection *The Bloody Chamber*. Drawing on the two writers' apparent preoccupation with the musical, this chapter explores how the nature and form of music spills over into the very form of text employed to invoke it.

In a stoic exploration of the two forms, music and language, Iain McGilchrist suggests that 'music and language have a shared architecture'.⁷ He posits that both are built out of 'intonational phrases related by a kind of syntax'. However, he remarks, the syntax of music 'has more to do with the overall shape of the whole piece over many minutes', whereas language is more about 'the specific relationship of rapidly successive elements in a linear progression'.⁸ McGilchrist's efforts represent an attempt to address the connection between music and language at their most fundamental level; in this way, such deep-level investigation is similar to that which this thesis will extend to literature.

⁷ Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 102.

⁸ McGilchrist, p. 102.

Introduction

In Conkling's work, poetry is seemingly structured with specific musical forms in mind. In her 1912 poem 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden', she lays out each stanza as a musical movement, with a key and style suggested – A minor *allegretto*, for instance – for the reader to consider in performance. The musical ambition of this poem provides an opportunity to explore how literary scansion and musical score can be used in tandem to map the structural correlation between two forms.

Carter's protagonist in her collection's eponymous short story 'The Bloody Chamber' spends her free time playing pieces from J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. By comparing the development of both 'The Bloody Chamber' and examples from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, one can begin to see similarities emerge between the structure of Carter's plot and the structure of the music her character plays. The musical term 'counterpoint' provides a context in which one can read Carter's text in a way that more closely resembles compositional analysis. Where music requires counterpoint to unfold through separate voices and tones, literature – and Carter specifically – explores the idea through distinct and interweaving narrative threads and character oppositions.

Much like the work of chapter two, chapter three draws on the similarities between structures of literature and music at a fundamental level. This section will bring together Renaissance conceptions of the connection between the universe and art, with contemporary interpretations of how literary form may be seen to invoke musical structures. The additional reflection on Carter's work also allows us to not only consider the formal relationships between literature and music, but the shared structural roots of poetry and prose.

Finally, the closing sections of the thesis are comprised not only of a concluding precis underscoring the key outcomes of each chapter, but a coda which is both summative and demonstrative of the work undertaken throughout this project; namely,

a combined reading of the invocations explored independently throughout the thesis. It also suggests the potential for future research and suggests a body of work that might be receptive to an analysis in the same vein as this thesis; the poetry of Louise Bogan is offered as a location of instrumental, sonic, and structural invocations of music in literature. The purpose of this postscript case study is to highlight what future research in this field may look like, the forms it may take, and the contribution it can make to the critical practices of the academy. It does not necessarily suggest a new synergy between all three invocations but highlights the ways in which one may apply the invocational threads of thesis, singularly or in combination, to a text; thus, it underscores the critical value of considering the three invocations of music in literature.

Thus, this thesis embarks on an exercise to map the interweaving natures of music and literature, from the processes of their creation, to their reception by an audience, and everything else in between. The historical scope and formal breadth of this project oversees a journey from the Renaissance to the modern day, while acknowledging a wide range of both musical and literary forms. William Shakespeare is considered against Henry Purcell; Wallace Stevens's work is explored in tandem with the compositional practices of pianists; Grace Conkling is read alongside the music of Beethoven; and the prose of Angela Carter alongside Bach. There is, of course, a daunting diversity to the work carried out in this thesis, but to pursue such a project one must allow oneself to be immersed in the vibrant and protean landscape that art leaves in its wake. The ambition of this undertaking is anchored in the – apparently natural – disposition of art to occupy as much of human attention as possible.

Part II: Prolegomenon – a comparison of the arts and literature review

II (a) – Calvin Brown

When musing on the nature of enquiry into the shared connections between music and literature, or in the case of this thesis, ‘invocations’ of music in literature, one will find the most productive first step they can take is toward the work of Calvin S. Brown. In Brown’s introduction to a special issue of *Comparative Literature*, which he also edited, he remarks that ‘as soon as the arts of music and literature began to draw apart, the possibility of one’s influencing the other arose’.⁹ It is perhaps this statement that typifies the inquisitive drive of both his work and my thesis. It acknowledges two key principles explored throughout this project; firstly, that music and literature share much in their original/evolutionary development; secondly, and concomitant to the first, that the two forms – though distinct – can inform each other.

Brown spends much of this essay mapping out the historical journeys taken by music and literature which weave them closer and further apart, before their combination ‘in a single work’ becomes viewed a potentially problematic.¹⁰ Later, in a contribution to *National Forum*, which expands upon the ideas from the excerpt above, he attempts to place the work examining the relationship between music and literature as a critical field in line with other empirical endeavours:

I believe that the future lies with the combiners rather than the fragmenters. Human beings have always vaguely sensed what Conrad Aiken calls ‘the miracle of interconnectedness’, and even in ancient times mathematicians systemically sought to reveal and understand it. Since then, thought has tended increasingly to relate concrete facts to each other in an ever wider range of relationships, and thus to synthesize general principles. The recent rise of ecology as a recognized branch of biology shows this principle still at work. The increasing study of the relationships of music and literature is

⁹ Calvin Brown, ‘The Relations Between Music and Literature as a Field of Study’ in *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Special Issue on Music and Literature (Spring, 1970), pp. 97-107, p. 97.

¹⁰ Brown, ‘The Relations Between Music and Literature as a Field of Study’, p. 102.

a similar development. Unlike the study of ecology, it will not help us to understand the external world, but it can help us to understand the human mind and some of its greatest creations.¹¹

These thoughts from Brown are made in the wake of a career spent in contemplation of the ‘interconnectedness’ of music and literature, most notably in his 1948 monograph *Music and Literature*. Laid out in this volume are perhaps the first contemporary attempts at a comprehensive comparison of the two art forms. Although the text already presents a broad and thoughtful study, its own author suggests it is merely the start of such endeavours; Brown’s hopeful preface opens with prophetic flourish:

This book was written with the hope that it might open up a field of thought which has not yet been systemically explored. Though various articles and books have dealt separately with many of the problems here brought together, there has been no survey of the entire field. This book attempts to supply such a survey.¹²

The success of Brown’s ‘attempt’ is evidenced by those subsequent works which directly acknowledged the work of *Music and Literature*, particularly in the offerings of The International Association of Words and Music, which dedicated their second edited volume in memoriam to the man.¹³ However, his declaration is made with some tentativeness, as Brown goes on to qualify:

The desire to make it both interesting to the amateur and useful to the scholar has inevitably led to some compromises. I have frequently found it necessary to generalize on the basis of evidence which could not be presented in detail, and occasionally I may even have generalized on the basis of insufficient evidence. The fragmentary and scattered condition of work in this field has sometimes made such a practice unavoidable. The

¹¹ Calvin Brown, ‘Literature and Music: A Developing Field of Study’ in *National Forum: The Phi Kappa Phi Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1980), pp. 28-29.

¹² Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature* (Athens (GA): University of Georgia Press, 1948), p. xi.

¹³ *Word and Music Studies: Musico-poetics in Perspectives – Calvin S. Brown in Memoriam*, ed. by Jean-Louis Cupers and Ulrich Weisstein (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000).

Introduction

general reader is hereby authorized to insert such qualifying expressions as *perhaps, probably, in general, to the best of my knowledge, and in my opinion* where he sees fit. The scholarly reader, on the other hand, is invited to confirm or disprove, by further studies, statements which he considers questionable.¹⁴

‘If he can be led to do this,’ Brown adds, ‘one of the main purposes of this book will have been achieved’.¹⁵ Thus, it seems that although my thesis was not intended to be such, it has become something of an addendum to the work done by Calvin Brown; much of the work in the thesis is frequently framed in reference to the perspectives offered in *Music and Literature* and has subsequently taken up the gauntlet thrown down by its author. Indeed, I return to look at the praxis of *Music and Literature* later in this opening chapter, but it is for these reasons above that so much attention has been paid to introductory elements of Brown’s work in my own introduction.

II (b) – Literature/Music : Music/Literature

The creative and constructive relationship between the art forms of literature and music can be viewed in manifold ways; these perspectives can be grouped into methodologically aligned categories. When determining – from a critical perspective – which of these is most appropriate for this thesis, we can draw from a number of established classifications formulated by musico-literary scholars such as Steven Scher and Werner Wolf.¹⁶ Wolf’s 1999 monograph *The Musicalization of Fiction* opens with a fresh approach to Scher’s three ‘general forms in which music and literature may

¹⁴ Brown, p. xi.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. xi.

¹⁶ cf. Steven Scher, *Literatur und Musik : ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes* (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1984), p. 14.

appear in one artefact'.¹⁷ The three categories are outlined as 'music **and** literature', 'music **in** literature', and 'literature **in** music'. Wolf summarises them thus:

One may differentiate between [the categories]: the form of a 'mixture' of music **and** literature (as in opera), and two forms which seem unmixed on surface: one in which literature is present **in** (expressed through, or turned into) music (as in the case of programme music), and one, the reverse case, in which music appears **in** literature (is expressed through, or 'translated' into, this medium).¹⁸

I find the content of Wolf's parentheses particularly germane to the conversations of my thesis. Not only do they help indicate some of the forms that are explored in this project, they also highlight how such artistic endeavours engage with ideas of translation, which becomes a consistent theme throughout the thesis.

I would also tentatively suggest the possibility of two further categories: music **of** literature and literature **of** music. These last two classifications are concerned purely with form. To write literature of music is to resign yourself wholly to the written form in a bid to represent that which is musical in a mode that is purely literary; yet, to broach the idea of the music **of** literature is to understand a fundamental convergence of the two arts and to suggest that the text in itself is musical. These two categories, then, are not simply the inverse of each other. Rather, one is concerned with the isolation of form – the other, with integration. Arguably, one may be satisfied that the criteria of Scher's categories already cover the various machinations that my two suggested categories would engender, but I offer them nonetheless.

¹⁷ Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p. 6.

¹⁸ Wolf, pp. 6-7 (Wolf's emphasis).

Introduction

It is important to clarify that not all of these categories feature in the investigations of my project: for example, there is no consideration of literature in music. Rather, the work ahead is concerned with how music is present in literature, both as a feature of its content and as an influence on its form. Similarly, when attempting to set out the nature of the work of this thesis, attention turns to back to Wolf's volume and the exploration of what he calls 'intermediality'. Intermediality, Wolf outlines, is the 'participation of more than one medium of expression in the signification of a human artefact'.¹⁹ This term arrives as a useful delineation of the discourse I wish to further manifest between music and literature. Wolf's position also appears to support this project's ambition to distinguish between various degrees of music's involvement with both literature and the practice of writing. Wolf's work conveys a pragmatic tone, one occupied with empirical explorations of art; he states that the relations that forge intermediality 'consist in a verifiable, or at least convincingly identifiable, direct or indirect participation of two or more media.'²⁰ The idea that intermediality – as both a characteristic and an operation – should be demonstrable, reinforces the following thesis's attempts to illustrate the interweaving connections between literature and music through the highlighting of specific examples.²¹

Musicologist Laurence Kramer, in his article 'Dangerous Liaisons' (1989), outlines the follies of previous attempts to forcibly combine the studies of literature and music. He cites Jordan and Kafalenos's article 'The Double Trajectory' as a test case for assessing the efficacy of 'tandem reading'.²² Kramer contends that the work undertaken in 'The Double Trajectory' is far too concerned with cementing the authors' perspectives

¹⁹ Wolf, p. 1.

²⁰ Wolf, p. 37.

²¹ Ibid, p. 37.

²² Lawrence Kramer, 'Dangerous Liaisons: The Literary Text in Musical Criticism', in *19th Century Music*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 159-167, p. 159.

as the only reading of the subject material.²³ He suggests that ‘melopoetics’ – as a way of approaching musical criticism – should not be ‘something extra’, added as an afterthought to a critical reading, but the ‘primary motive’ behind such criticism.²⁴ As a result, the conclusions of ‘The Double Trajectory’ are roughly thrust upon the texts, rather than drawn out through more considered means. One important observation Kramer makes in his analysis of Jordan and Kafalenos’s work is that ‘tandem readings of literary and musical works must stake their claims on deep-structural convergences *whether or not* manifest analogies are involved’.²⁵ This position is one that again reflects the work carried out by McGilchrist in attempting to understand music and language at the most embryonic states. Further to this, it helps contextualise the scope and perspective of my own thesis; by avoiding what Kramer identifies as flaws in the work of ‘The Double Trajectory’, my methodology can aim to be a more successful attempt to understand the intermediality of music and literature.

II (c) – Literature Review

There are number of publications that share my thesis’s interest in the connections between music and literature. Many of them share a critical approach, or a structural similarity. Most, however, remain focussed on one particular aspect of the relationship between the art forms. Naturally, there are numerous different ways one can write about the nexus of music and literature, many of which fit into the categories outlined above. In the interest of exposing the readers of this thesis to other examples of musico-literary

²³ Kramer, p. 160.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 167.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 161.

Introduction

endeavours, I will detail below the arguments presented in several contemporary and historical works; some are similar in style and approach to this thesis, others are markedly different. All of the texts considered below are examples of non-fiction, as, generally speaking, any works of fiction concerning music and literature of interest to this project are instead employed in the main body of this thesis as the locations of demonstrable musicality. I will begin by looking at examples that illustrate how texts may operate within the remit of ‘music *and* literature’, with the two forms being considered distinct entities, before plotting the amendments to such an approach – as demonstrated by other texts – one would make in order to transition to a more harmonised consideration of the two forms. As a result, the works included below tend incrementally toward the mode of musico-literary exploration offered by my own thesis.

While there are numerous texts which share the same praxis as those in the sample below, I have limited the number included as a result of this similarity: it is more important to outline, in detail, as broad a range of methodologies as feasible. Essentially, I want to establish the different and diverse ways one can write about the connection between music and literature. Discussing the approach of each publication and the relevant merits to this project should serve to not only broaden the critical scope of my own work, but also address where my thesis locates itself in relation to similar efforts.

Music *and* Literature

Paul Phillips’s 2010 monograph, *A Clockwork Counterpoint*, explores the music and literature of Anthony Burgess. It is arranged, generally, in chronological order, and maps out Burgess’s life through his inspirational experiences and own creative output. It opens with notes and a foreword – which is fairly standard practice – then an introduction follows – again, nothing particularly surprising – but, bizarrely, we are then provided a prologue and two further sections on ‘Beginnings’ and ‘Emergence’, before the main

body of the volume is underway. It is a book of several starts, which is likely in aspirational imitation of Burgess's own playful style.

Philips's work is undeniably thorough and provides extensive information regarding Burgess's catalogue of both published and unpublished work. In its very essence, however, *A Clockwork Counterpoint* is a biographical study of a man whose profession led him to both musical and literary output. Thus, the book fits squarely into the category of 'music **and** literature' but does disappointingly little to explore how Burgess's creativity in both art forms was the result of anything other than two distinct interests. There are two or three chapters within the book, out of thirty-four, which teasingly hint at a union between the forms in Burgess's work, but Phillips opts instead to simply acknowledge the existence of such works, rather than analyse the creative process involved in their manifestation.

Perhaps the most obvious examples concern Burgess's musical treatment of the plays of Shakespeare and their cinematic equivalents. 'Back in Chiswick', Phillips writes, 'Burgess worked on the [film] script, which included song lyrics. As he wrote these, he decided to set them to music and wound up composing twenty songs, writing them in short score with indications of instrumentation in Elizabethan style'.²⁶ Rather than elaborating on this exciting musico-literary undertaking, or exploring the compositional process in practice and the resulting creative decisions taken by Burgess, Phillips moves on to other biographical developments that had occurred around the same time.

²⁶ Paul Phillips, *A Clockwork Counterpoint* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 110.

Introduction

The film project was ultimately cancelled, which Burgess found a relief, and although Phillips points out that none of the music Burgess had composed was wasted, the reader is not enlightened as to what becomes of it in much detail. As a result, a rather fascinating quilting point between literature and music is left, rather unsatisfyingly, slightly neglected.

There is one brief chapter that bucks this trend; chapter 16, 'Bonaparte con Brio', presents the text's most detailed attempt to truly investigate the connection between music and literature *within* Burgess's work, not simply as different aspects of his body of work. In fact, Phillips's work in this chapter ends up compounding the disappointing divide throughout the rest of the book. Musing upon how different sections of the *Napoleon Symphony* represent the corresponding movements of Beethoven's third, *Eroica*, symphony, Phillips illustrates that Burgess aimed to model 'the form and character' of the novel on music.²⁷ There is, however, simply not enough of this kind of work throughout the rest of the volume.

Phillips's book is certainly one for fans of Burgess, music, or literature, and obviously all three, but for those who are hoping to learn about the connection between each element, they will find Burgess the only common denominator. So, although *A Clockwork Counterpoint* does in many ways satisfy Scher's remit for a study of 'music **and** literature', it fails to explore the extent of the connection between the two or apply analysis to the result of this relationship. The text in question is not about the forms of literature and music; it is about the work of Anthony Burgess, which just so happened to be in the fields of both music and literature.

²⁷ Phillips, p. 4 and pp. 158-165.

My thesis is not overly concerned with such biographical perspectives but it is interested in those figures of literature that also occupy the spaces of the critic and the composer. However, unlike Phillips's approach, I do not consider the musical and literary outputs of an artist as discrete and distinct endeavours. Rather, I explore works of literature that can be read with a musical perspective. *A Clockwork Counterpoint* does reveal intriguing elements of compositional intention; Burgess's desire, for example, to design the music for a Shakespeare screenplay so that it evokes the historical context of the original dramatic setting shows how form can be used to convey meaning without overtly relying on content.

Similarly to Phillips's work, *Larkin's Jazz* brings together ideas of music and literature in their respective connections to a single individual. Unlike *A Clockwork Counterpoint*, however, this volume is not a biographical account of Philip Larkin's relationship with music and literature, nor does it simply catalogue his various works on the matter. Instead, *Larkin's Jazz* is an edited collection of his writings on jazz, be that in the form of essay, review, letter, or report. Yet, despite the clear opportunity for investigating how music and literature are jointly explored within his oeuvre, it reveals a curious division between the two forms. Other than an off-hand citation of Larkin as 'one of the most distinguished British writers of the twentieth century', there is very little acknowledgement of Larkin's literary output in either the works included or the accompanying notes and editorial material.

Richard Palmer and John White's introduction to the collection, however, does touch briefly on the regard in which Larkin held himself as a reviewer of music; loosely engaging, too, with his own thoughts on the differences between writing about music and literature. The opening of their introduction is mostly formed of Larkin's own

Introduction

foreword from 1983's *Required Writing*, another collection of prose – this time focussed on literature. In it, Larkin draws attention to the correlation between a person becoming established as a competent writer and the simultaneous expectation – correct or otherwise – that they will be equally competent at assessing the work of other writers.²⁸ One can infer, then, that Larkin – as a jazz critic – expects the same assumption to be paid his musical credentials, or apparent absence thereof, and that his lack of ‘established competence’ as a musician would lead to expectations of less competent assessments of a musician’s work.

Despite Larkin’s foremost reputation as a poet, there is very little mention of this or any real discussions about how the two artistic forms – of jazz and poetry – may complement each other in his work; it is clear that any potential of inter-disciplinary focus has been circumvented in favour of drawing attention to a perhaps lesser-known facet of Larkin’s work. Indeed, *Larkin’s Jazz* seems quite content to remind readers that Larkin once claimed he could ‘live a week without poetry but not a day without jazz’.²⁹ Such sentiment unabashedly permeates the whole volume.

Unfortunately, in *Larkin’s Jazz*, there is little attempt to address the connections between music and literature; this is simply a collection of works, about music, by a predominately literary writer. In contrast to this approach, my thesis diminishes the distinction between the poet as writer and the poet as critic: the first chapter, for example, employs Wallace Stevens as not only the provider of examples of musical invocation, but also the proprietor of poetic theory. In this respect, Stevens’s oeuvre is employed two-fold: firstly, to establish how one may approach the classifications of creativity, and

²⁸ *Larkin’s Jazz*, ed. by Richard Palmer and John White (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 1.

²⁹ J. Horder, ‘Poet on the 8:15’ (*The Guardian*, 20th May 1965), p. 9.

secondly as a testing ground for such propositions. Unlike the poet and critic Larkin in *Larkin's Jazz*, the poetic and critical Stevens is presented as a unified character.

Moving away from rigid considerations of music and literature as distinct forms allows us to explore other ways scholarly texts may respond to formulations of 'music and literature'. The composer Peter Dickinson's collected critical writings, for example, were published in 2016 to commemorate his 80th birthday: the resultant volume, *Words and Music*, features articles, letters, and essays on varying subjects.³⁰ The most substantial section is devoted to, as one would imagine, 'Writings on Music' and includes reviews of performances, musings on contemporary musical styles, and – most interestingly – critical treatises on musical forms and specific compositional techniques. This situates Dickinson's book within the 'writing about music' category. The fifth section of the text, however, is titled 'Literary Connections' and boasts writings on Emily Dickinson, T. S. Eliot, Auden, and Larkin; here the distinction become a little less straightforward.

Unlike Phillips's book, which seems only to catalogue Burgess's writings on music and work rather indiscriminately and often without comment, Dickinson's compendium not only provides a generous selection of writings on broad-ranging aspects of music, but many pieces are revisited with amendments and retrospective reflections. What Dickinson can offer us, of course, is the direct perspective of the composer; something which is not available from Phillips. As a result, the work of *Words and Music* already takes place in the intellectual spirit of criticism and analysis. Much of the work included in this fifth section directly addresses the musical connections

³⁰ Peter Dickinson, *Words and Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016).

Introduction

between the literary figures noted above, and music. However, again unlike *A Clockwork Counterpoint*, the focus of each chapter is only loosely biographical; they focus, instead, on the relationship between music and literature and how the two forms are treated in relation to the works of each writer respectively. The chapters on Auden and Larkin are comprised of interviews and letter correspondences, and touch on how both poets considered – or did not consider – the role of music in their poetic work; in Larkin's case it is revealed that Dickinson was responsible for coining the term 'Larkin's Jazz', which, as mentioned above, is employed as the title of a volume wherein the poet Larkin and the musically-minded Larkin are kept disappointingly separate.³¹ Discounting these two chapters, and a third which is an adapted transcription of a radio tribute given for Ruth Pitter, the rest of the section looks more closely at the artistic symmetry between music and poetry. This includes, but is not limited to, the various ways poetry can be set to music, the ways that poetry itself becomes musical, and the artistic collaboration of musicians and poets. As a result, Dickinson's text provides the reader with enlightening commentary on the act of composition; often, and most significantly, these compositional processes include the creative reconciliation between the forms of music and literature.

Dickinson's acknowledgement that 'setting poetry to music' is not an arbitrary action – of simply applying melody to lyric – is a key one, and he recognises that, even in a glib sense, there is a difference between such an undertaking and the attempt to create a 'musical counterpart' to poetry.³² He reflects upon and, in some cases,

³¹ Dickinson also indicates why such separation (between musical/poetic Larkin) may be common; he states that Larkin 'was extremely cautious' about any of his poetry being set to music, perhaps revealing why Larkin himself rarely blurred the boundary between the two forms. Dickinson, p. 216.

³² Ibid, p. 178.

retroactively defends the compositional choices he has made when setting poetry to music.

This occurs not only in relation to Dickinson's own compositional work, but also in his evaluations of the works of others. For example, he observes that several composers, when arranging music to be set to the poetry of Emily Dickinson, 'construct a deliberately simple style to fit the clarity of the verse'.³³ Thus, and as will be further explored later in this thesis, artists are seen to make compositional choices in what we might view as an attempt to reconcile literary content with musical form.

Notably, in the essay 'Eliot, Stravinsky, Britten and Rawsthorne', Dickinson discusses the creative connection between Eliot and Stravinsky, and, in particular, the latter's musical tribute to the former. *Introitus: In Memoriam T.S. Eliot* was composed by Stravinsky six weeks after Eliot's death and represents one of the last connections between the composer and the writer. Dickinson muses over Stravinsky's own programme notes for the piece and observes that the accompaniment of string and percussion instruments is restricted to a male-voice range, and that

[Stravinsky] goes on to explain that he wrote the melodic lines first and that the 'four melodic versions of pitch orders are sung as a cantus firmus and in the form of a recessional, which is a small ritual the poet might have liked'. So his structural decisions were related to Eliot personally.³⁴

Dickinson reveals much about the writing process of this elegiac musical tribute and, in the final sentence, illuminates a key principle for the latter sections of my own thesis:

³³ Ibid, p. 178.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 188.

Introduction

namely, that structural elements of music can be just as significant – and literary – as their content counterparts.

Overall, Dickinson's book delivers a wealth of insight into the compositional process. This is not only valuable from the perspective of music practitioners, but in fact provides readers of poetry with new ways to consider literary works. The first chapter of this thesis, which explores the elementary connection between the principles of writing and composing, is not overtly occupied by the act of setting music to poetry, yet the work undertaken therein can be supported by Dickinson's compositional perspectives and critical work that have been briefly explored above. However, my work in chapter one differs, fundamentally, from that of Dickinson. Dickinson's music emerges after the poetry has been written, but I consider the two processes as simultaneous actions.

Chapter three of this thesis, too, revisits the idea of 'setting', but in reverse; I consider poetry that has been written in response to, or in interpretation of, a piece of music. Dickinson's and his peers' comments about structure, in reference to Stravinsky and Eliot, confirms to us the intentional decision-making behind composing – somewhat justifying the explorations of this project's third chapter.

Where Dickinson writes, in effect, about an adaptive process, it is not one necessarily concerned with translation; although setting poetry to music does involve formal decisions to be made in relation to the content of the poem, the very act of 'setting' requires the poem to be present regardless. Despite the difference in objectives, the work of Dickinson still provides useful contextual support for the rationale behind some of the critical approaches in this thesis, even if only in the acknowledgement of the principles that suggest one may take harmony and metre to be comparable elements of form.

Music in Literature

The most seismic shift in methodology occurs when we start looking at texts that occupy the ‘music in literature’ category. The work of Phyllis Weliver, for example, in her 2000 monograph *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900* examines how music can be used in novels to negotiate gendered social roles and how, subsequently, changing attitudes towards female musicians resulted in their changing representation in fiction. She also suggests that the publication of such novels itself challenged ‘anxieties’ toward ‘domestic, amateur music’.³⁵ Similarly, Delia da Sousa Correa’s 2003 book, *George Eliot, Music, and Victorian Culture*, probes the cultural implications of work that interrogates the boundaries between domesticity and musicality.³⁶ Her analysis, however, singles out the literary output of one writer.

Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff’s edited collection, *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction*, in which Weliver’s work also features, draws together essays that likewise explore how the employment of music in a text can be considered a device which reflects wider social and cultural concerns. The editors say of the collection that ‘by offering reflections on music in one of its many reception contexts, [they] hope to contribute to an enhanced awareness of the culture and sociology of nineteenth-century music’.³⁷ Notably, much of the scholarship undertaken by the contributors is restricted

³⁵Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 100.

³⁶ Delia Da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music, and Victorian Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 59-101.

³⁷ Sophie Fuller and Nicky Losseff, (eds.), *The Idea of Music in Victorian Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. xx.

Introduction

to work from Victorian period. As I have outlined above, my project does not focus its analysis on one historical period or literary movement.

Michelle Fillion's 2010 monograph, *Difficult Rhythm*, presents a further example of what we may classify as 'music **in** literature'. Suitably, her volume is subtitled 'Music and the Word in E. M. Forster', but, in the critical approach taken by Fillion, the text also offers an exploration of what is actually at stake as a result of Forster's work engaging with music. Once more like *A Clockwork Counterpoint*, and *Larkin's Jazz*, Fillion's text explores the relationship between music and literature in relation to one literary figure but, I would argue, it does so in a far more engaged and critical manner.

While *Difficult Rhythm* does employ a biographical framing, the bulk of the book is actually concerned with analysing the presence, and critical result, of the music Forster featured in his work. This fundamental difference moves Fillion's work into an altogether different category of musico-literary writing than Phillips. She incorporates information from Forster's life in a way that helps inform any assessment of the music in his work. For example, chapter two, 'Creating Lucia', maps the construction of Forster's characters in his 1905 novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* against the author's real-life relationship with operas. Donizetti's 1835 tragic opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, features in chapter six of the novel, set against the backdrop of the fictional Italian town of Monteriano.

Fillion's literary forensics probe Forster's rendering of the opera in a way that addresses the musical content, cultural relevance, and literary merit of its manifestation, while simultaneously building a picture of the event Forster would have quite likely had in mind when writing the work. By compiling the author's own reflection on actual opera attendances, other people's reviews of said performances, and other historical information, Fillion not only acquaints her reader with relevant historical and

biographical occurrences, she also guides them in exploring the impact music had on Forster as a writer.

Notably, in this second chapter, she transcribes a recording of Luisa Tetrazzini – upon whose performance of *Lucia* Forster based his fictional production – which she infers is perhaps only marginally different from a performance Forster himself would have heard. In fact, her evidence for similarity in performances comes from comparing as many known recordings of Tetrazzini's renditions as possible, of 'Alfi son tua', the centrepiece aria from *Lucia*. So vital is Tetrazzini's singing, Fillion claims, to the writing of Forster, that we should consider it 'the voice that launched *Where Angels Fear to Tread*'.³⁸

Fillion also challenges the contextual implications of Forster's inclusion of the opera in his novel, suggesting that that 'opera scene is the testing ground for English middle-class values in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*'.³⁹ Although Forster creates a fictional entry for Monteriano in a Baedeker tourist guide, he omits any recommendation of the theatre. This, for Fillion, would render it 'out-of-bounds' for the standard tourist. Philip and Caroline, two characters that attend the opera in the novel, only discover the theatre by happenstance, regardless, as Philip had previously lost his guidebook. It becomes clear that Fillion is not simply critiquing the implication of opera as an artistic feature of the novel, but addressing how such inclusion indicates other, social, contexts of significance.

³⁸ Michelle Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 33.

³⁹ Fillion, p. 27.

Introduction

What the reader is left with, by the end of the chapter, is quite a full picture of precisely what Forster was trying to recreate in his novel – in terms of his installation of *Lucia di Lammermoor* – and, subsequently, what the implications are for both the plot and the cultural and artistic exhibition taking place in Monteriano. *Difficult Rhythm*'s employment of biographic accounts, then, is constructively used to inform the exploration of Forster's work, rather than to simply signal significant events out of some solemn duty. Thus, it goes beyond what Brown often laments in works considering the use of music in literature when he suggests that 'at their worst, they merely collect all the musical references in an author's work and display them, for reasons which are not readily apparent.'⁴⁰

As far as the texts considered in this literature review hitherto, Fillion's offering represents the first real work of what we might call 'musicology'; it is unavoidably investigative and inherently analytical. So, although my thesis does not centre so rigidly upon one particular writer, *Difficult Rhythm* provides much by way of critical approach and scholarly rigour.

Fillion's text begins to explore how music can manifest, in literature, as more than just a feature of content. But more still can be done to broaden the way music is viewed as part of literature beyond those times it is employed as a part of plot. Music as a contextual element of a literary text is a substantial part of much what is at stake in much musico-literary work and, in fact, often becomes symptomatic of each of the invocations of music considered and explored in my thesis.

In a broader consideration of the impact musical invocations can have on non-musical forms, Ruth Skilbeck's 2017 work *The Writer's Fugue* 'addresses the fugue in

⁴⁰ Brown, 'The Relations Between Music and Literature as a Field of Study', p. 106.

music, psychology, and literature'.⁴¹ Its subtitle, 'Musicalisation, Trauma and subjectivity in the Literature of Modernity' is rather self-explanatory; Skilbeck examines how various dissociative states can be explored in literature and, simultaneously, how such explorations can be read musically.

Much like the organization of the chapters in my thesis, Skilbeck's text is divided into two halves. The first section serves as the volume's critical grounding, so to speak; it introduces her readers to the main ideas of her work, discusses what is 'at stake', and contextualises her work among similar projects. Part two of the book examines the role of the dissociative and musical fugue in the work of five different authors. In this sense Skilbeck shares Phillips's biographical frame; using authors to talk about both literature and music. Where the two differ, of course, is in that all five of Skilbeck's case studies look at people whose work was typically only concerned with literature. This means that the discussions of music and musical form in *The Writer's Fugue* are the result of analysis and synthesis from Skilbeck.

Of the writers that Skilbeck subjects to inquiry – Thomas De Quincey, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Paul Celan, and Sylvia Plath – only two are featured in my project, one very briefly. Needless to say, although *The Writer's Fugue* shares a similar critical interest to this thesis – namely with respect to musical form in literature – there is seldom much cross-over between the two works. The principal reason for this is that Skilbeck is almost exclusively concerned, in terms of musicalisation, with the form of the fugue; a further relationship is examined between this musical form and analogous fugal symptoms of trauma. As a result, the volume – although thorough – has a much narrower

⁴¹ Ruth Skilbeck, *The Writer's Fugue* (Newcastle, N.S.W: PostMistress Press, 2017), p. 3.

Introduction

scope of analysis than this thesis; the fugue is indeed considered later in this doctoral project, but it is by no means the only musical form under consideration throughout the work as a whole.

One point of harmonious synchronicity does emerge between part two of Skilbeck's text and this thesis. We are both concerned, not singularly with the nature of artistic output, but also with the creative process of production. Skilbeck looks to the author's state of mind, or dissociative states of mind, and suggests that any manifestation of a fugal state in the psychological make-up of the writer also becomes evident in their work. This précis is unlikely to do justice to the nuance of Skilbeck's work, so I will provide, in her own words, the rationale behind the selection of the writers used in her case studies:

In their writing they each sought to reconcile experiences of trauma, which found release in the dissociated formalised musicalized rhetorical figures of fugue forms. Each of the literary composers, De Quincey, Proust, Joyce, Celan, and Plath are driven by profound imperative, conveying the integrity of loss (of their loved object/person/place) and jouissance as they write of inner truths of being, *truth dwells in the inner man*. The desire to write is a healing drive for restitution, to reconstitute lost objects in words, in writing, after trauma, to restore dignity, and to bear witness; and speak truth to power, in the literature of poetic power.⁴²

Skilbeck's reference to the authors as 'literary composers' is pleasing to read, as I make a similar distinction throughout my thesis, particularly in Chapter One, wherein I address the similar creative compositional processes behind music and poetry. Although the first chapter of this thesis is concerned with the nature of the creative and composing mind, it does not undertake its investigations in a way that is discreetly tied to biography. While it is true that I use the critical and poetic output of Wallace Stevens to synthesise my

⁴² Skilbeck, p. 200.

argument, it is in fact done to illustrate a lineage of poetry, so one may see how to consider the assertions about the form more generally, rather than simply in Stevens's case specifically. Thus, while it is important to acknowledge Skilbeck's approach and, to a lesser extent that of Phillips, it is essential to distinguish the role the 'writer' plays in this thesis: the nature of musical invocation explored in this doctoral project is not derived from the singular experience of specific artistic figures; rather, it can be examined throughout the historical discourse of both forms, with each writer that features here simply providing evidence of one particular case.

Much like I have done in this thesis, Skilbeck openly frames her writing against the work of Calvin Brown and Werner Wolf. Likewise, her work is structured in a similar manner to Wolf's *The Musicalization of Fiction*. The main argument of *The Writer's Fugue* involves acknowledging that the systemic operation of a fugue transcends the musical form. Although this thesis is less concerned with psychological fugues, Skilbeck's text resonates with the work of my project's third chapter on structure. *The Writer's Fugue*, by the writer's own admission, also finds a critical – and structural – germination within the work of Douglas Hofstadter, namely *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, and signals another shared concern with the work in my project. Later in this introduction I elucidate how Hofstadter's perspective on the cognitive connections and correlations between maths, music, and visual art in *Gödel, Escher, Bach* are relevant to my own work, but it is important to note Skilbeck's acknowledgement of this mutual influence. Further to this, in her overview of 'musicalised readings', Skilbeck draws her reader's attention to Calvin Brown; she highlights Brown's reading of De Quincey's 'Dream-

Introduction

Fugue’ as being one of the first examples of ‘intermedial analysis’.⁴³ Thus, *The Writer’s Fugue* brings this literature review back to where it began and allows for a closer look at how at how Calvin Brown contributes to the field of musico-literary study in one of his most notable texts.

Originally published in 1948, Brown’s *Music and Literature* is perhaps the most seminal study of the two art forms. Although its subtitle, ‘A Comparison of the Arts’, would suggest a rather fettered approach to both media, the work goes beyond merely considering music and literature alongside each other. Rather, literary and musical examples are explored – in tandem – in relation to some linking theme. Comparison begets analysis which, in turn, becomes synthesis. Taking, once more, Brown’s opening statement from the preface it is made clear that the intentions behind the volume are to bring analysis of the two forms together:

This book was written with the hope that it might open up a field of thought which has not yet been systemically explored. Though various articles and books have dealt separately with many of the problems here brought together, there has been no survey of the entire field. This book attempts to supply such a survey.⁴⁴

Again, the use of the word ‘survey’ suggests an uncritical account of where the forms of music and literature meet. This, however, is simply not the case. For example, one of the early chapters considers ‘Rhythm and Pitch’ and not only looks – as one may usually assume – at the roles these elements play in music but uses rhythm and pitch to draw parity between poetic metre and its musical counterpart. He notes that ‘difference between “rising” metres and “falling” metres, is the great stumbling block of all theories

⁴³ Ibid, p. 230.

⁴⁴ Calvin Brown, *Music and Literature* (Athens (GA): University of Georgia Press, 1948), p. xi.

which seek to identify poetic metres with musical time-signatures'.⁴⁵ This particular line of inquiry is one picked up in the third chapter of this thesis; I build upon the work of previous scholars – Brown included – to formulate a comparable system of metric notation to employ between poetry and music. Subsequently, I have made every effort in this project to avoid tripping over Brown's 'great stumbling block'.

As stated previously in this introduction, this thesis embarks on an exercise to map the interweaving natures of music and literature, from the processes of their creation, to their reception by an audience, and everything else in between. *Music and Literature* offers a perspective on how we may interpret the way art is conferred to its audience. In the opening chapter, Brown asks his reader: 'How does the artist go about the task of communicating human experience?' He offers his own response and suggests that 'the artist begins with an experience of his own... in his own mind he then works over the experience, organising it in such a way that it can be made viable and be incorporated into some physical medium – words, tones, lines, colours, masses of wood or stone'.⁴⁶ These materials, Brown continues, become 'what we ordinarily call the work of art'; however, 'the artistic process is only half achieved', he adds in an important caveat.⁴⁷ To complete the process, Brown states: 'It is now the task of the recipient to reverse the process of the artist: he takes the "the work of art", perceives its structure, relationships, and "meanings", and comes finally to an experience of his own'.⁴⁸ He offers the following diagram to illustrate how the experiences of the artist become the experience of the recipient:

⁴⁵ Brown, pp. 19-20.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

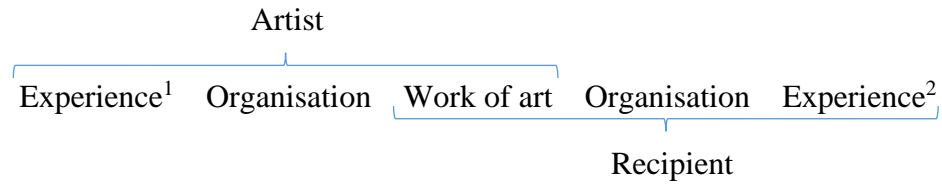


Fig. 1⁴⁹ - Calvin Brown's Diagram mapping art's path from creation to reception.

It is certainly helpful to visualise the relationship between the artist and their audience in terms of how each party engages with a work of art. Both sides of Brown's diagram are considered throughout the chapters ahead; that is to say, this thesis looks at the creative side of artistic production and also at how an audience may experience the art produced – in this case, a piece of prose, poetry, or drama.

As a writer, Brown is perhaps most irreverent on the subject of musical form in literature. Indeed, he eschews writers that make insincere efforts to implicate musical form in a text; scolding those who name their works after musical terms but make no other demonstrable attempt to engage with such inference in either form or content. It is in a spirit inspired by Brown's irreverence that I, too, probe the productive use of musical form in literature.

Much of Brown's language throughout *Music and Literature* is couched in a very casual tone – often scathingly critical and regularly humorous. His prose is lucid and, at times, downright playful. Take this example from chapter 19, 'Program Music: A Short Guide to the Battlefield', wherein Brown explores the tension between proponents of 'program music' and those of 'absolute music':

The defenders of program music have almost always felt themselves to be the rebels or insurgents against a type of instrumental music already established by the practice of composers and the aesthetics of theorists.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 4.

Hence their manifestos have usually been the position of the absolutists, and they have taken the defensive only in order to protect themselves against counter-attacks. Before investigating the theories of the programmatists, then, we must see the point of view they wished to dethrone.⁵⁰

Although I have offered this paragraph somewhat out of context, you can clearly see Brown's 'short guide to the battlefield' reads as exactly that – mirroring, by his own admission, the language of a dispatches report. Furthermore, his analysis of the two positions is carried rather humorously into the footnotes, where he makes the following disclaimer: 'Every attempt is made to keep the following account as unbiased as possible. But the reader is entitled to know that if the present truce breaks down and the battle must be joined again, I will be found in the camp of the absolutists'.⁵¹

Music and Literature is, in its essence, a discussion of the link between form and content, and a disquisition on the ramifications of when the form and content of music meet with the form and content of literature. Thus, Brown's wide-ranging work is not only called upon frequently throughout this thesis, it remains a foundational text for all those who hope to probe the relationship between music and literature. Despite being published over six decades ago, its relevance to this study is unquestionable. Furthermore, Brown's *Music and Literature* is so peppered – albeit indirectly – throughout later musico-literary investigations, it would be almost impossible to neglect.

⁵⁰ Brown, pp. 230-231.

⁵¹ Brown, p. 230.

A Wolf in Brown's Clothing?

As previously discussed, Werner Wolf is credited with defining the term 'intermediality'. The relevance of such an idea to this thesis has already been established. Wolf's book, comprised of two major parts, both lays out the criteria by which a work may be adjudged to be 'intermedial', and robustly investigates the repercussions of such a classification. Much like *Gödel, Escher, Bach, The Musicalization of Fiction* lends its first part to theory and its second part to contextual explorations.

One of Wolf's case studies shares a biographical interest with Phillips's volume; the role of music in Burgess's *Napoleon Symphony* forms quite a substantial part of *The Musicalization of Fiction*'s latter sections. Both Phillips and Wolf consider how Burgess framed his novel on the musical structure of Beethoven's third symphony. However, Wolf frames his analysis from *within* the text. What I mean by this is that, although he does acknowledge 'contextual evidence' (upon which Phillips heavily relies) for Burgess's attempts to invoke musical structure in the novel, Wolf also draws from 'intratextual thematization'.⁵² Thus, he submits the text to analysis to determine whether it is musical in its own right, whether it possesses 'symphonic shape'. The third chapter of my own thesis undertakes a similar endeavour in respect to poetry written in imitation of musical form – namely, in one case, another work from the same composer as Burgess's source: Beethoven's eighth symphony.

Earlier, I noted that the proliferation of Brown's work in current scholarship was 'indirect'. I gave this qualification, in part, due to the presence of *Music and Literature* in Wolf's book and the subsequent prevalence of the latter publication among other endeavours in the field of musico-literary analysis. Brown appears fairly frequently in

⁵² Wolf, p. 200.

The Musicalization of Fiction but is by no means the sole contributor of critical reflection. In fact, much of Wolf's work that runs in-line with Brown's study appears to actively evade much direct correspondence with the earlier publication. Yet, Brown's influence on Wolf's work remains evident; Wolf himself describes *Music and Literature* as a 'seminal and still highly important work'.⁵³

There are, indeed, times when Wolf perhaps misinterprets some of Brown's finer points – a number of these have been highlighted within this thesis. But, poignantly, this means that those who have looked to Wolf as their scholarly font, have also inherited the same – I add tentatively, erroneous – interpretations.

Many, if not all, recent efforts in the field of musico-literary enquiry make at least some reference to Wolf's work. As result, it remains important to hold the arguments made in *The Musicalization of Fiction* in one's mind when approaching contemporary studies concerning the relationship between music and literature.

Meta-mathematic Music

Beyond the work of Calvin Brown and Werner Wolf, there are two further texts responsible for the theoretical curiosity of this project: *Gödel, Escher, Bach* and *The Master and his Emissary*. While neither of these texts engages overtly in discussions on the relationship between music and literature they both offer valuable perspectives germane to the thesis ahead.

In Douglas Hofstadter's 1979 monograph, *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, an 'eternal golden braid', as its subtitle intimates, is woven through thoughtful considerations of

⁵³ Ibid, p. 5, n.12.

Introduction

aesthetic theory and philosophical musings on the nature of artificial intelligence.⁵⁴ Hofstadter frames his work within a series of dialogues and anecdotal parables. The title of the book is drawn from the three most significant figures in his study: the mathematician Kurt Gödel; the artist M. C. Escher; and the musician J. S. Bach. Although such a summary risks being reductive of Hofstadter's work, *Gödel, Escher, Bach* makes a sustained case for the interwoven nature of the work of these three figures through their shared employment of mathematical principles.

The book is split into two main parts, with twenty chapters between them. The first part 'GEB', which again takes its title from the initials of Gödel, Escher, and Bach, serves as a contextualising compendium of the three men's work and philosophical standpoints. The second part, 'EGB', an acronym for 'eternal golden braid', begins to explore how the work of music, art, and mathematical theorem may tie together, the subsequent repercussions, and how each may help contribute to understanding and developing both mechanical and digital computing processes. In weaving this braid, Hofstadter not only illuminates some of the unexpected connections which can be drawn between apparently paradoxical forms, he simultaneously unpicks some of the obscurities one may encounter in the early stages of AI development.

His study reaches its apex in the final chapter, which explores 'Strange Loops' and 'Tangled Hierarchies'. Fundamentally, these two terms refer to systems turned back on themselves, either in self-referentiality, or in structures of a cyclical nature. Thus, to risk too simple a summation, the notion of a Strange Loop becomes the overall product of the book's investigation into the connection between music, maths, and art.

⁵⁴ Douglas Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979)

Yet, Hofstadter's book appears to omit one further prominent art form that also indulges in the shared relationship explored between the other three: literature. Thus, my work ahead takes the opportunity to explore this ostensibly absent element of *Gödel, Escher, Bach*. It is notable, however, that Hofstadter discusses the importance of symbols in both the operations of our own minds and in the construction of an artificial one. He suggests that most symbolic systems function as Tangled Hierarchies given that 'symbols activate other symbols'. This is particularly true of language, which Hofstadter hints at when he suggests that the brain and the mind become 'a neural tangle supporting a symbol tangle'.⁵⁵ Indeed, he suggests that 'where language does create Strange Loops is when it talks about itself, whether directly or indirectly. Here, something in the system jumps out and acts on the system, as if it were outside the system', perhaps hinting that literary criticism, in itself, is an act within a Tangled Hierarchy.⁵⁶

Similarly, language is important throughout the explorations of *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, but only insofar as such systems (of syntax and coding languages) are useful in a programming sense – that is to say, when 'talking' to computers.⁵⁷ There is, however, much more, unexplored, potential for language's role in broader mechanisms of meaning – in both a linguistic and artistic sense – than Hofstadter covers in his work. The volume's subtitle, 'A metaphorical fugue on minds and machines in the spirit of Lewis Carroll' indicates Hofstadter's playful approach to his study in *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, and simultaneously pays homage to another mathematician-cum-writer. Yet, despite this tribute, there is a vacancy in Hofstadter's volume; yes, he deals with language to some

⁵⁵ Hofstadter, p. 691.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 691.

⁵⁷ cf. Hofstadter, on 'Mechanical Translation', p. 603.

Introduction

extent, but he only makes a very brief attempt to directly engage with works of literature as also evidencing his claims regarding art and the mind.

As I have discussed above, Hofstadter's treatment of language stems from the role it plays in the operations of thought and the processes of programming. The important and vital practice that Hofstadter alludes to – in which his work is suffused, in fact – is that of translation. Translation, for Hofstadter is an operation a language must go through to be comprehended by a machine but is also something that occurs within the Tangled Hierarchies of our own minds.

Hofstadter's later book *Le ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language* (1997) focuses quite directly on a more traditional idea of translation and begins to address the connection between the intricacies of language as communication and language as purely symbolic form. Yet, despite nominally being concerned with 'the music of language', the volume deals more with issues that arise in translation – particularly of poetry. The result, although fascinating, still neglects to explore the links between literature, as a written or performed form, and music as a compositional and performative form. For Hofstadter, translation becomes a web of tangled hierarchies, Strange Loops, and self-referentiality; this, I would argue, is the same set of connections one may identify across the boundaries between music and literature. Strange Loops, for Hofstadter, occur when 'moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started'.⁵⁸

In this way, it is clear that we can view such metamorphic shifts as not only translation between languages, but between systems of language. It will become evident that much of this doctoral project is concerned with 'translation', if not strictly in a

⁵⁸ Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, p. 18.

traditional sense; the moving of ‘meaning’ from one mode, to another, is – in essence – a migration of language.

Mind the Gap

More recently, neurologist and psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist explores the interconnection between logical thinking, and creativity, and how the brain is responsible for curating and managing such different modes of operation. His book, *The Master and his Emissary*, maps the processes of the mind against some of its most clearly demonstrable abilities – among them language, art, logic, and perception. As the subtitle ‘The divided mind and the making of the western work’ suggests, much of McGilchrist’s discussion centres on the assertion (which is, at times, challenged) that there are two hemispheres of the brain, both responsible for different cognitive processes. In an artistic allusion to classical philosophy, he employs the myth of Apollo and Dionysus to illustrate the ways the hemispheres of the brain are commonly interpreted: one geared toward order, the other towards the overriding of all humanly contrived boundaries. He then takes this to mean that the right-hand side – the Dionysian – brings us in touch with that which is new, and that the left-hand side becomes that which is responsible for creating anew.⁵⁹ But, as he ultimately underscores, it is only in the tension between the two drives that the mind can operate and synthesise thoughts effectively.

Like Hofstadter, McGilchrist spends much time deliberating over the difference between what we mean by the terms ‘brain’ and ‘mind’. The repercussions of parsing

⁵⁹ Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 198-199.

Introduction

such a distinction help form some of the opening discussions of this thesis's first chapter on imagination and creativity.

McGilchrist blends the fields neuroscience, psychology, and sociology, to generate a study which thoroughly investigates the genealogy of the western way of thinking, while also mapping the evolution, physically, of the mind; cognitively, of language; and culturally, of art. Intriguingly, despite the many overlapping themes of the two works, the only direct reference to *Gödel, Escher, Bach* is made – very vaguely – in an endnote. *The Master and his Emissary* is, in contrast to Hofstadter's work, far more concerned with the organic; his study is of the mind and its products, not so much an inquisition into whether such processes can be replicated artificially.

There are a few times where McGilchrist engages quite directly with the connection between language and music. One notable example comes in a reflection upon how art represents the world. He pulls together Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's views on language and poetry, and Schopenhauer's proposition that art – particularly music – is more directly able to reveal the nature of reality than philosophy. Ultimately, his line of argument moves towards understanding the nature of brain activity in regard to those three activities – language, art, and poetry – which he associates with the 'melancholy, music, empathy and religious feeling' of philosophy; he continues by suggesting that 'philosophy begins and ends in the right hemisphere, though it has to journey through the left hemisphere to get there'.⁶⁰ Thus we may infer that, for McGilchrist, the transition between form, content, thesis and hypothesis is an action that moves meaning between the hemispheres. Much like we can with Hofstadter's theories of cognition, we see such postulations engage with ideas of the migratory, as the change

⁶⁰ McGilchrist, p. 156.

from new information, to old information, to new ideas is – in essence – an analogous process to translation.

Although *The Master and his Emissary* is concerned with broader ways in which the mind operates, rather than focussing on music and literature specifically, it does provide this thesis with a way to consider the two art forms as products that originate from a similar cognitive space (and parallel processes), which, in turn, allows us to draw parity between the compositional and perceptual operations that emerge from the comparable initial cerebral workings.

As outlined above, McGilchrist's work attempts to map the nature of the human thinking organ in a way which probes both the physical, and unfathomable, operations of the cerebral network while establishing how 'brain' becomes 'mind'. Similarly, Hofstadter's fundamental objective is to comprehend the essential nature of thought with a view to replicate such processes artificially. In the attempts to generate 'machine thinking' in a system that mimics the rational operations of real people, his explorations inevitably uncover modes of thinking that are undeniably simultaneously human and musical. With this last thought, the stage has been set for chapter one on keys and creativity.

**Chapter One – The Keys to Creativity: Typing and Playing in the Work of
Wallace Stevens**

A Prelude to Poetry and Playing

‘Just as my fingers on these keys / Make music, so the self-same sounds / On my spirit make a music, too’; so begins Wallace Stevens’s 1915 poem ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’.¹ In his 1992 essay, ‘The Body of Music’, William Fitzgerald suggests that the spiritual ‘feeling’ and various senses of ‘play’ in Stevens’s poem ‘invite us to hear equivocally’ what is at stake in the text; he argues that the audience is required to ‘mishear’ and call upon their other senses instead.² Yet, the lines above illustrate the act of making music in both a creative sense and a physical, productive sense; Stevens also alludes to the affect the production of this art has upon the listener. I would argue that, in doing so, the ‘feeling’ of the poem is revealed not on the basis of mishearing, but as the result of a direct invocation of the instrumental. This chapter will offer several avenues of theoretical and critical discourse to help underscore why Stevens’s poem is explicit in its connection to the instrument rather than offering a message veiled, as Fitzgerald suggests, in mishearing.

This chapter explores the way music and literature share elements of artistic production from the creative inception of an idea to the use of tools to produce the work; I offer Wallace Stevens’s work as an example of literature exploiting this connection,

¹ Wallace Stevens, ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’, in *Harmonium* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp. 112-114, p. 112.

² William Fitzgerald, “‘Music is Feeling, then, not Sound’: Wallace Stevens and the Body of Music’, in *SubStance*, Vol. 21, Issue 47 (1992), pp. 44-60, p. 44.

between the creative drives of music and literature, and the instruments used to create them. It also explores the connection between artists, their work, and their audience.

I will examine the nature of the creative imagination of artists, particularly in ways outlined by Stevens, and explore how both poets and musicians follow similar compositional methods in the pursuit of their arts. After developing a position which goes some way to align the creative processes behind literary and musical composition, I will demonstrate why Wallace Stevens's work provides suitable ground to explore this connection between creativity, music, literature, and their respective instruments.

Although this chapter primarily focuses on his poetry (particularly 'Peter Quince at the Clavier' and 'Mozart 1935'), it also discusses fragments from Stevens's wider critical and theoretical works as well as his letters. Stevens's writings on the nature of creativity and imagination are significant in helping to define a shared creative spirit between the practitioners of poetry and music. Further to this, I will discuss whether the work of a 20th Century writer can be used as a suitable representation of poetry – and artistic imagination – more widely; I suggest that Stevens's work provides examples of an enduring literary heritage which in turn points to a broader artistic lineage broaching the creative media of both literature and music. The sum of these explorations will be used to challenge Fitzgerald's analysis of 'Peter Quince' and I will suggest that his essay overlooks the most important elements of creativity and play in the poem.

Building a case against Fitzgerald's essay will facilitate a broad discussion of artistic creativity in a general sense before a consideration of how different interpretations of creativity are directly applicable to the composition of musical and literary works. This chapter also examines, in detail, the connection between two specific tools of artistic production; one linked more closely with literature; the other,

with music. Typewriters and pianos share a very similar mechanical process and also

Chapter One

operate within very similar artistic, symbolic, and semiotic systems. By incorporating a discussion that ruminates on the physical operation of artistic instruments, this chapter is not limited to considering just the form and content of a piece of music or literature but extends its considerations to the actual production of the work. As a result, this chapter not only examines how a piece of literature can invoke instrumental elements of music, and how such an invocation can be used to produce a new reading of said literature, it also explores a deeper, practical connection between the acts of writing literature – and playing music – through the respective instruments of each craft.

Because the instrument sits on the boundary between performer and listener, which is to say the musician plays an instrument while the audience hears it, this chapter shall explore a dialectical interaction between the production of art and its reception as mediated through the figure of a performer. To consider the relationship in terms of Calvin Brown's diagram mapping the path of art from creation to reception, as explored in the thesis's introduction, the instrument – and the instrumental – would occupy a space integral to the work of art itself, positioned between the artist and the audience.

Ultimately, and as a result of considering the creative connection between instruments of music and literature, this chapter challenges Fitzgerald's reading of 'Peter Quince at the Clavier' offering, instead, an interpretation which recentres the focus on the role of typing, playing, and creativity in the poem. Thus, this chapter contributes to the overall objectives of this thesis by demonstrating how analysis which considers the way a work of literature invokes instrumental elements of music leads to a more nuanced reading of the text.

1.1 – The Poet Stevens

Before exploring critical perspectives on creativity, and how they engage with music and literature, I will introduce the writer whose work features most frequently in this

chapter. Wallace Stevens's first published collection of poetry, *Harmonium*, stands somewhat isolated from his later work. Not only was it over a decade before his next collection came to fruition, but the 'highly sensuous atmosphere of fine pictures, good food, exquisite taste' all but fades from his poetry post-*Harmonium*.³ Indeed, Northrop Frye goes as far as to barbedly claim that 'in the later poems, though the writing is as studiously oblique as ever, the sensuousness has largely disappeared, and the reader accustomed only to *Harmonium* may feel that Stevens's inspiration has failed him'.⁴ The recognition of the sensory in Stevens's work makes a pleasing connection between the ideas of creativity explored hitherto and the explorations of the bodily that lie ahead.

Harmonium, in retrospect at least, garners quite high critical praise, to the point that some evidently feel Stevens was unable to replicate the 'spirit' of the volume in his later work. This collection, for J. Leonard and C. Wharton, is characterised by 'brilliant, finely crafted imagery' and produces what J. Hillis Miller describes as a 'finished unity... which makes [the poems] seem like elaborately wrought pieces of jewellery'.⁵

Contemporary reception was equally positive, with Llewelyn Powys' praise of one poem ringing with particularly sonic praise:

But possibly the most perfect example of Mr. Stevens's genius is to be found in the poem called 'The Cortège of Rosenbloom' [*sic*]. It defies completely all rational explanations, and yet at the same time tingles with vague imaginative evocations. What strange subterfugitive symphonies of infinitesimal tomtoms titillate the listener's ears as the cadaver of the wry, wizened one 'of the color of horn' is carried to his burial place up in the sky! What sly bemused tambourine

³ Northrop Frye, 'The Realistic Oriole: A Study of Wallace Stevens' in *Wallace Stevens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Marie Borroff (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 161-176, p. 174.

⁴ Frye, p. 174.

⁵ James S. Leonard and Christine E. Wharton, *The Fluent Mundo: Wallace Stevens and the Structure of Reality* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp.76-77, and J. Hillis Miller, 'Wallace Stevens's Poetry of Being' in *The Act of the Mind: Essays in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens*, ed. by Roy Harvey Pearce and J. Hillis Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), p. 142.

Chapter One

cacophony beats upon the eardrum with the reiterated ‘tread, tread’ of the mourners.⁶

Despite the delight one may find in the joyful canter of Powys’ gushing review, the focus of this chapter is not solely on the sonic and the aural. The nature of sounds in literature – and what they may mean – faces further scrutiny in chapter two; the current chapter explores the process by which sounds are composed and created.

Notably, one of the key texts discussed in this chapter was, in fact, previously printed separately to this main collection, almost a decade earlier. ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ was first printed in William Stanley Braithwaite’s *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1915* and then, again, in the poetry magazine *Others*, before it was finally included in ‘that damned serious affair’ *Harmonium*.⁷

The title of Stevens’s collection, quite fittingly, resonates with the discussions of this chapter: not only because of the similarity between the words ‘harmonium’ and ‘harmony’, but because the harmonium itself is a musical instrument. R. P. Blackmur perhaps plays on the title of this collection – after an updated version is published in 1931 – in his 1932 essay, ‘Examples of Wallace Stevens’, when he claims that Stevens’s strength as a poet comes from his employment of language ‘not merely as an instrument of exact communication’.⁸ This is not the only collection of Stevens’s to directly call upon instruments in the title: his much smaller 1937 collection, *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, also follows this style – although, notably, it includes the musician in the billing.

Stevens’s direct invocation of musical imagery in this manner already frames the collection with a taste of the combined arts. This practice continues throughout the

⁶ Llewelyn Powys, ‘The Thirteenth Way’ in *Dial*, Vol. 77, July 1924, pp.45-50, p. 46.

⁷ Charles Doyle, *Wallace Stevens: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 1.

⁸ R. P. Blackmur, ‘Examples of Wallace Stevens’ in *Hound and Horn*, vol.5, Winter 1932, pp. 223-55, p. 226

Harmonium collection, with poems titled ‘To the One of Fictive Music’, ‘Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion’ and, of course, ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’. The other poem from Stevens of particular focus in this chapter, ‘Mozart, 1935’, comes from his 1936 collection *Ideas of Order*.

Ideas of Order, although sounding markedly different from the titles that chronologically envelop it, is not necessarily an un-musical title. As Joseph Carroll points out, the titles of Stevens’s first two collections share a focus on structure, insofar as ‘the words *harmonious* and *orderly* evoke the aesthetic ethos of *Harmonium* and *Ideas of Order*’.⁹

1.2 – Sense and Spirit

Feelings aroused by the touch of someone's hand, the sound of music, the smell of a flower, a beautiful sunset, a work of art, love, laughter, hope and faith – all work on both the unconscious and the conscious aspects of the self, and they have physiological consequences as well.

- Bernie Siegel¹⁰

As I will later discuss, sense experience and emotional ‘feeling’ play a key part in William Fitzgerald’s essay; such ‘feeling’ is perhaps also important when considering the production and reception of art. Before proceeding, it will be helpful to establish how one may combine the senses and ‘feeling’ (in both a physical and emotional sense) when considering them as part of the artistic creative process.

⁹ Joseph Carroll, *Wallace Stevens’s Supreme Fiction: A New Romanticism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), p. 18.

¹⁰ Bernie Siegel, *Peace, Love and Healing* (London: Rider, 1991), p.18. Siegel seeks to inform his reader of the deep and meaningful relationship between the conscious mind and the inner self. He goes on to say how one may, through practise, take advantage of this physiological, communicative, pathway.

Despite the largely spiritual motivation behind Bernie Siegel's work, the sentiment of the statement above serves to connect a number of both emotive and physical sensations within the coordinating mechanisms of one body. The interwoven network of sense experience probed in *Peace, Love and Healing* is not necessarily a system of reception that requires a bridge between some near-numinal field and the 'receiver'. However, regardless of spiritual persuasion, those actions and interactions which Siegel asserts elicit 'feelings' are very often regarded as channelling something transcendental. Is that which brings together touch, sound, and art, a purely corporeal force? Or, may it be the case that something far more mystic is at play? Exploring ideas that link physicality and touch, with both ethereal and emotive responses to art, can help generate a fuller understanding of the creative processes behind the production of art, and the sensory – and spiritual – impact of its reception; in short, by probing the creative drives behind music and literature, we will be better equipped to read Wallace Stevens's poetry.

In *This is Your Brain on Music*, the cognitive physiologist and neuroscientist Daniel Levitin grounds the connectivity between senses and the 'inner self' in far less spiritual terms and, in terms of music specifically, considers listening to be part of a wider 'perceptual system'. He uses the musical principle of 'harmony' as a way to develop a metaphor outlining sensory perception more generally. In the following excerpt, Levitin employs harmony to outline how visual art is transformed from simply a physical pattern, to an artwork evoking emotion:

What makes a set of lines and colours into art is the *relationship* between this line and that one; the way one colour or form echoes another in a different part of the canvas. Those dabs of paint and lines become art when form and flow (the way in which your eye is drawn across the canvas) are created out of lower-level perceptual elements.

When they combine harmoniously they give rise to perspective... and ultimately to emotion.¹¹

Through a thoughtful use of language, this exposition on painting serves to create a reverse allegory. Levitin is describing how drawings operate like pieces of music to help explain to his reader how music operates in a similar manner to other art forms. He expands on this idea by highlighting a similar phenomenon in dance, when he states that it ‘is not a raging sea of unrelated bodily movements; the relationship of those movements to one another is what creates integrity and integrality’, leading to ‘a coherence and cohesion that the higher levels of our brain process’.¹² For Levitin, perception therefore exploits the link between what Siegel designates as the ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ self. However, unlike Siegel, he considers this connection to be far more physical than spiritual; he makes a more direct engagement with reception by referring to the ‘brain process’ as opposed to Siegel’s vaguer location of consciousness within the ‘self’. Levitin is not necessarily de-mystifying the beauty of art, but his simplistic appraisal of ‘music’ as an art form reinforces a less spiritual approach:

The difference between *music* and a random or disordered set of sounds has to do with the way these fundamental attributes combine, and the relations that form between them. When these basis elements combine and form relationships with one and another in a meaningful way, they give rise to higher-order concepts.¹³

Once again, it is the sense of ‘relations between’ that, for Levitin, forms perception. Given that harmony itself is a relational property of music, and – evidently – art more

¹¹ Daniel Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008), p. 18.

¹² Levitin, p. 18.

¹³ Ibid, p. 17.

generally, a pattern is beginning to emerge between the writing of Levitin and Siegel, despite their wholly different outlooks. The use of the word ‘meaningful’, in the extract above, is potentially the vaguest word employed by Levitin in the entire volume. It suggests, with some trepidation, that there is still work to be done in parsing the connection between art and its reception.

Levitin is more confident about what happens when these ‘meaningful’ signals are received by the body. As the title of his volume suggests, Levitin’s study is primarily concerned with the relation between the brain and music – rather than with any potential connection to the numinous. Yet, despite the attempt to objectively quantify the act of listening to music, Levitin’s detailed descriptions of the neurological processes involved become increasingly intangible, until the scientific discourse is pushed beyond the realms of human understanding:

It is difficult to appreciate the complexity of the brain because the numbers are so huge they go well beyond our everyday experience (unless you are a cosmologist). The average brain consists of one hundred billion neurons. Each neuron is connected to other neurons – usually one thousand to ten thousand others. Just four neurons can be connected in sixty-three different ways, or not at all, for a total of sixty-four possibilities... For 2 neurons there are 2 possibilities for how they can be connected; for 3 neurons there are 8 possibilities; for 4 neurons there are 64 possibilities; for 5 neurons there are 1,024 possibilities; for 6 neurons there are 32,768 possibilities.¹⁴

Ultimately, ‘the number of combinations [between neurons] becomes so large that it is unlikely that we will ever understand all the possible connections in the brain’.¹⁵ Fittingly, although somewhat tangentially, Levitin also considers this exponential

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 88.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.88

growth as a process akin to musical composition. He notes that, ignoring octaves, music is made up of twelve notes and ‘each note can go to another note, or to itself, or to a rest, and this yields twelve possibilities. But each of those possibilities yields twelve more’.¹⁶ But, before these numbers expand beyond comprehension, Levitin consolidates this neurological step between sense experience and aural satisfaction more succinctly:

[Upon receiving sonic signals] several different dimensions of a musical sound need to be analysed – usually involving several quasi-independent neural processes – and they then need to be brought together to form a coherent representation of what we’re listening to.¹⁷

As a result, for Levitin at least, ‘hearing’ and ‘listening’ form something of a sensory Gestalt, wherein the ‘perceptual organisation’ of our mind makes ‘sense out of the jumbled signals that our senses receive’.¹⁸ Although attempting to pin down the spiritual elements of music may seem tangential and somewhat futile, the investigations undertaken by Levitin will help ground the later analysis of poetic and musical composition undertaken herein. The distinction between sounds and music and – similarly – words and poetry is something explored at several points throughout this thesis.

1.2.ii – Il miglior fabbro...

Levitin is not the only – nor the first – person to use the act of looking at a painting to illustrate the musical property of harmony and, particularly in this instance, representation in art. The poet, Wallace Stevens, for example, offers a similar position in his essay ‘Relations between Poetry and Painting’ when he suggests that ‘the poet

¹⁶ Ibid, p.88

¹⁷ Ibid, p.86

¹⁸ Ibid, p.85

Chapter One

does his job by virtue of an effort of the mind'.¹⁹ Such an effort puts the poet 'in rapport with the painter, who does his job, with respect to the problems of form and colour'. These problems, like the poet's, 'confront him incessantly, not by inspiration, but by imagination', or, 'by the miraculous kind of reason that imagination promotes'. Stevens summarises his argument by claiming that the two arts, of poetry and painting, share not only a common 'laborious element' but a 'consummation'.²⁰ This is not to say that an aesthetic telos is the sole object of the arts of painting and poetry but, rather, that – when undertaken – the labour is also the consummation. Plainly, the means, so to speak, are part and parcel of the end itself, rather than only existing to be a means to an end. Perhaps the same is true of musical composition; that the act in itself forms part of the final product.

Stevens's thoughts on the creative imagination return later in this chapter, as they form a link between not only the poet and the painter, but the poet and the composer; the manner by which the artist engages with their 'imagination' – according to Stevens, at least – is a comparable process for practitioners of both media.

It seems rather self-evident that with the manipulation of their equivalent factors, one will arrive at a system of aesthetics which aligns painting, poetry, and music, with each other, and thus equate the painter with the composer and the poet; to assert in independent claims that both music and poetry are like painting, it stands to reason that music and poetry are similar in themselves. But, in order to proceed with this closing of the ouroboros, one is required to fully expound precisely how – and why – these media can be 'like' each other.

¹⁹ Wallace Stevens, 'Relations between Poetry and Painting' in *The Necessary Angel* in *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1996), pp. 740-751, p.744.

²⁰ Stevens, p. 744.

In his work, *On The Spiritual in Art* (1912), Wassily Kandinsky draws upon the principles of music to illustrate how visual art seeks to represent the world. As can be expected from the writings of a man whose primary occupation was painting, the volume is subtitled ‘and Painting in Particular’. As a result, the majority of the discussions are framed by their relationship to painting. In an attempt to reconcile the arts early in the volume, Kandinsky observes, with some flourish, that:

When religion, science, and morality are shaken (the last by the mighty hand of Nietzsche), when the external supports threaten to collapse, then man’s gaze turns away from the external world toward himself. Literature, music, and [visual] art are the first and most sensitive realms where this spiritual change becomes noticeable in real form.²¹

Not only does this work to draw together art and its audience, but it also alerts the reader to two potential spheres of reception – the external and the internal. Later, in the same section, Kandinsky quite declaratively states ‘Words are inner sounds’.²² Naturally, this statement resonates with this thesis’s occupation with the musical and the literary. It also anticipates the sense of ‘the spiritual’ Siegel attempts to delineate and the unknown numinous to which Levitin alludes.

Kandinsky then draws on Arnold Schoenberg’s 1911 treatise *Theory of Harmony* to develop an understanding of why art follows a ‘path of internal necessity’.²³ There are two opposing sides to beauty in art, claims Kandinsky – ‘the side of external “beauty” and the side of internal “beauty”’.²⁴ The latter may only be achieved by renouncing what Kandinsky calls customary beauty. He suggests that, in terms of music, Schoenberg is a

²¹ Wassily Kandinsky, *On The Spiritual in Art*, in *Kandinsky Complete Writings on Art* ed. by Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), pp. 121-219, p. 145.

²² Kandinsky, p.147.

²³ Ibid, p. 149.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 149.

practitioner *par excellence* in this endeavour. Thus, Schoenberg's approach to music, as a result of his total renunciation of 'accepted beauty', 'leads us into a new realm, where musical experiences are no longer acoustic, but purely spiritual'.²⁵

He compares this practice to the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who 'always understood how to create abstract forms in spite of the visible, material forms'.²⁶ Similarly, of Paul Cézanne, he states that the painter's 'dabs and lines' become art because 'he expresses them in terms of color, thus creating an inner, painterly note, and molds them into a form that can be raised to the level of the abstract-sounding, harmonious, often mathematical formulas [*sic*]'.²⁷ Ultimately, Kandinsky claims that the work – or art – of both the painter and the musician serves to 'seek the internal in the world of the external'.²⁸ As a result of Kandinsky's parsing of the dichotomy – and union – between the internal and external worlds, a parity is revealed between the ostensibly separate media of art.

1.2.iii – Grasping the Intangible

Kandinsky and Levitin's discussions of the harmony shared by visual and poetic – aural – art can be seen to mirror Siegel's proposal regarding 'a bridge' between both the spiritual and physiological aspects of feeling; or the link between conscious and unconscious mind – and internal and external worlds – in respect to the *affect* of art. Stevens, too, suggests that imagination, over inspiration, is what brings reality and creativity to fruition in art. Thus, it is some form of internalisation of the external world that produces the aesthetic impetus of poetry (and painting, and, by extension, music).

²⁵ Ibid, p. 149.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 151.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 151.

²⁸ Ibid, p.151, Also, earlier, in the footnotes of his 1910 translation of Schoenberg's 'On Parallel Octaves and Fifths', Kandinsky compares the work of the composer to the work of the painter (p. 93).

Further to this, Kandinsky and Levitin both attempt to address a split in our body's first interaction with sense experience and the processes the information must filter through before we can understand such experience as art. For Kandinsky, this involves an undeniably spiritual element and, even for Levitin, there remains an air of mystery. The gap between the inner sounds and the external worlds becomes an elusive space, one that – as far as this chapter is concerned – the work of Wallace Stevens begins to explore.

Indeed, Levitin, even in his bid to de-mystify the magic of music, takes the time to distinguish between the mind and the brain, where the latter is the physical lump of tissue between our ears and the former is that which becomes the source of our consciousness.²⁹ In terms of making the jump between sense experience and the reception of art, Levitin contends that the same grouping of visual cues we employ to understand the world we see operates as a similar Gestalt to how our minds organise the sounds we hear into language or music.³⁰

As established above, both Levitin and Kandinsky consider what it means to simply look at shapes, or hear sounds, and then settle on the fact that you are, indeed, looking at – or listening to – art. I propose that one may take Levitin's colourful metaphor, on the harmony between 'dabs of paint and lines', even further; that, in fact, there is 'harmony' to be found in the relationships beyond the principles of 'listening' and 'hearing' in the very forms of literature and music themselves. In this respect, the 'dabs and lines' of visual art can be transposed as words and notes in their respective media.

²⁹ Levitin, p. 93.

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 101-103.

Chapter One

The fragment from Siegel draws together the feelings roused by hearing and seeing; already directly exalting the evocative power of ‘the sound of music’, his words can also be interpreted as a nod toward the forms of poetry and, perhaps, literature more generally. By considering Siegel’s musings in this way, one may argue that he is suggesting that literature and music – as art forms – share some ethereal bond. In the same way, through this invocation of the spiritual, one can extend the ethereal connection between the artform and those that experience it, as Siegel outlines, to one that bridges between the artist and their audience. The same, then, can be assumed of the relationship shared by the poet and the musician, not only between them and their audiences, but between the two figures as artists. The vagueness of this connection proposed by Siegel remains somewhat unfathomable or ungraspable, despite my attempts to subject it to the considerations of Levitin and Kandinsky. Thus, the noumenal bridge between the artist, their art, and their audience, appears to lead back towards the protean and at times unquantifiable nature of creativity itself.

By way of a response to this vagueness, not only will the rest of this chapter bring together the media of literature and music in a corporeal sense, it will also look at how the artist – be that the composer or the performer – is connected to both their audiences and their art in a more intangible sense. Corporeality and creativity are not only important factors to consider when attempting to parse the shared creative drives of music and literature; the two represent important elements in both Stevens’s ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ and Fitzgerald’s subsequent essay on the poem.

1.3 – Romantic (and Imaginary) Music/Creativity

In his 1818 letter to Richard Woodhouse, John Keats describes the poet as ‘the most unpoetical of any thing in existence’.³¹ Evidently reframing his earlier thoughts on negative capability, Keats proposes that, regarding ‘the poetical Character itself’, ‘it is not itself – it has no self – it is every thing and nothing – it has no character’.³² These striking binaries both fill and evacuate the body of the poet simultaneously. Keats is not reducing the role, or the position, of the poet in these thoughts; rather, he is beginning to illustrate the vital position the poet must take up in order to undertake his work. As Keats continues, it becomes clear that the dissolution of the self is as important for the poet as his ability to create or compose: ‘[the poetical Character] enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated’.³³ The result, in some respects, is that – in order to be a poet – one must consider the world without bias; that is to say the poet must approach their task without design or interference of that which they hope to address.

But Keats takes this much further: not only does the poet surrender his predilections and inclinations, ‘he has no identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body’.³⁴ Finally, in affirming his assertion that ‘the poet is ‘certainly the most unpoetical of all God’s creatures’, Keats suggests that ‘The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute’. However, ‘the poet has none’.³⁵ The formation of the ‘camelion (chameleon) poet’, then, is reliant on a protean and vacillating disposition.³⁶

³¹ John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats 1814-1821*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), p.387.

³² Keats, *Letters*, p.387.

³³ *Ibid*, p.387.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.387.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.387.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.387.

Throughout his career, Stevens also lays out several different models for what he considers to be a poet. There are, at times, several similarities between Stevens's constructions and Keats's proposal. Beyond this connection, one may also draw parallels between Stevens's attitude and approach to the poet – and poetic creativity in a general sense – and the Romantic legacy more broadly. To this end, B. J. Leggett looks to the figure of the 'possible poet' that Stevens discusses in the 1951 essay 'The Nobel Rider and the Sound of Words'.³⁷ Leggett suggests that Stevens develops a critical perspective on poetry that inherits its foundations from the work of Ivor Richards which, in turn, draws on the poetry and wider work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. However, I would suggest that this link can be extended to Keats, too, particularly when regarding the principles of negative capability and the construction of the chameleon poet. If one were to follow Leggett's lead and confront Stevens's 'The Nobel Rider' with an eye inclined towards the Romantic era, holding Keats in our gaze alongside Coleridge, the connection between the three begins to emerge. Take Stevens's introduction to the ideas that form his attempt 'to construct the figure of a poet, a possible poet':

He will consider that although he has himself witnessed, during the long period of his life, a general transition to reality, his own measures as a poet, in spite of all the passions of the lovers of truth, is the measure of his power to abstract himself, and to withdraw with him into his abstraction the reality on which the lovers of truth insist.³⁸

The 'possible poet', then, as Stevens figures him, is a comparably malleable character, at least one who is able – or permitted – to maintain their agency. Indeed, Stevens suggests that the formation of the poet is the result of an intentional action – specifically

³⁷ Bobby Joe Leggett, *Wallace Stevens and Poetic Theory* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p.35.

³⁸ Wallace Stevens, 'The Nobel Rider and the Sounds of Words' in *The Necessary Angel in Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, (New York: The Library of America, 1996), pp.643-665, p.657.

the action to withdraw oneself from reality, while remaining able to bring an abstraction of this reality with them – as he continues: ‘He [the poet] must be able to abstract himself and also to abstract reality, which he does by placing it in his imagination’.³⁹ Thus, while manipulation of the world is still considered somewhat transgressive for Stevens, the poet is not ‘unpoetical’ per se. Although this position is similar to Keats’, the importance of the poet’s role – for Stevens – is considered in an almost reverse construction. Keats’s poet ‘fills’ other bodies; Stevens’s invites the other bodies into his own. The ‘possible poet’ manifests his work not by surrendering to reality, but by imbibing it. Establishing a connection between Keats’s ideas on negative capability and Stevens’s figure of a ‘possible poet’ not only supports this chapter’s suggestion of a Romantic legacy, it contributes to the wider scholarship of Stevens’s engagement with poetic theory as explored by Leggett.

Stevens’s poetic figure is not alone in his artistic endeavour, nor is he the only figure whose job it is to call upon the ‘powers of abstraction’, for ‘the poet has his own meaning for reality, and the painter has, and the musician has; and besides what it means to the intelligence and to the senses, it means something to everyone, so to speak’.⁴⁰ Notably, here, the connection between the poetic, the musical, and the painterly has been brought once more to the fore. Stevens, like Kandinsky and Levitin, draws together the painterly and the literary in terms of their relationship with the nature of creativity. In a lecture titled ‘Relations Between Poetry and Painting’, delivered at the Museum of Modern Art, in January 1951, and subsequently published in the same volume as ‘The Nobel Rider’ the following November, Stevens ruminates on – as the titles suggests –

³⁹ ‘The Nobel Rider...’, p.657.

⁴⁰ ‘The Nobel Rider...’, p.657.

Chapter One

the relationship between the artistic roles of poets and painters. Specifically, he considers how such artistic craftsmen both engage with and represent reality in their works. His concluding statement postulates that both poets and painters share an assumption about the world – that ‘man’s truth is the final resolution of everything’ and that working towards that resolution is what gives them the ‘validity and serious dignity’ of those that seek such a goal.⁴¹ Considering both the manifesto – as one may regard it – of the possible poet and the object of a poet’s work, as proposed in ‘Relations Between Poetry and Painting’, there is a feeling that the poet has a responsibility thrust upon them, either through being ‘unpoetic’ or possessing the ‘power of abstraction’.⁴²

Despite Keats’s suggestion that the poet is ‘nothing’, there remains a sense of integrity that the poet must cling to. Stevens, too, indicates that there is – at times – a great deal of resistance to be exercised by the poet. Stevens predicts an approaching ‘violence’ of reality and asserts that ‘a possible poet must be a poet capable of resisting or evading the pressure of the reality of this last degree, with the knowledge that the degree of today may become a deadlier degree tomorrow’.⁴³ He concedes that his forecast is perhaps too dramatic to continue to indulge in, but he concludes with a rather pessimistic withdrawal of his quest to manifest the possible poet. It becomes evident that Stevens’s hypothetical poet must remain as such, or – at least – the final model is some way off in the distance, as Stevens laments in the closing of the section: ‘I confine myself to the outline of a possible poet, with only the slightest sketch of his background’.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Wallace Stevens, ‘Relations between Poetry and Painting’ in *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1996), pp.740-751, pp.750, 751.

⁴² Beyond this *modus operandi*, with specific regard to the work of poets, and returning to the figure of the ‘possible poet’ in ‘The Nobel Rider’, Stevens states that ‘the subject-matter of poetry is not that ‘collection of solid, static objects extended in space’ but the life that is lived in the scene that it composes; and so reality is not that external scene but the life that is lived in it.’ Stevens, here, is quoting – and rejecting – C. E. M. Joad’s response to Henri Bergson’s thoughts on the perception of objects; consequently, he offers the following précis: ‘Reality is things as they are’. ‘The Nobel Rider...’, p.658.

⁴³ ‘The Nobel Rider...’, p.659.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.659.

Despite the harsh future Stevens envisages for his poetic figure the ‘possible poet’ presents a far more hopeful configuration of the poet than the ‘annihilation’ that Keats foresees. However, I propose that the near abnegation of the self, for Keats’s poet, is a principle mirrored in the opening of Stevens’s ‘Mozart 1935’.

1.3.ii – ‘Be thou the voice...’

The poem in question begins with a conscription, perhaps a call to arts:

Poet, be seated at the piano
Play the present, its hoo-hoo-hoo,
Its shoo-shoo-shoo, its ric-a-nic,
Its envious cachinnation.⁴⁵

Immediately, and without warning, the reader is presented with the image – or rather the sound – of an impromptu musician. The ‘poet’ arrives as a vague, unknown, figure; indeed, it may be argued that it is the reader who is addressed, and it is the reader who is to take up the challenge.

The fourth and fifth stanzas implore the poet-pianist to channel only that which he is instructed; he must relinquish his agency, he is told ‘be thou the voice, / Not you’. This deferral of the self, I argue, can be seen as an example of the lack of identity Keats is keen to highlight in the construction of the chameleon poet and, furthermore, is clearly devoid of any ‘unchangeable characteristic’; rather, he is presented to be quite the model of transience.

I would also argue that this is an example of deferring creativity: the poet is not to invent, nor to improvise. They are seated at an instrument ostensibly alien to their art

⁴⁵ Wallace Stevens, ‘Mozart 1935’ in *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1996), pp. 107-108.

and expected to play; and beyond this, their playing is compared to Mozart's. This daunting task is surely one which no one expects the poet to carry out with panache and virtuosity; indeed, the music of Mozart is reduced to mere arpeggios and vague cachinnations. The poet, then, is off the hook, so to speak.

As a result, does the poet of 'Mozart 1935' become, perhaps, the chameleon musician, playing the music? Despite being un-musical, he clearly – as Keats would insist – 'has no identity – he is continually in for – and filling some other Body'. Or, perhaps, a 'possible musician', one capable 'of resisting or evading the pressure of the reality of this last degree'. The faceless poet-cum-musician is certainly a figure of intrigue for Stevens's audience, but he also represents an important link between the media of poetry and music. Stevens suggests, without much ado, that the role of the poet and the role of the musician, are essentially interchangeable; they become, simply, the artist.

1.3.iii – In which The Romantic Creativity of the Poet Stevens becomes acquainted with Reality

The ideology shared between Stevens and the Romantics is perhaps best reconciled through – as Leggett suggests – the harmonisation between imagination and abstraction.⁴⁶ Having considered Keats's perspective it serves this investigation well to briefly consider Coleridge's thoughts on ideas themselves. Richards, who Leggett holds responsible for a number of Stevens's theoretical perspectives, breaks down Coleridge's definition of an 'idea' and reduces it to two – potentially opposing – principles:

⁴⁶ Leggett, p. 35.

‘The imagination actuated by the pure reason’ is ‘the whole soul of man in activity’. What by and in it we know is certainly not a part of philosophy’s nomenclature. But what we *say* about it – whether we say that it is the mode of all our knowledge (ideas are regulative); or that it is what we know (ideas are constitutive) – must be said (thus abstractly) in a vocabulary.⁴⁷

Coleridge’s terms are levelled immediately in this passage and swiftly set up Richards’s attempts to reconcile the two principles that are formulated in association with the world and its representation. The use of language, and the importance of the language selected, are highlighted by Richards in the first excerpt from this passage. ‘Vocabulary’ itself will be brought to your attention more specifically in the coming pages. However, Richards continues:

I have tried to make the position acceptable that these rival doctrines here derive from different arrangements of our vocabularies and are only seeming alternatives, that each pressed far enough includes the other, and that the Ultimate Unabstracted and Unpresentable View that thus results is something we are familiar with and at home in the concrete fact of mind.⁴⁸

Evidently, Richards’s unfolding of Coleridge’s imaginative process presents a dichotomy between imagination and reality. This, of course, is neither an issue for Keats’s poet, who would not host the imagination in conflict with reality, nor for Stevens’s poet, who would only employ imagination as an abstraction of reality in the first instance – as soon as it is encountered. Leggett suggests, rather musically, that ‘once these rival doctrines are harmonized through the conception of abstraction, the artificial notion of “reality” is no longer a stumbling block for the imagination’.⁴⁹ As his mapping

⁴⁷ Ivor Armstrong Richards, *Coleridge on Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), p. 184.

⁴⁸ Richards, p. 184.

⁴⁹ Leggett, p. 35.

of the relationship between Richards and Stevens develops, Leggett makes an important distinction that shifts Stevens's 'possible poet' back into comparison with the chameleon poet. He posits that 'the reconciliation of imagination and reality follows directly from the poet's realisation of his abstractive powers'.⁵⁰ Thus, unlike Keats's formulations, where poet is unpoetical, Stevens's poet pursues, with intent, the poetic act. However, as earlier relayed, Leggett does not entertain the connection to Keats at any point in his volume, which makes it a little difficult to truly parse what this means for the Romantic inheritance he envisages for Stevens.

Stevens's Romantic inheritance offers a rich opportunity for critical scholarship, one that also fertilises thoughts on the connection between Stevens's poetic work and musical composition. Leonard and Wharton, in their joint-authored *The Fluent Mundo*, probe Stevens's engagement with a Romantic legacy and propose that he 'extensively explores and tests the vocabulary of the English Romantics, especially on the question of imagination versus reality'.⁵¹ Stevens acknowledges this connection himself, but asserts it was not the central theme to his work, in a letter to Bernard Heringman (1951) stating that 'while, of course, I come down from the past, the past is my own and not something marked Coleridge, Wordsworth, etc... My reality-imagination complex is entirely my own even though I see it in others'.⁵² Simon Critchley, in an observation which resonates with this thesis, posits that 'Stevens's work, and it shares this characteristic with its great Romantic precursors like Coleridge, is a poetry of notes, often musical notes'.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 37.

⁵¹ *The Fluent Mundo*, p. 42.

⁵² Wallace Stevens, *Letters*, ed. by Holly Stevens (New York: Knopf, 1951), p. 792.

⁵³ Simon Critchley, *Things Merely Are: Philosophy in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 60.

Further to this, Stevens explores his Romantic heritage in terms of a harmony that has already been raised in this chapter – the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind. To this end, Carroll suggests that the work of Stevens is ‘occupied by opposing metaphysical paradigms’⁵⁴. The first, he claims, is ‘the dualism of mind and reality that informs *Harmonium*’, and the second is the ‘transcendental unity of the mind and reality within the “mind of minds”’.⁵⁵ Carroll, here, is echoing Stevens’s own phrase from *Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas*.⁵⁶

In light of this dichotomy, and its potential for reconciliation, the following section shall form around Stevens’s own writing on the matter at hand, with the occasional return to those with whom the subject was grounded previously, in the hope one may shake a dialogue loose.

In a 1940 letter to Hi Simons, regarding the ‘Sombre Figuration’ sequence from his 1937 poem ‘Owl’s Clover’, Stevens explains:

The sub-conscious is assumed to be our beginning and end. It follows that it is the beginning and end of the conscious. Thus, the conscious is a lesser thing than the sub-conscious. The conscious is, therefore, inadequate. In another note I said that the imagination partakes of the conscious. Here it is treated as an activity of the sub-conscious: the imagination is the sub-conscious.⁵⁷

The last sentence of this excerpt is particularly striking: it appears to link the elements of Stevens’s Romantic influences and this chapter’s earlier discussion of the connection between ‘the unconscious and the conscious aspects of the self’. The distinction between the two worlds is blurred as Stevens continues:

In the presence of the things of the imagination, it seems to the conscious man, the rationalist, the realist, that he lives in a fluid. But there are realities so closely

⁵⁴ Carroll, p. 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Stevens, p. 229.

⁵⁷ *Letters*, p. 373.

Chapter One

resembling the things of the imagination that in their presence, the realist and the man of imagination are indistinguishable.⁵⁸

What appears to be occurring, from the perspective of Stevens, is a breakdown of the border between what Kandinsky would call the internal and external worlds. But, rather than leading to the ‘purely spiritual’ (as Kandinsky would suggest), Stevens delivers a far more troubling conclusion. As he puts it, ‘this destroys the order of things’ which refers to the closing few lines of the second section of ‘Sombre Figuration’:

[this is the fluid] in which
The man and the man below were reconciled,
The east wind in the west, order destroyed,
The cycle of the solid having turned.⁵⁹

‘The man below’ represents, in this instance, the figure of the sub-conscious. However, the destruction of order is not necessarily as devastating as the language would suggest. ‘Order’ and its dissolution are two opposing principles that are vital, if we look once more to Kandinsky, for the creation of art in the new realm of the purely spiritual experience. As with Kandinsky’s observations on Schoenberg, it is the renunciation of external conditions which allows art to flourish.⁶⁰

‘Mozart 1935’ emerges once more as an example of this exact practice. The poet-pianist must withstand all external distractions, but also permit a breakdown of the boundary between himself and the voice he is attempting to invoke. Taking the third stanza, one arrives at a distracted, trance-like, invocation of musical instruction. Time and reality become muddled and the imagination is stirred:

That lucid souvenir of the past,
The Divertimento;

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 373.

⁵⁹ Wallace Stevens, ‘Owl’s Clover’, V, Sombre Figuration, ii. lns.52-55. Unless stated otherwise, all further reference to Stevens’s poetry will be made from *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, (New York: The Library of America, 1996)

⁶⁰ *On the Spiritual in Art*, p. 149.

That airy dream of the future,
The unclouded concerto...
The Snow is falling.⁶¹

The oscillation between the task of the character seated at the piano and the musical world they must conjure straddles the border between the external and internal worlds. With the poet-pianist only roused from this sentimental revelry to ‘strike the piercing chord’, music is presented as the fundamental anchor of physicality and reality for the poet-pianist, while also operating as the spiritual hinge on which ‘the artistic’ and ‘the imagined’ swings into being. The quasi-Apollonian/Dionysian tension between what is happening and what is imagined produces both a making and un-making for the poet and then for the reader.

Thus, Stevens is actively engaging with the ideas of imagination and consciousness that pre-occupied his Romantic predecessors, and does so employing their language, yet the result is one that serves to – intentionally – manufacture a distance between himself and the likes of Coleridge and Wordsworth. Calling upon order and heralding its dissolution is a precarious position to balance, but it is one that will resurface throughout this thesis’s consideration of poetry and music, most notably in this chapter’s further discussions of Stevens’s poetry and chapter three’s exploration of Grace Hazard Conkling’s work.

Later, in his 1951 essay ‘Effects of Analogy’, Stevens returns to exploring the connection between imagination and reality, this time more directly addressing the two ideas from the perspective of the poet. The resulting considerations form an intricate postulation on the nature of artistic creativity more universally. The essay is dense, but

⁶¹ ‘Mozart, 1935’, lns. 10-14.

Chapter One

Stevens's articulation is nevertheless elegant and precise enough to warrant reproducing, so I will fragment and unpack his discussion of the 'two theories' of a poet's imagination:

The poet is constantly concerned with two theories. One relates to the imagination as a power within him not so much to destroy reality at will as to put it to his own uses. He comes to feel that his imagination is not wholly his own but that it may be part of a much larger, much more potent imagination, which it is his affair to try and get at.⁶²

This 'larger, much more potent imagination' which the poet attempts to 'get at' potentially represents two interpretations of the nature of creativity. In the first, like Keats's chameleon poet, Stevens's proposition suggests here that the poet opens up a connection with that which his poetry represents. Thus, the work becomes a viaduct for the subject of the verse which is then also accessible by the reader. The second, in a similar way to Kandinsky, would be to consider the 'imagination' to which Stevens refers as something more spiritual in nature, something outside both the poet and his work, but that is present in both and is also called upon by the reader when the work is received. Thus, the poet – and their work – is drawing on a body of ideas connected through a system external to themselves, which suggests that the audience, too – although to a lesser extent – is likely have some access to this 'larger imagination'. As a result, both of these perspectives seek to figure some noumenal space with which both the creator of art and the receiver of art share a relationship.

Leonard and Wharton, in considering the imagination of Stevens as both a poet and as a critic, discuss his use of 'various mental and linguistic gymnastics that thwart the imagination's insidious chromatisms' which leads, in turn, to a 'momentary revelation of the things themselves'.⁶³ They identify this process as 'decreation' and, in

⁶² Wallace Stevens, 'Effects of Analogy' from *The Necessary Angel* in *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1996), pp. 707-723, p. 712.

⁶³ *The Fluent Mundo*, p.2.

the increasingly complex case of the poetry of Wallace Stevens, exasperatedly outline how ‘the poet-as-critic becomes a de-creative creator inscribing an anti-poetic poetry’.⁶⁴ Although this muddled daisy-chain on the nature of the relationship between the poet and his work appears to be made with some humour, the concept of ‘decreation’ figures as an important aspect of Stevens’s own thoughts on imagination – and artistic creativity more broadly – and thus becomes a prominent element of his poetry. Roy Harvey Pearce, in his 1961 work *The Continuity of American Poetry*, breaks down Stevens’s decreative process:

The sum total of all poems – or, as a Stevens was to declare in *The Auroras of Autumn* and ‘The Rock’, of all creative acts – is decreation, and makes pass to the reality on which such creative acts are operative. Thus, the poet as decreator apprehends reality as it has been before (if ‘before’ can be used in a dialectical and not a temporal sense) it could be overcome and transformed by the poet as creator.⁶⁵

In support of these arguments for the noumenal, Leonard and Wharton suggest Pearce’s analysis indicates that decreation in the works of Stevens ‘opens onto a reality described in a hybridization of Kantian and Hegelian categories: “thing-in-itself” taken as dialectically (by which Pearce seems to mean logically) prior’.⁶⁶ Importantly, they note that we may reach the ‘conclusion that decreation leads us to the “portents of our own powers”’ – Stevens’s own phrase – and, as a result, Stevens (within a Kantian framework) points toward the noumenal.⁶⁷ The phrase they borrow from Stevens comes from his 1951 essay ‘Relations between Poetry and Painting’ when he postulates that ‘Modern reality is reality of decreation, in which our revelations are not the revelations of belief,

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.2.

⁶⁵ Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), p.412.

⁶⁶ *The Fluent Mundo*, p.3.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.3 and n.167.

but the precious portents of our own powers'.⁶⁸ Leonard and Wharton's use of this fragment, and the subtle emphasis on 'our own', suggests that the ability for engaging in decreation lies not solely with the poet, but with readers of poetry too – the 'us' to which they allude. The Kantian 'thing-in-itself', above, reminds us once more of Stevens's 'consummation' of artistic labour; the 'thing-in-itself' is the justification for – and the means by which one achieves – the creative endeavour.

Similarly, as Eleanor Cook explains, decreation in the work of Stevens sees 'the *schema* of the world move from a *schema* of something that is created – a world issued, say, by divine fiat from the Logos – to a *schema* of something that is uncreated'.⁶⁹ Critchley, in the same vein, suggests that it is this exploration, of how the 'relation between thought and things or mind and world is redescribed as the relation between *imagination* and *reality*', that places Stevens into a Kantian lineage.⁷⁰ According to Critchley, these two principles – imagination and reality – emerge as 'the two master concepts of Stevens's poetics'.⁷¹

However, Pearce posits that 'where [Ralph Waldo] Emerson was driven in the end to postulate a nature beyond nature, a supernatural, Stevens would postulate a reality within reality, an intranatural, or an infranatural'.⁷² Thus, such a consideration of Stevens's position reinforces the earlier claim that readers – or audiences – also have access to this 'larger imagination'; it becomes accessible simply by the nature of poetry. The same then, by extension, can be said of creativity more generally. That which gives breath to an artwork's creation – Stevens's 'larger imagination' – is also drawn upon during its reception; it can be found within the work of art itself.

⁶⁸ Stevens, 'Relations between Poetry and Painting', p.750.

⁶⁹ Eleanor Cook, 'The Deceptions of Wallace Stevens', *Wallace Stevens Journal*, 4 (1980), pp.46-57, p.46.

⁷⁰ Critchley, p.22.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.22.

⁷² Pearce, p.413.

To return to 'Effects of Analogy', Stevens continues to expound on the second theory, in a mirrored format to how he describes the first:

For this reason, [the poet] pushes on and lives, or tries to live, as Paul Valéry did, on the verge of consciousness. This often results in poetry that is marginal, subliminal. The same theory exists in relation to prose, to painting and other arts. The second theory relates to the imagination as a power within him to have such insights into reality as will make it possible for him to be sufficient as a poet in the very centre of consciousness. This results, or should result, in a central poetry.⁷³

So, for Stevens, the internal and external worlds – as they are delineated by Kandinsky – are paired with oppositional notions of the marginal and the central. The resulting dichotomy, of the internal/marginal poetry and external/central poetry, supports both the claim that Stevens is attempting to configure a noumenal sphere from which poetic creativity is drawn and the suggestion that Stevens is engaging – knowingly – with a Romantic heritage. Critchley draws these two positions together by proposing that 'far from being an anti-realist, Stevens is attempting to write a poetry of reality, where imagination touches reality, transfiguring the reality that it touches... [one must now understand] the Kantian and Romantic lineage of this thought'.⁷⁴

Stevens concludes his proposition of these two theories of imagination by stating:

The proponents of the first theory believe that it will be a part of their achievement to have created the poetry of the future... The proponents of the second theory believe that to create the poetry of the present is an incalculable difficulty, which rarely is achieved, fully and robustly, by anyone. They think that there is enough and more than enough to do what faces us and concerns us directly and that in poetry as an art, and for that matter, in any art, the central problem is always the problem of reality.⁷⁵

⁷³ 'Effects of Analogy', pp.712-713.

⁷⁴ Critchley, p.61.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.713.

The argument of Stevens's summation, above, echoes Kandinsky's remarks on the music of Schoenberg – that the composer, in shifting his art from a matter of the ear to a matter of the soul, creates the 'music of the future'.⁷⁶ Notably, in the fleeting connection to Kandinsky and in Stevens's argument unpacked above, the practices of painting and poetry are aligned once more – to the apparent neglect of the composer (of the musical variety).

1.3.iv – Poetic De-creation as part of Musical Composition

The presence of de-creation as an element of poetic output is an important perspective to consider. If, as Critchley suggests, such an element is responsible for reconciling the space between reality and imagination then it becomes a significant principle of all art and – by extension – artistic creativity.

The connection between poetry and painting, which, evidently, is a popular theoretical standpoint, indicates that the visual practice, too, lends itself to the proclivities of de-creation. As established above, Kandinsky would likely agree this to be the case. Kandinsky would also extend similar creative qualities to the work of the composer.⁷⁷

Cook notes that de-creation in Stevens's work can often accompany aural playfulness stemming from the stripping down of words to constituent fragments. One example Cook draws on is what she describes as the 'composting' of names in Stevens's 'Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction', where 'the name of Phoebus has flourished, then dies and will rot away into the uncreated but not into nothingness' and that 'part of Phoebus re-emerges in the ephebe'. She explains that 'though these two Greek words

⁷⁶ Kandinsky, p.149.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.171.

are not connected etymologically, the echo makes a succession clear: “Phoebus is dead, ephebe.””. Finally, she suggests that ‘in the parable of the sower, the word is sown. Here we have a natural process, without a sower; the name dies, but the syllable lives as compost and finds new life in ephebe’.⁷⁸

It was established in the previous section that ‘Mozart 1935’ produced a work of making and un-making; the reduction of Mozart’s music to simply a ‘hoo-hoo-hoo’ and a ‘ric-a-nic’ is a deft demonstration of the sonic decomposition Cook describes. One may argue that this ‘de-creative process’ is also one that belongs to music, with ‘Mozart 1935’ serving as a fitting bridge between the two, because, after all, it is the poet who is invited to become the musician. For example – taking the tenets of de-creativity as outlined in the previous section – the idea that de-creative art means the ‘relation between thought and things or mind and world is redescribed as the relation between *imagination* and *reality*’, would suggest that such a position is one which music can regularly be seen to occupy.⁷⁹ That is to say that music, too, can redescribe the relation between mind and world as imagination and reality and, thus, can also be considered de-creative. Simon Critchley’s later writings would also suggest that music is fertile ground for de-creation.⁸⁰ Similarly, it is also fairly straightforward to consider music a ‘thing-in-itself’, which is how Leonard and Wharton characterised Stevens’s poetry in the prior section, as – in a simplistic sense – the act itself becomes the art.⁸¹

Thus, what we may arrive at, through the arguments explored and the positions expounded in sections 1.2 and 1.3, are interpretations of creativity that one may apply

⁷⁸ Cook, p.49.

⁷⁹ Critchley, p. 22.

⁸⁰ Simon Critchley’s later work *On Bowie* explores in greater detail how de-creation transposes itself into the realm of music. (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2016)

⁸¹ *The Fluent Mundo*, p. 3.

to artistic endeavours, be those of music or poetry, and – specifically – the work of Wallace Stevens. These perspectives not only bring media of art together, they also consider ‘art’ as a system of production and reception. Creativity, considered in the ways above, brings together the artist, their art, and their audience; the three are linked through ‘the spiritual’. But they are all linked once more, in a more bodily sense, through the artist responsible for their composition. Specifically, the hand of the artist.

1.4 – Typing the Music of Poetry

‘Our writing tools are also working on our thoughts’

- Friedrich Nietzsche⁸²

Nietzsche’s words, striking as they are, not only comment on the role of writing instruments as a bridge between production and reception but encourage us to think about the separation between the physicality of our bodies and the comparative immateriality of our thoughts. The fragment above also harks back to the words which open both this chapter and Stevens’s ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’. Quince and Nietzsche are making the same observation; that which is being created by me is also creating something within me. For Peter Quince, it is the keys of the clavier – as he presses them to produce sound, the sounds make a further music within him; for Nietzsche, the tool is perhaps more ambiguous, but most likely refers to his Malling-Hansen typewriter, and he is reflecting on how the way he must form the words mechanically is affecting the way he composes them, even before committing them to paper.⁸³

⁸² Friedrich Nietzsche, letter toward the end of February, *Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, G. Colli and M. Montinari (eds), (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1975 – 84), pt. 3, 1: 172.

⁸³ Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wurz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 200, 204.

This chapter has so far been considering the nature of shared creative drives between music and literature; it now turns the focus to where such creativity meets creation. This section of the chapter looks at how artists must employ both the bodily and the intangible to operate the machines which give their art a physical manifestation. That is to say, and expressing things quite simplistically at this juncture, I will explore the connection between the processes employed to both print words on pages and to produce sounds from keyboards. The work in the sections ahead not only contribute to an innovative reading of Wallace Stevens poetry, and my subsequent challenge of prior scholarship, it also explores a proximity between the instruments of literature and music in a physical sense.

1.4.ii – Glenn Gould at the Clavier

Glenn Gould, in his television special *Glenn Gould on Bach* (1962), introduces his – presumably musically-uninitiated – audience to Johann Sebastian Bach’s compositional nuances. He looks at a number of Bach’s works and their impact on both musical composition as a practice and the nature of performance. Situating Bach’s music within the Age of Reason and the Baroque, and focussing on his unique technical intricacies, Gould provides an engaging analysis of both the composer’s *Gesamtwerk* and its place alongside art and artistry more generally. Gould considers Bach’s music to contain more than just sound; one important element of Bach’s work that Gould highlights is that, where many composers have explored themes as isolated events ‘propelling into a relationship with other themes’, the ‘eternally undulating flow’ contained within Bach’s musical architecture is what somehow produces ‘the suspended, perpetually transient,

unknowing, condition of man'.⁸⁴ However, in spite of this, Bach's work had very 'little effect' on the composer's own audiences. Where today people consider Bach's music to possess transcendental qualities, it would appear that historically at least, his popularity stemmed more from his compositional rigour than any emotional response that such compositions may ignite in the listener. Despite this, Gould suggests that

essentially, for Bach, art was a means of expressing that state of belief in which experience could be natively guided, in which only the obstructions and temptations of the world could thwart the immutable totality of existence.⁸⁵

One could listen to Gould talk about Bach for hours, but it pales in comparison to experiencing him *playing* Bach. Noting how he believes it to be one of Bach's most striking openings, Gould plays the first handful of notes from 'Cantata No. 54'. As he arpeggiates the chord, with his left hand, his righthand recoils up. His fingers twist and contort, and his arm bends at the elbow so the previously static hand is now knotted up by his chest, almost as if the very act of playing has caused all the tendons in his free arm to contract. All over in a moment, as the sound passes, his free hand unfurls and relaxes back down to rest limp at the pianist's side. The reaction triggered by playing the chord appears uncontrollable and involuntary.⁸⁶ Perhaps the potential for such a physical response is contained within what Gould mystically alludes to as 'the art, the music, and the poetry of the Baroque', or even some ethereal bond formed between the listener and a numinous realm.⁸⁷ The reason it occurs could be the product of any number

⁸⁴ Glenn Gould, *Glenn Gould on Bach*, (Canada: April 8th, 1962), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crQ8YEUKUjg>>, Accessed 15/04/2017, [00:08:01].

⁸⁵ Gould, [00:08:36].

⁸⁶ Gould, [00:09:31].

⁸⁷ Gould, [00:03:43].

of unique conditions. However, this chapter is interested primarily in the avenues of possibility that exploit the physical link between the artist and what they are creating.

1.4.iii – The Scientific Sublime

Gould is not alone in this seemingly peculiar response to music. The writing of Hector Berlioz not only features another example of such a visceral response to music, but also provides a reassuring vindication of our earlier sojourn into Stevens's Romantic heritage. Indeed, the French composer comes to us with a further striking similarity to another important Romantic figure in this chapter's earlier formulations of creativity; much like John Keats, Berlioz began his adult life with designs to become a physician.⁸⁸ Thus, despite their ultimate artistic trajectories, both composer and poet would have possessed a familiarity with the discourse of science, medicine, and rationality. Gould, too, whose detailed and mathematical commentary on the music of Bach comes from an informed and contextualised dissection of near-clinical calibre, exudes a stern – diagnostic – objectivity. Thus, Keats, Berlioz, and to a lesser extent Gould, can reasonably be seen to demonstrate some capacity for scientific, objective, language. Yet, the rational perspectives they are able to elucidate seem to then be twinned with apparently irrational physical responses.

The divergence between Gould's rational perspectives and unconscious reactions to playing and listening to music have been outlined in the section above, from external observations of his playing; but Berlioz often directly reflects upon his own cerebral and corporeal responses to music in his critical writings. As the composer

⁸⁸ Harold Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers* (London: David-Poynter Limited, 1971), p. 133.

Chapter One

outlines the difference between hearing and listening, in his essay ‘*A Travers Chants*’, he gets distracted by deriding the less expressive of his compositional peers and in doing so highlights the intellectual and physical impact of music on a person:

Merely satisfying the sense of hearing is a far cry from providing the exquisite [*délicieuses*] sensations that this organ is capable of experiencing; nor should one hold cheap the delights [*jouissances*] of the heart and the imagination; and as they are joined to the liveliest sensual pleasure in the true musical works of all schools, such impotent [*impuissants*] producers should also, in our opinion, be struck from the class of musicians: THEY DO NOT FEEL.⁸⁹

The vacancy, or numbness of feeling, that Berlioz decries in ‘impotent producers’ of musicians bears some resemblance to the relationship to sublimity in Keats’s chameleon poet. Those musicians described by Berlioz, unable to feel, are the inverse of Keats’s construction of the poet who – although similarly vacant – may only feel. The identity-less poet may lack agency but is still required to feel and, clearly for Berlioz, so too is the musician. Peter Quince, in Stevens’s poem, is likely empathetic to Berlioz’s suggestion here, that producers (of music) who ‘do not feel’ should be struck from the class of musicians, for it is his assertion that ‘Music is feeling, then, not sound’.

Translation becomes something of an issue for readers of contemporary reprints of Berlioz’s writing. As Fred Everett Maus notes in his essay ‘Virile Music by Hector Berlioz’, the most commonly available translation of this passage comes from Elizabeth Csicsery-Rónay’s 1994 edition.⁹⁰ In this English version, some of Berlioz’s enthusiasm – and euphemism – is masked, albeit unintentionally, by the translator’s choice of

⁸⁹ Hector Berlioz, *The Art of Music and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Elizabeth Csicsery-Rónay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 1-2.

⁹⁰ Fred Everett Maus, ‘Virile Music by Hector Berlioz’ in *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice* ed. by Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), pp. 113-133, p. 122.

language. Maus accuses the translator of normalizing Berlioz's expression somewhat – 'perhaps' he says, 'the translator finds Berlioz embarrassing'.⁹¹

For example, Berlioz writes:

Or, la satisfaction de l'ouïe est fort loin des sensations délicieuses que peut éprouver cet organe; les jouissances du coeur et de l'imagination ne sont pas non plus de celles dont on puisse faire aisément bon marché.⁹²

But Maus indicates that Csicsery-Rónay glides over Berlioz's intentional allusion to sensuousness. As he notes, 'Berlioz's language persistently evokes a sensual, seductive quality in music', which has been subsequently muted, or 'partially hidden by the translator's choices'.⁹³ He offers a slight clarification of the sentence, suggesting that 'the special, experienced ear may be charmed, may enjoy delicious sensation, leading to states described by the word *jouissance*', a word, Maus reminds us, 'that also denotes orgasm'.⁹⁴ Even without highlighting the significant connotations of this particular word, it is clear to see that Berlioz's reflections are outlining something beyond mere pleasure, something verging on the orgasmic. Indeed, as he goes on to describe:

On hearing certain compositions, my vital forces seem to be doubled in strength, I feel a delicious pleasure in which reason plays no part; next, the habit of analysis engenders the pleasures of admiration; emotion grows more intense in direct proportion to the vigour or nobility of the composer's ideas and causes a strange agitation in my bloody circulation: my arteries beat violently. Tears, which normally herald the end of the paroxysm, occasionally betoken an intermediate stage soon to be surpassed. When this happens, my muscles contract spasmodically, a trembling overtakes my limbs and a numbness my hands and feet, while the nerves of sight and hearing are partially paralyzed; I can no longer see, I barely hear, I become dizzy and fall into a half-faint.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Maus, p. 124.

⁹² Hector Berlioz, *A Travers Chant* (Paris: M. Ernest Legouvé et Michel Lévy Frères, 1862), p. 2.

⁹³ Maus, p. 123.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 123.

⁹⁵ Berlioz and Csicsery-Rónay, p. 6.

Maus offers a few amendments to the translation which help unveil the ‘normalising’ tone of the translator: ‘there are spasmodic muscle contractions, trembling of all the limbs, *total numbness of the feet and hands*, partial paralysis of the nerves of vision and hearing, I don’t see, I scarcely hear; dizziness... half-fainting...’.⁹⁶ He notes that ‘the first-person pronoun disappears from Berlioz’s descriptions of his bodily responses, reappearing only briefly to mark the separation of his subjectivity from his senses and the passage ends with fragments’.⁹⁷ The result of these observations is that Berlioz’s writing mirrors the states his body passes through; as Maus adds, ‘these intermittent extreme experiences seem to shatter Berlioz’s sense of himself, leaving failed senses, shuddering flesh and near extinction of consciousness, this dissolution deftly communicated by the eventual shattering of syntax in [his] description’.⁹⁸ The act of writing, here, thus appears to mirror the response of hearing music; an involuntary response is triggered and a degree of agency is apparently surrendered to the experience.

The language of Maus’s appraisal returns us – in a somewhat violent sense – to this chapter’s earlier discussions on Romantic creativity (which, of course, ties inextricably to Berlioz) and, in particular, negative capability. Indeed, ‘the dissolution of the self’ is the term I used to describe Keats’s construction of the chameleon poet. While there are clear differences in how Keats and Berlioz regard the role of the practitioner in their respective artistic forms, there is some parity to be drawn between what they consider to be an appropriate response to their corresponding media. However, Keats places the vassality of the poet before the process of composition and Berlioz, of

⁹⁶ Maus, p. 124, Maus’s emphasis.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 124.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 124.

the musician, after. Arguably, they would both support the perspective that such a state of being – whether it precedes the act or lingers after it – should be present *during* the act of composition; and, as such, becomes a fundamental part of the artist and their creative process.

Further to this, what we see in Berlioz's sensory episode is not all too dissimilar to the temporary paralysis exhibited by Gould. Although this more recent example is not as severe as the catatonic state of apoplexy recounted by Berlioz, there is a clear correlation between the unconscious physical reaction to listening to – and playing – music.

Berlioz also reveals a rather poignant observation; that 'the habit of analysis engenders the pleasures of admiration'. Significantly, this suggests that there is a correlation – for Berlioz at least – between understanding music and its enjoyment. We know that Berlioz received a cursory medical education and is familiar with how the body may react to stimulus, so, for the composer, the response of the audience is merely a rational one; bound by the tenets of creativity and tempered by subjective appreciation of the productive process. Similarly, Gould's hand contorts itself in response to a combination of musical notes that Gould himself declares to be one of 'the most striking'. This is perfectly understandable for Berlioz's position – Gould's 'pleasure of admiration' stems directly from his 'habit of analysis'; the pianist's intricate and intimate understanding of Bach contributes to the effect Bach's music has on him.

This is not to say that those unfamiliar with compositional processes cannot experience a similar level of '*jouissance*' when experiencing art, but merely that those with an understanding of the creative process are doubly inclined to appreciate the

Chapter One

artistic product of such efforts – *mutatis mutandis*, and in the same vein, doubly inclined to be critical.

Keats, too, can be seen to express a creative rationality which is so often masked in the sublimity of his verse. In a letter to his brother, George, regarding the poem ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’ he writes:

Why four kisses? you will say. Why four? Because I wish to restrain the headlong impetuosity of my Muse. She would have fain said ‘score’ without hurting the rhyme – but we temper the imagination (as the critics say) with judgement. I was obliged to choose an even number, that both eyes might have fair play: and to speak truly I think two a piece quite sufficient. Suppose I had ‘seven’? There would have been three and a half apiece, a very awkward affair.⁹⁹

Here, Keats acknowledges an obscure – external – creative impetus behind the genesis of a poem but goes on to describe the rationalised decisions behind its composition. What becomes clear is that Keats knowingly balances his inspired creative drive with an awareness of the tenets of poetic form. This is perhaps evidence of some level of compositional alignment with Berlioz’s remark that ‘the habit of analysis engenders the pleasures of admiration’.

Thus, we may say that Gould, Keats, and Berlioz are not necessarily beguiled by the sublimity of art in a *spiritual* sense, but in a rational – and physical – one. The relationship between rationality and suspensions thereof, in the face of the sublime, becomes an important element of the poetry looked at in this chapter. These shared creative experiences can reveal more about composition and reception, or, more directly, playing, typing, reading, and listening. In particular, such revelation allows us a new

⁹⁹ John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats Volume II*, ed. by Hyder Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 97.

perspective to consider when reading texts which involve such acts, namely ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’.

1.4.iv – Key Elements

The connection between the pianist, the composer, and the keyboard, explored hitherto, ties together the elements of music I want to address in this portion of my thesis. These entities combine within the idea of the ‘instrumental’ and provide a meaningful context in which to reassess Wallace Stevens’s work – namely his 1915 poem ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’. The perspectives of Martin Heidegger, in his 1942 lecture ‘Parmenides’, regarding the use of typewriters as an operation of production will be employed to unpack the connection between Stevens’s poetry and more *overtly musical* forms of art. Furthermore, I will explore how both Stevens and Heidegger negotiate the shared territory between tools of writing literature and playing music.

The opening stanza of ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ evokes a parallel with Gould’s unanticipated physical reaction to the playing of his instrument:

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the self-same sounds
On my spirit make a music, too.¹⁰⁰

This passage draws together the physical nature of musical performance and the near-spiritual mysticism of visceral musical affect. What this stanza hints at is a chain of causation between playing and feeling. For Stevens, at least, and from what Gould demonstrates, the pressing of keys on a keyboard not only produces sound but the sounds

¹⁰⁰ Wallace Stevens, ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’, in *Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose* (New York: Library of America, 1997), p. 72, lns. 1-3.

in turn are accountable for further emotional – or physical – responses. Thus, while simply listening to music can prove to be an emotional experience, Gould and Stevens indicate that *playing* is what can fully consume a person both spiritually and corporeally. Stevens draws upon on music's emotive impact further in the very next line when he states that 'Music is feeling, then, not sound'.¹⁰¹ This concept – of sound being a somewhat secondary condition of music – is not particularly alien to those who enjoy playing or listening to music; indeed it is at times a prescient figure in the mind of the composer – what Gould identifies as Bach's desire to capture in his music the 'joyous essence of being'.¹⁰²

For me, this opening stanza of Stevens's is among the most striking of all his poetry. Not only does the image it conjures offer the reader an intriguing perspective on the nature of *playing* but it indulges the listener in the relationship the player has with their instrument. Beyond this, the lines generate a two-way balance of artistic creation and consumption, with both positions hinged on the keys of a musical instrument.

1.4.v – The Body as Instrument

What Stevens appears to be suggesting, in the last line of this first stanza, is that people or – more specifically – their bodies, are also instruments: not only in their own role in the production of sounds but in the sense that they too may be played, emotively, by sounds. Yet, bodies, in the first instance, are not necessarily *instrumental* in the production of music – an image perhaps most reminiscent of Coleridge's 'The Eolian Harp', wherein the nature of man is compared with the order of nature itself. The poem explores the oppositional forces between nature and man – and the order and disorder

¹⁰¹ Stevens, ln. 4.

¹⁰² Gould, [00:33:37]

between them – and, in some respects, represents how the two can be reconciled through invocations of music:

O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.¹⁰³

The poem takes its inspiration from the Aeolian harp, an instrument which is played not by any part of the body, but by the wind. Coleridge describes how, like the harp, he is played by the thoughts that pass through his mind:

And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute!¹⁰⁴

There is a certain passivity suggested by these stanzas – which produces a system in which the body is seen as the instrument simply waiting to be played. This is quite different from the tack taken by Stevens, where the emotive music of the body is the by-product of an active mind, not an idle one:

And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
is music.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Eolian Harp' in *Romanticism: An Anthology* ed. by Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 601.

¹⁰⁴ Coleridge,

¹⁰⁵ Stevens, lns. 5-8.

Both Coleridge and Stevens broach the transcendental path music appears to traverse between physicality and spirituality. Both take ‘feeling’ as appealing to both corporal and ethereal senses. Yet the key, and central, component of both Stevens’s poem, and music more generally, is the role of the instrument. However, for Stevens, the role of musician is also given equal, if not greater, standing. Unlike Coleridge’s unmanned harp, Stevens’s clavier cannot be played without the poet’s fingers.

Martin Heidegger’s 1942 lecture, *Parmenides*, offers a useful perspective on the role of the hands in the production of art. The talk, which takes its name from the pre-Socratic philosopher, engages in a dialogue with the eponymous thinker’s ‘didactic poem’. In a section focussing on the modern world’s use of technology, Heidegger’s attention turns to the typewriter and – more specifically – the hands that use them. He suggests that ‘man himself acts [*handelt*] through the hand [*Hand*]’ and that ‘the hand is, together with the word, the essential distinction of man’.¹⁰⁶ He proceeds to detail the importance of the hand in terms of the actions it performs; among prayer, greeting, and oath, there is ‘also the “work” of the hand, the “hand-work” and the tool[-work]’.¹⁰⁷ Heidegger caveats this expression by declaring, ‘Man does not “have” hands, but the hand holds the essence of man, because word as the essential realm of the hand is the ground of the essence of man’.¹⁰⁸ What we may take this to mean is that while words exist as a series of shared conceptual anchor points of meaning, without the hand we cannot hope to render them with permanence. Thus, that which makes us different from animals – words – is intrinsically linked to that which enables us to create such entities – hands.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ Heidegger, p.80.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p.80.

¹⁰⁹ Later in this chapter I will explore the possible musical equivalent of such an ‘essence’.

Heidegger concedes that his position is a complex and obfuscated one: as this chapter develops, and as the connection between musical keys and literary keys is further elucidated, Heidegger's philosophical propositions shall become clearer.¹¹⁰

The ultimate role of the typewriter is one that interrupts the fundamental writing process of the hand, as Heidegger frames it: 'The typewriter tears writing from the essential realm of the hand, i.e., the realm of the word'.¹¹¹ However, one key principle is stressed: 'The typewriter is a signless cloud, i.e., a withdrawing concealment in the midst of its very obtrusiveness, and through it Being-to-man is transformed'.¹¹² Thus, the typewriter is what Heidegger designates as an 'intermediate thing, between a tool and a machine'.¹¹³ It is also intermediate in the position it holds between man and his essential realm – it sits between the hand and the page and, thus, between the hand the word.

1.4.vi – Handel/*Handelt*: A Comparison of Artistic Tools

Before continuing to unpack Heidegger's philosophical stance, it is important to address the fact that the typewriter is not the piano, nor is it particularly regarded as a musical instrument in any sense. However, as this chapter aims to establish, there are a number of systemic and operational similarities between the two mechanisms and numerous parallels between their employment as tools of artistic production. However, a delightfully germane point – especially with regards to the nature of this thesis – springs from the 'Clavier' of Stevens's title. The Clavier, while used to describe stringed

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.81.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.80.

¹¹² Ibid, p.85.

¹¹³ Ibid, p.85.

Chapter One

keyboard instruments is, in fact, an example of synecdoche.¹¹⁴ ‘Clavier’ comes, originally, from the Latin, *clavis*, for key; you may then trace its evolution through Medieval Latin, where it develops into *claviarus*, for key bearer, to contemporary French, *clavier*, for keyboard.¹¹⁵ Thus, ‘clavier’ refers both to the keyboard upon which Peter Quince finds his fingers, and the keyboard upon which I type this now.

The emerging popularity of the typewriter and its growing place in society were in fact underpinned by, as Julius Meyer and Josef Silbermann noted in 1895, ‘a practical use for what has become a veritable plague across the country, namely, piano lessons’, as ‘the resultant dexterity is very useful for the operation of the typewriter’.¹¹⁶ Beyond this, as has become evident, the typewriter and the piano share a vital component – the keyboard. Indeed, the language one uses to talk about typewriters, and their operation, stems from somewhat musical origins.

If one were to explore the inner workings of a typewriter, produce a brief outline of its mechanical intricacies, and then consider such a description of its operation alongside the description of the mechanisms of a piano, there would be quite some overlap. To explore this simply: the pressing of a key lifts a lever, this lever in turn sets a hammer in motion. This is what is known as the ‘action’ of a keyboard, and such a function belongs to both keys on a typewriter and keys on a piano, or harpsichord, or clavichord, and so on. Where each of these tools differ is in what happens at the head-end of the hammer and what material it meets at the terminus. For the typewriter (see *fig. 2*), a typeface is pushed through an inked ribbon with enough force to imprint the embossed figure of the typeface onto a page which sits behind the ribbon.

¹¹⁴ John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1965), p.429.

¹¹⁵ *Collins Latin Dictionary*, ed. by Joyce Littlejohn, (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 37, and T. F. Hoad, *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), ‘Clavier’.

¹¹⁶ Julius Meyer and Josef Silbermann, *Die Frau im Handel und Gewerbe* (Berlin, 1895), p. 264.

July 9, 1935.

R. ATTI

2,007,516

TYPEWRITER MECHANISM
Filed Sept. 22, 1932

3 Sheets-Sheet 1

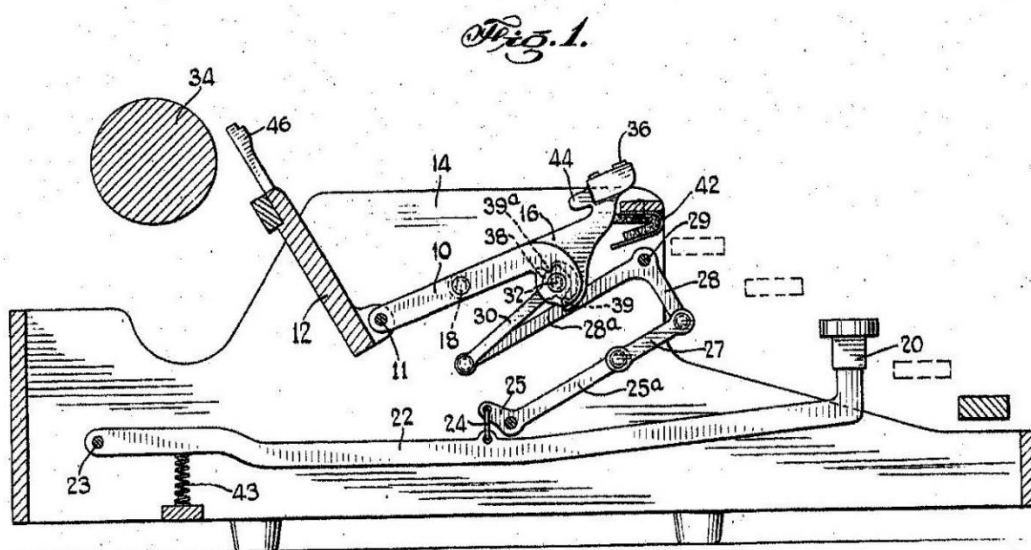


Fig. 2¹¹⁷ – A cross-section of a typewriter's mechanical action.

For the piano (see *fig. 3*), the hammerhead is cushioned and, when triggered by the lever, strikes a string corresponding to the key depressed.

¹¹⁷ Ralph Atti, *Patent Application for 'Noiseless Typewriter'*, (New York: United States Patent Office, 1935), can also found: < http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-vzzVg1XHPgl/Ty_LFTsoLnI/AAAAAAAAALdw/hUVsSqR6z7c/s1600/Noiseless+1935+001.jpg > [Accessed: 11/11/2016].

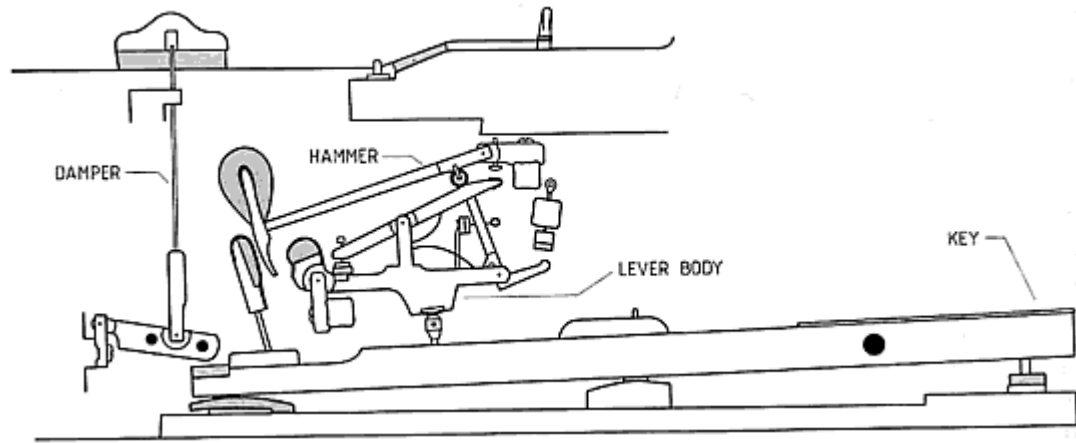


Fig. 3¹¹⁸ – A cross-section of a pianoforte's mechanical action.

For the Harpsichord (see *fig.4*), in lieu of a hammerhead, the end of the lever is tipped with a reed plectrum which plucks, rather than strikes, the corresponding string.

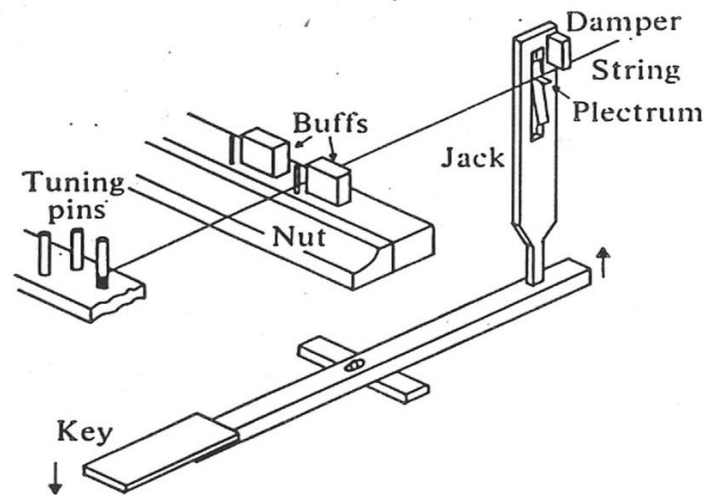


Fig. 4¹¹⁹ – A cross-section of a harpsichord's mechanical operation.

Finally, the clavichord (see *fig.5*), which shares an obvious nomenclature with Stevens's poem, predates the piano by some time yet operates in a similar fashion. The key is

¹¹⁸ Anders Askenfelt & Erik Jansson, 'From Touch to String Vibration' in *Five Lectures on the Acoustics of the Piano*, ed. by Anders Askenfelt, (Stockholm: The Royal Swedish Academy of Music, 1990), Available Online: < https://www.speech.kth.se/music/5_lectures/askenflt/images/40_01.gif > [Accessed: 11/11/2016].

¹¹⁹ Neville Fletcher and Thomas Rossing, *The Physics of Musical Instruments* (New York: Springer, 2010), p. 290. Also available online: < http://images.slideplayer.com/16/4986554/slides/slide_5.jpg > [Accessed: 11/11/2016].

depressed, rocking a lever on a pivot, with a tangent – in lieu of a dampened hammer – striking the string.

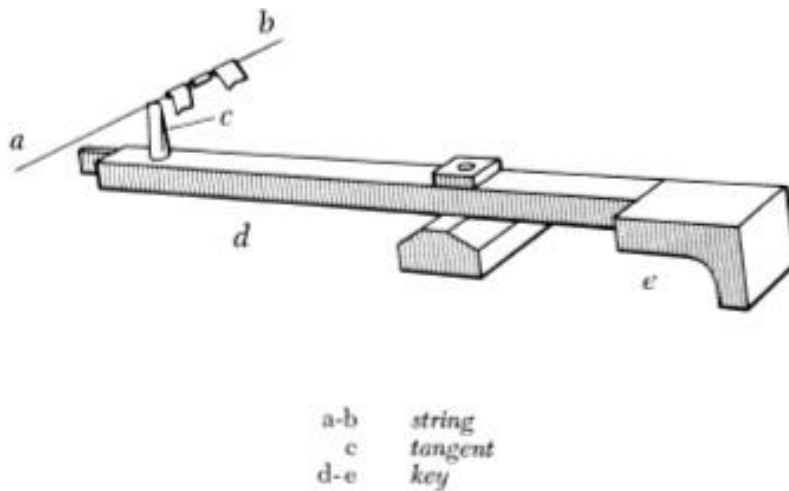


Fig. 5¹²⁰ – A cross-section of a clavichord's mechanical operation.

Thus, the clavichord, the harpsichord, and the piano present themselves as the musical systems most easily comparable to Heidegger's typewriter. If the typewriter tears man away from the essential realm of the hand – the realm of script and handwriting – the actions of these instruments tear man away from a similar realm. The harpsichord most closely mimics the essential practice of the hand in musical production. If, for Heidegger, handwriting is the essential process of the 'properly acting hand', the action interrupted by the 'mechanical force' of the typewriter, then it may follow that *plucking* is the comparable action for musical production.¹²¹ The lute, the harp, the lyre, although not the earliest of instruments, simply operate by bringing together the string and the hand itself – in much the same way that the hand and the page maintain Heidegger's essential realm. Therefore, the piano, the harpsichord, and those instruments in which the clavier

¹²⁰ Gillespie, p. 5.

¹²¹ Heidegger, p. 80

Chapter One

is present, interrupt the hand and its essential action – placing a further mechanism between man and the product of man's work.

These shared processes are important to hold in one's mind when approaching the more esoteric proclivities of this chapter. Although analysis of keyboards will be developed in greater detail later, the reader will appreciate that a working understanding of the basic elements of both typewriters and the clavier are fundamental to the discussions ahead.

The function, then, of the clavier and the typewriter is pivotal in the production of the physical manifestations of art – the generation of palpable signifiers. For the writer, the page is printed and their words are sealed corporeally upon the paper – for the clavierist, their music is rendered sonically in the vibrating strings that resonate through the air to quiver the ear. But, for Heidegger, the typewriter is merely a tool, a signless cloud; it is the hand that is of most interest to him. Barbara Johnson, in her 2008 monograph *Persons and Things*, explores a line of thinking in tandem with Heidegger's philosophy on objects.

Drawing on some of the German philosopher's later writings, Johnson somewhat clarifies the positions Heidegger presented earlier in his career. Noting how Heidegger's arguments heretofore have resulted in endless circles of self-reference, she identifies that 'the real opposition is between art and equipment' rather than art and 'thing'.¹²² Johnson also considers such equipment less intrusive than Heidegger does, suggesting that 'equipment extends me, while art encompasses me'. The use of the word 'equipment' is borrowed from Heidegger's revised postulations in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1950-60), wherein he suggests 'equipment displays an affinity with the art work insofar

¹²² Barbara Johnson, 'They Urn It' in *Persons and Things*, pp. 61-82 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 63.

as it is something produced by the human hand'.¹²³ I rather favour this syntax, as it is suggestive of the act of 'equipping' something. 'Equipping' fits into Heidegger's insistence on the importance of the hand, but indicates a more cooperative relationship: rather than 'tearing' man away from his essential realm, it simply shifts the relationship to a shared ground between tool and hand – what Johnson identifies as 'the intermediate stage between work of art and thing'.¹²⁴ More than this, the term 'equipment' underscores the fact that such tools can be used to *create* works of art. This is an important perspective to consider when addressing the shared protocols between typewriters and musical instruments, as it suggests that the hand can *wield* the sound, just as – for Heidegger – it wields the word.

1.4.vii – Patently Musical

The mechanical and symbolic connection between the typewriter and its musical equivalents that I have been outlining in this section comes to an uncanny zenith when one explores the early days of industrial-scale printing presses.

In 1822, William Church registered a patent for an 'improved apparatus for printing'. *The London Journal of Arts and Sciences* reported it to be an 'ingenious' mechanism, one 'which embraces a more extensive range of invention than [they] remember ever to have seen before projected by an individual', perhaps one that has been a result of 'a stroke of magic'.¹²⁵ This high praise is enough to whet the appetite of

¹²³ Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language, and Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 23.

¹²⁴ Johnson, p. 63.

¹²⁵ William Newton, *The Journal Arts and Sciences*, No. 35, Vol. 6 (London: Sherwood, Jones, & co., 1823), pp. 225-226 [University of Leeds Special Collections]

any printing-press enthusiast, but the real revelation is in the peculiar description of both its function and its operation:

In our fourth Vol., page 200, we gave notice of this ingenious apparatus, consisting principally of three pieces of mechanism; the first of which is designed to cast metallic types with great expedition, and to arrange them ready for the compositor ; the second is to compose those types into words and sentences, by an operation similar to the fingering of a piano-forte ; and the third, a press to produce printed impressions from the composition, in the most perfect manner, and with unexampled celerity.¹²⁶

William Newton's employment of musical terms above illustrates his attempt to provide an initial outline of how Church's press worked to an audience with scant frames of reference for the manual operation being described; the most straightforward way that Newton finds to do this is to compare Church's mechanism to the workings of a keyed musical instrument. Presumably, Newton considers the two mechanical systems similar enough in operation to allow him to bypass a complex and lengthy description and rely instead on a resemblance he finds self-evident. Further to this, one will note the use of 'compositor' and 'compose' in a way that analogises the role of both the poet and the musician; this printing press may, of course, be used for – and more than likely will be – materials other than poetry, but the intentional semantic link draws the detached operation of the printing press in line with the creative drives behind the more artistic elements of symbolic expression. As the patent listing continues, it begins to describe, in detail too great to reproduce here in full, precisely how Church's press works. I offer, in lieu of the complete listing, a fragment explaining one of the machines uncannier operations, which you may read with correspondence to the original patent illustration (see *fig. 6*):

¹²⁶ Newton, p. 225.

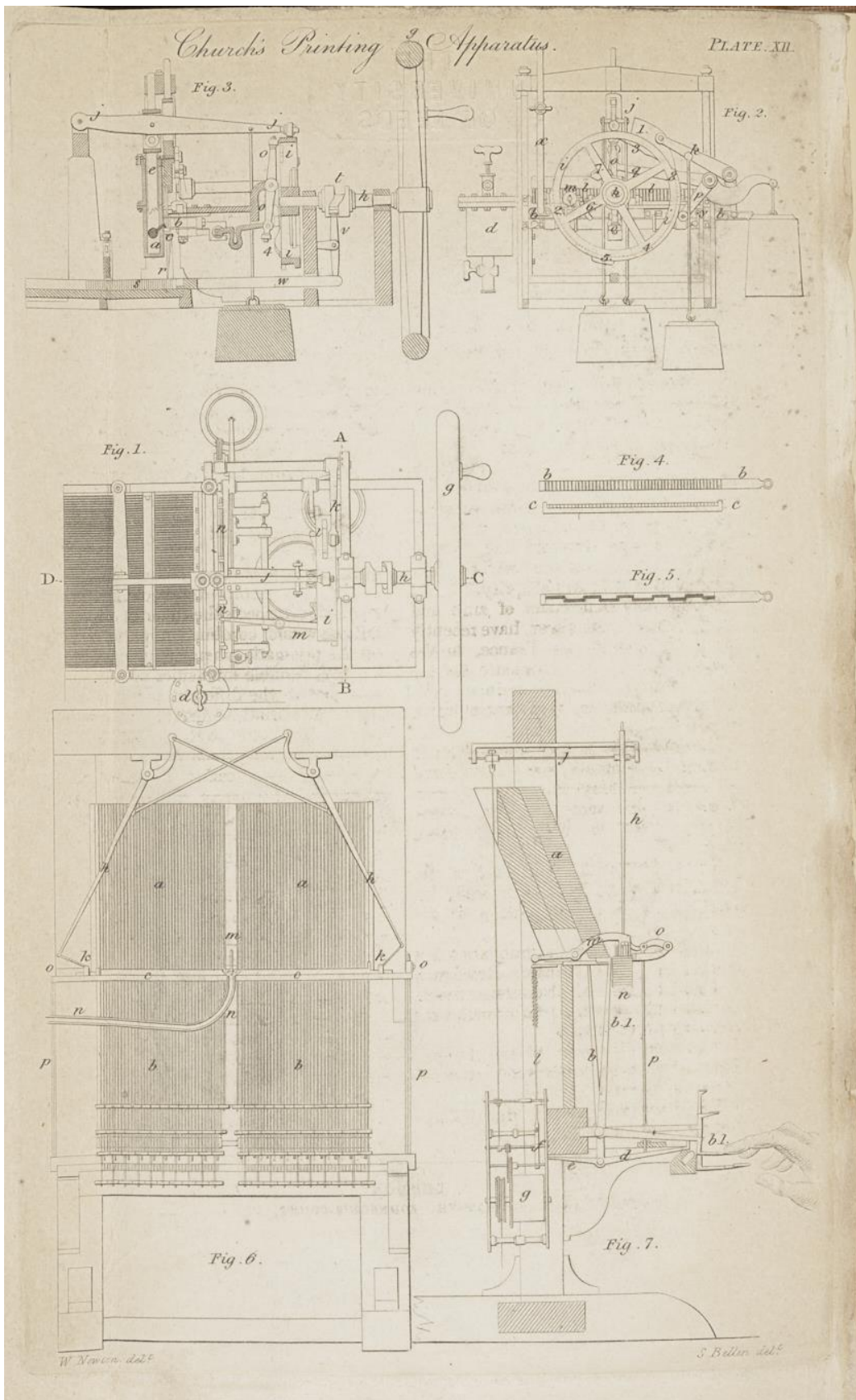


Fig. 6 ¹²⁷ – An Illustration of William Church's Patent Design for a type-setter.

There are several simplified modifications of this apparatus, to be worked by hand, divested of the fly-wheel and most of the levers; but these are not calculated to perform the business with equal facility, or to produce so great a number of types at one operation.

The second part of this series of apparatus for printing, is the machine by which the types are to be composed, that is, selected and associated together into words and sentences. Having disposed and arranged the several sorts of types into narrow boxes or slips, each individual slip containing a great number of types of the same letter, which is called a file of letters, the cases with these types are placed in the upper part of the composing machine, a front view of which is shewn (sic.) at fig. 6, and a section of the same at fig. 7 ; a a, are the boxes or slips containing the types ; b b, are a number of jacks, to each of which a key is connected in a manner somewhat similar to the jack and keys of a harpsichord or piano-forte. There are four rows of keys, which are so disposed for the convenience of gaining space, in order that any one of them may be touched by the finger as at fig. 7 ; ccc, is a plate with a number of slits corresponding to the keys, through which slits the heads of the jacks pass. There are precisely the same numbers of files of letters that there are jacks, each file standing exactly over the head of its jack in front of it.

Any one of the keys being pressed upon by the finger will cause the upper part of the jack to advance, and push forward the lower type of the file against which it stood on to the front part of the plate.¹²⁸

So, simply: the depressing of a key, which corresponds to a file of letters, releases a typeface into the press setting, forming a printing plate. As the press setting plate is completed, the arrangement of typefaces is then pressed, inked, onto the paper. Thus, Church's press is, in fact, an embryonic form of what we – and certainly Heidegger – would take to be a typewriter. However, where the typewriter translates the action of a key to the page letter by letter, Church's machine completes the task page by page.

The reader will note that, once more, the language of music is used to outline how the machine operates. Specifically, the role and employment of 'keys' are likened to those of a musical instrument; the manner in which they are pressed, and the resulting

¹²⁷ Ibid, engraved plate 12. One will also note the mechanical similarities to both the typewriter and keyboard instruments above. Reproduced with the permission of Special Collections, Leeds University Library.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 230.

action, are compared with the piano-forte and the harpsichord. Further to this, the arrangement of keys so that they are ‘disposed for the convenience of gaining space, in order that any one of them may be touched by the finger’, strikes an additional resemblance to both the ‘*clavier*’ of a keyed instrument and the mechanisms of a modern typewriter. Consequently, the patent listing appears to be describing a rudimentary ‘keyboard’, in the typing sense, as we know it today. Indeed, Church’s patent predates any publicly available keyboard-based typewriting design, commercial, domestic, or otherwise, by at least thirty years, with the most recognisable manifestations arriving in the 1870s, along with the first recorded roles of ‘typist’ as a form of employment.¹²⁹ Thus, what we may consider to be the very first manifestation of a lexical keyboard required a description almost entirely dependent on the mechanical operation of musical instruments.

In light of this, it is worth noting that the patent listings above were previously considered lost. Their discovery not only provides this chapter with an important example of the closeness of the tools of music and literature, especially given the clear invocation of the instrumental in the description of its operation, but also that they indicate a further contribution of this thesis to the field of musico-literary study.

1.4.viii – Between the Head and the Hand

The fourth section of ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ once more lays out the divisions and unities between the body and the mind. It begins to dissect, for the reader, what one may

¹²⁹ Cf. Kittler, pp.184, 187, 191; one may also note William Burt’s inefficient design for a dial-operated typing machine in Horace Eldon Burt, *William Austin Burt, Inventor of the Typewriter First Constructed in Any Country, Solar Compass, Equatorial Sextant*. (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley, 1920).

Chapter One

take from such an important distinction. The body is reinforced as a vital component of the human experience, even in terms of art:

Beauty is momentary in the mind –
The fitful tracing of a portal:
But in the flesh it is immortal.¹³⁰

The transience of thought that Stevens captures in these lines strikes a discordant image for the reader to contemplate. Suggesting that merely clinging to *the idea* of something is inadequate, the stanza sheds some light on the desire to manifest art physically. However, as we all know, flesh itself is far from immortal. Stevens seeks to address this concern at the start of the next stanza and gilds the pill by declaring ‘The body dies; the body’s beauty lives’.¹³¹ This suggests that beauty, while represented ‘in the flesh’, clings to something more akin to essence than pure corporeality.

This, of course, is where the media of page and sound are most disparate. While it may be true that pages are susceptible to decay, the physical sounds of the clavier are far more fleeting. David Sudnow, in the introduction to his 1993 book *Ways of the Hand*, offers his readers an even greater sense of disorientation when he relays his experiences of being physically sat in front of the keyboard – of both literary and musical varieties. Sudnow remarks of his playing that ‘the sight of his piano-playing hands is familiar’, ‘I know their looks, not only in those intimate ways we all know our hands’ looks, but as my jazz-making hands’.¹³²

He indicates that he can play his piano without looking and without a score in front of him, but this is not purely ‘improvisation’; it is rather a response to the pathway

¹³⁰ Stevens, p. 74, lns. 50-52.

¹³¹ Stevens, ln. 53.

¹³² David Sudnow, *The Ways of the Hand*, (London: The MIT Press, 1995), p. xi

of a ‘visual Gestalt’.¹³³ Regardless, this process of ‘playing’ remains a largely unconscious undertaking. There is an acknowledgment of prior experiences of playing, which contributes to this unconscious dexterity, but Sudnow suggests that the hands are somewhat isolated from such processes; the fingers become alien operators of a creative impulse. Indeed, as he later claims, almost echoing the ‘fingers on these keys’ which ‘make music’ for Quince and Stevens, ‘one sense [he has] from [his] vantage point looking down is that the fingers are making the music all by themselves’.¹³⁴

His thoughts on this relationship, between his unconscious, his fingers, and his piano keys are extended – to some degree – to include the keyboard of a typewriter, although he concedes that he is ‘startled by the looks of [his] hands while typing’, and in contrast to the semi-sentience he sees in his piano-playing fingers, he states that ‘if I watch my hands on a typewriter, I don’t recognise their movements’.¹³⁵ The suggestion, here, is that typing – for Sudnow – is far less of an unconscious act. Yet, he recognises that the same mechanisms of dexterity and symbol production are still occurring:

As I watch the letters coming up on the page when typing rapidly along, thinking the thought as my typing, as I watch the thought seeming to settle down on the page as the competent flycaster smoothly sets a lure gently down on a trout pond, I wonder, had I a similar historical access to the looks of my fingers at this typewriter keyboard, would I see ‘fingers doing thinking’?¹³⁶

The first half of the passage above highlights the same connection between the mind and the typing action that Sudnow describes of his vacant-minded piano playing; but, in front of the typewriter, such an action is conscious and deliberate. The act of typing is a

¹³³ Sudnow, p. xi.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. xiii

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. xi

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. xiii

Chapter One

thoughtful one, insofar as the fingers are not acting separately in this instance but are tethered to the thought of the word. Yet, there is still an indication that there is some nascent autonomy in this process; the fingers are simultaneously acting in response to active thoughts of letters, but their movements are unfamiliar; thus, the typing becomes both conscious and unconscious. Just as the Gestalt pathways unconsciously guide his fingers to form music on the piano keys, there must coexist a thought which pairs itself to the key pressed and the letters created, so that the action on the keyboard becomes, as Sudnow essentially frames it, the typed thought.

The latter half, however, suggests that someone with a more developed relationship with a typewriter – such as Sudnow has with his piano – would experience similar ‘unthinking’ actions when engaging with the keyboard of a typewriter. An observation from Angelo Beyerlen, the founder of Germany’s first typewriter company, neatly brings together the special dexterity of hands on keys and the different distances between the production of the symbol by hand and by mechanism:

In writing by hand, the eye must constantly watch the written line and only that. It must attend to the creation of each written line, must measure, direct, and, in short, guide the hand through each movement. For this, the written line, particularly the line being written, must be visible. By contrast, after one presses down briefly on a key, the typewriter creates in the proper position on the paper a complete letter, which not only is untouched by the writer's hand, but is also located in a space entirely apart from where the hands work.¹³⁷

Ultimately, Sudnow’s familiarity and practice with the piano moves his playing of it into the absent-minded patterns of symbol production so often accredited to ‘improvisation’. But such creative actions are not necessarily calling upon some cosmic

¹³⁷ Richard Herbertz, ‘Zur Psychologie des Maschinenschreibens.’ in *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* (1909: 2), pp. 551 – 61, p. 559. Translated in Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800 – 1900* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 1990), p. 195.

inspiration – like drawing from the numinous, or the influences of muses – but are formulated from the Gestalt amalgamations of the pianist’s – and typist’s – thoughts. Robert Jourdain’s *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy* has a section on ‘Composing at the Piano’, in which he describes a very similar phenomenon: musicians working at piano keyboards would ‘improvise’ compositions by playing out experimental ‘imagery’ upon the keys. But, unlike Sudnow, he warns that such pathways may in fact hamper a composer’s musical originality, suggesting that ‘musicians work through a hierarchy of ready-made movements’.¹³⁸ The use of the term ‘movement’ to describe a musician’s physical interaction with the instrument is similar to Sudnow’s observation; rather than a musician consciously and continuously engaging with any conceptual or musical system or melody, Jourdain suggests instead that ‘thousands of patterns of scales and arpeggios and chord progressions are deeply channelled in their nervous systems’, thus, the work of ‘improvisation’ emerges more like muscle memory.¹³⁹

Sudnow’s thoughts seem to somewhat echo, too, the earlier section on ‘The Scientific Sublime’, and – indeed – Berlioz too wrote about the relationship between the composer, their hands, and the keyboard beneath them:

When I consider the appalling number of miserable platitudes to which the piano has given birth, which would have never seen the light [of day] had their authors been limited to pen and paper, I feel grateful to the happy chance that forced me to compose freely and in silence, and this has delivered me from the tyranny of the fingers, so dangerous to thought, and from the fascination which the ordinary sonorities always exercise on a composer.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Robert Jourdain, *Music the Brain, and Ecstasy*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 176.

¹³⁹ Jourdain, p. 176.

¹⁴⁰ Hector Berlioz in Harold Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers* (London: Davis-Poynter Limited, 1971), p. 134.

Chapter One

Notably, Berlioz could not actually play the piano, so his perspectives on the ‘tyranny of the fingers’ emerge from an almost paranoid suspicion, but still reflect a legitimate anxiety in the finger/key relationship, which Sudnow glosses over as something – while remarkable – fairly benign. Berlioz is clearly recognising something akin to the ‘pathways of a visual Gestalt’, outlined in *The Work of the Hands*, in the artistic outputs – and keyboard playing – of his contemporaries, but regards them more as an unfortunate trap for composers to fall into, rather than the impressive and laudable mark of keyboard familiarity that Sudnow suggests.

Fingers and hands were also disembodied in the writing of composer Carl Maria von Weber, who suggested that ‘the tone poet who derives his working from [the piano] is almost always born poor or on the way to surrender his soul to the common and the ordinary’.¹⁴¹ Weber clearly considers a close relationship with the keyboard one detrimental to musical ingenuity, but his use of the term ‘tone poet’ perhaps indicates he would feel similarly about the equivalent mechanism at play for his literary counterparts. He continues, ‘for these very hands, these damned pianist’s fingers, which finally take on a kind of independence and peculiar intelligence’, appearing to separate the musician from the dexterity they exercise.¹⁴² Weber, too, suggests that this detachment comes from ‘perpetual practice and work for mastery’, supporting the idea that the faculties of improvisation emerge simply from the well-furrowed neural networks of muscle memory and instrumental familiarity; as a result of this, Weber is prompted to dub the fingers and hands ‘stupid tyrants and bullies of the creative impulse’.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Carl Maria von Weber in James Mursell, *Psychology of Music* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1937), p. 278.

¹⁴² Mursell, p. 278.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 278.

It is not unreasonable to extend this discourse of physical pathways and neural patterns to the keyboard of a typewriter; indeed, as Noah Sobe notes, after the standardisation of the QWERTY keyboard in 1888, ‘words could be created out of random, spatial combinations achieved through the abstract geometries of touch typing’.¹⁴⁴ Typing, like the jazz-playing of Sudnow’s fingers, becomes almost sightless and unconscious. Sobe’s use of ‘random’ is perhaps a little disingenuous, as the patterns are only useful if they form words, rather than cluttered letters of gibberish. Nevertheless, his suggestion of ‘abstract geometries’ mirrors Sudnow’s, Jourdain’s, and Berlioz’s observations on the movement of hands on a musical keyboard, perhaps making their perspectives similarly applicable to literary keyboards.

Naturally, to consider the hands as somewhat detached from the typist and the pianist further disembodies an artistic process already ‘torn from hand’s essential realm’ by the mechanisms of symbol production; each of these perspectives appears to reinforce Heidegger’s proposition that such tools ‘withdraw concealment in the midst of their very obtrusiveness’. Such interruption, which brings unconscious ease – particularly for those with technical familiarity – can bring new meaning to the blindness intoned in Beyerlen’s proposal that the letters typed, rather than written, are ‘located in a space entirely apart from where the hands work’; such ‘space’ is not only physical but symbolic.

Quince, as he sits at the clavier, is likely to be reassured by the more positive perspective of Stravinsky, who noted that what fascinated him most about composing one of his pieces ‘was that the different rhythmic episodes were dictated by fingers

¹⁴⁴ Noah Sobe, ‘Fashioning Writing Machines’ in *Modelling the Future: Exhibitions and the Materiality of Education* ed. By Martin Lawn (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2009), pp. 87-106, p. 96.

Chapter One

themselves'.¹⁴⁵ The composer seems to share much with Quince's experience when he states that 'fingers are not to be despised; they are great inspirers and in contact with a musical instrument, often give birth to unconscious ideas which might otherwise never come to life'.¹⁴⁶ Turning back to the first two stanzas of Stevens's poem, we see an intersection of improvisation, inspiration, and vacant symbol creation:

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the self-same sounds
On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

The unconscious feeling of desire, and the fingers at work on the keyboard, combine to generate a symbiosis between Quince and the clavier. Sound, touch, and feeling, are interpolated, and it becomes hard to distinguish the difference between them, and to determine which is the cause and which are the responses: something physical stirs something mental, and vice versa. The first line of the next stanza, 'Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk, / Is music.', both summaries the first two stanzas while also presenting an enduring statement in its own right. The subject of Quince's affections is simultaneously conjured by music, in thought at least, while also conjuring a music in return; such unconscious desires both channel the music while being channelled by music. Quince's mind, as discussed earlier in 1.4.v, is still active but led somewhat astray by wandering and unchecked thoughts – not idleness. Furthermore, the fingers, acting alone, become the alien operators of the poetic voice, emerging as stark reminders of

¹⁴⁵ Igor Stravinsky in Roman Vlad, *Stravinsky* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Vlad, p. 14.

Stevens's Romantic passivity. Ultimately, this surrendering of Quince's agency reflects the creative drive explored earlier in Stevens's constructions of the 'possible poet'.

1.4.viii(b) – A brief note on the nature of *Manuscript*

One issue I would like to briefly turn my attention to is why it is the *playing* of the musical instrument that I am concerned with, as opposed to the printing of a musical score. I contend that the similarities one can draw between the typewriter and, say, the piano, stem from the physicality of the artefact produced – the word must be printed to be manifest; the sounds must vibrate the air – this is how music is physical. While, yes, words can be spoken, music must be played.

The difference lies with the symbol; the symbol of the word on the page is enough to inform the reader of meaning; but the symbols of the musical note on the page only partially holds enough information to convey the meaning. That is to say, the fundamental essence of a word is its meaning – you may get this from simply reading (as you are now). But the fundamental essence of a musical note is in the hearing. Reading, for example, this fragment from Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*¹⁴⁷,



does not produce the same response as hearing it, regardless of whether you are musically literate or not. Naturally, the stave above will convey more meaning to those

¹⁴⁷ J. S. Bach, "Prelude and Fugue No. 9 in E major", from, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book 1 (BWV 854), (New York: Dover Publication, 2013).

Chapter One

musically trained, but musical literacy of the reader does not alter what the symbols represent; nor does the fact that words, too, may be heard. Fully understanding the complex relationship between how music and poetry are physically presented is a task too broad for this chapter, but it remains an important consideration throughout this thesis. The most significant relationship that forms the focus of the remainder of this chapter is in the physical manifestation of both literature and music, and the connection between the artist, their art, and their audiences.

Friedrich Kittler touches on this dichotomy between the two media, and how – physically – they share a symbolic tension. Although his focus is on the historic popularity of piano-playing among women (as a result of social expectation) and the subsequent decline of such a trend, his description of the causes of this cultural shift reveals a semiotic analogue between the consumption of literature and music:

Edison's mechanical storage of sound made obsolete the piano keyboard as the central storage device for music's scriptive logic; women were no longer asked to endow lyrical letters with a singable, ersatz sensuality; the national plague of their dexterity could finally find a practical use on typewriter keyboards (derived from the piano).¹⁴⁸

When the piano is considered as a form of storage device an intriguing parallel to the printed page can be drawn. Returning somewhat to the discussion above on the insufficiencies in comparing the physical manifestations of the printed note and the printed letter, Kittler can provide us with a perspective that reinforces this chapter's position regarding the shared creative processes of musical and literary keyboards. He makes the case that playing the piano merely unpicks the 'scriptive logic' of musical manuscripts in a way that renders it more aurally palatable; the pressing of a keyboard simultaneously transcribes the 'lyrical letters' of score into music. With this suggestion,

¹⁴⁸ Kittler, p. 195.

he frames the piano as simply another mechanism for the storage of sound: essentially, the sounds, at least from what we may infer from Kittler's contention, are always there – simply waiting to be released (and, subsequently, re-recorded).

The keys of both the typewriter and the piano thus hold within them the 'potential' for sign. Once the word is printed – or the sound recorded – the act of typing, or playing, is no longer an exchange of action for symbol but – importantly – a preservation of this process. We may, then, consider the recording of a piece of music to be more analogous to the printed lines of a poem, than we would the score.

One will also note how Kittler echoes Meyer and Silbermann's phrase regarding the 'plague of dexterity', as his analysis then shifts to the economic benefits of such playing skills on the labour market:

Since power after the print monopoly's collapse was diverted to cable and radio, to the recording of traces and electrical engineering, outdated security protocols were dropped as well: women were allowed to reign over text processing all by themselves. Since then, "discourse has been secondary" and desexualized.

1.5 – Peter Quince, Musically Misunderstood

The corporeal nature of art and, more specifically, the embodied practice of art represent frequently considered areas of criticism and theory. Indeed, such perspectives are applied liberally to various bodies of artistic output and, in at least one other instance, have been explored in relation to the work of Wallace Stevens. For example, William Fitzgerald's 1992 essay "'Music is Feeling, then, not Sound": Wallace Stevens and the Body of Music', as the title suggests, combines ideas of the bodily, the musical, the relations between these two, and their subsequent manifestations in the poetry of

Chapter One

Wallace Stevens.¹⁴⁹ As the remainder of this chapter shall propose, it is my opinion that Fitzgerald's essay on Stevens's work, which is considered among the more popular works of criticism in terms of the musical perspectives on Stevens's oeuvre, is – in fact – a misrepresentation of what is at stake in one of Stevens's most important and enduring products of verse. The quote employed in the title of Fitzgerald's essay indicates that the poetic piece under most scrutiny is one shared by this chapter, 'Peter Quince at the Clavier'. Thus, I will forge my own reading of 'Peter Quince', driven by a focus on the instrumental, in tandem with a dissection of Fitzgerald's own exploratory offering.

His essay – which shall now act as a precursor to my own analysis – opens with an unpacking of the phrase 'plays with feeling' and it becomes clear that the subject of 'feeling' can be interpreted in both a physical and spiritual sense. Attempting to accentuate the differences between the two would only take this chapter back to its opening – yet, where I have discussed the spiritual and imaginative aspects of creativity, Fitzgerald seeks to reconcile the difference between different types of sensation. So, while these discussions have already taken place in both my work and Fitzgerald's, it remains important to highlight that Fitzgerald addresses such a dichotomy, and, as I would be inclined to agree, sees Stevens's poem as a blatant exploration of a combination of these principles. As the essay develops, Fitzgerald works to bring the spiritual and physical elements of feeling together. As I am primarily concerned with the 'instrumental' in this chapter, it has already established that physicality plays a fundamental role in the production of both music and poetry. So, despite focussing more singularly on 'the body', Fitzgerald's close reading does offer up useful points of

¹⁴⁹ William Fitzgerald, "'Music is Feeling, then, not Sound": Wallace Stevens and the Body of Music', in *SubStance*, Vol. 21, Issue 47 (1992), pp. 44-60.

departure on the bridges between the body (or the bodily), artistic composition, and performance.

A parsing of Fitzgerald's essay will thus serve as the basis for a new close reading – one that not only addresses and confronts some of the positions explored in 'Wallace Stevens and the Body of Music' (referred to hereafter as 'The Body of Music'), but one that pushes these positions into new grounds, helping to expand on this chapter's current arguments regarding the instrumental connections between music and poetry.

As I have briefly indicated above, Fitzgerald begins his essay by attempting to pin down what might be meant when 'we say that someone "plays with feeling"'.¹⁵⁰ He suggests that such a phrase is a celebration of the fact 'our listening goes beyond the sounds' and that there is something – an 'authenticity' – which 'transcends the mechanical demands of the instrument'.¹⁵¹ By establishing that there is a difference between what one may play, or listen to, and that which one hears, Fitzgerald creates a dynamic foundation for a reading of 'Peter Quince', because such a syllogism suggests that it is only by exceeding the mechanical that one may perceive 'feeling'. By Fitzgerald's accounting, therefore, the instrument alone is not enough to engender 'feeling'. Perhaps, then, it is the player, and the manner in which they play, which imbues a piece of music with 'feeling'. Yet, as Peter Quince – in Stevens's poem – indicates, it is the very action of 'playing' that stirs feeling.

It is the case then, for Fitzgerald, at least, that the musical instrument is in fact inhibited by its physical construction – the keys and strings themselves are unable to

¹⁵⁰ Fitzgerald, p. 44.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 44.

Chapter One

produce ‘feeling’ – but a higher musical and emotive potential is reached with the playing of a musician. Thus, it may be simply said that those who are *capable* of ‘feeling’ become those who can bring ‘feeling’ to the production of art.

Following this initial declaration that ‘Music is feeling, then, not sound’, Quince suggests that

... thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music.¹⁵²

This would lead one to believe that the connection between feeling and music is not necessarily a one-way process. While music is dependent upon the musician, or the listener, for the manifestation of ‘feeling’, Quince indicates that ‘feeling’ alone is apparently adequate for the creation of ‘music’. What Quince means, here, by ‘music’ is a potentially self-contained – and even synesthetic – Gestalt concept in itself. Because, as previously established, the distinction between hearing and listening is one which is made at the point of reception – yet sound is still an element shared by both. To say ‘music is feeling’ and declare music is ‘not sound’, is not a statement in conflict with the principles of distinction Levin establishes. Thus, it is not ‘sound’ alone which makes noises music, but the reception, the ‘feeling’.

1.5.ii – A Note on Feelings

Regarding Fitzgerald’s interpretation of ‘feeling’ and how it may be derived from mechanical instruments – can the same be said of the typewriter, where poetry is

¹⁵² Wallace Stevens, ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ in *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*, (New York: The Library of America, 1997), pp. 72-74, p. 72.

concerned? This brings us once more to considerations of artefact. Can the medium of art created by the clavier be considered the same in the same way as the medium of art created by the typewriter? The fleeting notes, in this instance, are able to be imbued with feeling because of the presence of the player, or the musician; does this mean, then, that the printed page of poetry, ‘played’ by the poet inherits ‘feeling’ in the same manner?

Naturally, we – as readers – receive our poetry from printing presses, or hear the words aloud, which suggests the poet’s original rendering – which is the act most comparable with the musician at the clavier – and all any ‘feeling’ delivered thusly, has been lost in the subsequent replications of the piece.

One may suggest that there is an argument to be had regarding a comparison between the printing press and the self-playing piano. Any ‘feeling’ produced by either piece of art could only linger there from the initial creation of the pieces – the prime and original form. Thus, the arrangements of typeface and musical notes – although they have the potential for ‘feeling’ – must remain unchanged in every repeated manifestation. Fitzgerald would likely suggest that this unchanging replication of ‘feeling’ robs both the poem and the musician piece of the ‘authenticity’ required for ‘feeling’. It is worth also noting that such processes would push the chain of artistic creation directly into the ‘mechanical demands’ Fitzgerald argues ‘feeling’ must transcend. This, of course, may raise complications where self-playing pianos and the scrawled poetry of automatons are concerned.

1.5.iii – Un-Mann’ed

After his initial enquiry into the ideas at stake in ‘Peter Quince’ and questioning what it means to ‘play with feeling’, Fitzgerald turns his attention to the listener. The ‘listener’, here, refers to both any audience Peter Quince may be playing to, and to any listeners –

or readers – of Wallace Stevens’s poem. Critically, Fitzgerald subjects the audience to an arbitration usually reserved for the artist; he suggests that the ambiguities in Stevens’s poem lead to ‘mishearings’.¹⁵³ Roughly echoing Adrian Leverühn’s proclamation ‘music turns the equivocal into a system’ – from Thomas Mann’s *Dr. Faustus* – and taking it to mean that ‘music both invites and controls mishearings’, Fitzgerald encourages his reader to believe that we are invited – as readers of Stevens’s poem – to ‘hear equivocally’.¹⁵⁴ He suggests that poetry itself, like music, seeks to control our mishearings; he thus aligns the ambiguity of music with the ambiguities of verse. It is here that Fitzgerald reveals his hand, so to speak; he claims he ‘will read the poem somewhat perversely’ and that he does so because, ‘as a poem about music’, ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ has the ‘authority to perform certain sleights-of-hand’.¹⁵⁵ What Fitzgerald is intending to convey with this phrase – ‘sleights-of-hand’ – is slightly unclear. Does he mean that ‘Peter Quince’ is representative of Stevens’s poetic sleight-of-hand. Or that Fitzgerald himself, as a critic, is intending to manipulate – unabashedly – the content and context of Stevens’s poem in order to support his position? Or that the subject of the poem, the clavier playing of Peter Quince, unquestionably an act of dexterity, is in itself a sleight-of-hand? Is his suggestion, perhaps, that a sleight-of-hand is not only found in the physical playing of the instrument (as the phrase suggests a

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 44.

¹⁵⁴ Fitzgerald, p. 44. It is my opinion that Fitzgerald undersells – or even mis-sells – Mann’s position. Indeed, Leverühn actually states ‘[You know what I find?] That music turns the equivocal into a system. Take this or that note. You can understand it so or *respectively* so. You can think of it as sharpened or flattened, and you can, if you are clever, *take advantage* of the double sense as much as you like’ (Emphasis added). This suggests an act of engineering on behalf of the musician, rather than inherent – and passive – ambiguities in music alone. According to Leverühn, it is not music itself that creates ambiguity, but the relationships between sounds – or, more specifically, the relational sequences of notes and tones employed to generate music: ‘Relationship is everything. And if you want to give it a more precise name, it is ambiguity’. Thus, the manufacture of this equivocation is down to the musician, or the composer; it is not an element of unmanned sonic phenomena. Excerpts taken from Thomas Mann, *Dr Faustus*, trans. by H. T. Lowe-Porter (Alfred A. Knopf [Everyman’s Library]: New York, 1992), p. 45. I have employed the same translation used by Fitzgerald.

¹⁵⁵ Fitzgerald, p. 44.

deception of some description), but that the trick lies in the images Quince is capable of conjuring in the migration from the sonic to the visual through the spiritual? Regardless of what may be precisely meant by Fitzgerald, one may take this phrase to frame the direction from which he approaches his reading of Stevens's poem; there is a playful air of suspicion that almost verges on the cynical.

Finally, Fitzgerald describes Stevens's poem as one that employs music as a figure of desire – a figure which 'transforms physical desire into a spiritual sacrament'.¹⁵⁶ Vitally, he shifts the reader's focus from considering the non-physical content of Stevens's poem – as the poet puts 'in the mind', where it is momentary – to the corporeal – again, as the poem suggests 'in the flesh', where beauty is apparently immortal.¹⁵⁷

Thus, despite using his opening to discuss various perspectives on what it is to 'play', the essay is revealed to be about '(mis)hearing', and that we – as an audience – are deliberately encouraged to mishear, perhaps even to the point we have been subjected to artistic misdirection. In an attempt to buffer this series of apparent mishearings, 'The Body of Music' calls on Geoffrey Payzant's 1986 translation of Eduard Hanslick's 1891 treatise *On the Musically Beautiful (Vom Musikalisch-Schönen)*.¹⁵⁸ Fitzgerald uses Hanslick's volume as a ballast to his own claims about 'Peter Quince', poetry, and music more generally. He suggests that Hanslick harbours an anxiety surrounding the mishearing of audiences and that, as a result, his writings on music can offer up several critical responses to the concerns raised in 'The Body of Music'. In order to fully engage

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 44.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 44, and 'Peter Quince at the Clavier', lns. 51, 53.

¹⁵⁸ Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. by Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986).

with Fitzgerald's essay, and Stevens's poem, I too will refer to Hanslick's work – particularly the areas that Fitzgerald himself employs, while also flagging up the elements which I consider relevant when considering the connection between the poetic and the musical.

1.5.iv – On the Nose

Fitzgerald suggests that the line 'what I feel, / Here in this room, desiring you' signifies a 'fracturing of the auto erotic body'.¹⁵⁹ He aligns this process with the characteristics of a concert audience. Indeed, he gives this section the sub-title 'Music and the Concert Audience'. It is this section of Fitzgerald's essay that I disagree with most. However, that is not to say it is wholly without merit.

His initial claim revolves around a shared process (between the reader of the poem, and some imagined concertgoer in the audience of Quince) of 'musing'. As a supporting tangent, Fitzgerald suggests that the verb 'to muse' is derived from 'the French *museau* (snout)', which – he contends – invokes both the 'suspension and the suspense of the audience that sits, snout in the air, catching the scent of that elusive, evanescent body that is the music'.¹⁶⁰ Not only may Fitzgerald aggravate his reader by redundantly employing both 'suspension' and 'suspense' as apparently separate terms, but he leads them astray in a fruitless lunge at a linguistic parity; his translation of the word '*museau*', is arrived at in a rather spurious manner. Consequently, Fitzgerald's tangent forces a brief, albeit important, deviation from Stevens's poetry.

¹⁵⁹ Fitzgerald, p. 44.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 46.

Indeed, ‘*museau*’ is derived from ‘*musel*’, which is the Middle French word for the protruding part of an animal’s head – the muzzle, or snout.¹⁶¹ This Middle French ‘*musel*’ finds its ancestors in ‘*mūsellum*’ and ‘*mūsum*’ which are both Latin for the same body part. Yet, the root for these words, is a corruption of the Ancient Greek ‘*mousa*’; finally, the Ancient Greek (and unchanged in the contemporary Greek) word, ‘*mousa*’, is – completing somewhat of an etymological loop – the same as ‘*μούσα*’, the noun ‘*Muse*’.¹⁶²

The musing that Fitzgerald references does not descend from ‘sniffing’ rather the ‘sniffing’ he hopes to invoke emerges from the act of musing; while all those that sniff may muse, not all those who muse must sniff. If one were to continue to trace back the origins of both words, although their developments took different routes, through different languages, the two meanings unify at the source. Thus, while both our verb and noun for ‘muse’ comes from the noun ‘*musa*’ meaning muzzle, or snout, each of these senses descend separately from the root Greek noun ‘*Muse*’.¹⁶³

The case, then, is that, despite Fitzgerald’s attempt at justifying the contrary, while sniffing may lead one to musing, or may be employed to undertake a ‘musing’, as an act in itself it is neither necessary, nor sufficient; it is not a prerequisite, nor an unavoidable symptom of ‘musing’. Thus, in confusing the order of how each word has come to be, Fitzgerald gets tangled in the semantics of smell. This leads his close reading somewhat astray. He becomes blinkered by a focus on the singular notion of one aspect

¹⁶¹ Auguste Brachet, *An Etymological Dictionary of the French Language*, trans. by G. W. Kitchin, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1873), p. 242. One may also see the following, for reference: <<http://www.wordreference.com/definition/muzzle>>; <<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/muse>>; <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/muser#Old_French>; <<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/muzzle>> [Accessed 18/08/2017].

¹⁶² <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/resolveform?type=start&lookup=mousa&lang=greek> [Accessed 18/08/2017]

¹⁶³ <<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=muse>> [Accessed 18/08/2017]

of the sense experience, which unavoidably leads him to neglect the others – one being, most perilously, hearing.¹⁶⁴ This resonates slightly ironically, as Fitzgerald's opening dwells on ideas of 'mis-hearing' but is then propelled by an act of misreading. This observation does, however, create a further synesthetic link between music and the senses; beyond music being heard, and felt, its scent can be smelt.¹⁶⁵

My major contention, however, grows from the contradiction to which this proposition gives way. Both Stevens and Fitzgerald are clear: Quince 'feels' and thus generates music, but such feeling originates from his 'spirit'. Thus, what would be suggested by Fitzgerald's *'museau'* thread would present a dichotomy between physicality and the more intangible. As highlighted above, Fitzgerald's essay is concerned with the 'bodily' and as a result each reading he generates is steered towards the physical – in this case, the musing 'scent'. Further to this, the critic fails to address how he is able to reconcile the difference between the 'feeling' he deems to be important at the opening and the 'thinking' that seems to follow; as earlier parts of this chapter have suggested, one of the most important questions raised regarding the nature of creativity is in the connection between the conscious and unconscious mind. 'The Body of Music' appears to provide evidence of both states but stops short of joining the dots.

Despite this ill-footed beginning, there are a number of stronger assertions presented by Fitzgerald in this section, and, although they grow from subsiding foundations, they find themselves rooted in such a way that one may transplant them from their original intention, and apply them to a more suitable one. For example, he suggests that 'idleness, wonder and meditation are all relevant meanings [of the word

¹⁶⁴ It is perhaps worth noting, even in passing, that Fitzgerald's focus on one's sense of smell and scent in relation to music is a perspective that would serve well a reading of 'Le piano que baise une main frêle' by Paul Verlaine, of whom Stevens often wrote in his letters.

¹⁶⁵ Fitzgerald, p. 46.

muse]’ to this poem, but the job of the critic is to consider ‘*how* corporeality is apprehended by the listener’, and that ‘sniffing the air and pursuing the track of a scent, is the aspect most relevant to this poem’; he elaborates that ‘the track of a virtual and virtuous body that haunts the music-filled room is picked up by the muser, for whom the relation between the fingers and the spirit is a riddle’.¹⁶⁶

It is easy enough to appreciate the efforts made by Fitzgerald to reconcile the ethereal and the physical, but the mechanics he pursues hinge upon the reader – and by extension the listener – neglecting the sense for which Quince’s playing is intended. One may un-pick the ‘riddle’ of the musician-spirit relationship, simply enough, but not – as ‘The Body of Music’ suggests – through picking-up some scent; Stevens’s opening lines tell us: ‘so the self-same sounds / On my spirit make a music, too.’ Thus, it becomes clear that the bridge between corporeality and the spiritual is one anchored in both the tactile and the acoustical.

Fitzgerald’s attempts at generating a connection between the senses and the pensive state of Peter Quince do, however, stumble upon another linguistic connection which perhaps offers some redemption – that both ‘muse’ and ‘music’ share an etymological root: from the Ancient Greek ‘*mousa*’, for Muse, through ‘*mousikē tekhnē*’, meaning ‘Art (*tekhnē*) of the Muses (*mousikē*)’, to the fairly familiar Old French ‘*Musique*’.¹⁶⁷

1.5.v – Stevens’s Poetry as Libretto

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 47.

¹⁶⁷ T. F. Hoad, *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), ‘Muse’, ‘Music’.

Chapter One

Aligning Quince's 'playing' at the clavier with the experiences of a concert audience provokes a further area of contention. As mentioned above, the second section of Fitzgerald's essay generates a communal reading of Stevens's poem, one which encourages the reader to join the poetic voice in 'musing'. Fitzgerald takes this perspective further in a later section titled 'Opera: The Corruption of Pure Music?'. I consider this to be where 'The Body of Music' loses its focus on Stevens's poem.

Essentially, Fitzgerald suggests that the narrative unfolding in both Stevens's poem and Quince's playing bears the same framing as an opera. He points to the crashing cymbals and 'roaring horns' as evidence of some orchestral accompaniment to proceedings. As the poem draws on, it becomes clear that Shakespeare's mechanical is engaging with the bible story of Susanna and the Elders. 'The Body of Music' suggests that this narrative is unfolding in front of an 'operatic audience'¹⁶⁸. Yet, unlike the playing of the poet-pianist in 'Mozart 1935', this narrative is one imagined from music, not one that is playing the events as they unfold. As Quince himself tells the reader, he is in a 'room', after all, not a theatre – let alone a concert hall.

Pianist Glenn Gould, who features earlier in this chapter, would also disagree somewhat with the perspective offered in 'The Body of Music', having stated:

As far as I am concerned, music is something that ought to be listened to in private. I do not believe it should be treated as group therapy or any other kind of communal experience. I think that music ought to lead the listener – and, indeed, the performer – to a state of contemplation, and I don't think it's really possible to attain that condition with 2,999 other souls sitting all around.¹⁶⁹

Thus, in defiance of Fitzgerald's position, one can argue Gould's perspective plucks Quince's playing from the public realm, and places it once more in the personal. This

¹⁶⁸ Fitzgerald, p. 52.

¹⁶⁹ Glenn Gould, quoted in *Great Pianists Speak for Themselves*, ed. by Elyse Mach (London: Robson, 1981), p. 102.

key shift is aided by the employment of the term ‘contemplation’; where Fitzgerald is encouraging a receptive musing, ‘contemplation’ fetters the mind in a more introspective manner. I would argue that Quince’s playing is far more representative of contemplation than it is of musing. Stevens’s own thoughts, as explored earlier in this chapter point towards imagination, not inspiration, being the artistic catalyst for creativity. It is Peter Quince’s internal introspection that renders the story of Susanna in his playing – it is not, say, the muse-like presence of Susanna that instructs his hands to play; first, his fingers ‘make music’ then, as a response ‘the self-same sounds / On [his] spirit make a music, too’.

To hark briefly back to ‘Mozart 1935’, Stevens also indicates he is aware of the intimacy of piano playing. The poet-pianist, called to the piano, is directed to remain seated at the instrument, playing, despite the streets being ‘full of cries’ and stones being thrown upon the roof. Yet, as explored in section 1.3.iii, he is not inclined to simply ignore these distractions; he must simultaneously be aware of his surroundings, as he is instructed to ‘play the present’. He must be the voice of ‘angry fear’ and ‘besieging pain’; he must be the sounds that he is both isolated from and interrupted by; a true internalisation of these external stimuli.

1.5.vi – Wallace Stevens at the Clavier

Finally, and with slightly playful intentions, I would like to briefly address the identity of the poem’s narrative voice. It has long been assumed, with good reason, that the ‘I’ of ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ is Quince himself. Indeed, a number of arguments in this chapter rely on this being the case. However, it strikes me as a rather unavoidable conclusion of the previous section, that the ‘I’ may signify someone other than Shakespeare’s character.

Chapter One

Perhaps it is the poet's – Stevens's – fingers, on the keyboard of a typewriter, that are relaying the narrative of Susanna's plight, while simultaneously outlining the very process by which the poem he is writing comes to be. After all, Stevens is writing the poem, making music, typing music; he renders the 'pulse pizzicati', the crashing cymbal, 'the roaring horn', the tambourines, 'the maiden's choral', and 'the bawdy strings'. His fingers on the keys make a music, both for the reader, and – apparently – for the poet: the poet muses, the poet feels, the poet writes. The Peter Quince of the poem, the mechanical, in this sense, becomes a representation of the very mechanism employed to render him into being.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the creative processes shared between music and literature. It has established a set of mutual compositional foundations, creative drives and noted a parity between the instruments of symbol production. As a result of considering various perspectives on the nature of creativity, and how stimuli derived from inspiration and imagination have been responded to by practitioners of art, it has outlined how different interpretations of creative imagination can bridge the gap between reality, spirituality, and art.

This chapter has also probed the close compositional connection between the media of music and literature by outlining the physical similarity in the production of each form; the typewriter and the piano are examined as similar mechanisms of symbol production. Wallace Stevens's poem 'Peter Quince at the Clavier' is used to demonstrate where these two systems overlap; while ostensibly a piece about music and imagination, following a consideration of the connection between music and literature, and their respective tools of symbol production, the poem becomes concerned with the act of writing itself.

Wallace Stevens – selected for his poetry and writings on creativity – represents a significant focus of this chapter. Stevens’s own critical musings have been used throughout this part of the thesis to interrogate the nature of creativity in his own work and beyond; I have also identified where such ideas are equally applicable to music.

In approaching Stevens’s poem ‘Mozart, 1935’ as an expression of the ‘possible poet’, this chapter forged a connection between Stevens’s thoughts on poetic output and those of John Keats. The poem also served as an illustration of the bridge between the conscious and unconscious minds – the internal and external worlds – that is formed in the creative efforts of the artist. Building on this, and drawing on the scholarship of Joseph Carroll, Bobby Joe Leggett, and Eleanor Cook, this chapter suggested that Wallace Stevens’s engagement with a Romantic heritage allows his work to be used as a strong example of the written form in a broader sense.

The ideas established throughout this chapter have also been explored within the context of Stevens’s ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’, and the findings of its theoretical discussions have revealed the different ways creativity and ‘play’ are present in the text. As a consequence of considering how Stevens’s poem invokes the instrumental, this chapter challenges some of the arguments of William Fitzgerald’s essay, ‘The Body of Music’. Where the critic claims the poem requires the audience to ‘mishear’ in order to grasp what is at stake, I have proposed that the audience should instead listen along with the figure seated at the clavier as he plays and narrates. The action of the poem is not, as Fitzgerald suggests, revealed to us by sniffing out ‘the elusive body of music’, but made explicit through the presence of a musician and the operation of their instrument; the story of the poem is not concealed from the listener; rather, it is revealed by the very pressing of the keys themselves.

Chapter One

This chapter thus shows that, by considering the creative and productive connections between the musical and the literary – with a particular regard for the instrumental – we can derive a new and engaging reading of Stevens’s poem. As a result, this chapter supports the overall argument of the thesis, which proposes that considering the musical invocations of a piece of literature can lead to innovative readings of the text.

Chapter Two – Trumpets and False Alarums: The Sound, the Symbol, and the Unseen in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

‘A first encounter with any new phenomenon exercises immediately an impression on the soul. This is the experience of the child discovering the world.’

- Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

Prelude

Given that the objectives of this thesis involve identifying, examining, and demonstrating, the close relationship shared by literature and music, it stands to reason that we at least briefly explore those connections between literature and music which can be traced through humankind's acquisition of language. Sound, which we may take to be music in its fundamental element, thus also shares a connection with language. Language, as we know it, requires such extraordinary cerebral development that Ian Tattersall suggests it is what most separates us from ‘other forms of life on earth’.¹ Iain McGilchrist estimates that Homo Sapiens would not have sufficiently developed enough to undertake the ‘sophisticated symbol manipulation’ required for language until only 50,000 years ago.² Interestingly, the current approximations for the earliest complex instruments – a bone flute beyond, say, simple percussion – lie in a similar epoch.³ Yet, the vocal apparatus and brain size required for verbal communication were possessed by

¹ Ian Tattersall, ‘What Happened in the Origin of Human Consciousness’, in *The Anatomical Record Part B: The New Anatomist* (Vol. 276B, No. 1, January 2004), pp. 19-26, p. 25.

² McGilchrist, p. 101.

³ Thomas Higham et al., ‘Testing models for the beginnings of the Aurignacian and the advent of figurative art and music: The radiocarbon chronology of Geißenklösterle’ in *The Journal of Human Evolution* (Vol. 62, No. 6), June 2012, pp. 664-676.

our ancestors over 400,000 years ago. Thus, as McGilchrist estimates, language only evolved from crude aural means and developed into a more recognisable system in a relatively recent portion of our history; this correlates with the emergence (albeit in various rudimentary imaginings) of written, visual, form – all within the last eighth of our time on earth.⁴ Evidently, sound constitutes one of the first modes of meaningful communication.⁵ But this archaeological attempt to map the birth of language does not need to diminish the contribution music and sound can make to storytelling in its own right. It is not enough to declare that music and literature's shared heritage is simply due to an efficiency in preservation (insofar that melody makes narrative more memorable); rather, we look to more meaningful connections between the two practises and develop a shared system of interpretation.

This chapter looks at language, storytelling, sound, and how they can combine in literary works; specifically, it examines how sonic devices are employed in examples of dramatic literature and how such devices can contribute to the narrative development of a play. I will consider the role of trumpet signals in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, particularly in their employment as a key dramatic device. Moreover, I will examine how such sonic signals may be seen to contribute to characters' impressions of their physical world and how, subsequently, these impressions affect the progression of a scene. Thus, in considering the sonic elements of *Troilus and Cressida*, this chapter also explores the connection between musical actions and physical ones; specifically, how music and sound can be used in literature to represent a physical action.

⁴ McGilchrist, p.101.

⁵ There is much to be said for the important role played by spoken histories, wandering troubadours, and the development of these story-telling methods. In this sense, there are a substantial number of works one may turn to; for example, Peter Dronke's *The Medieval Lyric* (1968) and Eugene Bahn's *A History of Oral Interpretation* (1970) both explore the importance of the oral form. Further exploration of the transition from oral to written form, perhaps through the emergence of hieroglyphs, or even runes, up until birth of literature as we know it, is a tantalising prospect, but it is not the goal of this thesis.

The literary setting for this exploration, *Troilus and Cressida*, is aided by the consideration of music and other theatrical works – namely *Macbeth* and, to a lesser extent, *Hamlet*. I will be considering the nature of sound as signal – and symbol – to unpick how Shakespeare builds elements of these plays around sonic devices that, for the most part, are essentially unintelligible – in an esoteric sense – for the audience. My analysis of *Troilus and Cressida* will also draw comparisons to a form which is more typically associated with music and sound – opera.

As noted in its introductory sections, this thesis deals both with the production of art and the audience's reception of it. Given the dramatic nature of the texts explored in this chapter, both of these perspectives are considered valuable for analysis. However, as a result of the linguistic and semiotic arguments throughout this chapter – and the important part hearing plays within those discussions – greater attention is paid to the experiences and interpretational machinations of the audience. Thus, in terms of Calvin Brown's diagram mapping the path of art from creation to reception, which was detailed in the introduction of this thesis, the analysis of the sonic undertaken ahead predominately occupies the side concerned with reception.

Despite being, what I argue is an important element of the play, there has been an absence of critical reflection on the role trumpets have in *Troilus and Cressida*. The play, completed in 1602, features a number of interactions and relationships between musical instruments, their sounds, and the narrative, both as it exists in its form as theatre and as a physical environment for the characters. These interactions will be explored throughout this chapter and, by its conclusion, and in support of the thesis's overall argument, I will have demonstrated how one can produce a more nuanced reading of a text by considering the musical invocations contained within it; specifically, using the

work of Shakespeare as an example, I will have shown how the – seemingly extraneous – sonic features of a play can represent an important part of its dramatic development.

2.1 – The Sound of Shakespeare

Despite the critical vacancy this chapter explores, particularly regarding the use of trumpets in *Troilus and Cressida*, there has been wider scholarship on the presence of music in Shakespeare's work more generally. Perhaps the most notable of these is manifest in David Lindley's *Shakespeare and Music*.

Lindley's monograph aims 'primarily to explore the ways in which music in Shakespeare's plays might have been comprehended by the audiences at the Globe'.⁶ Notably, he contextualises music in the setting of Shakespeare's contemporary audience. By underscoring how music may have been received by Renaissance audiences, Lindley is able to not only write about the employment of music as an entertaining element of theatre, but also consider to what extent musical analogy operated within Shakespeare's plays.

He begins, much like my own project, by examining the various theoretical drives behind music. He considers various mathematical models of music, many of which he indicates Shakespeare would have likely been aware, and hypotheses of 'Universal Music' and the music of the spheres.⁷ He settles on a Neoplatonic formulation, drawn out of the cosmic myth, as the most likely influence on Shakespeare's musical understanding.⁸ He suggests Shakespeare's engagement with music, particularly in Lorenzo's opening speech from act five of *The Merchant of Venice*, is reflective of central strands of Neoplatonic thinking; primarily that 'music gets its

⁶ David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), p. vi.

⁷ Lindley, pp. 14-17.

⁸ Ibid, p. 17.

power through its reflection of celestial harmony, and we respond it because of our faint memory of its original', but that we have 'no direct access to the heavenly music itself'.⁹ One may note that several of these ideas have been examined in the previous chapter of this thesis, on the sources of creativity. Lindley concedes, however, that 'there is little evidence that Shakespeare was much interested in validating his deployment of musical conceits by anchoring them in precise scholarship'.¹⁰ While Lindley observes an important point, here, I hastily add that the arguments of this chapter are not reliant on Shakespeare's own musical awareness.

Shakespeare and Music continues in the same rigorous vein, exploring the employment of song and the presence of instrumental music and dance in Shakespeare's plays. The final section of the text considers the function of music as a thematic device in theatre, particularly in *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. It does, however, only exercise very fleeting considerations of the play which forms the focus of this chapter.

Indeed, Lindley's text does spend some time addressing the use of alarums in Shakespeare's work, and *Troilus and Cressida* features among them. In this broad section, which addresses numerous plays that feature alarums, *Troilus and Cressida*'s employment of trumpet alarums is not directly considered as part of a semiotic system. He, instead, views them as somewhat of a simulacrum of Troilus and Cressida's changing love for each other, suggesting that trumpets 'interrupt the conclusion of Troilus and Cressida's prolonged foreplay, menacingly portending the events to come'.¹¹

⁹ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 15.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 119.

Importantly, Lindley does begin to touch on the semiotic significance of the trumpet sounds in *Troilus and Cressida* when he notes that ‘the retreat sounded in 1.2.173 is followed by Pandarus’s comment: “Hark, they are coming from the field”, which would make best sense if the implications of the signal were clear to the audience as well as the on-stage characters’.¹² Although he likens the usage of trumpets to the retreats sounded in *King John*, Lindley does not probe the significance of their sound to the same degree as this chapter.

2.2 – Received loudly, but not clearly

Beginning with an ending of sorts, the first sonic device I will address is drawn from one of the play’s numerous retreats. Throughout *Troilus and Cressida*, retreats and alarums are sounded – as stage directions – nine times. While this is entirely understandable for a play that unfolds in the midst of the Trojan War, the signals issued by trumpets throughout the course of the play engender greater meaning than that of simply binary value (that is to say, beyond being played or being silent); the trumpets are instead used in a way that conveys more complex information. One notable instance occurs towards the close of the play, and coincides with the fall of Hector – Priam’s heir and Troy’s noblest warrior:

ACHILLES

Strike, fellows, strike; this is the man I seek.

[They fall upon HECTOR and kill him.]

So, Ilium, fall thou next! Now, Troy, sink down!

Here lies thy heart, thy sinews, and thy bone.

On, Myrmidons, and cry you all amain,

‘Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain’.

Retreat [sounded from both sides]

¹² Ibid, p. 116.

Hark! A retire upon our Grecian part.

MYRMIDONS

The Trojan trumpets sound the like, my lord.¹³

Simultaneously marking the death of Hector and calling the day's fighting to a halt, the 'retreat' presents a multi-faceted signal. As a result, the sounding trumpets represent an ambiguous symbol in what is – essentially – a ubiquitous alarm; symbolically, despite an action being undertaken by warring states, the belligerents are temporarily unified in retreat. Yet, this mutual cessation of combat has served to benefit only the Greeks. The call is made by both parties, yet, those responsible (for the call) are unaware of the action underway at the hands of the Myrmidons. Of course, the significance of the call's timing here is all too obvious; merely moments too late to save the Trojan hero, but soon enough to stem further slaughter.¹⁴ The sound, then, for the Trojans is not simply one to signal a withdrawal; it also – albeit unknown to them – underscores a grave loss.

Compare the staging of this sonic signal to a similar use in Henry Purcell's 1684 opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, which – serendipitously – also shares the character Aeneas with *Troilus and Cressida*:

AENEAS

Behold, upon my bending spear
A monster's head stands bleeding,
With tushes far exceeding
Those did Venus' huntsman tear.

DIDO

¹³ William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. by David Bevington, (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), 5.4.10-16.

¹⁴ cf. Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Achilles: 'My half-supped sword, that frankly would have fed, / Pleased with this dainty bait, thus goes to bed.' (5.9.19-20).

Chapter Two

The skies are clouded, hark!

[At this point, the score indicates a series of trumpet salvos and sharp string sweeps.]

how thunder

Rends the mountain oaks asunder.

*[The strings and trumpets sound once more, in the same manner.]*¹⁵

In both instances, extradiegetic sounds are employed to interrupt the dialogue. Although the example from Purcell is from a medium where musical interruption is far more commonplace, it remains one that delineates an occurrence directly affecting the story of the scene: this excerpt is from a largely vocal section of the opera and the interruption from the ‘thunder’ is not supported by other musical accompaniment. It breaks up the dialogue between Aeneas and Dido, but is effectively unintelligible for the audience until action (and dialogue) resumes on stage and Dido provides her response to the sound; then, the second time the ‘thunder’ is sounded, the audience are better placed to immediately recognise the signal. So, although it is said that lightning never strikes twice, fortunately – for the narrative of Purcell’s opera – the same is not true for its aural counterpart.

As a result of these developments, the two dramatic pieces establish a structure that engages with a cognitive process which is often present in both music and poetry – one that involves the exchange of initially concealed symbols with subsequently revealed meanings. Reuven Tsur suggests that such exchanges form a system of reference that operates under a ‘Law of Good Continuation’, wherein the audience share a mutual comprehension and understanding which is derived from the structural patterns laid out within a text – be that in the form of prose or, perhaps more obviously, in

¹⁵ Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate, *Dido and Aeneas* (c.1684) (London: Novello, Ewer and co., 1889), Act II, Scene ii. Directions in italics are drawn from reference to the original score.

poetry.¹⁶ Following the explanation of the sounds, the audience is better equipped to interpret them in the future; indeed, they are prepared for the sound to surface again – it presents what Tsur dubs the ‘Law of Return’, which establishes the rule so it may be recalled later, in pursuit of poetic closure.¹⁷ This mechanism is fundamental to the construction of formal narratives; indeed, Tsur employs an example from another of Shakespeare’s plays to help demonstrate the process in action. This fragment from *Hamlet* sees the eponymous prince recite a portion of a ballad to Horatio moments after the famous ‘play-within-a-play’ sequence:

HAMLET

“Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungallèd play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
So runs the world away.”

[...]

A whole one, I.
“For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here
A very, very--pajock.”

HORATIO

You might have rhymed.¹⁸

Horatio’s blunt response, Tsur suggests, reflects a ‘feeling of unease from a sense of incompleteness’.¹⁹ The previous stanza generates the expectation of an ABAB rhyme

¹⁶ Reuven Tsur, *Towards a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), pp. 124, 113.

¹⁷ Tsur, pp. 123, 115.

¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2005), 3.2.271-274, 280-285.

¹⁹ Tsur, p. 115.

scheme and, as a result, Horatio and the audience expect and desire the pattern to be fulfilled. Typically, texts avoid such unfulfilled expectation in what Gestaltists call ‘requiredness’. As Barbara Herrnstein-Smith outlines in *Poetic Closure*, ‘requiredness is the demand that one part of the perceptual field may have on the other’.²⁰ While there is no poetic closure for Horatio in this instance, it does not mean the passage is without satisfaction. Hamlet’s ballad only forms one poetic structure within a network of many that constitute the whole play. Indeed, perhaps it is only Horatio’s comment on the second stanza that draws the audience’s attention to the expectation of completeness; for those watching Shakespeare’s play the structure continues but, for Horatio as a listener only to Hamlet, the ballad is over.

The passages from *Troilus and Cressida* and *Dido and Aeneas*, in this respect, present scenes which are somewhat disrupted, yet simultaneously propelled by musical intervention. In Purcell’s opera, a predominantly vocal passage is interrupted by instruments imitating thunder and, in Shakespeare’s play, Achilles’s speech is curtailed by trumpets sounding a retreat. In both cases the dialogue is overtly expository; it explains what would be obvious to those characters involved in the scene. Specifically, the characters elaborate on the details of actions recently undertaken and their result. Subsequently, the descriptions elucidate – for the audience – the physical nature of the unseen event; be it the Grecian retreat or thunder tearing trees from their roots. Both accounts serve to elaborate upon physical elements of scenes that, while vital for the progress of the plot, would have likely lacked effective visual representation on the stage. Essentially, the scenes employ sound and dialogue to dramatically vocalise the visual, or – in terms of the audiences’ experience – the invisible.

²⁰ Barbara Herrnstein-Smith, *Poetic Closure* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968), p.2.

2.2.ii – Sounding the retreat, or playing the plot?

Daniel Levitin, in his 2006 book *This is Your Brain on Music*, notes that while music is organised sound, ‘it must involve some element of the unexpected’.²¹ Complementing Tsur’s formulation of a ‘Law of Good Continuation’, Levitin suggests that the appreciation we have for music is ‘intimately related to our ability to learn the underlying structure of the music we like’, which then allows the listener to ‘make predictions about what will come next’.²² The result of this structural relationship – between listening, anticipation, and expectation – Levitin suggests, is ‘equivalent to grammar in spoken or signed languages’.²³ The introduction of sounds as signals – trumpets in the case of *Troilus and Cressida* – takes the first step in laying out a new structure of expectation for the audience. On first being heard, the trumpets mean very little to the audience, yet, after the importance of the sound is highlighted, the audience then know to expect more meaning from the signals; regardless of whether the sound produced is intended to mean the same as it does in the first instance, the mechanism by which the trumpets are bestowed greater meaning – than first assumed – has been established. Intriguingly, Lindley notes that a comparable battle sequence in *King John* is also ‘economically foreshortened’ by a series of musical cues, one announcing an ‘alarum’ and the other initiating a retreat.²⁴

As I have argued, aural interruptions present an audible addition to the scene that – in the first instance – offers the audience little information. Yet, as the audience subsequently learn, the sounds are of direct importance to the procession of the plot. The

²¹ Daniel Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music* (London: Atlantic books, 2006), p. 111.

²² Levitin, p. 111.

²³ Ibid, p. 111.

²⁴ Lindley, p. 116.

Chapter Two

trumpets and the strings do not simply provide incidental music to the scene; they also present ambiguous symbols that the listener is not initially equipped to decode. That is to say, the Grecian and Trojan trumpets explain something before the audience can understand it; they must hear without listening. As with ekphrastic descriptions of physicality, the characters of Shakespeare's and Purcell's narratives must elucidate the nature of the alarums. Upon the resumption of dialogue, the narrative does not simply continue in the way it had done before the introduction of the disruptive sounds; it is bolstered by the addition of a new form of communication for the audience.

As a result, the progress of both dramatic plots is reliant on the intervention of sounds external to the action on stage, yet the audience are dependent on the scenes' internal dialogue in order to understand such developments. Visually, and certainly aurally, one may not fully appreciate the action of the scene without the explanations offered by its participants. Another example from *Troilus and Cressida* can further demonstrate this process at work.

In the following exchange between Trojan men, from Act 4 Scene 4, trumpets are once more responsible for bridging separate plot points, bringing an end to one exchange and helping initiate the following sequence. The complex nature of this communication, from apparently rudimentary stimuli, indicates how the trumpets are able to operate as an essential dramatic device:

DIOMEDES

O, be not moved, Prince Troilus:
Let me be privileged by my place and message,
To be a speaker free; when I am hence
I'll answer to my lust: and know you, lord,
I'll nothing do on charge: to her own worth
She shall be prized; but that you say 'be't so,'
I'll speak it in my spirit and honour, 'no.'

TROILUS

Come, to the port. – I'll tell thee, Diomed,
This brave shall oft make thee to hide thy head. –
Lady, give me your hand, and, as we walk,
To our own selves bend we our needful talk.

[Exeunt TROILUS, CRESSIDA, and DIOMEDES.]

Sound trumpet [within].

PARIS

Hark! Hector's trumpet.

AENEAS

How have we spent this morning!
The prince must think me tardy and remiss,
That swore to ride before him to the field.

PARIS

'Tis Troilus' fault: come, come, to field with him.

DEIPHOBUS

Let us make ready straight.

AENEAS

Yea, with a bridegroom's fresh alacrity,
Let us address to tend on Hector's heels:
The glory of our Troy doth this day lie
On his fair worth and single chivalry.

*Exeunt*²⁵

Once again employed as a marker for action, the trumpet this time provides the transition between two distinct narrative threads – a blossoming love, a war that rages on regardless – and is used as an opportunity for exposition. While, for the most part, this scene has been one focussed on the relationship between Troilus and Cressida, Aeneas divulges – perhaps more for the benefit of the audience than his colleagues who are most

²⁵ *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.4.135-142.

likely aware of their folly – that, instead of being involved in this exchange, he should have been accompanying Hector. Importantly, the trumpets announce the world in a way only the characters of the play are able to interpret; the audience are oblivious to the nuance of each individual signal. The characters must – in essence – become translators for those outside the play; refiguring the ambiguous signals of the trumpets as comprehensible representations of information. This, in turn, opens a fresh semiotic framework for the scene and *Troilus and Cressida* as a whole.

For instance, the audience is uninitiated in recognising each alarum or sound and thus must rely on the characters' explanation. It is impossible to know that the call is that of 'Hector's trumpet' without Paris saying so. Not only is the source of the trumpet identified, an entire portrait of the scene of its origin is provided. Before considering the depth and complexity of this system of signification, it is worth addressing the other communicative devices/ devices of communication at play. Specifically, the ways in which absent figures are rendered present.

2.3 – Heard but Unseen

Barbara Johnson's work on the figure of *apostrophe* can help explore this process. In the opening to her 2008 work *Persons and Things*, Johnson discusses the means by which a writer may achieve 'animation' in absent beings. Johnson proposes that there are a number of 'major rhetorical figures' that allow a person to undertake an action of animation through address, and she asserts that 'the first and most pervasive of these rhetorical figures is apostrophe, the calling out to inanimate, dead, or absent beings.'²⁶ Noting its Greek roots, 'Apo, away; *strephein*, to turn', she quotes from the *American Heritage Dictionary*, and the *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*:

²⁶ Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 6.

apostrophe is ‘a digression in discourse’; especially ‘a turning away from an audience to address an absent or imaginary person’. Most notably, apostrophe is proposed as ‘a figure of speech which consists in addressing a dead or absent person, an animal, a thing, or an abstract quality or idea as if it were alive, present, and capable of understanding.’²⁷ In her earlier essay ‘Apostrophe, Animation and Abortion’, from 1986, Johnson asserts that apostrophe is ‘both direct and indirect’, elaborating that – as a result of its etymological root and digression from straight speech – it ‘manipulates the I/Thou structure of direct address in an indirect, fictionalized way’. As a result, ‘the absent, dead, or inanimate entity addressed is thereby made present, animate, and anthropomorphic’. In short, apostrophe ‘is a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form into the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness’.²⁸

1.3.ii – Knocking, Listening

An obvious difference between Johnson’s summary of apostrophe above and Hector’s (unseen) involvement in *Troilus and Cressida* is that his muteness is not represented by metaphorical images and unresponsiveness, but by the sounds announced from trumpets. Yet, as Johnathan Culler recognises, ‘Apostrophe makes its point by troping not on the meaning of the word but on the circuit or situation of communication itself’.²⁹ The ‘circuit of communication’, in this case, would be to recognise the signals of the trumpets as communicative actions. Thus, Paris’ recalling of Hector simply through the sound of his trumpet – ‘Hark! Hector’s trumpet’ – can in some senses be considered an act of

²⁷ Johnson, *Persons and Things*, pp. 6-7.

²⁸ Barbara Johnson, ‘Apostrophe, Animation and Abortion’, in *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1986), pp. 28-47, p. 30.

²⁹ Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 135.

apostrophe: Paris's recognition of the sounding trumpet prompts him to evoke Hector, an 'absent entity', which is then addressed and 'thereby made present' – the absence of Hector onstage does not exclude him from the action of the scene. He is retroactively made present, despite his own muteness and physical absence, when the sounds of a trumpet are attributed to him. Crucially, he is only rendered present in the scene after the audience are given sufficient information to recognise the trumpet signal. Thus, neither act alone is an effective example of apostrophe: the combination of hearing the *sound* of the Prince's trumpet – and Paris' recognition of it as such – essentially apostrophises Hector, rendering him present amongst the action. The signal is given as a stage direction and the audience are meant to hear this sound; the reception of this signal by both the audience and the characters of the play sustains the 'circuit of communication', as Johnson outlines: 'Apostrophe situates its fictive entities in the field of direct address, so that the spoken voice is what knits the utterance together.'³⁰ The trumpet sounding without being deciphered is – for all intents and purposes – meaningless. Yet, the interpretation offered to the audience translates the incomprehensible aural cue into something quite directly representative of an otherwise absent figure.³¹

This process, however, does present a complication. Paris's apostrophe of Hector reveals to the audience the meaning of the trumpet signal which effectively turns the sound into a simulacrum for Hector himself. In the retroactive acknowledgement that the sound that forms part of the scene is in fact his brother, Paris is no longer rendering an absent figure present. The audience hears an unknown sound; Paris apostrophises

³⁰ *Persons and Things*, p. 7.

³¹ As a result, we may view this as becoming what Lindley describes as 'part of the *mise-en-scene*, and a function of the directional reading of the play as a whole'. Lindley, p. 6.

Hector, but in doing so realises that the sound itself represents Hector and – subsequently – he is not mute. Thus, the audience have always been able to hear Hector but simply do not know that they have been listening to him; consequently, deciphering the meaning of the trumpets reveals Hector's presence and the exchange ceases to be apostrophe at all.

Stronger instances of this rhetorical practice can be found littered among Shakespeare's oeuvre. The most pertinent example – which is also dependent on the sonic – is perhaps found in his later play, *Macbeth* (1605), which not only employs apostrophe, but – much like it has been demonstrated in *Troilus and Cressida* – does so through non-verbal signals. In the aftermath of Duncan's murder, and as Macbeth's regret for undertaking the act swells, a knocking can be heard throughout the castle. The sound disrupts the discussion the would-be usurper and his wife are having and causes them to flee to their bedchamber; this action leads the play into the next scene and – as the knocking continues – a rather bizarre soliloquy follows. Given that the knocking in question presents itself quite literally as interruption in crude aural form, I will follow suit and interrupt the scene as I break it down into three parts and address each extract:

[Exit LADY MACBETH. Knocking within]

MACBETH

Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

[Re-enter LADY MACBETH]

LADY MACBETH

My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white.

[Knocking within]

Chapter Two

I hear a knocking
At the south entry: retire we to our chamber;
A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy is it, then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended.

[Knocking within]

Hark! more knocking.
Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,
And show us to be watchers. Be not lost
So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

[Knocking within]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

*[Exeunt]*³²

Towards the end of act two, scene two, the knocking is first heard by Macbeth and his wife, who have just completed the murder of Duncan. The knocking is received by the two in very distinct ways. For Macbeth, each rap at the door appears to gnaw at his conscience, unnerving him; the hand that hits the door has come for him. The sounds signify the arrival of some moral arbitrator and, in this moment, Macbeth's attention is on hands – both his and the knocker's – the guilt that betrays him and that which marks the sound of looming justice. Lady Macbeth, however, considers these sounds in a more collected and pragmatic manner. Recognising 'the south entry' as the source of the knocking, she attempts to rouse her husband from his trance-like state and ushers Macbeth to ready himself – in both mind and body – for the arrival of others. The knocking simply signals to her the initiation of the next phase, the next challenge to overcome. Macbeth, in his parting remarks, indicates both regret and uncertainty of self; the knocking has facilitated a separation between cause and action. Macbeth's attempts to reconcile the two are thus hampered. For Macbeth, the knocking is a sound of some

³²William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 2.2.74-95.

spectral force which – of course – is not the case, yet, this denial of action is mirrored in his lament for his own undertakings. For the audience, however, the sound of knocking is also heard with source unseen; they have not the guilt that stirs them to fear the sound, but the Macbeths serve as their only means of interpretation – there is no stable way for them to understand what they hear. When Paris delivers his confident proclamation, ‘Hark! Hector’s trumpet’, the message is conveyed to the Trojans and the audience with clarity and certainty; in this passage from *Macbeth*, however, the audience is supplied two uncertain, conflicting perspectives on the source of the knocking, both provided by people of questionable judgement in this instance.³³ This potential doubt is dealt with in the opening of the scene that follows:

SCENE III. The same.

[Knocking within]

[Enter a Porter]

PORTER

Here's a knocking indeed! If a
man were porter of hell-gate, he should have
old turning the key.

*[Knocking within]*³⁴

In a more objective shift from the Macbeths’ hurried discussion of the knocking, the Porter – quite directly – confirms to the audience that there is ‘indeed’ someone knocking at the gate. When the Porter arrives and quells any concerns on the matter, the audience are contented that the knocking exists in more than just the erratic, flustered, minds of the murderers.

³³ *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.4.139.

³⁴ *Macbeth*, 2.3.1-3.

As a porter, his entire role serves to maintain the thresholds of buildings, grounds, and – in this instance – of narratives. Thomas De Quincey, in his 1823 essay ‘On the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*’, highlighted that when ‘the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced: the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish’.³⁵ The guilt-ridden musings of the Macbeths are underpinned with the stability of this monotonous knocking, its very rhythm mimicking a heartbeat. The actions responsible for ending one life have also stalled the narrative at the scene of the crime; trapping the audience in the company of the confused couple. De Quincey considers this shift – away from the place of the murder – as similar to leaving a place of narrative isolation, the result of which ‘makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended [the audience]’ therein.³⁶ It is only upon walking outside and feeling the breeze that we may realise how stifled the room we have just left was; it is the ‘sign and a stirring [which] announce the recommencement of suspended life’.³⁷ The knocking, which spills over into the next scene, resuscitates the action of the play and marks, as De Quincey puts it, ‘the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live’.³⁸ Where the Trojan trumpets remotely usher the narrative on in *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare’s use of knocking exaggerates this idea in *Macbeth*; not only is there a sound to signal the next phase of action – there is a character whose specific presence is devoted to interpreting this sound and acting in accordance with it. This familiar and quotidian sound reassures – perhaps falsely – the audience that the regular pulse of the play has returned. This relative stability, however, is short-lived:

PORTER [Continued]

³⁵ Thomas De Quincey, ‘Knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*’, in *The Oxford Book of Essays*, ed. by John Gross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 131-135, p. 135.

³⁶ De Quincey, pp. 134-135.

³⁷ De Quincey, p. 134.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 135.

Knock,
knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of
Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hanged
himself on the expectation of plenty: come in
time; have napkins enow about you; here
you'll sweat for't.

[Knocking within]

Knock,
knock! Who's there, in the other devil's
name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could
swear in both the scales against either scale;
who committed treason enough for God's sake,
yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come
in, equivocator.

[Knocking within]

Knock,
knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an
English tailor come hither, for stealing out of
a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may
roast your goose.

[Knocking within]

Knock,
knock; never at quiet! What are you? But
this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter
it no further: I had thought to have let in
some of all professions that go the primrose
way to the everlasting bonfire.

[Knocking within]

Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter.

[Opens the gate]

[Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX]³⁹

These panicked thought processes from the Macbeths and the Porter lead the knocking to become more than just sound. The plethora of potential meanings the dwellers of the castle bestow the knocking give greater significance to these sounds than regular knocking. While the Macbeths' guilty consciences play a large pattern in their

³⁹ *Macbeth*, [II.iii.3-21].

pursuit of meaning, the Porter is responding only to the knocking itself. Daniel Levitin suggests that ‘the difference between music and a random or disordered set of sounds is the way these fundamental elements combine and form relationships with one and other’.⁴⁰ The Porter’s echo of the knocking, ‘Knock, / Knock, knock! ... Knock, / Knock!... Knock, / Knock, knock!’, appears to demonstrate some form of rhythmic pattern present in the sounds that have woken him.⁴¹ The repeated pattern of knocking, then, gives rise to what Levitin calls ‘higher-order concepts’, which is how music is distinguished from random sounds.⁴² So, although the knocking is not literally a piece of music it is – from Levitin’s perspective – musical.

The Porter, roused from sleep, begins to mimic the knocking himself while appearing to perform the role of the porter of hell-gate as he proposes in his opening lines. After each segment of knocking, he imagines there to be a different arrival to the underworld waiting on the other side of the door: a farmer, an equivocator, and an English tailor-cum-mountebank. In calling out to each imagined character, the Porter employs apostrophe to manipulate the silence left between the knocks. Referring to Keats’s ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ (1820), Johnson suggests that ‘apostrophes allow for there to be address without context’; there is, as a result, an observation to be made regarding Keats’s poem and the Porter’s speech. Both the narrator of Keats’s poem and the Porter’s inquisition at the gate pose questions to absent voices. In this way, the Porter’s soliloquy becomes what Johnson identifies in Keats’s ode as ‘a shaping of the void’.⁴³ Beyond this, one may argue that – in this form of apostrophe – the gate manifests as ‘self-object’ for the Porter. Johnson acknowledges this principle, drawing on Heinz

⁴⁰ Daniel Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008), p. 17.

⁴¹ The imaged equivocator’s ‘scales’ make for a pleasing nod to music in this passage, too.

⁴² Levitin, p. 17.

⁴³ Johnson, *Persons and Things*, p. 65.

Kohut's explanation, which suggests the 'self-object' is produced when 'other people are treated as if they were parts or extensions of the self'.⁴⁴ The gate, where of course the knocking comes from, becomes the focus of the Porter's self-reflection. His musings lead him to imagine the knocking to be manufactured by a variety of beings of his own making. After all, it is the Porter who has rendered himself the keeper of the gates of hell; if there truly were such people behind the gate, they would only serve to complete the Porter's own image of himself.

This presents quite a stark contrast to the use of the trumpets in *Troilus and Cressida*, on the Trojan battlefield, where the sound does not create a space solely dedicated to self-reflection. It serves as a telling reminder, as demonstrated by Aeneas' sudden realisation: 'How we spent the morning! The Prince must think me tardy.'⁴⁵ In this moment, the man's thoughts are not concerned with his own image, but with others' expectations of him. Both sounds – of knocking and of Hector's trumpet – act as summoning requests but appear to appeal to different faculties of their intended recipient.

Drew Daniel, in his 2011 article 'All Sound is Queer', suggests that 'Sound intrudes upon us with the fact of the world'.⁴⁶ He claims that this intrusion 'affords [the listener] the possibility of forgetting [their] me-ist attachments to [their] subjective particularity and affiliation' and, instead, forcing them 'to register the everywhere of an ongoing being, an outside where [they] thought there was no outside'.⁴⁷ Aeneas, the Macbeths, the Porter, all hear sounds which force them to consider the world outside

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 48.

⁴⁵ *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.4.139-140.

⁴⁶ Drew Daniel, 'All Sound is Queer', in *The Wire: Adventures in Modern Music*, (No. 333, 2011), pp. 42-46, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Daniel, p. 46.

them and their relation to it. Aeneas, in his realisation he is late to the battlefield; the Macbeths in their need to flee the scene of the murder; the Porter's consideration of his role as the gatekeeper to hell.

Daniel goes on to say that 'sound constitutes a common 'pluriverse' for its auditory participants', the recognition of which becomes 'transmissible and sharable'; this is what can connect each of these characters to their audiences.⁴⁸ In the case of the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*, all three characters hear the same sound as the audience – and each other – but they all *listen* to something very different. Their initial reception of the signal reinforces their own alone-ness, but upon sharing their understandings of the signal (and creating a 'perceptual community' on stage) they open up their perspective to the audience and engage in a relationship forged from auditory difference.⁴⁹

The act of knocking itself represents a position of subtle ambiguity. The sound both interrupts one path of drama while simultaneously inviting another to begin; so familiar is the discourse and exchange involved with knocking on gates and doors, there is an entire joke format that mirrors it. Most often one may not know who knocks until the call is answered; the sound is not as distinct as Hector's trumpet, but its purpose is still clear. The announcement made by the knocking, whilst blunt, is at least clear in the fact that it signals the arrival of someone – or something. Yet, in *Macbeth*, the knocking becomes the source of wild and outrageous conjecture, clouding the typically clear – and straightforward – exchange; it takes ten separate instances of knocking before the gate is even opened. Despite the regular pulse of the knock ostensibly serving to carry the action on, the audience find themselves once more stalled. There is, of course, an irony

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 46.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 46.

in this repetition regulating the passage of the scene yet ceaselessly providing a source of interruption; it becomes unclear whether the knocking is interrupting the speaker or, indeed, is supplying him with the very foundations to continue talking and that, rather, it is the speaker who is interrupting the knocking.

Thus, the knocking manipulates ‘the law of good continuation’ outlined earlier and, instead, explores it in two ostensibly opposing ways. The knocking may cause disruption in its initial manifestation, but the very process involved with knocking itself is disrupted; all the assumptions made about the person – or thing – knocking, and the actions that delay the answering of the call, violate the expectations of the audience. Knocking is commonly encountered, but the reactions carried out by the characters in *Macbeth* in response are certainly not commonplace. Daniel Levitin identifies this practise as something that often occurs in music as ‘violating rhythmic expectations’.⁵⁰ Both Levitin and Robert Jourdain agree that the disruption of expected conventional actions shifts from the areas of the brain that deal with mundane, oft-rehearsed actions to the parts that are employed to create fresh images;⁵¹ as a result of the instability surrounding something usually straightforward, the audience are cognitively coerced into paying greater attention than they may have done beforehand.

2.4 – Sign(ed), Sealed, and Delivered

The initial ambiguity of the play’s various signals prompts us to think about for whose benefit they are sounded. If the audience cannot understand the signals without

⁵⁰ Levitin, p. 113.

⁵¹ Levitin, p. 125; Jourdain, p. 281.

assistance, are they supposed to bother listening to them at all? Are the audience simply eavesdropping, or are they the intended recipients of these sounds? It is perhaps immaterial to consider these questions given that the key to Hector's invisible involvement in the exchange from *Troilus and Cressida* lies in the discourse of those who announce his physical absence; that is to say, it is the dialogue of the scene's characters which reveals Hector's unseen presence. However, an example from a recent staging of the play does offer an interesting perspective on who the on-stage sounds are for: Fittingly, a connection between absent hero-figures and their representation through music is maintained by directors Elizabeth LeCompte and Mark Ravenhill, whose 2012 postmodern production of *Troilus and Cressida* saw the Trojan soldiers – dressed as Anglo-Americans of the Wild West – ‘break out in choruses of “John Wayne, hey-o, hey-o, hey-o, hey-o, hey-o”’.⁵² Apostrophe is being evoked once more, here, to an even greater extent, with the name ‘John Wayne’ being sung by supposed-cowboys, in a Shakespearean play. John Wayne was neither present during the Trojan War, nor is a character of Shakespeare's play, nor – in fact – was John Wayne actually alive during the era of manifest destiny portrayed by the actors of LeCompte and Ravenhill's production. While John Wayne was an actor made famous for his cowboy roles, the echo of his name only appeals the audience. The use of music here results in another usual instance of apostrophe, in that the absent figure addressed is not one – as far as the characters of *Troilus and Cressida* are concerned – that even exists. Kara Reilly, whose review notes this inclusion of music, makes no reference to how the production treats the operation of the trumpets, once again illustrating the neglect the signals have received.

⁵² Kara Reilly, ‘Review of *Troilus and Cressida*’, *Theatre Journal*, Volume 65, (No. 2, May 2013), pp. 277-279, p. 278.

As I have argued, the off-stage action in *Troilus and Cressida* is brought to the fore by the sound of trumpets, which, in turn, is decoded and presented to the audience. The trumpet call – although over in an instant – offers itself as a point on a continuum of events that have occurred and events that are to follow. In *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, Edmund Husserl suggests that ‘when we listen to a piece of music we retain the memory of the note just played, we hear the note currently being played, and anticipate the next note in the sequence, all at once’.⁵³ Hector’s trumpet does not necessarily offer the audience a sequence of notes – that, of course, may alter with each production – but, instead, provides a sequence of information and denotation. Rather than retaining the memory of a previous note, previous knowledge of what a particular note may represent is recalled. The transition of information from off-stage, to onstage, to audience means that the trumpet – and those who hear it – engages in a system of signification. That is to say, an off-stage event is encoded, decoded, and recoded – through sound – and simultaneously rendered for interpretation in the physical space of the audience’s main focus; an action or event happens somewhere beyond the stage but can only be heard *through* the stage. In light of this, we might say that the sounds themselves are seen to operate within the framework of a typical linguistic system.

2.5 – Cymbals/Symbols

⁵³ Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*, trans. James Churchill (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp. 50–51.

Chapter Two

Addressing this perspective requires approaching the trumpets in terms of their relationship with signification. This, in turn, invites a more comprehensive breakdown of the elements of the trumpets' involvement in the action of a scene.

There are perhaps two systems of semiotic interpretation that take primacy when considering how the trumpets heard in *Troilus and Cressida* operate as a form of communication. The first is the system proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure and expounded in his 1916 work, *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure suggests that, principally, there are two components of a linguistic sign. Namely, the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. The latter term Saussure describes as the 'concept' to which the former, as a 'sound-image', is attached.⁵⁴ As a result, in the case presented in *Troilus and Cressida*, the trumpet's alarum manifests as a signifier of the retreat, which is then exercised, physically, as the withdrawal of soldiers – the signified. Arguably, Saussure can be seen to support this interpretation when he states that 'The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary'.⁵⁵ He elucidates this position thus:

The idea of "sister" is not linked by any inner relationship to the succession of sounds *s-ō-r* which serves as its signifier in French; that it could be represented equally by just any other sequence is proved by differences among languages and by the very existence of different languages: the signified "ox" has as its signifier *b-o-f* on one side of the border and *o-k-s* (*Ochs*) on the other.⁵⁶

What this means, for *Troilus and Cressida*, is that the sounds issued by the trumpets can – within reason – mean anything.⁵⁷ Indeed, Victor Kofi employs this approach when

⁵⁴ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 67.

⁵⁵ Saussure, p. 67.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 67-68.

⁵⁷ The reader may find chapter three, 'Topic and Leitmotiv', of Raymond Monelle's *The Sense of Music* helpful when considering 'anticipated sounds', particularly with regard to the correlation between instruments and the sounds we expect to hear from them. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 41-80.

using Saussure's system as a means to interpret the symbolic ramifications of classical music. Kofi's explorations require him to isolate the 'elementary units of music' in order to understand the organisation of musical syntax. Notably, Kofi contends that by using Saussure's semiotic framework, he is dealing 'fundamentally with a relational system rather than a substantive one'.⁵⁸ In a manner similar to Levitin's position, Kofi proposes that – in classical music, specifically – musical passages correspond with established linguistic '*paroles*'. *Paroles*, he notes, form – along with a contrasting group, '*langues*', – the two dimensions of language. Outlining Saussure's difference between the two, Kofi marks '*langue*' as pertaining to larger systems of language, whereas *paroles* may be understood as individual utterances of the language. This, he suggests, is 'at the heart of Saussure's theory.'⁵⁹ The resulting musical symbols, which come from repeated and familiar employment, are maintained throughout a particular compositional tradition.⁶⁰ The work that Kofi hopes to undertake – negotiating musical discourse and outlining any resulting syntax – culminates in what he calls 'great excitement' as a result of 'the constant rereading of these signs'.⁶¹

This perspective, however, is not the case for the supposedly nuanced alarums demonstrated in *Troilus and Cressida*; the sounds are not self-evident and there is no particular frame of reference from which the audience may draw their symbolic understanding. Thus, given that those 'outside the play' are unable to draw any connection between a supposed signifier and whatever it may be signifying, this semiotic exchange is insufficient for coherent communication – on the part of the audience at

⁵⁸ Victor Kofi, *Playing with Sounds* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 15.

⁵⁹ Kofi, p.17.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 142-143.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 20.

least – and, as such, is incomplete. The missing element for the Grecian trumpets, Charles Pierce would suggest, is the ‘interpretant’.⁶² The interpretant, for Pierce, is that which is able to deliver and elucidate the connection between the signifier and the signified.⁶³ Beyond this, there are degrees to which an interpretant may operate; a distinction he explores in a rather protracted example regarding weather:

For instance, suppose I awake in the morning before my wife, and that afterwards she wakes up and inquires, "What sort of a day is it?" This is a sign, whose Object, as expressed, is the weather at that time, but whose Dynamical Object is the impression which I have presumably derived from peeping between the window-curtains. Whose Interpretant, as expressed, is the quality of the weather, but whose Dynamical Interpretant, is my answering her question. But beyond that, there is a third Interpretant. The Immediate Interpretant is what the Question expresses, all that it immediately expresses, which I have imperfectly restated above. The Dynamical Interpretant is the actual effect that it has upon me, its interpreter. But the Significance of it, the Ultimate, or Final, Interpretant is her purpose in asking it, what effect its answer will have as to her plans for the ensuing day.⁶⁴

In short, he suggests that being faced solely with a sign is not enough to provide an understanding of what object it is signifying: there must be some third party – an interpretant – to relay more pertinent and useful information. Wolfgang Iser illustrates Peirce’s description of this semiotic relationship with a diagram (See *fig. 7*)⁶⁵:

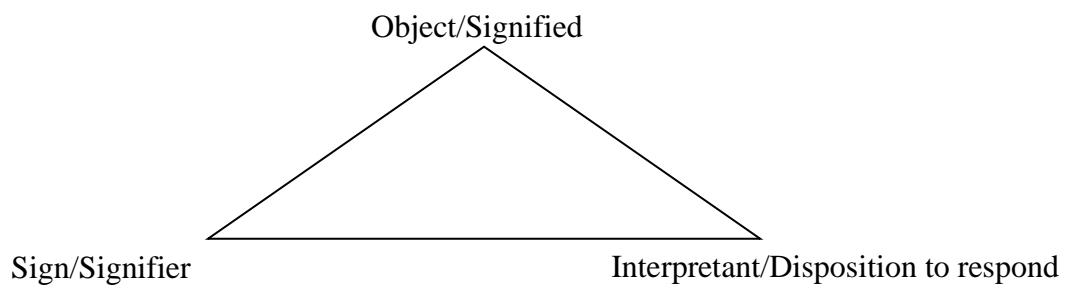


Fig. 7 – Iser’s diagram of signification and interpretation.

⁶² Wolfgang Iser, *How to do Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 70.

⁶³ Iser, p. 70.

⁶⁴ Charles Pierce, *The Essential Pierce: Selected Writings Volume 2*, ed. by Nathan Houser (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 498.

⁶⁵ Iser, p. 70.

While Saussure would hold that a ‘signifier’ and a ‘signified’ are enough to generate a sign, Pierce mandates that the signifier must be interpreted before it may be rendered as a symbol; or else it remains – simply – an object, as opposed to a sign. The construction of the symbolic, in this way, moves from being dyadic to ‘trichotomic’. Thus, the sound of the trumpet does not fully become a sign until it has been interpreted. As Pierce insists, ‘the meaning of the sign is not conveyed until not merely the interpretant but also this object is recognized’.⁶⁶

In both the examples from *Troilus and Cressida* and the earlier excerpt from *Dido and Aeneas*, the resumption of the scene – after sonic disruption – is constituted by an explanation of the preceding interruption. Thus, in the case of Hector’s trumpet and the call for retreat, the Greeks and the Trojans – respectively – act as interpretants. Were the same alarm to sound once more, the audience would be better positioned to interpret the sign completely. The example from Purcell’s opera demonstrates this with the second salvo of musical ‘thunder’. Once the signifier for thunder has first been heard – and then extolled as such – the sign is complete and, thus, when the listener encounters the same sounds again, the inference is evident. The symbol for thunder – at least for the audience of *Dido and Aeneas* – has been established. The means by which the trumpets of *Troilus and Cressida* communicate can be seen to move beyond the boundaries of conventional semiotic exchange.

⁶⁶ Pierce, p. 429.

As McGilchrist notes in his work on the hemispheres of the brain, there is ‘a close semantic link between music and language’.⁶⁷ He continues by asserting that ‘musical phrases convey specific meanings that, if required, we will intuitively associate with specific words’.⁶⁸ What this points to is some intrinsic, perhaps innate, relationship humans draw between sounds and meaning. Wassily Kandinsky certainly holds this position, as he makes clear in his writing on synaesthesia and what he calls ‘the deep relationship between the arts’.⁶⁹ Kandinsky posits that ‘Musical sound acts directly on the soul and finds an echo there because, though to varying extents, music is innate in man’.⁷⁰ *Troilus and Cressida* exploits this direct connection between sound and sense quite directly in the third scene, where Aeneas arrives at the Grecian camp to lay down a challenge to the Grecian general Agamemnon and – by extension – his Grecian soldiers. Although the Trojan’s message is ‘for Agamemnon’s ears’, the general has no interest in receiving it *in camera*:

AGAMEMNON

He hears naught privately that comes from Troy.

AENEAS

Nor I from Troy come not to whisper him:
I bring a trumpet to awake his ear,
To set his sense on the attentive bent,
And then to speak.

AGAMEMNON

Speak frankly as the wind;
It is not Agamemnon's sleeping hour:
That thou shalt know. Trojan, he is awake,
He tells thee so himself.

⁶⁷ Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 102.

⁶⁸ McGilchrist, p. 102.

⁶⁹ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. by M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, 1977), p. 27.

⁷⁰ Kandinsky, p. 27.

AENEAS

Trumpet, blow loud,
Send thy brass voice through all these lazy tents;
And every Greek of mettle, let him know,
What Troy means fairly shall be spoke aloud.

*The trumpet sounds*⁷¹

Kandinsky is perhaps more concerned with art's impact on a person in a spiritual sense – its relationship with the numinous – than a physical sense. Yet, as I have highlighted, the trumpet acts as a viaduct between off-stage and on-stage; it transports 'action' through sound and the process – when considered from Kandinsky's position – is almost synaesthetic in nature. Indeed, these ideas hark back to chapter one and the production of music. However, where the fingers on keys in 'Peter Quince at the Clavier' instigate a transition from the physical to the musical and the imaginary, the sounding of the trumpet in Shakespeare's play prompts a rendering of the conversion from the aural to the corporeal. The role of the physical world is essential for language, the discourse of a trumpet's call is no exception. As McGilchrist deftly puts it: 'However much language may protest to the contrary, its origins lie in the body as a whole'.⁷² This holistic, bodily, idea of communication is broached in *Troilus and Cressida*:

AJAX

Thou, trumpet, there's my purse.
Now crack thy lungs, and split thy brazen pipe:
Blow, villain, till thy spher'd bias cheek
Outswell the colic of puff'd Aquilon:
Come, stretch thy chest and let thy eyes spout blood;
Thou blow'st for Hector.

*Trumpet sound*⁷³

⁷¹ *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.249-259.

⁷² McGilchrist, p. 119.

⁷³ *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.5.7-11.

This, in turn, adds another level to the process of signification previously discussed. Such visceral and violently corporeal description outlines the near-mechanical processes required to produce the desired sound. The action, through the body, becomes sound; from this, the sound becomes action once more and the corporeality of the signal is sustained. The body, as a result, becomes instrumental; both in the sense it is required (or instrumental) for the act of playing and – more literally – becomes part of the trumpet physically.⁷⁴ His ‘brazen pipe’ is simultaneously the vessel he is blowing into and the anatomical element of his body required for such an act. This idea of embodiment is reflected in the nature of the player’s title: ‘Trumpet’. This synecdoche results in the man to be known only by his instrument – not even as a player of the instrument, ‘trumpeter’ – while all other trace of his identity is neglected and rendered superfluous. Yet, his role – and that of his kinsmen – is integral to the procession of the plot. Despite the neglect of their own physical agency, the bodies of the trumpeters ultimately have the means to command the physicality of the world about them, at least in the actions of those who hear them. Take, once more, the line ‘Outswell the colic of puff’d Aquilon’. His command is to pit the air of his lungs against the winds of the battlefield and – quite literally – involves the forcing of breath from his body. While it is unlikely a mortal man would be able to blow harder than ‘the north wind’, the sound that accompanies it can certainly be expected to ‘outswell’ any ‘colic’ opposition from puff’d Aquilon. Shakespeare’s suggestively ambiguous use of the word ‘colic’ here again points to the bodily nature of this sonic exchange. To encourage passion and performance to the point

⁷⁴ The reader may note the connection this suggestion shares with the arguments of section 1.4.v, of this thesis, which considers the instrumental role of the body in the production of music.

the trumpeter's 'eyes spout blood', again reinforces – to, perhaps, the extreme – the visceral nature of both this particular instance of musical performance and battlefield.

Intriguingly, the play's preoccupation with connecting the physical to the unseen – heard, but invisible – is also met with a contrasting instance of one of Shakespeare's Hapax Legomenon. The word 'unbodied' appears only once in Shakespeare's vocabulary.⁷⁵ Its use in this instance, 'And that unbodied figure of thought / That gave't surmised shape', in a speech by Agamemnon, serves to highlight the influence the non-material may have upon the actions of men.⁷⁶ Thus, 'unbodied' is a word employed to illustrate the value of the body even in its absence. Indeed, as Ian Lancashire observes, the 'matter' in question, which – at first – is unbodied, is soon transfigured into the 'mettle' of the princes; the 'matter' at hand becomes physical matter and the princes become material – people of action, rather than princes of conjecture and hollow speech, 'puffing at all'.⁷⁷

Beyond appearing to twin the bodily and the aural, Shakespeare also interrogates principles of holistic musical production and presence throughout the play. One of the most notable instances of this occurs in a speech made by Ulysses:

How could communities,
Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And, hark, what discord follows! each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters

⁷⁵ Ian Lancashire, 'Probing Shakespeare's Idiolect in *Troilus and Cressida*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Volume 68, (No. 3, Summer 1999), pp. 728-767, p. 731.

⁷⁶ *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.16-17.

⁷⁷ Lancashire, p. 733, *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.28.

Chapter Two

Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores
And make a sop of all this solid globe.⁷⁸

The speech is concerned with the reconciliations of smaller systems within the whole. An association may even be drawn between the operations of *langue* and *parole* examined earlier and the relationships Ulysses explores in the fragment above. Essentially, the dichotomies interrogated here pertain to notions of the ‘Gestalt’. Gestalt theory, as outlined by Wolfgang Iser, argues that ‘whatever is encompassed in an act of perception is constituted as a field, which basically consists of center and margin’. In order to structure this field the perceiver engages in what Iser calls ‘balancing out the tension between the data’ and thus groups them into ‘shapes’.⁷⁹ Essentially, ‘a field arises out of the relationships between data – relationships that are neither given nor brought about by a stimulus but are the result of a grouping activity guided by the perceivers underlying assumptions’.⁸⁰

So, as an example from the ‘fields’ outlined in Ulysses’ speech, the centre and margin could be taken for the distinction between ‘cities’ and ‘brotherhoods’ respectively. When Ulysses talks repeatedly of degrees Shakespeare is seemingly exploring the distinction between a shape’s part and its whole. McGilchrist argues that Shakespeare, and – in some instances – John Donne, did not draw these connections – in a Gestalt manner – between concepts by mistake: rather, ‘they were aware of it’.⁸¹ Specifically, he points to the passage above and to components of *Hamlet* as engaging, most deliberately, with Gestalt systems. He compares their employment in this respect to the music of J. S. Bach and the ability to, lightly, ‘unpick parts of the whole without

⁷⁸ *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.104-114.

⁷⁹ Iser, p. 43.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸¹ McGilchrist, p. 326.

losing the Gestalt'.⁸² In light of this, it is not the most audacious manoeuvre to manipulate explorations of the Gestalt – that have been made in reference to visual stimuli – in order to apply them to a musical equivalent. In this respect, one may mark the difference between singular notes as parts of melody as the 'degrees' between which one may form both the margin and the centre, respectively. Not only does the nature of musical composition lend itself to manifestations of Gestalt perceptions, the instruments responsible for their gestation are also approachable in this manner. Without the functions of Gestalt perception, as Ulysses indirectly describes, the physicality that I have argued is brought about by the presence of the trumpets cannot, subsequently, come to fruition. It is the simultaneous perception of both the part and the whole that provides the complete symbol, without which one may only hear a trumpet blast, forever ignorant of any connection there may be between the world of the play and the sound issued from beyond it. It is the Gestalt that allows the audiences to press through the 'oppugnancy' as Ulysses puts it, and clamber onto the shore of comprehension.

Fittingly, included in Ulysses' diatribe is a reference which directly draws on the aural: 'Take but degree away, untune that string, / And, hark, what discord follows!' Discord is not usually a word representative a system of mutual operation; rather, it suggests that, although lightly 'unpicked', the Gestalt is not maintained, the field is disrupted, and the structure of the 'image/shape' is lost. However, the syllogism of the statement instead points to a whole that is directly affected – in its perception – by the nature of one of its parts; the idea that these systems represent Gestalt construction is strengthened. Ultimately, because Gestalt-formation is that which is undertaken within

⁸² Ibid, p. 326.

the mind of the perceiver, the untuned string may disrupt the *correct* operation of Ulysses' metaphorical instrument but – in this disruption – it strengthens the concept of how his instrument operates as a whole.

If one were to consider the narrative of the play in terms of its interaction with such operations, the trumpet alarums may be – to some extent – regarded as Gestalt forms. The caveat being that, while the trumpet sound is part of battlefield discourse (and thus a margin in relation to a centre), only characters of the play can recognise this, and – as a result – they are the only ones able to readily form Gestalt perceptions of the sounds as signals. This, however, does not stall the narrative. In this case, the audience are not the ones required to understand or interpret the Gestalt images in their first instances. The first order of perception is undertaken by the characters of *Troilus and Cressida*, *Macbeth*, and *Dido and Aeneas*, and then relayed – to their respective audiences – as fully formed 'fields'. To understand the narrative of the plays, or indeed a scene in Purcell's opera, one must embrace the idea that each constituent part of a signal plays an important role, be that in the sound of Grecian trumpets or the strings and brass of Purcell's thunder; the absence of either – regardless of the party responsible for its perception – would disrupt the narrative as a Gestalt form and render each work incomplete.⁸³ Ulysses' speech here is important because it explores a system that is vital for the continued operation of the very 'text' it is held in. The numerous constituent parts of the play each engage endlessly in semiotic exchanges; one 'un-tuned string' brings with it the potential to throw the entire process into disharmony. Both the Gestalt and, by the nature of his metaphor, Ulysses ask us to consider what may happen to a body of music should even the most meagre instrument fail to play its part correctly.

⁸³ Iser, p. 44.

Whilst Ulysses' speech presents concerns about semiotics and the operation of a text as a Gestalt whole, it returns attention to Levitin's position on the distinction between music and sounds. He, too, highlights the importance of Gestalt perceptions in terms of music. The faculties of hearing and memory combine to form systems of what Levitin calls 'perceptual completion'.⁸⁴ The audience, as a result, are as responsible as composers for combining elements of sound to understand them as musically whole. Yet, even when taken all together, each individual element is able to remain, as it becomes the relationship between the perceptions that generate 'music' as art.⁸⁵ By generating a non-vocal system of signals, the trumpets in *Troilus and Cressida* create sounds that unfold in time, draw on both expectation and memory, and – eventually – allow the audience to draw understanding from the salvos. Regardless of their role on the battlefield, or as elements of Shakespeare's play, simply listening to the sounds as signs is – for Levitin – enough to consider them music. Thus, it is not necessarily the source of sound that *creates* music but the listener's perceptual response to the sounds – intended or otherwise. The now-familiar opening lines from 'Peter Quince at the Clavier', which were examined at length in chapter one, demonstrate this: 'Just as my fingers on these keys / Make music, so the self-same sounds / On my spirit make a music, too'.⁸⁶

2.6 – Words, Words, Mere Words: Beyond Semiotics

⁸⁴ Levitin, pp. 85, 101.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 18.

⁸⁶ Wallace Stevens, 'Peter Quince at the Clavier', in *Harmonium* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp. 112-114, p. 112.

Chapter Two

This exploration of the Gestalt nature of sounds in *Troilus and Cressida* is perhaps epitomised in one of Troilus' more forlorn reflections. The last moments of Act Five's third scene bring about a febrile demonstration of Troilus's adolescent petulance, yet doubtlessly resonate with delicate poetic complexity; the young prince has just received a letter from Cressida and appears to find its contents incongruent with her behaviour toward him:

TROILUS

Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart;
Th' effect doth operate another way.
[He tears the letter and tosses it away.]
Go, wind, to wind, there turn and change together.
My love with words and errors still she feeds,
But edifies another with her deeds. *Exeunt [severally].*⁸⁷

Here, Troilus is not merely lamenting the rift that grows between words and their meanings, he is also expounding the distinction between breath and simply air. The differences explored here, between wind, breath, sounds, and words, are not only challenged by systems of semiology in Troilus's declarations above; his speech unearths divisions that are further complicated by the very nature of sense experience. It once more recalls the physicality of sound; no longer the cracking ribs of the trumpeter, but the transformation of air, to word, to wind. Troilus's outburst on the distinction between words that are written and those that are spoken remind the audience of the fragile semiotic boundary, between the play as it was written and the performance given, which they find themselves sat upon the threshold of. From script to stage, the audience is the

⁸⁷ *Troilus and Cressida*, 5.3.107-111.

very last station to which the message is delivered; as Pierce would suggest, they performed the role of the final interpretant.⁸⁸

It would be remiss to ignore the obvious similarity this passage bears to Shakespeare's other work. Hamlet's facetious 'Words, words, words', in the centrepiece second scene of the second act, similarly reflects the nature of the distinction between what is written, what is read, and what is 'meant':

LORD POLONIUS

[...]

What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET

Words, words, words.

LORD POLONIUS

What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET

Between who?

LORD POLONIUS

I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.⁸⁹

In this instance, Hamlet navigates the distinction between form and content in a way that appears to lazily drape his observations on the border between the two, casually transgressing the linguistic systems on which the people that surround him evidently rely. When Polonius enquires as to what – exactly – the Prince is reading, Hamlet's

⁸⁸ Iser, p. 71.

⁸⁹ *Hamlet*, 2.2.209-212.

response appears less than helpful. What Hamlet does here – and Shakespeare by extension – is explore the ‘fixity’ required for dialogue. To ask ‘what is the matter’ can, of course, simply refer to the very ‘matter’ that forms to make us all or, more specifically, the paper from which the Prince is reading; but it is more commonly synonymous with ‘what is wrong?’. Had Polonius specified ‘subject matter’ or some such equivalent, he would have drawn a more efficient response from Hamlet. The Courtier’s ambiguity – or, simply, lack of specificity – is likely not an intentional attempt to destabilise the conversation; rather, it highlights the fluid nature of vocal discourse. This exchange points to a flaw that potentially undermines any system of interpretation: rooted in the mechanics of understanding, one will also find misunderstanding.

Where Hamlet distractedly laments the futility of reconciling media, Troilus has very much come to terms with the numbing desolation that accompanies the normalisation that one attempts to undertake between word, sound, and thought. He takes the page of pen-rendered voice and scatters it to the wind – he demands it to become wind. Assimilated by the force which carries away her message, Cressida’s words are rendered in a form ostensibly identical to breath but robbed of any meaning that would typically be bestowed by such recitation – reducing such invocations to ‘mere words’. The semiotic path of supplication becomes almost too much here: from script, to speech, to prop page, to ‘wind’; the last of which is the only signifier to which the audience is privy, even then, only by means of dialogue (and any performance-specific additions). To consider the relationship of this sequence to Ulysses’ speech, Troilus ‘unpicks’ the very fabric of language, quite literally as he tears the physical words apart

and then more symbolically as he commends the words back to nothing. The discord that follows, to borrow from *Macbeth*, is ‘full of sound and fury, signifying nothing’.⁹⁰

Conclusion

To conclude, I have considered the presence of trumpets in *Troilus and Cressida* from the perspectives of semiotic, synesthetic, and Gestalt systems. I have done this in order to explore both the extent of their role in the play and how their communicative functions are an invocation of music. As a result, this chapter has established how the sounds of musical instruments have affected the progression of each scene and overall the development of the play. Additionally, there has been consideration of a similar semiotic mechanism in *Macbeth*, wherein I have suggested that the knocking at the gate holds a greater linguistic significance than one may initially acknowledge. I have also supported these explorations with a comparison to Henry Purcell’s opera *Dido and Aeneas*; this comparison interposed the relationship between the two media – of opera and drama – and considered how they both deal with the connections between physicality, sound, and storytelling. In a similar way to how the arrival of ‘thunder’ prompts an expositional verse of dialogue in Purcell’s opera, the Greek and Trojan trumpets of *Troilus and Cressida* both mark and initiate key developmental moments in Shakespeare’s play.

Chapter two contributes to the overall arguments of this thesis by looking at how musical components can supplement literary media by focussing on the use of sound in dramatic literature. The use of sound, and the impact it has on the development of plot in each dramatic piece, has been investigated and I demonstrated that Shakespeare’s

⁹⁰ *Macbeth*, 5.5.27-28.

Chapter Two

plays employ sounds – or fragments of music – to indicate a physical action has taken place. This chapter interrogated what these sounds might ‘mean’ and suggested that there is an important symbolic framework in place. Using linguistic and semiotic theories, I have argued that sonic signals in *Troilus and Cressida* are used as a way to relay information to the audience without direct speech. Often these sounds are not just commands, but representations of an action that has taken place; they deliver news, announce arrivals, call to arms, and relay troop movements. Purcell’s opera was used to help further demonstrate this semiotic mechanism at work; the use of strings is external to the main melodic scene but serves to provide an aural representation of a physical event.

This chapter has also considered whether we are justified in considering ‘sound’ music; the porter scene in *Macbeth*, for example, involves knocking rather than something overtly musical (while perhaps not completely melodic, knocking is of course rhythmic). The occurrences of these sounds were then considered to be signals which firstly provide information to the characters of the play (or opera) and then, as the meaning of the sounds are revealed on stage, to the audience.

By acknowledging this extra semiotic dimension to Shakespeare’s plays, which emerges as a result of considering the musical elements of each work, we are able to produce a new reading – or at least supplement current criticism – of *Troilus and Cressida* and, to a lesser extent, *Macbeth*. Thus, this chapter supports the overall argument of this thesis which proposes that considering the musical invocations of a piece of literature can lead to innovative readings of the text.

Chapter Three – Scores and Stories: The Use of Musical Structure in

Literary Form

Deoxyribonucleic acid jazz

Deoxyribonucleic acid, the fundamental aspect of one's biological make-up which contains all the necessary information for life, is not a particularly musical term. The genome, comprised of four bases, is present in every living organism and, without it, we would not exist.¹ For Michael Zev Gordon, however, this structural component contains more than just a string of chemicals outlining a cell's function; when these four bases are configured to be read as musical notes, the helix becomes a stave and, the sequence of chemicals, a score.

Eduardo Reck Miranda, a composer whose work builds on that of Gordon, takes the same structural compound as it is found in antibiotics and undertakes a similar transformative procedure.² The shift from biological information to musical instruction, although requiring human, creative, interference or fine-tuning, is what Miranda simply calls 'a translation'. The information is already extant; it simply needs reading from a musical perspective.

Just as with Miranda and Gordon's projects, which isolate the essential components of living cells in a bid to generate an organic music, so, the fundamental elements of music and literature can be found in their most essential components. This

¹ Michael Zev Gordon, 'Symphony of Life: Making Music out of the Human Genome', in *The Guardian* (London: June 24th 2010).

² Tom Service and Eduardo Reck Miranda, 'Music Matters', <
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09hr3w6> > [accessed 18/12/17].

thesis has considered several of the roles that sound plays in literature and in the shared creative practices of the poet and the composer, but attention now turns to the fundamental nature of the modes themselves; the structures that make the distinct art forms are – as this chapter will argue – similarly linked. The case for formal parity between music and literature extends to a symbiotic understanding of how the two forms share structural connections and can be seen to inform each other.

3.1 – Overture: Against the Grain

Calvin Brown, in his exploratory work *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts*, proposes that while music and literature share several qualities, there are many more that are simply incompatible. He notes the similarities between poetry's employment of metre and rhythm and the tempo, and time signature, of music; he also draws a comparison between how the sonic qualities of music, like pitch, timbre, and harmony, can be thought of in terms of rhyme, assonance, and other poetic traits that rely on the oral. However, one of the most difficult properties for Brown to consider in equal standing between both music and literature – and thus reconcile – is that of structure.

Starting with the general findings of Brown's conclusion, this chapter will unpick previous attempts to parse the connection between structures of music and literature. That is to say, the point on which Brown chose to end his work has become something of a point of departure for this chapter. Thus, this chapter contributes to existing scholarship by both testing the limits of Brown's findings and offering new perspectives to occupy some of the critical vacancies in his work.

There are number of practicalities that should be addressed as salient factors when considering why Brown makes the claims he does in his monograph; first and foremost is to acknowledge that his work is contextualised by the artistic environment

from which he draws his analysis – one arguably unburdened by the advent of postmodernity, and certainly before such a movement becomes the zeitgeist. While I agree with much of Brown’s work, contention between my arguments and his does arise at various junctures – especially on the question of structure. However, understanding why Brown draws this conclusion, that the structures of music and literature are mostly irreconcilable, and the thinking that has led him here, is – I suggest – an important step to take in order to formulate a new perspective on the symbiosis between musical and literary form. Thus, Brown’s work – and that of his spiritual successor, Werner Wolf – will provide much of the critical reference for this chapter. Indeed, much like how chapter two sought to fill a critical vacancy in the scholarship of *Troilus and Cressida*, the chapter ahead contributes to the field of work set about by the two writers, offering to fill gaps in their findings and formulating new perspectives in response to their propositions. Unlike chapter one’s interactions with Fitzgerald’s ‘The Body of Music’, my engagement with Brown and Wolf is not intended to be wholly adversarial; while in some cases I challenge prior interpretations of their work, in others, I am in fact supporting their proposals with further evidence.

3.1.ii – The Art of Sharing

‘A story is never regarded as sound, whereas in a poem, sound plays a much more important role, but even there less so than in music, where this role predominates.’

- Werner Wolf, *The Musicalisation of Fiction*, p. 16.

Story, sound, music, and poetry are brought together in this quotation from Wolf. The observation hinges on the involvement of narrative and sound in artistic form, but only focusses on the distinction between poetry and music itself. Earlier chapters in this thesis have considered the distinction glossed here in greater detail, and – beyond this – this thesis has already explored the further connection the first three elements have in common with drama. However, a key driver of story, or narrative – and one that Wolf appears to omit from his assessment in this excerpt (but not, I must add, the further work) – is structure. While a story, in written prose form at least, does not rely much on sound, narrative – in any form – requires structure. It is fair to assume that, for Wolf, forms of art that convey narrative must do so with structure. Perhaps the two are linked in such a way that is simply axiomatic for Wolf, meaning – from his perspective – there is no need to differentiate between them; indeed, in his study he stresses that only ‘**narrative** literature’ offers a suitable example of the form’s intermediality with music.³

Where other chapters of this thesis explore the semiotic and instrumental, ‘Scores and Stories’ looks to establish the connection between music and literature in the very structures of each artistic form. This chapter, like those that precede it, is roughly comprised of two elements: a critical disquisition on the historical and contemporary discussions that have been presented heretofore to the academic community and a series of case studies exploring artistic works which contextualise the theoretical foundations in respect of literary and musical examples. Namely, Grace Hazard Conkling’s 1912 poem ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’, and Angela Carter’s ‘The Bloody Chamber’ from her 1979 short story collection of the same name.

³ Wolf, pp. 3, 33 (Wolf’s own emphasis).

The next, grounding, section develops the critical underpinnings of the chapter with reference to the nature of ‘form’, ‘structure’, and the relationships between the two. In order to achieve this, I will consider form in its most foundational sense: as a fundamental component of the world around us and not simply a contingent element of aesthetic and artistic practice. Following from this, I will address how form and structure are differently manipulated; firstly, as products of the creative process; and then in the way they are subsequently received by their respective audiences – critical or otherwise. What I mean by this is that while form is intrinsically linked to the nature of a text, there are indeed times when it is interpreted differently. For example, one may attempt to ‘read’ form in a manner which is simply counterintuitive to the structure that has been presented, or extrapolate fragments of formal qualities to implicate the structure as a whole; for example, reading a haiku as if it were a sonnet, or discovering a rhyming couplet in a novel and declaring the whole work as poetry. Such an approach to reading drastically alters the text – literary or musical. The virtues or follies of such practice are too delicate an issue to touch on here, but the results are intriguing enough to warrant covering in greater detail later. Indeed, in some respects such an approach is what allows for studies of intermediality (of this nature) to take place at all. The presence of sustained assonance in a passage of prose, for instance, may not necessarily be representative of the text as whole but it does indicate the author’s engagement – even if incidental – with poetic techniques possessed of musical quality. In light of this, the focus of chapter three is evidently more concerned with the production of a text. As has been done in the prior two chapters, one can consider the critical position of this chapter in terms of Calvin Brown’s diagram mapping the path of art from creation to reception. In this case, the

Chapter Three

discussions ahead – on musical structures and literary form – occupy a space on the side of the artist and their ‘organisation’ of a work.⁴

Tracing the nature of form and its relation to structure will draw together what appear – to some – to be distinct art forms, thus illustrating the shared roots of music and literature. This, in turn, will allow me to discuss how forms of one artistic mode may affect another – specifically musical structure in a literary sense and vice versa.

Although this chapter will begin its direct literary analysis by drawing on examples of previously critiqued poetry, it will also consider the role musical structure can be seen to play in prose. Later, drawing on the works of Calvin S. Brown and Werner Wolf, the two foremost proponents of musico-literary study, I will address how their approaches differ and how best to proceed on the subject. Although their work is as broad in scope as my own project, if not more so, I will be focussing on how they perceive the essential similarities between music and literature.

In the closing section of this chapter, I will also reflect on the work of E M Forster. Forster produced a number of lectures on the ‘rhythms’ of literary form and his own prose fiction has been subject to criticism – from Edward Killoran Brown – in terms of its relationship to music. I will consider how the analysis I have undertaken in chapter three might be compatible with the critical perspectives of both Forster and E. K. Brown.

The invocation of music as a structural component of, say, a novel or a poem, means that the presence of music can both form and inform the work, not just as part of a literary narrative, but as an element of the very fabric of the text. Thus, in a felicitous return, much of the position presented here shares an objective with chapter one. After

⁴ Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 4.

all, what could be more at stake when considering form, than the nature of creativity? Indeed, in Dominic Scott's essay 'Plato, Poetry, and Creativity', the argument is put forward that Plato's dialogues provide us with at least three different models of poetic creativity, all of which are related to form.⁵ Scott arrives at similar conclusion to my own arguments in chapter one, suggesting that Plato likely thought that poetic creativity was derived – in poets – from a combination of talent and external (perhaps spiritual, but certainly ineffable) inspiration.⁶

Plato's position on poetic art is valuable, and certainly reassuring, but it is his work in *The Republic* which proves to be critical – particularly when the task now is to establish the connections between musical and literary form.

3.2 – Variations on (a) Form

'Form' is, perhaps, a term too broad to continue employing without clarification. To arrive at a usable interpretation of form – before one can fully engage in what then emerges from discussions of formalism – it is useful to consider the philosophical origins of form in its rawest sense. The fundamental principles of form, in Western philosophy at least, are found in Plato's allegory of the cave. Widespread in its diffusion throughout critical writings and Continental philosophy, the dialogue represents Plato's dualistic theory of the world and how we experience it. T. Z. Lavine's lucid appraisal provides a firm footing with which we may embark on this chapter's attempt to consolidate an understanding of both musical and literary form:

⁵ Dominic Scott, 'Plato, Poetry, and Creativity', in *Plato and the Poets* ed. By Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp.131-154.

⁶ Scott, p.152.

Imagine mankind as living in an underground cave which has a wide entrance open to the light. Deep inside are human beings facing the inside wall of the cave, with their necks and legs chained so that they cannot move. They have never seen the light of day or the sun outside the cave. Behind the prisoners there is a raised way on which a low wall has been built, such as is used in puppet shows as a screen to conceal the people working the puppets. Along the raised way people walk carrying all sorts of things which they hold so that they project above the wall – statues of men, animals, trees. The prisoners, facing the inside wall, cannot see one another, or the wall behind them on which the objects are being carried – all they can see are the shadows these objects cast on the wall of the cave.

The Prisoners live all their lives seeing only shadows of reality, and the voices they hear are only echoes from the wall. But the prisoners cling to the familiar shadows and to their passions and prejudices, and if they were freed and able to turn around and see the realities which produce the shadows, they would be blinded by the light of the fire. And they would become angry and would prefer to regain their shadow-world.

But if one of the prisoners were freed and turned around to see, in the light of the fire, the cave and his fellow prisoners and the roadway, and if he were then dragged up and out of the cave into the light of the sun, he would see the things of the world as they truly are and finally he would see the sun itself. What would this person think now of the life in the cave and what people there know of reality and of morality? And if he were to descend back into the cave, would he not have great difficulty in accustoming himself to the darkness, so that he could not compete with those who had never left the cave? Would he not be subject to their ridicule, scorn, even their physical attack?⁷

Plato's description of the cave-dwellers is most often seen as a metaphor for the difference between those enlightened – quite literally in this sense – and those still ignorant. Yet, what is also alluded to in this allegory is the means by which people are able to distinguish between material objects and their phantoms. As Lavine indicates, Plato's theory of forms points the reader back towards the allegory of the cave and revives the metaphor of shadow and substance once more: 'Plato specifies the shadow-substance relation of the things of the visible world to the forms of the intelligible world by referring to the concrete objects of the visible world as imperfect "copies" of the

⁷ T. Z. Lavine, *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), pp. 27-28.

forms which they partake of'.⁸ In comparison to the world of shadows the prisoners take for reality, 'the forms are no mere ideas or mental entities for Plato'. Rather, 'of all the components that make up reality, the forms have the greatest claim to reality', they are 'the most real'.⁹ Thus, the case is made for a reality in two parts, across which human experience is spread: a material plane, and the realm of forms.

There are many perspectives on the role art plays in this system and many that dismiss such a notion. However, with respect to how art represents the world, it is often the case that Plato's ideas on form simply cannot be avoided, whether one is in agreement with them or not. Deems Taylor suggests – directing us once more to the analogy between the painterly and sonic arts – that the history of visual art (specifically painting) shows a steady development from illustration to abstraction.¹⁰ Calvin Brown extrapolates this thought by claiming:

We might go further, and say that painting went from the attempt to represent objects exactly as they are, through a freedom deliberately to distort them, to a school of abstraction in which patterns are created for their own interest with no representational intention whatsoever. Conversely, the general course of instrumental music has been from pure formal abstraction, through formal patterns designed at the same time to represent states of mind and feeling, to the illustration of objects and stories.¹¹

The final pairing of 'objects and stories' echoes the sentiment to which Lavine points, in that not only do 'things' have forms that cast shadows, but ideas – or, in this case, stories – too, are merely shadows of a more perfect form.

⁸ Lavine, p. 38.

⁹ Ibid, p.48.

¹⁰ Deems Taylor, *The Well Tempered Listener* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p. 238.

¹¹ Brown, p. 268.

Brown then takes the step ignored (or side-stepped) by many others in previous – and subsequent – attempts to bring literature in line with her sister arts; in the boldest paragraph of his conclusion, if not the whole volume, he works to pare down the complexities of literature in the hope that it, too, can be considered in terms of ‘illustration’ and ‘abstraction’, which – in this context – we consider to be polar positions. Brown’s declarative paragraph operates in two halves, each establishing a poignant proposition on the nature of literature as a developing art form. In the first, he compares the written form to the evolution of painting and music:

In literature no such simple line of development can be seen as in painting, and we must speak in very broad generalizations, without taking into account the numerous individual exceptions (even entire schools and periods) which disrupt the simple pattern of development. Nevertheless, the general course of literature seems to have been, like that of painting, from the literal and concrete to the abstract.¹²

The terms ‘illustration’ and ‘abstraction’ thus become the tools with which we gauge an artist’s response to form. Plato would suggest that art’s attempts to – as Brown terms it – illustrate the world would always fall short of that which the world itself represents, or, at least, how we experience it. Such a statement is hardly controversial, but Brown’s attempts to apply such a mode of thinking do potentially ruffle some feathers:

[The] change can easily be seen within individual literatures: Homer was presumably incapable of the degree of abstraction found in *Prometheus Bound* – or, if capable of it, he was not interested in it, which comes to much the same thing. Though various ideas govern his characters, we always feel that the principal interest of the Homeric poems lies in the persons – even more literally – in their actions. But Prometheus is a symbol, rather than a person, and all his action in the play is internal. His dealings are with such personified abstractions as Strength and Force, which are given human form merely for the convenience of the dramatist and spectators.¹³

¹² Ibid, p. 268.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 267-268.

I would offer a challenge to the first statement; to ‘be incapable’ of something and ‘be capable’ but uninterested in doing it are, fundamentally, not ‘much the same thing’, despite arriving at the same end; being unable to employ abstraction is vastly different from being uninterested in it, and – different still – from opting not to employ it. Brown’s assessment only considers the work of literature as a product, not the poet as an artist, or for that matter, their process; this, I concede is his primary concern and perhaps permits such narrowing of the scope. It does, however, still signal the changing role and manner of literature Brown wishes to illustrate in this passage.

What, then, is the result for literary form and structure? If the case is, as Brown presses, that art moves between degrees of abstraction and illustration, what function does form and structure play in the composition of a text? As both Plato, Lavine, and Brown would be likely to agree, the answer to the first question is perhaps simpler than to the second. Indeed, art simply becomes another rung to the nature of reality Plato describes. Where the world we experience is a shadow of forms, art is a copy – or an attempt at a copy – of these interpreted images. Brown makes the distinction between ‘objects’ and ‘ideas’ and thus I, too, acknowledge the difference; both entities are conjured as shadows in the world, but are found – fully – in the realm of forms.

Questions of whether ‘art is truth’ propose that instead of imitating the shadows, art shrugs off the shackles of the dimly lit cave and in fact represents forms more closely than we have known them. As discussed in the earlier chapter on ‘The Keys to Creativity’, art’s ability, in painting, music, and literature, to ‘move’ its audience goes beyond that of a ‘rational’ response. Of course, if indeed art represents ‘truth’ or ‘form’ more purely than any alternative, then the case for parity between principles of

composition for different art forms becomes self-evident; if art shares truth, then forms of art must be congruent with each other, in their creation and how they relate to reality, given that they all must pertain to ‘truth’. Despite the eager pull of such an empirically driven argument, ‘truth’ is not necessarily the key goal at stake in this chapter. It does, however, provide a tool and a motivation. While this chapter may briefly address the relationship between art and truth, the primary goal of such discussions is not to adjudicate on the veracity of the relationship, but to determine – in light of such considerations – what qualities of form and structure are shared by music and literature, and how, as readers, listeners, and critics, we may exploit these shared elements to better understand, or engage, with a text.

3.2.ii – Formal Structure

How, then, is it that form – in the sense it has just been discussed – comes to be related to structure? The lineage of the forms, form, and structure – and how they each may be linked –not only emerges in the Ancient Greeks’ work on poetics discussed above, but in later works of criticism and literary instruction, which are ones inevitably informed by a greater wealth of texts. George Puttenham’s seminal Renaissance tome on poetry, *The Arte of English Poesy* (1589), explores such a connection.¹⁴

The opening section of his work, ‘Of Poets and Poesy’, discusses many of the matters previously covered in both this chapter and the thesis more widely, namely, the nature of creativity and the origin of forms. He, too, arrives at the conclusion that creativity – though perhaps prompted by divine inspiration – is in fact the product of

¹⁴ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesy*, ed. By Frank Whigham and Wayne Rebhorn (London: Cornell University Press, 2007).

marshalled effort.¹⁵ What Puttenham aims to set out in his work, as he describes it to his patron, is something of an introduction to, and disquisition on, poetry as a creative engagement and profession; what he calls ‘a device for [this] discipline’ of poetry. To wield a blunt but suitable phrase, Puttenham’s text is a discourse on the science of poetic art.¹⁶

In the second book of his work, titled ‘Of Proportion Poetical’, he suggests that all things – artistic and otherwise – exist in relation to each other. This relationship, according to Puttenham, operates proportionally.¹⁷ Beyond this, Puttenham makes several arguments regarding the nature of ‘good poetry’, including the cases for and against weak, forced, rhymes, becoming dictatorial in his approach to poesy.

However, chapters eleven and twelve of this second book present important observations in the correspondence between ‘the forms’ and the structures they give way to. ‘Of proportion by situation’ and ‘Of Proportion in figure’, as these chapters are titled, consider the physical rendering of poetry. Specifically, Puttenham describes the importance and function of line placement. He suggests that the layout of a poem serves to trigger a ‘natural sympathy between the ear and the eye’; a symbiosis linked directly to form ‘for if it please the ear well, the same represented by delineation to the view pleaseth the eye well, and *e converso*.’¹⁸ ‘Ocular proportion’, as Puttenham names it,

¹⁵ Puttenham, pp. 93-94.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 94. It is worth noting Puttenham’s caution when referring to poetry as a ‘discipline’, as opposed to a ‘delight’. Such qualification demonstrates an intention to preserve at least some artistic mystique, despite the academic dissection he is preparing to undertake – a determination shared by this thesis. Poetry is still fit for enjoyment, Puttenham reminds his reader, in spite – and in many cases because – of the unveiling of its intricacies.

¹⁷ This conceptual model is not unique to Puttenham. Indeed, there are many who suggest that the universe is balanced in such a way that one may measure each relationship as mathematically significant to another. *Musica Universalis* and the Golden ratio are perhaps among the most predominant of these theories – particularly in relation to art.

¹⁸ Puttenham, p. 175.

relies on distances. These distances are to be measured between lines, verses, and rhymes. Below are a number of Puttenham's own illustrations of how these distances appear in poetry:

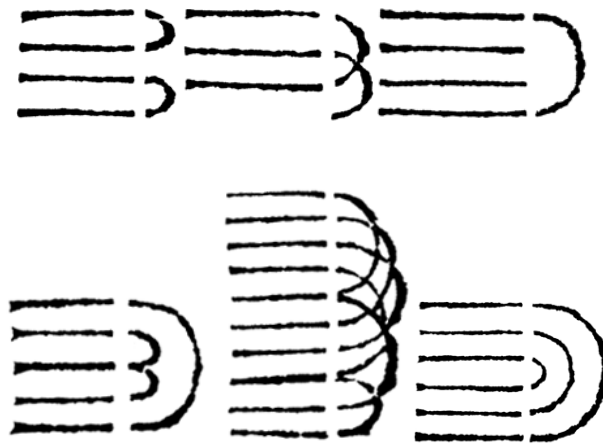


Fig. 8¹⁹ – Lines and concords in Puttenham's text.

Beginning with a simple distich and then with stanzas growing in size and complexity, Puttenham demonstrates each line (represented by a line) and the distance between its corresponding 'concord' (represented by the arcs). He draws on examples from literature in order to demonstrate how these concords become variously manifested, how these proportions grow out of form and how they become, quite overtly, the 'musics of poetry'.²⁰

The closing section of 'Proportion in Situation' describes how the arrangement of lines, with respect to both measure and concord of rhyme, affects not only the efficacy of reading but the operation of these proportions themselves. It demonstrates, visually,

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 175.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 174-177.

‘both proportions concurring together as they needs must’ and reinforces each of these poetic elements to the reader.²¹ This conclusion is followed directly by ‘Of proportion in figure’, a chapter that helps the reader consolidate the development of form to structure and allows us to begin to think about how we might also apply the principles under discussion – here and in the rest of the work – to prose, alongside its poetic counterpart. Puttenham describes this final proportion thus:

[the] last proportion is that of figure, so called for that it yields an ocular representation, of your metres being by good symmetry reduced into certain geometrical figures, whereby the maker is restrained to keep him within his bounds, and showeth not only more art, but serveth also much better for briefness and subtlety of device.²²

He also identifies the potential figures such works may take:

²¹ Ibid, p. 178.

²² Ibid, p. 179.

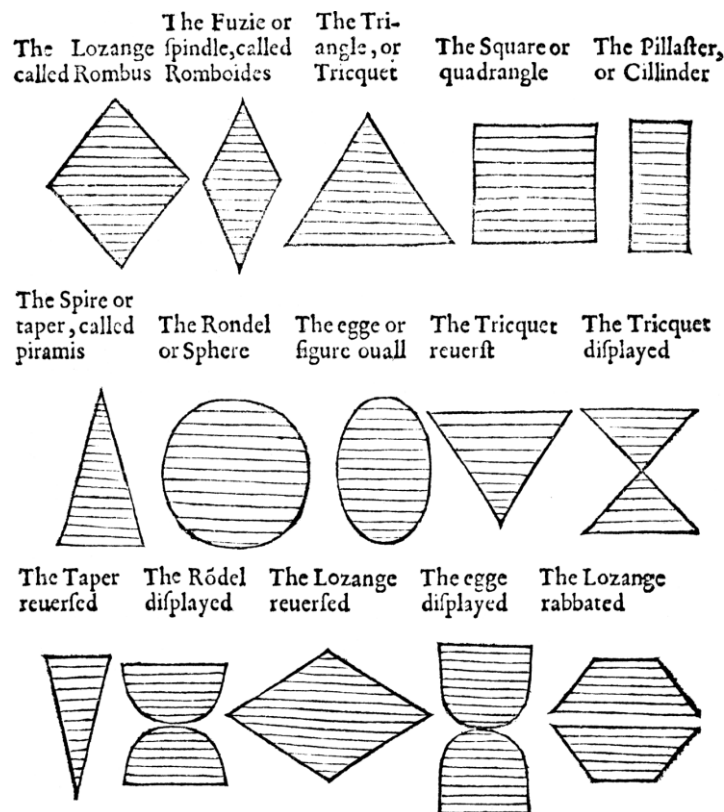


Fig. 9²³ – Examples of ‘proportion in figure’ from Puttenham’s text.

The examples above represent fairly simplistic arrangements of lines that become visible as shapes; recognisable because they conform to the audience’s expectations of shapes with which they are already familiar. Much like the prisoners in Plato’s cave, Puttenham would suggest, it is the shapes’ correspondence with the ‘forms’ that facilitates the audience’s recognition of them as such.²⁴

²³ Ibid, p. 181.

²⁴ The application of these ‘proportions in figure’ must begin at the level of line, if not the word. Puttenham recognises this when discussing these relational proportions. Thus, the lines of poems (arranged ‘in figure’) represent a form of gestalt; the lines are only part of a comprehensive shape when the form itself is viewed as a whole.

Puttenham's suggestion that this manner of composition is restrictive is a robust one but can be perhaps no more eloquently challenged than in the work of George Herbert. For example:

A broken ALTAR, Lord, thy servant rears,
Made of a heart and cemented with tears;
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workman's tool hath touch'd the same.
A HEART alone
Is such a stone,
As nothing but
Thy pow'r doth cut.
Wherefore each part
Of my hard heart
Meets in this frame
To praise thy name.
That if I chance to hold my peace,
These stones to praise thee may not cease.
Oh, let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine,
And sanctify this ALTAR to be thine.²⁵

In 'The Altar', we can see how form, in quite a literal sense, begins to shape, again quite literally, the structure of a work of poetry. Herbert's poem demonstrates not only the principles of Puttenham's poetic proportions, but that the singularity of form and content can extend to the very structure of a piece of literature.²⁶ As a result, 'The Altar' can be used to represent the summit of the development of form; from Plato's ideas on form looked at earlier, to forms of poetry, to forms of structure. Thus, one may recognise the importance, and

²⁵ George Herbert, 'The Altar', *The English Poems of George Herbert* ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 89.

²⁶ One may find an equally pleasing example in Herbert's 'The Collar', where the poet claims 'My lines and life are free; as free as the rode, / Loose as the wind, as large as store.' and presents his poem in loose irregularly sized lines.

relevance, of the relationship between the simplistic models Plato employs to describe how we perceive the world and the complex structures of literary texts.

Angela Leighton, in her 1997 monograph *On Form*, draws her reader's attention to the same form-structure connection.²⁷ In her opening chapter, she muses – much more precisely than I – over the evolution of the Platonic forms. Her exposition spans from a gloss of form's various iterations in the dictionary to an evaluation of its historical contexts, and considers the relationship between form, matter, content, and even the volatility of formlessness. In an elegant summation of the various meanings of 'form', a term which at times is enigmatic and contradictory, she declares that 'nevertheless, this simple four-letter word, so basic to the idioms of speech, expresses in miniature a conundrum of language itself: that is, and is not, the object it represents.'²⁸

In mitigation of the task which befalls both the literary critic and the philosopher, Leighton notes that 'the story of form is an erratic one'. 'It does not lend itself to chronological plotting', she continues, 'and its more technical meanings come and go on the tide of fashion'.²⁹ The protean versatility of the word brings with it a certain degree of ambiguity. To have a word of transient significance in one's argument is typically a crippling weakness – particularly if such a word forms the basis for all that follows. Indeed, Leighton goes so far as to accuse 'form' of being 'a word full of contradictions, which can switch its allegiance from any one meaning or slip the hold of any one philosophical definition'.³⁰ Despite this, she argues in favour of such 'moveable' signification, as 'this very multiform potential may be the reason why artists

²⁷ Angela Leighton, *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism and the Legacy of a Word* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1997).

²⁸ Leighton, p. 3.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 3.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

continue to need and use the word, whether or not it is in a critical fashion'.³¹ She asks her reader 'what other word could describe, with so little fuss, but also with a due sense of estrangement and embodiment, the object in question: the art form in all its integral complexity?'³² After all, the term has persisted as both a cornerstone of western philosophy and a fundamental element of any critical vocabulary.

The attempts of both Leighton's book, and this chapter, to usher the use of the term 'form' from its classical origins toward a meaning more applicable to literary criticism are not disingenuous; rather, they represent a singular process – one that exploits the term's own pliant and obliging characteristics. Thus, although my own distillation of these axiomatic philosophic observations has taken a well-intentioned detour through the Renaissance, Leighton's pertinent and efficient analysis supports the conclusion reached.

Later in this chapter, I will examine the extent to which the structural devices I have looked at in poetry translate into different types of writing, namely prose fiction. Before this, however, there is still much significant and relevant work offered by Puttenham to explore.

3.2.iii – A Matter of Mathematics

Excitingly, in *The Art of English Poesy*, Puttenham also demonstrates an eagerness to highlight the structural similarities that poetry shares with music. As previously discussed, the work's second book focusses heavily on the principles of proportionality and how

³¹ Ibid, p. 3.

³² Ibid, p. 3.

such a mechanism governs art. Puttenham's arguments in the latter half of 'Of Proportion Poetical' have been discussed above. However, the first half of the book has a much more overtly musical influence. Where the later chapters cover 'figure', 'situation', 'rhyme', and 'the distance of lines', the opening chapters tempt the reader with pronouncements on 'staff', 'measure', 'accent', and 'time'. Notably, the language employed by Puttenham is already indicative of a shared musical lexicon. Despite these early chapters providing a comprehensive discourse on what Puttenham calls 'motion in words', chapter eight presents the most compelling case for this kinetic connection with music.³³ It is titled 'Of your cadences by which your meter is made symphonical', to which 'when they be sweetest and most solemn in a verse' is added as a corollary. Despite being one of the briefest chapters in the second book, it not only makes some of the most obvious connections to music in the volume, but directly indicates the importance of the role music plays in the performance of poetic works. The general claim of the chapter is that the selection of words and the construction of verses must consider the resulting 'cadence'. This arithmetic rhythmic structure is thus intentionally manifested, as opposed to being the result of a random act of metric guesswork. The ultimate goal of such a practice is to produce poesy that balances both the cadence of each line and those proportions shared between verses so as to make such work 'symphonical'. What Puttenham is essentially arguing for is a harmonic system – one that is perhaps not too dissimilar from those principles found in western music. Indeed, it should not be overlooked that his use of 'cadence' is almost certainly a direct reference to the music practices of medieval Italian music.³⁴ By laying out the directions for altering cadence to correspond with the content – and intent – of a poem, Puttenham

³³ Puttenham, p. 167.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 169, n. 2.

demonstrates a vital symbiosis between a poem's form and its content. Thus, the form and structure of a poem are similarly reliant on musical principles.

In his work on the musicalisation of fiction, Werner Wolf also highlights the importance of Puttenham's observations. Wolf suggests, as I have done, that Puttenham's discussions of 'proportion' give credence to perspectives on a universal relationship between mathematics and art, offering 'the Pythagorean notion of the music of the spheres' as one comparable theory.³⁵ Wolf goes on to indicate that these mathematical 'proportions' in fact underpin Puttenham's 'rudimentary comparison of the arts'; the resulting conclusion is that 'proportion plays a major role in the affinities between music and poetry'.³⁶

3.2.iv – Poesy, Poetry... Prose?

On an etymological tangent, Puttenham echoes Philip Sidney's disambiguation of the word 'poet': 'A poet is as much to say as a maker. And our English name well conforms with the Greek word for, of ποιέειν, to make, they call a maker *poeta*'.³⁷ Framing his use of the word 'poet' in this historical context is significant because it reveals how his readers would come to perceive the role of the poet as a craftsman, or an individual in pursuit of creating; it also broadens the contexts in which the term '*poeta*' may be used, thus making it more applicable to a wider range of potential critical approaches. If a poet, as Puttenham indicates, fulfils the role of the 'maker' the question of what they are making becomes an important one. '*Poiesis*' (ποίησις) forms the verb 'to make' and 'is

³⁵ Wolf, p. 102.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 102, n.172.

³⁷ Puttenham, p. 93.

the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before. Unlike natural changes, such as the changes that occur as a flower grows, changes in *poiesis* are brought about by human activity.’³⁸ The author of this definition cites ‘building houses’, ‘making shoes’, ‘curing illness’ as examples of *poiesis*, but also states that it includes ‘the art or craft’ by which materials are made into that which is ‘aesthetic’. Ultimately, ‘the activity of *poiesis* yields a product or result that is separate from the person who made it and is available to others for their use and evaluation’.³⁹ One may infer from this that the manipulation of words in literature, or the arrangement of sounds in music both fulfil the criteria laid out for *poiesis*.⁴⁰

Thus, while Puttenham’s work appears only to focus on what we regard as poetry – by his own assessment of the role of the poet – the case may be made for artists of any ilk to join the ranks; ‘poeta’, just as it comes to mean poet, so too may it mean composer, playwright, or novelist. Naturally, the time at which Puttenham is writing is not one well-acquainted with prose fiction; the novel, at least, remains a century away.

What I suggest is important about Puttenham’s choice – to bring his reader’s attention to the nature of the word ‘poet’ – lies in the understanding of ‘*poiesis*’ itself as ‘the activity in which a person brings into being that which did not exist before’. The artist, then, undertakes an activity which – through either, as Brown distinguishes, ‘abstraction’ or ‘illustration’ – brings something into being that was not there before. As a result, Puttenham’s text not only provides evidence for the mathematical

³⁸ David Polkinghorne, *Practice and the Human Sciences* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp.114-115.

³⁹ Polkinghorne, p. 115.

⁴⁰ I concede that the conversion between ‘materials’ and words and sounds is a rather crude way to refer to the artistic process, yet, they remain the elementary building blocks of either art form and the comparison serves only to strengthen Puttenham’s own employment of the term *poiesis*, further indicating the suitability of its usage while reinforcing its potential for aesthetic equivocation.

similarities of measure between poetry and music, but also prefigures commonality between poetry and prose by the virtue of their artist as ‘maker’.

3.3 – Conkling’s Sym-phoney Poetry

The following section will undertake a reading of Grace Hazard Conkling’s 1912 poem ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’ and consider if and where poets ‘fail’ in their attempts at imitating musical form. Robert Buttel’s *Wallace Stevens: The Making of "Harmonium"* can help us draw a link between this chapter and chapter one; he compares Stevens’s attempt at musical poetry – particularly that of ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ – with Conkling’s work, suggesting that these examples of both Stevens’s and Conkling’s work are representative of Amy Lowell’s mode of Imagism.⁴¹ The irony of Imagism being recognised in ‘musical’ poetry is neither not lost on me nor – presumably – Buttel, who notes that formal interplay is ‘part of the general [Imagist] movement to bring music and poetry closer together’.⁴² Both ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’ and ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’ draw together the senses once more in a synesthetic manner, conflating image with sound. However, in the case I present here, it is not solely polyphony that attempts to render musicality in the poem, but the form.

3.3.ii – Mozart the Muse

The opening of ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’ presents another link to Stevens’s poetry while also recalling the explorations of apostrophe in chapter two. Just as

⁴¹ Robert Buttel, *Wallace Stevens: The Making of "Harmonium"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 137-140.

⁴² Buttel, p. 137.

Stevens's piece 'Mozart, 1935' is framed as a performative memorial to the eponymous musician, Conkling's poem begins in tribute to the same prodigious composer. Even before this dedication, the poem exhibits direct musical intent. The main body of 'Symphony' is preceded by an overview of the work's organisation:

I. THE GARDEN

Poco sostenuto in A major
'The laving tide of inarticulate air'
Vivace in A major
'The iris people dance'

II. THE POOL

Allegretto in A minor
'Cool-hearted dim familiar of the dove'

III. THE BIRDS

Presto in F major
'I keep a frequent tryst.'
Presto meno assai in D Major
'The blossom-powdered orange-tree'

IV. TO THE MOON

Allegro con brio in A major
'Moon that shone on Babylon'⁴³

It becomes apparent that the arrangement of these distinct sections represents something akin to musical movements; not only is each quarter given its own name, the components in each segment are given both tempo and musical key indications. As a result, we are presented with sufficient musical direction for four specific movements of a symphony.

⁴³ Grace Hazard Conkling, 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden' in *Afternoons of April* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), pp. 13-20, p. 13.

The opening line of each movement is also provided in this synopsis, just as one would receive in the performance details for an evening of programme music. Calvin Brown in a 1944 article for *The Musical Quarterly* notes that these tempo and key indicators are identical, not with one of Mozart's works, but with Beethoven's *Symphony No.7*.⁴⁴ The exact correlation found between the tempo and key arrangements for Conkling's poem and those of Beethoven's symphony, with particular attention paid to the switch between an introductory *poco sostenuto* and *vivace* in the first movement, signals that such selections were far from coincidental. But, simultaneously, this prompts the reader to question why the poem was dedicated to Mozart, as opposed to the composer of the piece on which it is based. Perhaps, as I have argued of Stevens's later offering, the poem represents the apostrophe of a musician acting in memory of Mozart; using Beethoven's own creative output to formulate a ventriloquised tribute.⁴⁵

3.3.iii(a) – Score and Scansion

Despite the obscure and confused nature of Conkling's musical allusion, the fact remains that the poet – even in the very opening of this piece – is resolved to impress upon her reader the musicality of her poem. Ultimately, what this opening suggests is that there is great structural similarity between the poetic work that follows and the musical forms to which each section is aligned. It is not uncommon for poets and writers to herald the

⁴⁴ Calvin S. Brown, 'The Poetic use of Musical Forms' in *The Musical Quarterly* (vol. 30, No. 1, January 1944), pp. 87-101, p. 99.

⁴⁵ Fanciful speculation may draw comparison between the ambiguities of 'Symphony' and the mystery surrounding Beethoven's letter to his 'immortal beloved', which was thought to have been written around the same time as the composition of *Symphony No.7*. cf. Ludwig van Beethoven, 'To "Immortal Beloved"' in *Love Letters of Great Men and Women*, ed. By Ursula Doyle, (London: Pan Books, 2010), pp. 57-60.

musical virtues of their work and, as Brown suggests, they often do so without warrant.⁴⁶ But, given the opportunity ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’ presents for direct comparison with not only musical form, but a specific musical example, I intend to test the poem’s claims of musical parity by considering the success of Conkling’s attempts at formal imitation. Simultaneously, such an exercise gives this thesis the space to explore different approaches to notation, from both literary and musical perspectives and consider how these systems of tabulation may reconcile with each other. What follows in the next section is the process of transcribing poetry as if it were music. There have, of course, been several previous attempts at such a task; it is my endeavour to usher these, often differing, methods into a cohesive system of approaching musical notation for poetry. As such, the following section represents complex and – at times – apparently futile efforts, yet I expect it to demonstrate some level of parity between the forms, whilst also productively exposing some significant differences.

Of the myriad musical invocations Conkling conjures in her poem, the first I will look at is tempo. Taking a cue from James Murray Brown’s two-volume work on musical instruction, one can both understand the tempo – and time signature – of a given score and apply music to words whilst adhering to these same temporal music conventions. As a result, it stands to reason that one may combine these processes in order to produce a comparative reading of a piece of music and a work of poetry. Of course, there is already a precedent for using such notation to visualise the interpreted meter of a poetic work. Indeed, Geoffrey Leech, in his 1969 *Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, directly employs a simplified musical stave to represent how one would decipher the meter and rhythm of a line of poetry.⁴⁷ This alone is not particularly unique; Calvin

⁴⁶ Brown, *Music and Literature*, pp. 169-170.

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (London: Longman, 1969)

Brown also employs a similar method of scansion – preferring instead to utilise the metric virtue of percussive score to signal the presence of stress.⁴⁸ Vitally, however, Leech goes beyond simply denoting stressed and unstressed syllables – as is the minimum demanded of many systems of poetic scansion – and utilises notes of different duration to indicate the aural length of each spoken sound.⁴⁹ Thus, as a by-product of his syllabic breakdown, Leech in fact creates a rudimentary system by which one may measure the apparent tempo of a poem, by which I mean the relative lengths of utterances. Leech acknowledges the musical aspect of the metre of poetry as something derived from the nature of language itself, suggesting that, ‘as the rhythm of English is based on a roughly equal lapse of time between one stressed syllable and another, it is convenient[...] to think of an utterance as divided into “bars” or measures, each of which begins with a stressed syllable, corresponding to the musical downbeat.’⁵⁰ The fact that Leech’s comments are made first in reference to language in general, before being applied to poetry, suggests the possibility that such musical presence is not only recognisable in poesy, but other literary forms. This thought shall resurface later in this chapter’s discussion of musical form in prose structures. So strong is the musical influence on Leech’s approach to poetic deconstruction, he indicates an intention to move away from the term ‘scansion’, as it is traditionally understood, and favours instead ‘rhythmic analysis’.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ Leech, p. 106; Richard Bradford even suggests that poetic notation could extend to the pronunciation of words, and thus preserve the entire sound of a poem beyond simply rhythm and metre – in Richard Bradford, *Silence and Sound* (London: Associated University Press, 1992). (See also Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 38, on the recognisable sounds in the voices of friends.)

⁵⁰ Leech, p. 106

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 106.

What is perhaps most nuanced about Leech's system of 'rhythmic analysis' is his inclusion of 'rest' beats. Beyond further illustrating the similarity between his method and typical musical notation, for this thesis at least, the presence of rests extends the potential of mapping poetic close readings alongside musical equivalents.

One could almost argue that such a precise method of metric annotation is prescriptive – bordering on intentionalism. Leech acknowledges this fallacy by admitting that such 'notations give only one possible rendering of each line', and one that represents how he would naturally read the poem. The resulting poetic 'score' is in a sense unique to each reader; naturally, changes in pronunciation, dialect, the register of the speaker, are all likely to affect how one would compose one's own rhythmic analysis. However, as even musical performances – which rely directly on scores for performance – differ greatly between renditions, it is clear that the same shortcomings can be identified in musical notation in general – or, rather, in the transition between score and performance. Despite this, Leech's method still provides a solid foundation upon which to build a comparison.

I will take a segment from the score of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* to illustrate its leading melodic pulse which, in turn, will allow us to glean the fundamental rhythm of the piece. I will also take the opening section of Conkling's poem, a movement titled 'The Garden', and discuss whether it possesses the same temporal qualities as the piece of music it purportedly imitates. It should be made clear that the purpose of this exercise is not to fit Conkling's verse to the music, as if they were lyrics to Beethoven's melody; rather, it is to test whether the two pieces share any metric patterns and consider if her words mirror some musical element of Beethoven's composition.

The first similarity between Beethoven's score and Conkling's poetry is the suggestion that the pieces are first to be played – or read, in the latter's case – '*poco*

sostenuto’ and then ‘*vivace*’. The practicalities of performing poetry *poco sostenuto*, which roughly translates as ‘a little sustained’, are not immediately clear.⁵² The case is complicated by the fact that the phrase is more suggestive of a playing expression than it is of tempo.⁵³ Indeed, one may argue that in order to draw a comprehensive comparison, such efforts must go beyond simply addressing the mirrored tonal and temporal directions in the two pieces. More precise and technically intricate analysis can help demonstrate how closely ‘Symphony of Mexican Garden’ follows these indicators, or if these references merely exist to signal the poem’s musical subject, rather than its formal ambitions.

When it comes to representing ostensibly non-musical texts in a musical manner, I have already introduced Geoffrey Leech’s methods of ‘rhythmic analysis’, which provides a rudimentary temporal framework for parsing how stresses fall in a poem. However, the most common way such an exercise is undertaken is in the application of music to lyrics. The opening to chapter VII of James Brown’s second volume is titled ‘Setting Words to Music’. J. Brown, too, begins with a straightforward annotation of a poem’s syllabic construction. Yet, it is not stressed syllables he favours with annotation, but ‘accented’ ones. Brown fails to elucidate for his reader the specific nature of the difference between stress and accent, but it becomes apparent when he provides an example; many syllables that would receive an indication of stress in a typical scansion are left unmarked. Nevertheless, these terms are almost made equivocal when he instructs that ‘the accented syllables fall on strong beats’.⁵⁴ In general, J Brown’s method

⁵² James Murray Brown, *A Handbook of Musical Knowledge – Part One: Rudiments of Music* (London: Trinity College of Music, 1967), p.49.

⁵³ J. Brown, p. 48.

⁵⁴ James Murray Brown, *A Handbook of Musical Knowledge – Part Two: Basis of Harmony and Composition* (London: Trinity College of Music, 1967), p. 51.

seems to suggest that whilst all strong beats are stressed, and thus accented, not all stressed syllables are accented.

Both Leech and J. Brown champion the division of syllables into bars, reinforcing the musical connection of this metrical system.⁵⁵ The corollary of this is that poetry, too, can be afforded a time signature. Leech suggests that each of these bars – or measures – contain one crochet's worth of time (♩); he unpacks the principal rules of this method of annotation thus:

A number of stressed syllables, varying from nil to about four, can occur between one stressed syllable and the next, and the duration of any individual syllable depends largely upon the number of other syllables in the same measure. If we assign the value of a crotchet to each measure, then a measure of three syllables can be approximately represented by a triplet of quavers, a measure of four syllables by four semi-quavers, etc.⁵⁶

It becomes clear that Leech's simplification of the musical stave is an attempt to arrange bars in such a way that they may more closely resemble poetic 'feet'. His choice of crochet, however, appears largely arbitrary; it may even be more practical to use semibreves for whole measures and split each foot into minims of stress and unstressed syllables. J. Brown makes a more nuanced decision regarding note duration as his example employs a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, meaning that there is only time for three crotchets' worth of beats in each bar.

Neither, however, is the first to consider appropriating musical notation to denote duration in prosody. Joshua Steele, in his 1775 work, *An Essay Concerning the Melody and Measure of Speech*, is one example of an attempt

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 51.

⁵⁶ Leech, p. 106.

to develop precise and detailed poetic scansion. In it, he employs symbols from musical score to demonstrate how rhythm grows from sounds that are either ‘articulated’ or ‘not articulated’.⁵⁷ Despite ostensibly attempting to keep notions of musical articulation and poetic articulation separate, Steele goes on to transplant musical notation into a complex system of annotation tailored for prosody.⁵⁸ Richard Bradford suggests that Steele’s work exposes ‘a number of tacit assumptions’ about poetry as it written on the page. Whilst he is ultimately disturbed by the implication of Steele’s ‘apparatus of Peculiar Symbols’, Bradford supports the attempt at moving poetry from its written format, through a ‘quasi-musical’ system, as a way of understanding the effects of reading it aloud.⁵⁹ Steele’s approach also introduced a number of non-musical symbols to represent various intonational and acoustical qualities of the spoken word, including zigzags, flags, commas, and apostrophes (see *fig. 10*).



Fig. 10 – Steele’s ‘Peculiar Symbols’ annotating an example of prosody.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Joshua Steele, *An Essay Concerning the Melody and Measure of Speech* (London: J. Almond, 1775), pp. 65, 66, 73, 121.

⁵⁸ Steele, pp. 75, 79, 119.

⁵⁹ Richard Bradford, *Silence and Sound* (London: Associated University Press, 1992), pp. 110-111.

⁶⁰ Steele, p. 38.

Steele divided his symbols into five categories, each representing a different element of prosody: ‘accent’, ‘quantity’, ‘pause’, ‘emphasis’, and ‘force’ (See *fig. 11*).

1st, ACCENT. Acute / grave \, or both combined ^ v, in a variety of circumflexes.
 2^{dly}, QUANTITY. Longest ≡, long ∅, short √, shortest |.
 3^{dly}, PAUSE or *silence*. Semibrief rest ■, minim rest ▬, crotchet rest □, quaver rest ▴.
 4^{thly}, *EMPHASIS or *cadence*. Heavy Δ, light ∴, lightest ∴.
 5^{thly}, FORCE or *quality of sound*. Loud, e, louder ee, soft , softer &. Swelling or increasing in loudness ~~~^, decreasing in loudness or dying away ^~~~~. Loudness uniformly continued ~~~~~.

Fig. 11 – Steele’s ‘Peculiar Symbols’ and their meaning.⁶¹

Remarkably, he applied these symbols and characters to a staging of *Hamlet* performed by David Garrick; he annotates a line as such (see *fig. 12*).

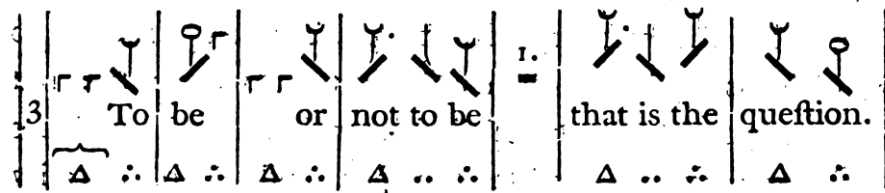


Fig. 12 – Steele’s ‘Peculiar Symbols’ annotating Garrick’s performance as Hamlet.⁶²

Additionally, Steele described this performance in a musical sense by employing the term ‘*sotto voce*’. What Steele has produced here is arguably the closest we can ever come to hearing Garrick perform Shakespeare. The detail of Steele’s annotations goes far beyond metre and attempts to preserve a transcription that records not only what has been said, but exactly the manner

⁶¹ Steele, p. 24.

⁶² Steele, p. 47.

in which it has been orated. It is worth noting that, in his work on poetic rhythm, Derek Attridge simplifies Steele's approach by drawing only on his use of musical symbols of duration. He warns, too, that Steele's further complications and embellishments 'give merely an impressionist record of one possible reading of the line' and 'offer very little insight into the metrical structure'.⁶³

Thirty years before Steele's offering of 'peculiar symbols', Samuel Say used musical symbols to help outline his annotative marks for poetic feet. Richard Bradford suggests that this is the 'first attempt to effectively rewrite the rules and expectations of English poetic form'.⁶⁴ In an essay exploring the harmony, variety, and power of 'numbers' in literature – by which he mostly means metre – Say calls upon semibreves and minims to mark the difference between unstressed and stressed syllables (see *fig. 13*).

The Spondee	— — :: ◊ ◊	The Tribrachus	∪ ∪ ∪ :: 9 9 9
The Dactyle	— ∪ ∪ :: ◊ 9 9	The Trochee	— ∪ :: ◊ 9
The Anapoeft	∪ ∪ — :: 9 9 ◊	The Iambic	∪ — :: 9 ◊

Fig. 13 – Say's use of musical notes for poetic feet.⁶⁵

In doing this, he suggests that stress and un-stress are, in fact, merely concomitant with duration:

The Movements, therefore, with which the Voice proceeds with Pleasure, or is heard with Delight, are only Six; as will appear to the more Slow and Solemn, of the Sharper and more Aëry Movements; in which the Strait Lines mark the Longer, and the Semicircles the Shorter Times.⁶⁶

⁶³ Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry* (New York: Longman, 1982), p. 20.

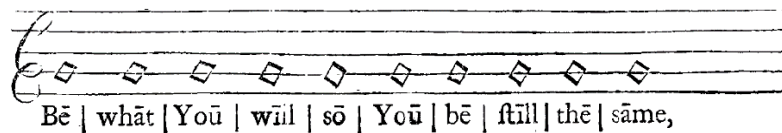
⁶⁴ Bradford, p. 106.

⁶⁵ Samuel Say, 'On the Harmony, Variety, and Power of Numbers, whether in Prose or Verse' in *Poems on Several Occasions: and Two Critical Essays* (London: John Hughes, 1745), pp. 95-138, p. 104.

⁶⁶ Say, p. 104. I have preserved Say's spelling and capitalisation.

Bradford remarks that Say's 'scansion symbols reflect his perceptive yet ambivalent acknowledgement of English as a melting pot of quantity and lexical and rhetorical stress'.⁶⁷ However, as Bradford goes on to elucidate this claim, one encounters a bizarre series of omissions: Bradford explains that ' is a short, but not always unstressed syllable; is a long and usually stressed syllable'.⁶⁸ It is evident that Bradford intended to include characters in these gaps, as he concludes by noting that '/ is a syllable either long or short, but distinguished from the other by the degree of emphasis given to it as a central part of a syntactic movement'.⁶⁹ In this commentary, Bradford makes explicit the inferred conclusion of Say's work; namely, that musical duration is simply not sufficient to provide a reference for which syllables are stressed and unstressed.

Say also employs musical symbols – this time more directly as part of a stave – to illustrate the follies of 'uniformity of voice':



The use of the semibreve here is to demonstrate 'one perpetual tenor of the voice, unchang'd alike in time or in accent', which Say suggests produces 'surd and unmeaning sounds; painful to the voice, and ungrateful to the ear'.⁷⁰

Say's observations lead him to make a key distinction between what users of Latin may call 'numbers', but users of Greek would call 'rhythmi'.⁷¹ Bradford sees this

⁶⁷ Bradford, p. 107.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 107.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 107-108.

⁷⁰ Say, pp. 101-102

⁷¹ Say, p. 115.

as Say attempting to dismiss rhyme, or ‘rime’, as superfluous to English poetry; where *rhythmi* and *rhythmus* lead one to the ‘jingling sound of like endings’, ‘numbers’ remains purely about the ‘metrical organisation of words’.⁷² Say’s defence of ‘numbers’ as the correct term for such discussions of poetic structure is established on the subtle – but crucial – difference between ‘rhime’ and ‘rime’: the first is derived from ‘*rythmus*’, as above, and the second evolves from ‘*rune*’, which comes to mean what we know as ‘rhyme’.⁷³ Evidently, one can begin to see where confusion may arise: Say’s determination to employ the word ‘numbers’ is most likely an attempt to preserve clarity. While rhyme and rhythm are distinct enough terms today, the proximity between the words and what they represent, for Say, would have complicated his position and compromised his readers’ comprehension; ‘numbers’ always pertains to the metrical, whereas ‘*rhythmus*’ did not always do so – especially in Say’s own essay. Yet, ‘numbers’ – as a poetic term – has not endured as effectively as its Greek counterpart in the realms of literary analysis.⁷⁴ He also employs the term ‘movements’ to describe the relationship between singular syllables and the different ways they can be employed in metric feet:

Such a Number of Movements, thus agreeably united, are call’d in Greek by the name of ‘*rhythmi*’ a word which is also used to express the simple movements, when not the Order, but the Quantity of time is only consider’d. Thus, the dactyle and the anapoest [– ∪ ∪ ∴ ∪ ∪ –] are the same *rhythmus*, tho’ not the same Foot or Movement.⁷⁵

⁷² Bradford, p. 107

⁷³ Say, p. 117; cf. Bradford 107.

⁷⁴ Say, pp. 103, 115, 116.

⁷⁵ Say, p. 103. (Again, I have preserved Say’s spelling and capitalisation.)

Say's comments, here, have considerable repercussions for the rhythmic comparison I will undertake later in this section, particularly as I attempt to map how 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden' might share a temporal structure with the musical suite upon which it is ostensibly based. Essentially, Say is arguing that where a stress pattern is mirrored, but the same metric elements are present (i.e. the two unstressed syllables and a stressed syllable) it still preserves the rhythmic model of duration. This balance does not work when the metric pattern is inverted, that is to say, if the stresses and un-stresses were to be replaced with their opposite value. For example, inverting the value – what Say calls 'quantity' – of syllables that form a foot such as the dactyl, – ∪ ∪ , would cause it to become a bacchius, ∪ – – ; the movement pattern is the same, with one particular value followed by two opposing values, but the 'duration' is now different.

The work Say undertakes in this essay serves a precursor for the second essay of the same volume, in which he applies these metric observations to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Ultimately, for Say, the emotive nature of poetry is intrinsically linked to the distribution of its metrical patterns, which – in turn – are bounded most predominately by time. Thus, both Steele and Say employed musical symbols in their work to help establish their own approaches to poetic scansion and prosodic notation; there is perhaps one more notable – and direct – attempt to find parity between musical and poetic annotation.

John Mason, in his 1749 essay 'On the Power of Numbers and the Principles of Harmony in Poetical Compositions' considers the various ways in which the form of the written word is altered when orated. As a result, much of his text is concerned with how to write well, so ones work may be read well. He very readily draws on musical analogies and employs musical operations to help describe an equal effect in prosody. One entertaining example can be found in chapter seven, 'Unison in Musick', in which he

compares the construction to metric feet to some sonic correlation between string length and thicknesses.⁷⁶

Notably, chapter eight is titled ‘An Attempt towards adjusting the Quantities of poetical Numbers to those of musical Notes’ and – as such a name would suggest – is focussed on finding parity between poetic syllables and musical notes.⁷⁷ The work Mason undertakes in this chapter is rooted in what he thinks is the most obvious unity of verse and music, English Psalmody. One happy, if not circumstantial, outcome of this task is that Mason also goes some way toward trying to reconcile the notational systems used by either medium. He warns, however, of the follies of inappropriately allocating notes of incorrect duration to syllables:

Such an Incongruity between the Quantities of the Musical Notes and of the Words that are set to them is apparently irrational and unharmonious; and gives too much Ground for the Censure which *Pancirollus* passed upon the modern Musick, ‘that we hear Sounds with Words, by which the Ear is a little pleased, without and Entertainment to the Understanding’.⁷⁸

In precis, he says that such a mismatch is an ‘absurdity’. Ultimately, Mason’s work is of more use to the artist than the critic and he offers his essay with little sympathy towards the analysis of literary texts.

3.3.iii(b) – *Poco Sostenuto*

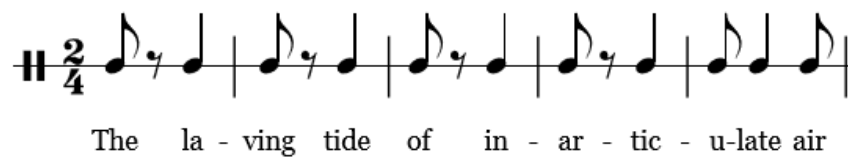
According to J. Brown’s instruction, the first step in building a comparative ‘score’, in a metric sense at least, for Conkling’s poetry would be to identify where the stresses

⁷⁶ John Mason, ‘An Essay on the Power of Numbers and the Principles of Harmony in Poetical Compositions’ (London: James Waugh, 1749), pp. 20-21.

⁷⁷ Mason, pp. 28-33

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 28-29. I have preserved Mason’s capitalisation

fall. Taking the first line of ‘Symphony’, ignoring the dedicatory elements, ‘The laving tide of inarticulate air’, would result in a scansion of ‘The **laving tide** of **inarticulate air**’, with bold type representing the stressed syllables. However, Leech’s initial – unnuanced – direction, simply transfigures the signification of stresses into quavers and the lack of stress into crochets. In a similar way to Say’s system, the value of stress is conflated with duration. A straightforward rendering of the first line of Conkling’s poem after Leech’s model would return the following stave:



This transcription, however, fails to accurately indicate the stresses of the syllables. Instead, it only produces an approximate rhythm as a result of the false equivalence between stress and duration and, importantly, the metre of the poem does not correspond to what is presented on the stave. In short, Leech’s initial guidelines are not suitable for correctly employing musical score as a form of poetic scansion.

Yet, while this initial score does not correctly reflect the metre of ‘Symphony’, it does indicate that Conkling’s poem shares the same number of beats with the opening bars of Beethoven’s *Seventh*.⁷⁹



⁷⁹ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Opus 92*, Oboe I, (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1864), bars 1-5.

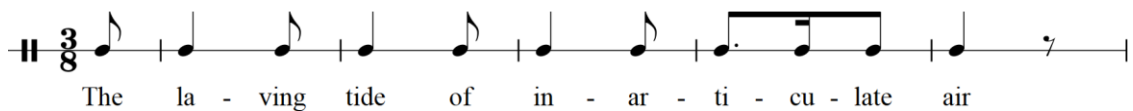
Although the eleven syllables of Conkling's first line can find themselves as beats distributed across an equivalent number of measures in Beethoven's piece, the order of their emphasis is reversed. This perhaps becomes a disguised example of Conkling's playfulness; the structure is tantalisingly close to matching the *Seventh's poco sostenuto* introduction but is supported by a pattern of inverted metrical feet. There may be a case, as Say discusses, for the suggestion that instances where rhythm is preserved, but the value of the stresses inverted, may still preserve a parity between the two metres at play in the respective openings of Conkling's 'Symphony' and Beethoven's *Symphony*. However, some issues may arise given Say's reliance on duration as the foremost signifier of stress. Even in light of this slight correlation, it is clear duration is not a sufficient indicator of stress in a poetic score – primarily as a result of the additional notational conventions musical scores introduce.

One substantial difficulty arises when we consider the differences between what Leech identifies as stress and what J. Brown values as accent. Taking the first two measures of this initial metric transcription of 'Symphony', which is based on Leech's model – with stresses being represented by crochets and un-stresses by quavers – we can see the syllables fall into the iambs so typical of English verse:



However, J. Brown's approach – from a much more musically informed position – instructs us that while metre falls into regular beats of accented and unaccented notes,

‘in writing music, the strongest of these accents are normally indicated by putting a line vertically across the stave in front of them’.⁸⁰ Thus it becomes the case that despite the longer notes occurring – in this example – at the end of each metric foot, they fall before a bar line and are unable to satisfy J. Brown’s conditions for typical musical notation. It is the bar lines of a stave that indicate the stress of a beat, not simply the duration; currently the stress patterns in the staves above are inverted (they are trochaic feet, opposed to iambic). The most appropriate solution is to adjust the time-signature of the score in order to closer mirror the way in which the poem would be read:



As a result, the stave not only more accurately represents one’s natural oration of the line, it also maintains the correct stress structure of the poem’s metre: each of the syllables that were originally emphasised in bold above, ‘**la**’, ‘**tide**’, ‘**in**’, ‘**tic**’, ‘**air**’, follows a bar line and becomes both accented and stressed. This demonstrates, however, that the initial line of Conkling’s ‘symphony’ does not overtly mirror the rhythm of Beethoven’s *poco sostenuto* opening.

Interestingly, the arrangement of syllables in the last two measures of this stave appears to challenge the poem’s overall adherences to iambic pentameter. Indeed, it is only the word ‘inarticulate’ that troubles the metric uniformity of the first line. There is, perhaps, a musical solution to reading these outlying syllables – I will explore this below.

⁸⁰ J. Brown, *Rudiments of Music*, p.4.

3.3.iii(c) – Iambic pentameter and Architectonic annotation

Roger Scruton encounters a similar issue with the designation of accent and stress in his work on *The Aesthetics of Music*. When considering the notational nuance of rhythm in musical score, he notes that ‘we should distinguish accent from stress’, referring to ‘the audible *leaning* on a note which is neither a down-beat nor a rhythmic accent’.⁸¹ He attempts to reconcile two entities, which often appear at odds, by drawing on musical patterns of syncopation. He claims that ‘the distinction between beat’, which he equates with metres of stress, ‘and accent is clearly illustrated by syncopation’. He justifies this by highlighting that a ‘syncopated rhythm is a *single* rhythm, in which the accent falls regularly off the beat – often on a note which lies between two beats’. Thus, ‘syncopated rhythms should be distinguished from melodic syncopations, in which the melodic line falls off the beat, creating a stress where there is no rhythmic accent’.⁸² Scruton prefaces this disambiguation with a metaphor about how ‘the beat in music is comparable to the heartbeat’: ‘the regular, but flexible, throbbing upon which our life depends, and which we notice only when some great exertion has upset the natural function of the body’ – an observation particularly pertinent when considering the natural music of Conkling’s garden.⁸³

The system he points to as a solution to this dichotomy between stress, accent, and the resulting rhythms, is similar to the one being developed in this chapter and draws on the work of Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer. First, one must note that such an approach moves the musical notion of rhythm beyond simply metre. One of Scruton’s

⁸¹ Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 30 (Scruton’s emphasis).

⁸² Ibid, p. 29.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 24.

major arguments for this – which is also applicable to poetry – is that rhythm is as much a perceptive phenomenon as it is a systemic(ally metric) one.⁸⁴ He argues that tempo, ‘in itself’, is not a form of organisation. Rather, it ‘a source of energy by which rhythmic organisation is driven’.⁸⁵ This perspective is a restating of the position presented by Cooper and Meyer who, in their introductory chapter, declare that ‘rhythm is more than a mere sequence of durational proportions’.⁸⁶ Instead, rhythm emerges from the grouping of separate sounds into structured patterns; Scruton argues that this experience is alterable and largely listener derived.⁸⁷ These groupings, Cooper and Meyer suggest, are ‘the result of the interaction among the various aspects of the materials of music: pitch, intensity, timbre, texture, and harmony – as well as duration’.⁸⁸ Clearly, not all of these elements are applicable to poetry; there will, however, be a case made for some parity between these musical ‘materials’ and components of poetry and prosody late in this section and throughout the rest of the chapter.

What they propose is a comprehensive way of annotating musical score to address permutations of these groupings, alongside stress and accent. Scruton is little more discerning in recognising that across this hierarchy each of these terms, alone, only produces Gestalt experiences; listeners can isolate each element, but only truly make sense of them when considered as part of the whole.⁸⁹

In a later collection of essays, Scruton elucidates this interpretation of the Gestalt. To help illustrate the function of the Gestalt in music, he draws a comparison – as many philosophers have – with visual arts. He asks his reader to imagine looking at a ‘dot-

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 30.

⁸⁶ Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 1.

⁸⁷ Scruton, p. 28.

⁸⁸ Cooper and Meyer, p. 1.

⁸⁹ Scruton, p. 29.

picture’, unable to work out what the image is intended to represent. This jumble of dots then suddenly becomes clear; by means of ‘unseen lines’ the dots are joined together and it becomes obvious that the image represents the outline of a face.⁹⁰ These ‘unseen lines’, for Scruton, are perhaps the clearest way to illustrate the operations of Gestalt perception. He continues:

The joined-up Gestalt is unified by a shape, and the shape is one that you recognise. It is quite clear how the ability to amalgamate bits of visual information into a whole will assist us in recognising objects. For the perceptual Gestalt shares properties, such as shape, size and colour, with its object, and the emergence of a visual Gestalt involves conceptualising visual experience in terms that the object too would fit.⁹¹

The explanation offered by Scruton does an efficient job of outlining the workings of Gestalt perceptions and, importantly when considering its application to the notation system proffered by Cooper and Meyer, concludes that ‘in describing the order of the Gestalt you are unavoidably referring to an order of objects’.⁹²

Applying these principles of Gestalt perception to music, or indeed poetry, requires one to acknowledge something Scruton calls ‘virtual causality’. He suggests that musical experience ‘involves the importation of a spatial framework, and the organisation of the auditory field in terms of position, movement and distance’. However, he insists that these ‘spatial concepts do not literally apply to the sounds that we hear. Rather they describe what we hear *in* sequential sounds, when we hear them as music’, or – I would add – poetry.⁹³

⁹⁰ Roger Scruton, ‘Sounds’ in *Understanding Music: Philosophy and Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 20-32, p. 26.

⁹¹ *Understanding Music*, p. 26.

⁹² *Ibid*, p. 26.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 58.

He states that ‘the relation between auditory “streaming” and the perception of musical movement can be likened to the relationship between the perception of shapes and the perception of their figurative content’, thus recalling the ‘dot-picture’ of his earlier example.⁹⁴ In re-conjuring this image, Scruton effectively completes the circle of his argument; where the Gestalt draws unseen lines between dots, so it brings together a relationship in fragments of sounds. Each musical note takes on a more coherent meaning, as it becomes understood – not independently but in its relation to each of the notes that surrounds it. One can perhaps crudely compare the ‘dot-picture’ to the scattered dots on a musical stave, although the Gestalt emerges not from the appearance of notes on a page, but as their sounds are played through time.

Ultimately, Scruton highlights operations of the Gestalt as an underpinning mechanism for understanding sights and sounds, stating that all ‘perceptual information must be assembled into comprehensible units if it is to guide us around the world’.⁹⁵ The difference between the visual Gestalt described above, and an auditory equivalent is that where visual perception operates spatially, auditory perception functions temporally. Scruton notes this connection, albeit in a cursory manner, when he suggests that such observations of the Gestalt are as ‘true of the ear as of the eye; hence Gestalt principles operate in the auditory as in the visual sphere, though applied to temporal rather than spatial configurations.’⁹⁶

The hierarchy established by Cooper and Meyer, and further explicated by Scruton, involves – much like traditional poetic scansion – identifying how notes fall

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 58. ‘Streaming’, Scruton claims, is not a metaphor but ‘a primitive term denoting continuous temporal gestalt’.

⁹⁵ Roger Scruton, ‘Rhythm’ in *Understanding Music: Philosophy and Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 57-81, p. 51.

⁹⁶ *Understanding Music*, p. 57.

into arrangements of stressed and unstressed beats. As mentioned above, the method borrows its lexicon from poetic analysis and considers music to fall into groups of iambs, trochees, anapests, and dactyls. Where it begins to distinguish itself from more traditional methods of annotation is in its approach to the organisation of musical metric structures, which they claim is arranged into ‘architectonic levels’.⁹⁷ In their exposition on the subject, they draw a comparison with literature, suggesting that

Just as letters are combined into words, words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, and so on, so in music individual tones become grouped into motives, motives into phrases, phrases into periods, etc.⁹⁸

They concede that this ‘concept’ is familiar in the analysis of harmonic and melodic structure yet argue that it is equally important in the analysis of rhythm and metre, an area in which heretofore the approach had been underemployed, or even neglected. They go on to elaborate on how considering the architectonic structures of music, and the relationship between these levels, affects the sound and rhythm of a musical piece as a whole:

As a piece of music unfolds, its rhythmic structure is perceived not as a series of discrete independent units strung together in a mechanical, additive way like beads, but as an organic process in which smaller rhythmic motives, while possessing a shape and structure of their own also function as integral part of a larger rhythmic organisation.⁹⁹

This passage not only illustrates the role such structures play in musical metrics, thus validating their attempts to annotate them effectively; it also hints at the underlying importance of the Gestalt at work; each of the smaller musical ‘units’ is distinct, but

⁹⁷ *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

Chapter Three

contributes to a larger, overreaching, body. What intrigues me most about this section of Cooper and Meyer's work is its applicability to literature; if one were to replace 'music', in the excerpt above, with 'poetry', it would not seem out of place. Scruton's later analysis of Cooper and Meyer's work as a foray into Gestalt perception is equally justifiable for the metric systems of poetry.

The transformation of these structural observations into a notational form – and from their initial consideration as 'levels' – is how the hierarchical annotations emerge. Simply speaking, the first architectonic echelon of annotation begins at note level, with each note being – as is the case with Leech's annotative system – accented or unaccented which – like Leech – they equate with 'strong' (straight lines) and 'weak' (bowed lines) beats respectively.¹⁰⁰



Then, essentially, the field of analysis is widened, with the next group of notes being considered alongside the 'foot' that has already been annotated.¹⁰¹



¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 7.

One may see how the stressed note is co-opted into an unstressed beat, when considered as part of the rhythm as whole. Subsequently, when a sample area is widened once more; each bar is considered in relation to its neighbours.¹⁰²



What results is an aggregate of all the individual metric units at work, and how their relationship to their surrounding units contributes to the architectonic level that emerges between them.¹⁰³

Effectively, what Cooper and Meyer's notational groupings attempt to illustrate is that while metric anomalies may occur note to note, or even between bars, the rhythm of the music is preserved; the overall metre is a product of the relationship between each of these levels. Although this summation is in danger of simplifying their approach, it reinforces Scruton's observations regarding the importance of Gestalt in understanding the practical, sonic, rhythmic results of the annotations.

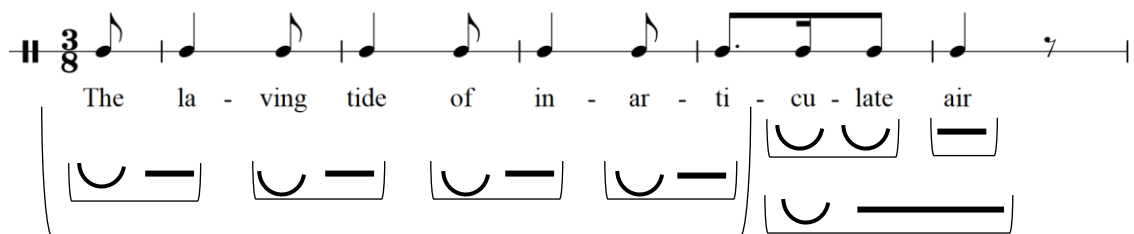
If the case is compelling enough for music, can we not also extend this method of metrical analysis to poetry? Metre, stress, other elements of prosody, all contribute to Gestalt perspectives of poetry alongside content and, ultimately, form; the last of these is what ushers each other component together. Indeed, Scruton's commentary on Cooper and Meyer's method notes that the terms in which they describe their work are rooted in

¹⁰² Ibid, pp. 62-63.

¹⁰³ The example above is developed from an extract from Bach's *Passion According to St. Matthew*, which features in Cooper and Meyer, p. 63.

classical prosody, and that ‘even in poetry, rhythm evolves from a metrical background’.¹⁰⁴ He goes on to suggest that ‘the musical phenomena that we group together under the rubric of rhythm have their counterparts in other areas of human activities’, citing that ‘stress, accent, metre and grouping all occur in speech, and speech-rhythms are both patterns and constraints when set to music’.¹⁰⁵ Further to this, syllabic anomalies occur in poetry which would normally undermine the rhythm of the line but, by considering the organisational approach outlined above, one can begin to understand how the metre – for the listener – may be preserved. Conkling’s work provides us with one such example that will be examined further here, and in section 3.3.iii(e).

Considering the way each of the syllables in the ‘Symphony’s first movement shuffle into iambic feet, it is perhaps more comprehensive to represent the opening score of Conkling’s poem as:



The final two syllables of ‘inarticulate’ are both unstressed but, when regarded as part of a larger rhythmic pattern, the distinction between the syllables – and where their stresses lie – becomes somewhat altered. As the architectonic annotations indicate, the last syllable of ‘inarticulate’ becomes co-opted into the final stressed syllable of the line,

¹⁰⁴ *The Aesthetics of Music*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ *Understanding Music*, p. 61.

‘air’.¹⁰⁶ So, for the listener, ‘inarticulate air’ is not heard staccato, with iambs distributed evenly across the two words, but instead receives a metric compromise which moves the last unstressed syllable partially into a stressed beat. The final stress, in practice, becomes ‘-te air’ with the tail end of the preceding unstressed syllable. Thus, the line does not end with two stressed syllables, but two syllables covered by one stressed beat.

One may continue to mark out the remainder of Conkling’s poem as a score in this manner, with Cooper and Meyer’s notational hierarchies of each level of perception providing a more detailed account of how the piece’s rhythmic structure actually sounds.

3.3.iii(d) – Muddled Movements?

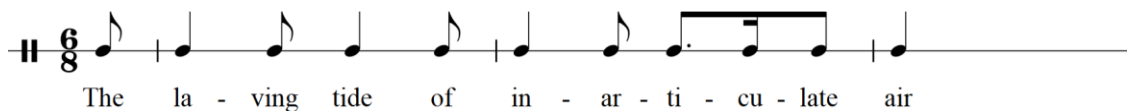
Although section 3.3.iii, ‘Scores and Scansion’, has explored a number of different notational approaches to combining musical score with poetic scansion, and demonstrated their potential value to literary criticism, it has not yet identified a particularly close link between the first movement of Conkling’s poem and the first movement of Beethoven’s symphony. However, as has already been established, Conkling’s manipulation of poetic form seems to occur with some obvious musical influence: the poem is dedicated to Mozart but set out according to a piece of music by Beethoven; the opening demonstrates the tantalising promise of rhythmic alignment with Beethoven’s first movement, but reverses the pattern of stress. Perhaps, then, these instances of near correlation are not the result of imprecision, but allusions made with intentional playfulness; ‘Symphony’ is still poetry, after all, not a piece of music.

¹⁰⁶ Cooper and Meyer note that ‘it is not surprising that iambic and anapaestic groupings are the most common ones at higher [architectonic] levels. *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, p. 61.

If, for example, we were to consider first movement of Beethoven's *Seventh* as whole, there are in fact two style and tempo indicators: after the introductory *poco sostenuto*, which bears only fleeting rhythmic similarity to the equivalent section in 'Symphony', there follows a section to be played *vivace*:¹⁰⁷



The first four bars of the *vivace* are formed of a repetitive six note sequence but, as the melody begins to change, we notice a familiar pattern of notes. Taking the 'score' of Conkling's first line arrived at above, and converting it to the same time signature as Beethoven's *vivace* section, 6/8, presents us with:



The occasional musical flourish notwithstanding, there is significant rhythmic alignment between the first line of Conkling's *poco sostenuto* section and the beginning – melodically – of Beethoven's *vivace* section. Indeed, isolating the *vivace*, from the end of bar 7 to the beginning of bar 70, illustrates considerable correlation between the metre of the 'Symphony' and the rhythm of the *Seventh*:

¹⁰⁷ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Opus 92*, Flute I, (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1864). Bars 63 - 78.

Brown discuss the potential use of musical triplets in poetic metre; the first line of ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’ obliges us with a particularly strong example of where such practice can aid in metric annotation.

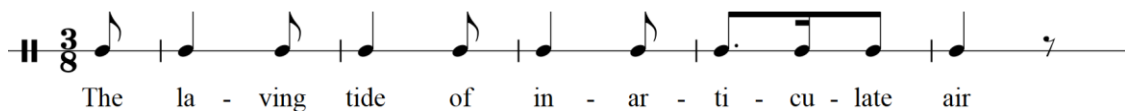
Although the majority of Conkling’s first movement follows iambic pentameter, the first line itself contains eleven syllables. Yet the metre, sonically at least, is fairly well preserved; the groups of syllables seem to cluster together and help maintain the rhythm. The penultimate word of the first line, ‘inarticulate’, is comprised of no less than five syllables and it is in this word that the metre manages to skip over the apparently superfluous beat. I have already offered architectonic annotations as a solution to this issue, but, historically, another approach may have been taken.

Leech and C. Brown’s – attempted – employment of syllabic triplets is not acknowledged in Scruton’s work, probably as he is solely focussed on parsing established musical convention. However, it is evident that their work may productively inform his approach to understanding rhythm. The rhythmic grouping Scruton speaks of – which I mention briefly, above – is not necessarily dictated by the ‘real relations between words or syllables; rather ‘it is completed by us’. Importantly, he states that ‘however unambiguous the metrical organisation of a piece of music, there will be subsidiary groupings, stresses, and boundaries which we impose upon it, and which we can alter and emphasize at will’.¹⁰⁸ This is true of – among countless other examples – the first line of Conkling’s first movement. However, if one were to consider the introduction of triplets, as C. Brown would have employed them, the rhythm would group the syllables ‘tic-u-late’ together, as opposed to fragmenting them as ‘tic-u’ and ‘-late air’:

¹⁰⁸ *The Aesthetics of Music*, p. 29.



Although this implementation of a triplet is an example of how C. Brown would use the notation – which admittedly appears often arbitrarily – it represents a rather clumsy oversight of the nuances of the articulation of ‘inarticulate’. Intentionally affected delivery notwithstanding, a more natural intonation would read as previously established:



Not only does this latter stave more closely resemble natural pronunciation, it mirrors the metre the line would demand in delivery. This is not to say that the triplet is ill-fit for marking poetic metre; quite the opposite is true. Economic use of the notation can indeed group sounds together, allowing for a clear indication of a line’s rhythm. It may temper the speed and pace, whilst also signalling where the line skips and trips over words; its ability to create relatively precise emphasis means that, to some extent, it may even preserve the pronunciation. An example from Shakespeare, and the heading of this sub-section, provides a rather satisfying opportunity to demonstrate another – more effective – instance of this metric triplet at work:

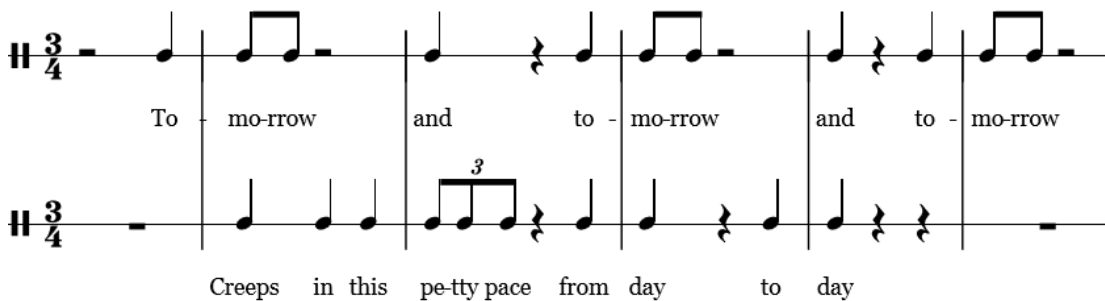
MACBETH

She should have died hereafter.
There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time,
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!¹⁰⁹

In a passage of near-meta metric reflection from the titular character, the power of syllabic distribution and temporal measure is at once exclaimed for both the narrative sequence – the death of his wife – and the nature of poesy more broadly, whilst also drawing on an immediate relationship between tempo, in a metric sense, and time, in a universal sense. Thus, time and rhythm are intertwined in both the form and content of these lines.

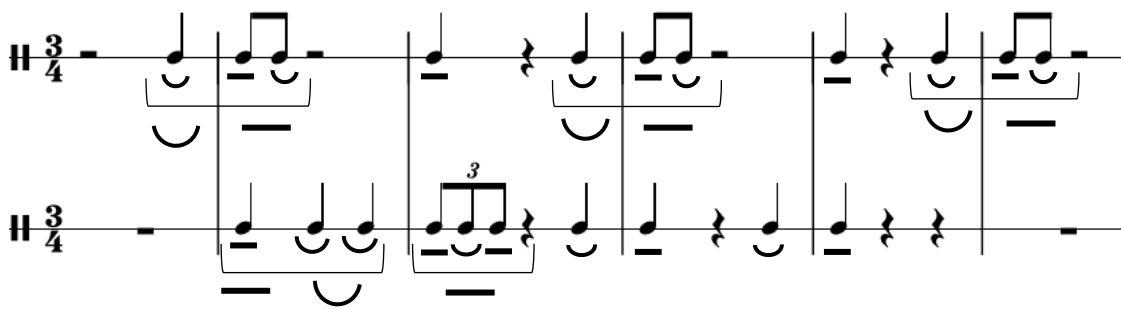
The centrepiece of the extract is formed of lines three and four. The drawn-out repetitive syllables of ‘to-mo-rrrow’ are made to seem even longer when followed by the staccato tiptoeing of ‘pe-tty pace’. For Scruton, this would be an example of the perceptive Gestalt at work. The effect is perhaps best represented thus:¹¹⁰



The employment of the triplet here, and the perceptible rhythm described above, allows us to see how one would apply annotations marking what Scruton calls ‘rhythmic grouping’:

¹⁰⁹ *Macbeth*, 5.5.17- 23.

¹¹⁰ The stresses for this scansion are based on Ian McKellen’s performance in Trevor Nunn’s 1976 staging of *Macbeth*. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LDdyafsR7g>> [Accessed 20/08/2019].



With the first level of brackets representing how each syllable relates to another, the second level shows the overarching metric result of the aggregate of each measure; the notational hierarchy clearly preserves the metric values of stressed and unstressed syllables, yet further furnishes them with the intricacies of natural speech. As indicated above, the trio of ‘tomorrow’s pulse slowly, punctuated by ‘and’s, which syncopate the beat, whilst ‘petty pace’ skips by in a hurried vocal tiptoe. By employing this system of poetic ‘score’, nothing is lost, per se, from regular scansion, but the precision of the metre is elaborated upon.

The hybrid between score and scansion developed throughout the section above represents an innovative synthesis between previous modes of annotative analysis. As result, I have not only been able to thoroughly investigate the structural similarity between a poem and piece of music, but I have also offered a new analytical tool for use in future such endeavours.

3.3.iii(f) – More Echoes of Beethoven

Although it has been made clear that temporal correlation between Conkling’s poem and Beethoven’s symphony is sporadic and inaccurately attributed, there still remain distinct sections of verse that are organised according to varying forms throughout the work.

This potentially suggests that there is a relationship between the form employed by Conkling and the musical structure she is ostensibly emulating.

Unfortunately, there are no repeated tempo indicators in either piece, so it becomes difficult to test Conkling's rhythmic mimicry in this respect. That is to say, if – for example – there were two movements to be played '*vivace*' it would be relatively simple to compare the respective forms in Conkling's work. The two sections would mirror the sixteen line format, of the first movement's *vivace* above, with six syllables to each line and an ABAB rhyming scheme throughout. Whilst there is no opportunity to observe such direct correlation, there are in fact two similar tempo indications – '*presto*' and '*presto meno assai*'. With '*presto*' meaning 'very quick', and '*presto meno assai*' roughly meaning 'less very quick', one can expect quite high degree of similarity between the two.¹¹¹ The syllogism of my earlier claim, that two sections of poetry ostensibly imitating the same tempo would share formal qualities, suggests that the same parity should be demonstrable in the two movements of Conkling's poem that correspond with the two sections of similar tempos from Beethoven's piece.

The third movement of 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden' is titled 'The Birds' and is separated into two further section with musical markers for '*Presto* in F major' and '*Presto meno assai* in D major' respectively.¹¹² The first of these sections is organised into four nine-line stanzas. These lines are typically in iambic trimeter; however, the last line of each stanza resolves in iambic pentameter. The first three stanzas follow an ABABCCDDB rhyming pattern, with the final stanza's last line rhyming with the first and second lines (ABABCCDDE). The second section, conversely, is comprised of just two four-line stanzas. These quatrains are predominately

¹¹¹ J. Brown, *Part II*, pp. 46, 49.

¹¹² Conkling, pp. 17-19.

in iambic tetrameter, with the odd anapaestic interloper. The rhyming pattern for these stanzas mirrors the start of the previous section's scheme, ABAB, but considering the section as a whole reveals ABAB / ACAC. Thus, excluding the resolving ninth line of each *presto* stanza, the *presto meno assai* section contains half the number of stanzas at half the length. Temporally, both sections possess fairly brisk rhythms, regularly drawing lines out beyond tetrameter and both peppered with melodic changes in feet.

In light of this comparison, it does appear to be the case that if the first section of the third movement is in some way representative of a 'very quick' musical style, then the second section – with its slightly longer, more drawn-out, lines – is at least an attempt at a tempo representing something slightly 'less', or slower, than that. Undoubtedly, the shorter stanzas still contribute to a reasonably quick pace of poetry, certainly when compared to the other movements of the piece. Indeed, these two sections of the third movement represent the quickest of both the poem and the symphony as a whole. As a result, 'The Birds' section of 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden' does demonstrably employ form to mirror the tempo of a musical equivalent.

3.3.iii(g) – A Minor Detail

The second overtly musical point of reference shared by both Conkling and Beethoven's work is the indication of which key each movement should be played in. Once again mirroring the *Seventh*'s key progressions, Conkling's 'Symphony' includes markers for A major, A minor, F major, and D major, with A major occurring thrice. The fundamental make-up of a piece of music's key signature lies in the principles of pitch. As I have previously discussed in relation to tempo, the pitch of a poem – when read aloud – is vastly dependant on the reader. Is it then the case that Conkling wants her

poem to be performed in a way that incorporates the notes of the A minor scale, for example, or merely give the ‘impression’ of being in each respective key?

There is perhaps an argument to be made for the sonic qualities of words, the patterns in which they are employed, and a correlation with both timbre and pitch. For example, in the heavy and repetitive use of, say, alliteration or assonance, the poem is marshalled towards a persistent pattern of sound. Arguably, this kind of sound alone is not enough to establish pitch, which is what would be required to ensure the section of the poem corresponds with its relevant key-indicator. Calvin Brown, however, would further reduce the relevance such literary elements have to music; he suggests that ‘the devices of alliteration, assonance and rhyme have no parallel in music’.¹¹³ Brown, whose wide-ranging musico-literary study dedicates a chapter to ‘Rhythm and Pitch’, only permits pitch a page and a paragraph of consideration, compared to the fifteen pages of critical attention rhythm receives. This lack of balance is ostensibly justified in the chapter’s conclusion, which states

All things considered, we may conclude that pitch may be an effective element in a given performance of a piece of literature, but that it is not an essential literary element, that it is entirely outside of the author’s control, and that it belongs to a particular rendition of a work than to the work considered as a permanent thing.¹¹⁴

Brown’s argument stems from his reluctance to characterise elements of rhyme as musically significant. His statement, however, is rather short-sighted; later in his own book he discusses the prominence of Conkling’s key indicators – and their correspondence with Beethoven’s *Seventh Symphony* – thus providing an example of literary work which contradicts his claim regarding the permanent presence of pitch. As

¹¹³ C. Brown, p. 38.

¹¹⁴ C. Brown, p. 30.

this chapter has already discussed at length, Conkling's employment of musical key indicators is evidently a deliberate inclusion; not simply in vague reference to musicality, but as a direct nod towards an established piece of music. Regardless of the performative impact of these indicators, their very presence signals Conkling's awareness of musical structures and, sonically or not, makes pitch a vital presence in her poem.

Establishing whether the key indicators of 'Symphony' correspond to particular sound patterns in each section is regrettably a task of conjecture; while one may be able to evidence that each section has a unique sound pattern, it hardly confirms that this is the result of a conscious effort to mirror musical keys. However, the benefit of both 'Symphonies' possessing a recurring key, A Major, is that we may use these as a reference point to determine whether Conkling's poem does indeed follow a sonic pattern akin to musical key. That is to say, if each section has its own sonic palette, other than the three that ostensibly share a 'key', there is a much more convincing case for the legitimacy of Conkling's key indicators.

Unfortunately, no such consensus can be found between the three sections in question. By approaching each 'movement' with a view to isolating the dominant sounds – or at least identifying some sonic consistency – that occur between the sections of 'Symphony' that are ostensibly written in the same key, one can potentially demonstrate a pattern of sound comparable to a musical key.

Doing this for the poem's first A Major section, '*Poco Sostenuto*', reveals no real central sound for the rhyming pattern. This movement arguably flits between punchy phonetic assonances of 'i', 'a', and 'ə', as found in 'vivid', 'aria', and 'air' respectively,

but lacks a conviction towards either sound. Such protean rhyme is unlikely to satisfy the demands of a musical key.

The second A Major section, '*Vivace*', features a longer, drawn-out 'ah', sound (ɑ:) as its dominant rhyming focus, and one more easily determined, with 'dance' being repeated in the first stanza, and the last five lines boasting 'darkness', 'demand', 'amber-barred bourré', and 'saraband'. The first stanza is seemingly treated to a tonic as its major sounds are complemented by a deeper, but equally drawn-out 'o:' sound, as found in 'faun', and 'dawn', which, like 'dance', is repeated in the first half of the movement.

The final A Major section, '*Allegro con brio*', is a little less uniform than the '*Vivace*', in that its rhyming focus is not strongly linked to a single sound. There is, however, a heavy presence of long and short 'i' sounds (ai and i); 'hide', 'light / Vines', 'pine', 'iris white', 'shine', and 'silvered air / Wistful spirits'.

Thus, although all three parts feature heavy assonance, each employs a different vowel sound, or two in the final instance. Regardless, the similarities are far from obvious enough – as the key and tempo indicators are – to be of benefit to the audience. Thus, we must conclude there is no correlation between the sounds employed by Conkling in the movements of her poem and the key signatures used to denote them.

On a final note, it is worth clarifying that, as has been briefly mentioned above, Brown's issue with addressing pitch in literature arises out of conflict of terms he finds with ideas of rhyme in music. He suggests that rhyme, specifically 'alliteration' and 'assonance', have no parallel in music:

Because music does not have those constant and rapid shifts of timbre which make them possible in language. The term *rhyme* is sometimes used

in a musical connection, but this use is an illegitimate extension of the literary term, and is applied to a phenomenon of rhythm.¹¹⁵

However, as this section has been directly discussing the sounds of words and the sonic qualities of poetry in relation to those of music, with specific reference to the compositional – and performative – role of musical keys, Brown's contentions are not applicable here.

3.3.iv – Orchestral Ambitions

A broader view of the content of Conkling's poem reveals further formal inter-play between music and literature. Examining, again, only the first so-called movement of 'Symphony', one is faced with reference to a number of musical instruments comprised of percussive and melodic members of an orchestra. From a garden of hibiscuses, black cypress, mariposa lilies, and pomegranate blossoms, emerge cymbals, bassoons, flutes, and oboes. The 'instruments' are also not rendered passively – they crash, hum, and flutter into trills. C. Brown calls this sequence 'an elaborate confusion of the senses', which not only involves 'the common association between sound and colour, but further associations of scent and shape.'¹¹⁶

Poetically, these musical performances are not the product of onomatopoeia; hibiscus flares do not crash like cymbals. If anything, the word 'hibiscus', with its internal sibilance, hisses like a snare drum but this, too, is beside the point. Rather, it is

¹¹⁵ C. Brown, p. 38.

¹¹⁶ C. Brown, p. 168.

through an orchestral act of apostrophe that the plants of the Mexican Garden undergo a musical transformation.

Brown's comments on the role senses play in his reading of this section recalls Plato's analogy discussed earlier in this chapter. However, in lieu of leaving the cave, the shadows on the cave wall are reimagined; the prisoners are hoodwinked once more and the relation to the forms slip further away. Addressing the content of the *poco sostenuto* section may appear to shift the gaze from form, but it is important to note the way in which the poem's subjects are ushered into musical performances. Although Conkling only teases at this 'unimagined music', it becomes clear that this opening section is about how form may be manipulated. The metaphor in this stanza of Conkling's poem goes beyond linguistic comparison; it hints at melodic metamorphosis:

The laving tide of inarticulate air
Breaks here in flowers as the sea in foam,
But with no satin lisp of failing wave:
The odor-laden winds are very still.
An unimagined music here exhales
In upcurled petal, dreamy bud half-furled,
And variations of thin vivid leaf:
Symphonic beauty that some god forgot.
If form could waken into lyric sound,
This flock of irises like poising birds
Would feel song at their slender feathered throats,
And pour into a grey-winged aria
Their wrinkled silver fingermarked with pearl;
That flight of ivory roses high along
The airy azure of the larkspur spires
Would be a fugue to puzzle nightingales
With tool-evasive rapture, phrase on phrase.
Where the hibiscus flares would cymbals clash,
And the black cypress like a deep bassoon
Would hum a clouded amber melody.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Conkling, pp. 13-14.

Thus, the very garden at the centre of Conkling's symphony has also had its form altered to become more musical; the poem is not simply mirroring musical form in its indications of tempo and keys, its botanical subjects are invited to bring this form to life at the very heart of its content. In this respect, Conkling becomes a member of the symphony's audience, rather than its conductor. The poet's experience of this musical transformation is perhaps not one initiated by the poet herself; it is the rousing of form 'into lyric sound'. It is the 'forms' in the poem which is mooted as the responsible cause and the argument of the verse becomes about the inherent music of the natural world. Silent forms are unmuted through their manipulation into elements of an orchestra. However, this does not place nature against the artifice of instruments, after all, the first comparison sees 'a flock of irises' become as 'poising birds' with 'slender feathered throats', singing a 'gray-winged aria'.

The transformation of these flowers into music-making entities may remind us of the story with which the chapter was opened: the transformation of DNA sequencing into musical score. Where Miranda and Gordon subject natural – if not miniscule – elements of life to digitisation, a mode of synthetic reading, with the aim to converting the information held by the genetic code into musical instruction, Conkling instead draws on the transformative processes of poetry to achieve her symphony. Both form and the way forms are represented – as subjects of metaphor – in the poem are still very much the dominant forces at play.

However, this vibrant musical scene is silenced once more in the *vivace* section of the first movement:

The iris people dance
Like any nimble faun:

Chapter Three

To rhythmic radiance
They foot it in the dawn.
They dance and have no need
Of crystal-dripping flute
Or chuckling river-reed,
Their music hovers mute.
The dawn-lights flutter by
All noiseless, but they know!

Such children of the sky
Can hear the darkness go.
But does the morning play
Whatever they demand,
Or amber-barred bourré
Or silver saraband?¹¹⁸

The irises are yet again subject to transformation, this time evolved from the avian to some mythic humanoid. With these creatures dancing in apparent silence, the music of the garden is suppressed, but still extant, as it ‘hovers mute’. The stifled – but marked – presence of music not only reinforces the importance of rests in both musical and poetic metre but also serves to return the reader to the beginning of the movement. Caught up in this symphonic episode, one easily forgets that the music of Conkling’s garden is born purely of form. It is silence and poetic imagination which permeates through the poem, not the warbling, vibrating, songs of the plants. The orchestra of the ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’ is one held in potentiality. The transformation of these flowers into musical instruments is a hopeful, aspirational, one; and so the same may be said of Conkling’s other musical allusions throughout the piece. The poet’s indications of tempo and key are not markers for performance. Rather, they signal the changing nature of the poem as it runs its course. Thus, the structure laid out in the programme – at the

¹¹⁸ Conkling, pp. 15-16.

beginning of the poem – is only one of a multitude of ways we may understand the events as they unfold.

3.3.iv(b) – Music in Poetic Clothing

One all-encompassing argument that can be made in defence of Conkling’s musical allusions would be to propose that although ‘Symphony of a Mexican Garden’ does not necessarily conform to the musical styles from which it borrows in the way music would, it produces a comparable response from the perspective of poetry. In this way each movement, and subsequent constituent parts, of the poem becomes more allegorical of music than it is illustrative.

Thus, in a manner which brings together the conclusions of the previous subsections, the musicality of Conkling’s ‘Symphony’ emerges from a series of literary equivalents; the time signatures and tempo indicators of Beethoven’s work are transfigured into sections of differing metres which are relative to each other; each section has an interpretive response to the respective keys of the *Symphony*. Conkling’s poem can be figured as a literary translation of Beethoven’s piece, one which replaces strictly musical elements with equivalent – or at least approximate – poetic ones.

3.4 – Prose and Considerations thereof

The majority of this chapter so far has been focussed on the connections between music and poetry. But poetry is far from the only literary form which can be seen to invoke structural elements of music. Indeed, Calvin Brown – whose work has been present throughout much of this thesis – expresses almost equal interest in the structures of prose

fiction as he does in poetic verse. Similarly, much of what has been discussed throughout this thesis is directly applicable to works of prose. However, I would like to complete the investigations of this chapter by exploring some structural invocations of music that are specifically demonstrable in prose.

Angela Leighton, whose writing features in the earlier sections of this chapter, begins the second chapter of her monograph, *On Form*, by recalling George Moore's observations on the 'crossbreeding between the arts':¹¹⁹ Moore suggests that had Walter Pater 'lived to hear *L'après-midi d'un Faune*, he could not have done else but think that he was listening to his own prose changed into music'.¹²⁰ Leighton employs the comparison to once again demonstrate the pliability of the word 'form', but in doing so also illustrates the fluidity with which one may move between forms. Indeed, Pater himself claimed that 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music'.¹²¹ His position is certainly one that can be attributed to Conkling's 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden', but it perhaps requires more work to convince his critics of the ubiquity and persistence of his claim; Calvin Brown, in particular, criticises his employment of the word 'constantly', and Werner Wolf omits it completely from some instances of the quotation in *The Musicalization of Fiction*.¹²² Reading just this isolated line is perhaps what leads to such disagreement on its meaning, so I will extend the statement:

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject, namely, its given incidents or situation — that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape — should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling,

¹¹⁹ Leighton, p. 30.

¹²⁰ George Moore, *Avowals* (London: Heinemann, 1924), p. 187.

¹²¹ Walter Pater, 'The Dialectic of Art: The School of Giorgione' in *Essays on Literature and Art* ed. By Jennifer Uglow (London: Dent, 1973), pp. 43-74, p. 45.

¹²² Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 101, and Wolf, p. 144, 218.

that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.¹²³

Leighton, too, lends the passage more attention, suggesting that ‘to quote only the opening sentence is to miss the way it is quickly qualified’.¹²⁴ The real gravamen of Pater’s proposal is that, ultimately, form and matter, and thus form and substance, and – crucially – content, are inseparable. Perhaps this is most true of music, but it is certainly true, too, of the other art forms; Pater’s notion of aspiration gives way to a fluidity between media – particularly between literature and music.¹²⁵ A secondary conclusion we can draw is that there is, at least by this assertion, a constant presence of music in literature.

Leighton also hedges Moore’s contention by suggesting that ‘if Debussy’s piece seemed to Moore the achieved musical position of Pater’s prose, this was also because that prose was always ‘on the way to music’. Although somewhat self-referential, as it concerns the man who makes this claim about prose and thus would have signalled such aspiration in his own work, this statement appears to signal something fundamental in terms of intermediality: reading prose as aspirational to music does not ‘apply’ musicality to a text; it considers such music as part of the text and thus musicality is something that can be lifted from it. Thus, prose does not necessarily become a prelude to some musical form through criticism, it simply already is one. Leighton’s appraisal of Pater’s prose as being ‘on the way to music’ concludes that ‘music, it seems, may be

¹²³ Pater, p. 45.

¹²⁴ Leighton, p. 83.

¹²⁵ Granted, this fluidity is signalled as monodirectional toward music, but the emphasis on ‘aspiration’ seems to allow for a superposition (of sorts) of forms.

all that remains when his words run out'.¹²⁶ This observation alludes to something not only transformative or transitional about the nature of literature but that form transcends, beyond words, and delivers music.

Brown tempers this claim historically, suggesting that 'the assumption of such an identity as the ultimate goal of art is peculiar to the aesthetics of the Romantics and their successors'.¹²⁷ But, subsequently, Werner Wolf points to Pater's claim as a way to understand the 'art for art's sake' nature of Modernism.¹²⁸ Wolf's use of such a phrase invites us to extend his observation to include the '*l'art pour l'art*' poetry of nineteenth century France; a connection which Leighton also recognises.¹²⁹ However, the creative stance towards the mantra 'art for art's sake' grows weary as the century passes its midpoint.¹³⁰ One writer whose work is located within the postmodern turn, yet remains hugely influenced by the '*l'art pour l'art*' and *Le Symbolisme* movements, is Angela Carter.¹³¹ With notable stylistic similarities to Baudelaire and Verlaine, Carter's texts become a fertile ground for narratives that exhibit both Romantic themes and postmodern traits.¹³²

3.4.ii – Technical Note

Before engaging in an analysis of Carter's text, it is worth making a further connection – and establishing some technical differences – between the forms of poetry, prose, and music. The intricacies of a so-called 'technical' approach to reading musical structures

¹²⁶ Leighton, p. 30.

¹²⁷ Brown, p. 101.

¹²⁸ Wolf, p. 142.

¹²⁹ Leighton, p. 32.

¹³⁰ Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 270.

¹³¹ Cf. Maggie Tonkin, *Angela Carter and Decadence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 116-117.

¹³² Cf. Rebecca Munford, *Decadent Daughters and Monstrous Mothers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 1-26.

in literature return us somewhat to the area explored at the beginning of this chapter – the presence of harmony and proportion in literary forms. When it comes to systems of harmony in literature, poetry has lent itself more willingly to the pursuit; rhythm, rhyme, and metre, each provide some measurable element that one may compare quite directly to music; indeed, such musical systems have been employed for analysis throughout this thesis. Yet, despite this, the examples of 15th and 16th Century scholarship explored earlier in ‘A Matter of Mathematics’ are useful to redeploy in the realm of prose – particularly in light of the fact that many of the observations in this section offer an applicability to literary forms beyond poetry. Puttenham, for example, does not limit his discussion to poetry itself, but to the creative act of ‘poesis’. Equally, it is worth recalling the work carried out above on the parity between methods of devising musical score and applying literary scansion; although centred on poetry, the annotative methods explored in section 3.3.iii certainly have ramifications and applications for prose.¹³³

Indeed, John Mason, whose 1749 work ‘On the Power of Numbers and the Principles of Harmony in Poetical Compositions’ was briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, followed up this essay with a similar project dedicated to prose. Also published in 1749, ‘An essay on the Power and Harmony of Prosaic Numbers’ lays out Mason’s ‘chief intention’ to demonstrate how one may correctly engage with musical models of structure in prosaic forms.¹³⁴ In clarifying what this means in practice, he suggests that writers and orators who show ‘a critical regard to the structure of their periods; or such a care in choice and disposition of their words’ will bestow upon their work ‘that

¹³³ One may note the work of Samuel Say, featured earlier, which openly defended the suitability of applying a system of musical scansion to both poetry and works of prose.

¹³⁴ John Mason, ‘An Essay on the Power and Harmony of Prosaic Numbers: Being a Sequel to the one on the Power of number and the Principles of Harmony in Poetic Compositions’ (London: James Waugh, 1749), p. iii.

agreeable flow which the ancients called Rhythmus.’¹³⁵ He considers the engagement of musical principles – in prose – to be ‘so important’ and bemoans the fact that his contemporaries have seemingly lost interest in such ideas.¹³⁶ Chapter nine of Mason’s text establishes ten rules which a writer should follow in order to ‘acquire a numerous stile’. With guidelines ranging from word selection, their syllabic arrangement, and subsequent order, to the musical qualities of prose are considered at the levels of the word and the line; with further rules to regulate the ‘proper use of rhetorical figures’ and the correct way to organise distinct elements of a text and its ‘expressions of sentiment’, the musical principles are considered as a structural presence across a whole work.¹³⁷ Mason ends his discussion with a pertinent comment on the connection between form and content which specifically concerns their employment of musical elements and is equally applicable to poetry and prose:

When a person by a little care and practice is once master of a neat and numerous stile, he will find it no longer difficult to express his best sentiments in a lively manner; if his conceptions be clear, his stile will be so too.¹³⁸

Ultimately, Mason demonstrates that those elements of poetry which draw on the mathematical – technical – aspects of music are also evident in prose. Thus, his argument brings a renewed value to the investigations of this chapter by indicating that much of the work carried out in this thesis, with a focus on poetry, can similarly be explored in prose.

3.4.iii – Post-Brown, Postmodern

¹³⁵ Mason, *Prosaic Numbers*, pp. iii-iv.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. iv.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 61-72.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 73.

As I have previously mentioned, Calvin Brown's work on music and literature, in his 1948 volume in particular, is one of the first – and certainly fullest – studies of the connections between the 'sister arts' since the Renaissance. However, as is the case with all critics, his assessments of literature are limited to those which are either a product of his contemporary surroundings or those that have preceded him. This being said, Brown's pool of texts is impressively broad in terms of its historical scope; yet, naturally, Brown cannot pluck texts from the future and subject them to analysis. In his conclusion, Brown muses on the idea that music and literature may simply be in the early stages of their development, suggesting that 'instrumental music is a very young art, and even when we allow for the fact that other arts are slower in their evolution than music, we still see that its course of development has been relatively short'.¹³⁹ In this genealogical reflection Brown is not simply looking back at the shared roots of the art forms, but priming his reader to look forward. Perhaps, however, a seismic shift in creative attitudes comes sooner than Brown anticipated, in the guise of postmodernity.

When translating some of Charles Perrault's work as part of a commission, Angela Carter noted that 'each century tends to create or re-create fairy tales after its own taste',¹⁴⁰ and, by her own admission – when reinventing the tales – intended to 'engage with aspects of his texts that [she] couldn't integrate in to [her] translation'.¹⁴¹ Elaborating on this, she claimed that she 'liked to put new wine into old bottles', emphasising how 'the pressure of the new wine [can make] the old bottles explode.'¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 270.

¹⁴⁰ Martine Hennard, Dutheil De La Rochere and Ute Heidmann, "'New wine in old bottles": Angela Carter's translation of Charles Perrault's 'La Barbe bleue'," in *Marvels & Tales*, Vol. 23 (April 1, 2009) pp. 40-58.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 42.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 46.

She used this analogy to illustrate the effects of her approach to translation and writing on both the narrative – and the form – of the stories. This process can be considered a symptom of the postmodern condition, where writers draw – not from experiences of reality – but from previous narratives of fiction. Fredric Jameson underscores such a symptom of postmodernity, and its impact on artistic creativity, by stating:

Cultural production can no longer gaze directly on some putative real world, at some reconstruction of a past history that was once a present; rather, as in Plato's cave, it must trace our mental images of that past upon its confining walls... if there is any realism left here, it is intended to be derived from the shock of grasping that confinement...¹⁴³

Brown's critical attachment to binary notions of illustration and abstraction is evidently challenged here and it becomes clear that his work is not only limited in terms of the texts available for analysis, but in the analytical tools, and perspectives, with which he may approach them.

Wolf's most prominent work, *The Musicalization of Fiction*, arriving at the end of the millennium is well-situated to be considered the critical successor to Brown, and benefits from the five decades of social, cultural, and artistic change that spans between the two works. Indeed, some of Wolf's key departures from Brown's position occur in his last four chapters, which are all dedicated to texts eliciting characteristics of postmodernity. Wolf's historical location, by his own reckoning, is a key factor in the formulation of 'intermediality'. That is not to say that intermediality does not, nor cannot, exist before postmodernity; rather, the 'deconstruction of hierarchical relations' and 'discursive boundaries' that postmodernity has engendered gives way to the kind of critical approach necessary for the 'musicalization of fiction'; Wolf goes as far as to

¹⁴³ Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. by Thomas Docherty, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1999), pp. 62-92, p.79.

claim that postmodernism is a ‘second climax in the history of attempts to musicalize fiction’.¹⁴⁴

Wolf’s brief overview of the effect of postmodernity on fiction neatly echoes Jameson’s thoughts on postmodern forms, in the Platonic sense, while introducing a more tangible approach to what this means for literature:

As far as the fiction based on these [postmodern] premises is concerned, postmodernism continues – and again intensifies – modernist experimentalism. This is especially true of the radical variant of postmodernism (as opposed to a ‘muted’ and more easily readable variant which ironically maintains, revives or eclectically combines traditional ways of storytelling as well as received literary genres and is often considered to be especially popular in English literature). Postmodernist fiction tends to present anti-stories of various kinds, emphasizes meta-aesthetic self-reflexivity, sports its own fictional and medial nature much more than [*sic*] modernist fiction had done, and it frequently betrays a playfulness that moves beyond the predominant seriousness and even the ludic moments of modernist experimentation. As a consequence, aesthetic illusion, which still played a role in modernism, disappears as a seriously intended effect and at best survives in an ironically undermined form.¹⁴⁵

Wolf considers this shift from modernity not only crucial to understanding postmodernity, but intermediality itself, suggesting that these ‘features of postmodernism’ have ‘a direct relevance for the history of intermediality’ and that ‘some important postmodernist characteristics favour intermedial experiments... particularly musico-literary ones’.¹⁴⁶

What I find most striking about this formulation of postmodernity is how one may seamlessly pluck the passage from above and reapply it within a piece of criticism

¹⁴⁴ Wolf, p. 183. Fittingly, this fiddly traversing of the antecedent becomes a reflection of the protean descriptions of postmodernity itself.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 184.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 184.

upon a work of literature; specifically, one can – without much demand from their imagination – read this paragraph as a fragment of a review on Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* collection. The phrase ‘anti-story’ has a particular resonance with Carter’s own attitude towards her work, with regards to the exploding of old wine bottles with new wine. Her adaptation of the fairy-tale form is easily readable as an ironic maintenance of traditional ways of storytelling. Thus, Carter’s collection becomes an apposite location for a musico-literary analysis of Wolf’s ilk.

3.4.vi – “Keys, keys, keys.”

The titular short story from *The Bloody Chamber* includes numerous, overt, references to music. The most prominent – and frequent – examples arrive in the form of the protagonist’s musical background and regular piano practice. However, I propose the musical presence within the narrative of ‘The Bloody Chamber’ in fact signals a deeper, structural, musical relationship to form within the text. Thus, the protagonist’s musical proficiency becomes not only an extension of the text’s postmodern dimensions, but a textual marker of intermediality.

Carter perhaps hints at music’s role in her text with the playful ambiguity of ‘keys’. The protagonist’s (and narrator’s) physical relationship with the piano is one that stirs therapeutic reveries and abstracted solitudes.¹⁴⁷ However, this sensuousness is later shared with a door key as it is pressed to her forehead and she feels ‘a faint tingling of the skin’.¹⁴⁸ There is a tension in the relationship ‘keys’ share with the story’s protagonist; they both bring her release from her surroundings, and tether her to her husband:

¹⁴⁷ Carter, pp. 35, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Carter, p. 36.

Then, slowly yet teasingly, as if he were giving a child a great, mysterious treat, he took out a bunch of keys from some interior hidey-hole in his jacket – key after key, a key, he said, for every lock in the house. Keys of all kinds – huge, ancient things of black iron; other slender, delicate, almost baroque; wafer-thin Yale keys for safes and boxes. And during his absence, it was I who must take care of them all.¹⁴⁹

The phrase ‘keys of all kinds’ can perhaps be read as Carter’s ‘self-reflexive’ acknowledgment of the dual-senses in which the word can be understood; there is a number of meanings for the ‘keys’ in ‘The Bloody Chamber’ but all share a role. Perhaps the most obvious example of the heteroglossia of ‘keys’ occurs on two occasions, when the Marquis takes a ring of keys and shakes ‘it musically, like a carillon’, and when ‘the bunch of keys... jangled at every step like a curious musical instrument’.¹⁵⁰ This shared meaning is also demonstrated in the reverse, too, when the protagonist considers the process of playing music, on pianos keys, concomitant with her liberty: ‘If my music had first ensnared him, then might it not also give me the power to free myself from him?’.¹⁵¹

Shortly after this reflection, the blind piano-tuner – who has been listening, through the keyhole, to her play the piano – returns to her the set of keys, from which one key is missing. Perhaps in a bid to allay incrimination, our protagonist simply comments ‘it’s perfect’, ‘Perfectly in tune’, referring of course, to the piano, but as if to equally stress that ‘all the keys are where they should be’. The double-play here, is unmistakable and once again conflates the distinction between musical keys, their physical counterparts, and their namesakes pertaining to locks; this junction-box of

¹⁴⁹ Carter, p. 16.

¹⁵⁰ Carter, pp. 18, 35.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 30.

connotation becomes vital for the progression of Carter's plot. Music becomes the means by which the narrator understands the events that occur to her and, simultaneously, it plays a large part in the way the story is then relayed to the reader; music does not simply occur in the narrative, it is an essential component to its construction.

The narrator's musing of 'keys, keys, keys', seems to echo the speeches of Hamlet and Troilus who lament 'words, words, words' and 'mere words', each toiling with the apparent lack of fixity of meaning attributed to the respective signifiers.¹⁵² Just as Shakespeare's characters challenge how the purported truths are retained in written form, Carter's protagonist seems to understand the fluctuating significance of the relationship between her, her fingers, and the keys that she uses with them.

Further evidence of the connection between musical and narrative structures in 'The Bloody Chamber' comes to the reader in the 'lulling music of the sea'.¹⁵³ The rising and falling tide is a central feature of the story's setting; where once it provided the castle with natural fortification from attack, it now forms a preventative measure against our protagonist's potential escape. Thus, like keys – musical and otherwise – this body of water presents both freedom and imprisonment for the story's protagonist. Further to this, despite the 'lulling music' the sea provides, the accompanying breeze in fact renders the narrator's piano unplayable; in providing music, it silences any other opportunity for it. The pivotal (and musically symbolic) role the tide plays comes to a climax in the moments before the Marquis's return to the castle:¹⁵⁴ "Hark!" said my friend suddenly. "The sea has changed key; it must be near morning, the tide is going down".¹⁵⁵ The

¹⁵² *Hamlet*, 2.2.183; *Troilus and Cressida*, 5.3.108.

¹⁵³ Carter, *Ibid*, p. 12.

¹⁵⁴ I use the word 'pivotal' here to draw attention to not only the importance of the tide, but its changing, pivoting, nature.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 32.

‘friend’ in question is the blind piano-tuner, Jean-Yves, and his observation serves as a stark reminder, to the reader, of how he must interact with the world without sight. As I suggested earlier, the protagonist comes to understand her surroundings, and the events that transpire within them, by their relationship to music; Jean-Yves, without the ability to see, must rely – to an even greater extent – on the sonic world to understand his environment and life within it.

In terms of demonstrating how the world is understood through musical means, the blind piano-tuner reinforces the narrator’s own perceptive structures and, beyond this, his reliance on the sonic extends the role music plays in the structure of both his life and Carter’s text; it represents the fundamental way in which he is able to gauge the passage of time and – by extension – how we, as readers, are delivered to the story’s next event. The corollary of this is that the ‘world’, so to speak, for the characters of Carter’s short story, is merely a consecutive series of events that constitutes the plot for her readers. Thus, her characters’ relationship with musicality is transferred to her audience; the interplay between oscillating actions of ‘keys’, becomes both the way Carter’s narrator navigates her life and the way her reader negotiates their way through the story.

The protagonist’s playing habits perhaps hint at a further similarity between ‘The Bloody Chamber’ and musical structure. In a manner that recalls the robotic performance of Stevens’s Peter Quince, Carter’s narrator – after having discovered the Marquis’s bloody chamber – takes to playing the piano, in the hope it will calm her nerves:

Mechanically, I began to play but my fingers were stiff and shaking. At first, I could manage nothing better than the exercises of Czerny but simply the act of playing soothed me and, for solace, for the sake of harmonious

rationality of its sublime mathematics, I searched among [the Marquis's] scores until I found *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. I set myself the therapeutic task of playing all of Bach's equations, every one, and, I told myself, if I played them all through without a single mistake – then the morning would, find me once more a virgin.¹⁵⁶

This passage reminds us once more of the multi-faceted power of 'keys' and the functions they serve in the text; not only does the music have remedial powers, its therapy proves transformational. The repeated employment of 'I' plots how the protagonist is 'soothed' from a mechanical state, back to a human one and, simultaneously, we note how the narrator aligns an unblemished performance with her own image as a woman; for her, a spotless rendition also signals her own vindication – or redemption – of sorts.

Beyond this, the 'sublime mathematics' of 'Bach's equations' recalls, somewhat, the lines conjured between the art forms of music and literature in section 3.2, and the underpinning principles of composition presented by Puttenham. But, perhaps a more salient observation lies in the narrator's selection of music. With pieces covering every minor and major tonal key, Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* is noted for being one of the most accomplished demonstrations of counterpoint and fugue.

3.4.v – Feuds and Fugues

One of the most prominent subjects of disagreement between Wolf and Brown occurs in their respective discussions of the use of musical fugues in literature. Essentially, the fugue is a structural extrapolation of 'counterpoint'; counterpoint, as put by Luigi Cherubini in his treatise on the subject, is when two or more musical voices that, whilst

¹⁵⁶ Carter, p. 30.

independent in rhythm, are harmonically interlaced in melodic composition.¹⁵⁷ With this being the case, as Cherubini states, ‘as it exists at the present time, Fugue is the perfection of counterpoint’.¹⁵⁸ He identifies four ‘indispensable conditions’ of a fugue; the ‘Subject’, ‘Counter-Subject’, ‘Response’ and ‘Stretto’.¹⁵⁹ In turn, these components form three movements involving the exposition of a main musical motif, followed by a development in two (or more) voices and ending with a recapitulation of both voices tending back the main theme.¹⁶⁰

Brown thinks that ‘for rather obvious reasons, the literary fugue has seldom been attempted’. He supports this by noting, as I have done above, that ‘the form is essentially contrapuntal’, and thus ‘real counterpoint is impossible in literature’. ‘Nevertheless’, he counters, ‘there is one really brilliant example of the fugue in literature’.¹⁶¹ This is example is Thomas De Quincey’s ‘Dream-fugue’, from *The English Mail-Coach*.

Brown then begins an exegesis which describes, step by step, the stages of De Quincey’s work, and how he interprets the text’s success in mimicking the musical form, complete with a diligently laid-out chart representing how each of the elements of the ‘Dream-fugue’ correspond, structurally, to a musical fugue.¹⁶² Overall, Brown is generally convinced by the structural correlation between the text and its musical counterpart, which he suggests is intentional on De Quincey’s part.¹⁶³ In summing up the discussion, states that:

¹⁵⁷ Luigi Cherubini, *A Treatise on Counterpoint and Fugue*, trans. by Cowden Clarke, (London: Novello, Ewer and co., 1854), pp. 7-8.

¹⁵⁸ Cherubini, p. 62.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 62.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 63-66.

¹⁶¹ Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 151.

¹⁶² Ibid, pp. 154-157.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 158.

We may say that De Quincey's musical knowledge and interest suggested to him the use of fugal form, and that he applied this form with surprising accuracy and effectiveness, but was sufficiently conscious of the differences between the media of music and literature not to press the analogy so far as to damage his work.¹⁶⁴

Wolf, too, looks to De Quincey's work as an example of 'Romantic musicalization of fiction'.¹⁶⁵ Wolf views Brown's reading with slight hesitation, suggesting that 'his reaction [to the text] may also be the consequence of the omission of, or a (partially) erroneous answer to, some questions which are crucial for the fugue as a contrapuntal form of composition'.¹⁶⁶ In short, Wolf is rather condemnatory of Brown's attempt to align elements of the 'Dream-fugue' with components of a compositional fugue, citing 'erroneous analogy', 'untenable conclusions' and barely concealed 'oddity'.¹⁶⁷

More recently, Ruth Skilbeck revisits both Wolf and Brown's musical readings of the 'Dream-fugue' and notes that the significant difference between the two approaches is that Brown views the text as 'analogous to a musical fugue in a technical sense', whereas Wolf proposes three, more symbolic, ways to locate the text's musicalisation.¹⁶⁸ She briefly outlines these as 'a psycho-narration of the traumatic events concerning Elizabeth's death'; 'a political allegory of England's history between the French Revolution and the victory over Napoleon at Waterloo'; and finally, 'as a religious allegory of the resurrection'.¹⁶⁹ She also notes that Wolf questions the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 158.

¹⁶⁵ Wolf, pp. 111-124.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 114.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 114.

¹⁶⁸ Ruth Skilbeck, *The Writer's Fugue* (Newcastle, N.S.W: Postmistress Press), p. 230.

¹⁶⁹ Skilbeck, p. 230.

analogous merits of some elements of De Quincey's text which, in turn, challenges Brown's attempt to fit them into a fugal structure.¹⁷⁰

However, it appears that Wolf and Skilbeck share a misunderstanding of Brown's final position on the possibility of fugues in literature. Both claim that Brown summarises his reading of the 'Dream-fugue' with a futile statement which decries that 'there's is no working out of the complete musical pattern'.¹⁷¹ However, Brown in fact makes this point in reference to other works that attempt to imitate the form of musical fugues, and James Joyce's fugato section in *Ulysses*, in particular:

Considering these special circumstances, it is not surprising to find that De Quincey's use of the fugue as a literary form is rather an isolated phenomenon. A few poets have described the form without attempting to imitate it – Milton did this in a highly concentrated passage which De Quincey significantly quoted as a motto for his own fugue, and Browning did it more extensively in *Master Hughues* (a name shamelessly invented to rhyme with *jugues*) of *Saxe-Gotha*. A few writers have pretended to follow the form without making any real attempts to do to.

More exact and interesting than these is James Joyce's fugato section in *Ulysses*. In this scene in a Dublin pub there are recurrences and combinations of themes which are clearly based on the fugue, but so far as I have been able to determine there is no working out of the complete musical pattern.¹⁷²

I have included this uninterrupted passage to illustrate how Wolf and Skilbeck's clipping of Brown's sentence perhaps misapprehends, and thus – unintentionally – misrepresents Brown's final position on the 'Dream-fugue'. Finally, the penultimate line of his chapter – which follows on directly from the extract above – in fact contradicts how Wolf and Skilbeck represent Brown's account: 'Also (and this is perhaps more important), the

¹⁷⁰ Skilbeck, pp. 231-232; cf. Wolf, pp. 115-118.

¹⁷¹ Wolf, p. 114; Skilbeck, p. 230; cf. Brown, pp. 159-160.

¹⁷² Brown, *Music and Literature*, p. 159.

cumulative excitement of the fugue, which De Quincey so perfectly captured, is entirely lacking.’.¹⁷³ As a result, far from considering De Quincey’s offering a failure, Brown holds it up as an example to be emulated.

It is important to address these discrepancies in contemporary understandings of Brown’s reading of the ‘Dream-fugue’ given the significance of such ramifications on Wolf’s positions on intermediality, the musicalisation of fiction, and the subsequent works based upon them. Both Wolf and Brown agree that the ‘Dream-fugue’ achieves a musicalisation in its form; both have different reasons for supporting this conclusion, but – ultimately – they both illustrate how one may understand musical structure in literary forms. Wolf’s appraisal of Brown’s examination of De Quincey does not dismiss the idea that the ‘Dream-fugue’ is musically structured, but it does reveal why Brown would have been unable to find further examples of ‘fugal’ literature. Brown’s approach labours in the hope of identifying a very particular correlation between structural elements, which he finds in the ‘Dream-fugue’s case (albeit making certain allowances), whereas Wolf’s approach allows for a much more lenient consideration of the fugal structures at work.

In terms of parsing the potential presence of a fugue in Carter’s text, one may cite the methods set down by either Brown or Wolf to achieve a different mode of musical invocation, but both ones in which the differences still seek to meet the conditions of musicality. By moving forward with both approaches in mind, however, it is perhaps possible to reveal a musical structure which is both symbolic and technical, and one which would satisfy the criteria of Brown and Wolf simultaneously.

¹⁷³ Ibid, pp. 159-160.

Symbolic Fugue

Given that Wolf examines De Quincey's text as partly operating as a fugue in a metaphorical sense, he provides the – comparatively – easier set of conditions that a work of literature must achieve in order to be considered 'fugal'. The most straightforward way to assess Carter's text is to identify which symbolic loci of the narrator's story may correspond to a fugal composition.

I would tentatively offer that the protagonist's liberty provides a narrative arc not too dissimilar to the one Wolf highlights in the 'Dream-fugue' as a 'thematic' fugue.¹⁷⁴ To put it plainly, when the protagonist's situation is introduced, her notable liberty foregrounds the story's thematic progression; her marriage perhaps curtails this freedom, at least from a societal perspective, but she becomes immediately aware of her lack of liberty upon discovery of the bloody chamber; then, the moment of her death-dais rescue resolves into her liberation. Plainly, a rudimentary structure becomes 'Free – Imprisoned – Free'; this, however, only demonstrates an ABA thematic form which, though for Brown may constitute evidence of meretricious intermedial effort, is neither uniquely fugal nor musical. Thus, we must complicate our symbolic assessment with an oppositional theme. Counterpoint, after all, is a crucial component of a fugue. To this end, it is perhaps too flippant to view the protagonist's imprisonment as being counter to her liberty; rather, it is more suitable to consider the Marquis's authority as the text's diverging 'voice' – resistance to the patriarchy, after all, is a major theme of Carter's collection.

¹⁷⁴ Wolf, p. 112.

Technical Fugue

Calvin Brown's approach, which is more focussed on the like-for-like, elemental analysis of a text's fugal structure, may also yield results when 'The Blood Chamber' is thrust under its lens. Like Wolf, Brown highlights the 'Dream-fugue's thematic and symbolic 'arcs', but is perhaps more concerned with more specific, formal, qualities of the text. Thus, a comparable reading of 'The Bloody Chamber' would seek elements that not only conjure connotations of fugal structures, but that form part of a fugal structure themselves. That is to say, a component (of a text) cannot be singularly fugal in content; it must also represent a formal correlation with a fugue in terms of its employment within the text as a whole. Such an approach actively reinforces Pater's assertions regarding form and content, and his claim that literature 'constantly aspires towards the condition of music'.

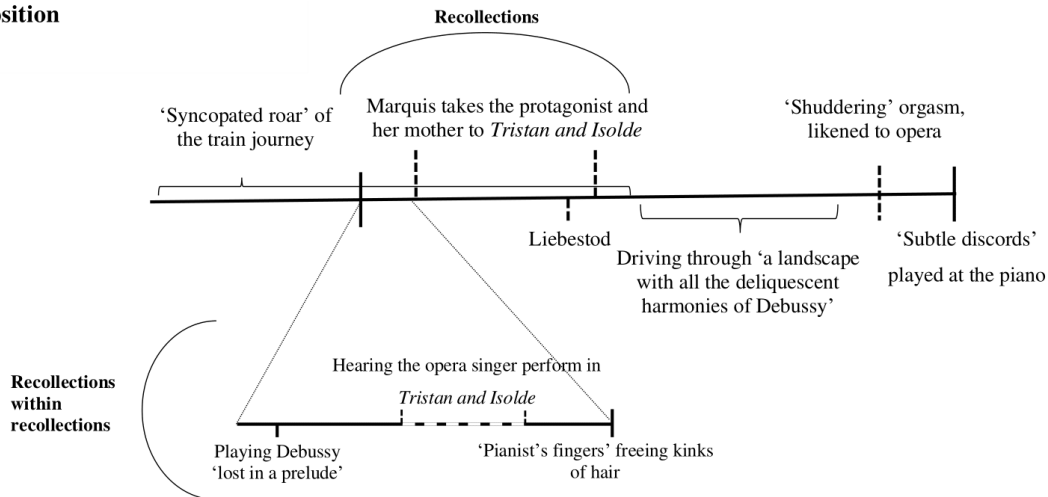
In response to this, there are perhaps a number of suitable candidates within Carter's short story. One major recurring feature of the text is Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, which makes appearances in both direct and indirect ways; another is the frequent vignettes of the story's protagonist playing the piano. Furthermore, there is the suggestion of structural prefiguring, a prelude of sorts, when the narrator stumbles across three books in the Marquis's library, '*The Initiation, The Key of Mysteries, The Secret of Pandora's Box*'.¹⁷⁵ The titles alone of these volumes come to represent three predominant elements of the plot that have not yet unfolded; the significant role keys play in 'The Bloody Chamber' has been well established in this chapter; similarly a correlation can immediately be drawn between Pandora's box and the Marquis's chamber, and such a connection is solidified when the narrator herself references the book – notably – not by its title, but by a recollection of myth to which the book alludes:

¹⁷⁵ Carter, p. 12.

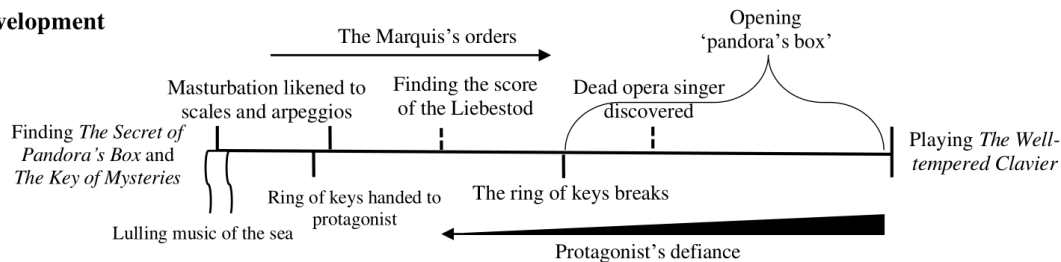
‘The secret of Pandora’s Box; but he had given me the box, himself, knowing I must learn the secret’.¹⁷⁶

I offer, in the same vein as Calvin Brown, a chart to illustrate the structure of ‘The Bloody Chamber’ and map its musical elements:¹⁷⁷

Exposition



Development



Resolution

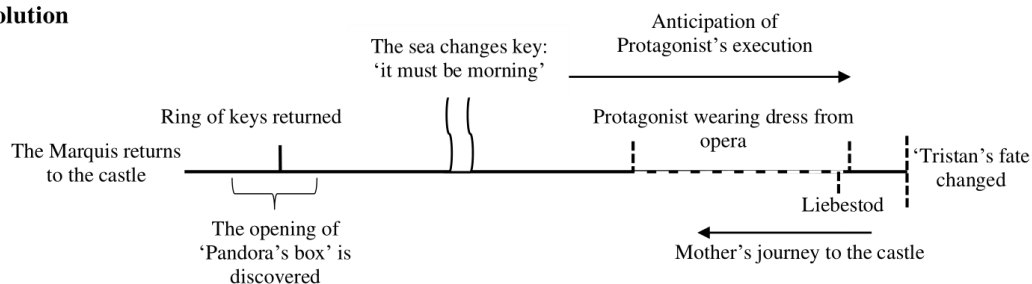


Fig. 14 – A chart outlining the structure and musical elements of Carter’s ‘the Bloody Chamber’.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 34.

¹⁷⁷ Brown devises a chart to illustrate the separate voices in the ‘Dream-fugue’ in an attempt to demonstrate the text’s potential for reproducing fugal structure. *Music and Literature*, p. 157.

Chapter Three

We can view this chart as a thematic score of Carter's text; it illustrates how the linear development of 'The Bloody Chamber' involves a selection of recurring elements. The styles of corresponding lines indicate events which share thematic significance; the dashed lines relate to Wagner's opera; the curved braces indicate events that unfold over time, rather than occur in an instant; solid vertical lines mark the protagonist's interaction with keys (musical and otherwise). I have also positioned 'waves' to signal where the sounds of the sea are used by the narrator to determine the passage of time. Finally, like the braces, arrows mark events that are drawn out beyond a single moment, such as actions or ideas that linger in the narrative, or receive subtle attention in the background of the narrative. The protagonist's defiance, for example, grows in opposition to the Marquis's orders, and is the cumulative result of an increasing number of transgressions; these arcs are depicted with opposing arrows, with the protagonist's arrow formed of an increasing wedge.

These arrows are particularly useful for illustrating the presence of counterpoint in the text. The protagonist's acts of rebellion, and her mother's arrival, both appear to be actions in direct conflict with those of the Marquis; but their actions could not exist without first having something to act against. Thus, there is something contrapuntal in these two episodes of opposing wills; the conflicting arcs are interdependent, sharing an initial impetus, but each character responds independently – inversely – to this drive. An analogy to music here would represent the opposing forces (the actions of the protagonist and her mother versus the will of the Marquis) as voices that share an initial harmony but exert different, independent, rhythms against each other.

I have divided the story into three main sections which correspond to the major elements of the narrative: the protagonist's journey to the Marquis's castle; her discovery of the bloody chamber; her liberation. These sections are perhaps analogous to musical

movements or, more appropriately (and as I have labelled them), elements of a fugal composition. Further to this, the thematic score also illustrates the repeated elements of ‘The Bloody Chamber’ which populate the text like musical phrases: the recurrence of Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, in various forms, seems to correspond with significant moments of narrative prefiguring or arresting revelation. The playing of the piano, too, is an example of a repeated musical element that punctuates the story. These frequently recurring images become a leitmotif throughout narrative as a whole. Notably associated with Wagner (which has its own significance for their presence in the text), the leitmotif serves as a recurring musical phase which conveys a symbolic or thematic meaning: the same is true of these repeated elements of ‘The Bloody Chamber’ – the piano reminds the protagonist of her identity and self-worth, while images of the opera reinforce her imprisonment. Thus, there are two repeating leitmotifs in Carter’s story, one with positive connotations for the protagonist, the other with generally negative implications. I say ‘generally negative’ because – importantly – the final instance of *Tristan and Isolde* is employed to illustrate how the protagonist has in fact changed her fate; her liberation results in the redundancy of the opera’s original implications and instead aligns the leitmotif with more positive significance.

It is notable, too, how the flashbacks that take place during the protagonist’s train journey are microcosmic of the opening section’s structure more broadly. Indeed, ‘The Bloody Chamber’s exposition appears to emerge from a series of expanding patterns which, structurally, is not unlike a musical work of fugue. Similarly, the closing ‘movement’ features, to some degree, all of the elements that appear earlier in the story. It becomes a structural resolution in both form and symbolic content – a thematic crescendo, which is perhaps not entirely conducive to the structure of a fugue, but

undoubtedly invokes something musical. There are certainly elements of musical structure at play here – perhaps not in a sustained fugal form specifically, but it is clear that ‘The Bloody Chamber’ is constantly aspiring ‘towards the condition of music’.

3.4.vi – From Bach to Beethoven

The considerations of ‘symbolic’ and ‘technical’ allusions to music in ‘The Bloody Chamber’, above, can draw from the critical approach of two earlier studies which examine the potential connection between certain elements of prose – and novel – narratives and musical forms. The first of these is found in E. M. Forster’s 1927 Clark Lectures, and the second emerges twenty-three years later, when Forster’s own writing is revisited with a musical inclination by Edward Killoran Brown in his 1950 lecture series, *Rhythm in the Novel*. As I have done in this chapter, both Forster and Brown offer perspectives on how literature can exhibit rhythmic elements of music; the example they employ for their musical foundation is not Bach, as I have considered for Carter, but Beethoven. The specific observations Brown makes in Forster’s work are perhaps too tangential to explore here, but the manner in which the observations are made both reinforce the ideas contained in their work and provide reassurance for the approach I have taken in this chapter.

Forster’s Clark Lectures cover a number of different characteristics of the novel form, which Forster claims, is ‘one of the moister areas of literature’, ‘irrigated by a hundred rills and occasionally degenerating into a swamp’.¹⁷⁸ These elements, or ‘aspects’, are where the series gains its title, dubbed so – as Forster himself puts it – because the name is ‘both unscientific and vague’, and provides the maximum amount

¹⁷⁸ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, ed. by Oliver Stallybrass, (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 25.

of freedom for discussion.¹⁷⁹ The *Aspects* are divided into nine lectures and seven sections: The Story; People; The Plot; Fantasy and Prophecy; Pattern and Rhythm. The last of these, evidently, is of most interest to this thesis. Forster's final lecture on 'Pattern and Rhythm' begins by outlining the formations of patterns in the novel form. The majority of the lecture is in fact spent discussing ideas relating to patterns, yet his premise is rather straightforward: patterns in novels are typically rigid. Further to this, and regardless of a pattern's complexity, if it is rigid and – worse still – repeated continually throughout an author's body of work, it is a disadvantage to the form; of authors who are guilty of such practice, Forster says he does 'not want more of [their] novels'.¹⁸⁰ He continues by suggesting that a rigid pattern 'may externalise the atmosphere, spring naturally from the plot, but it shuts down the doors on life and leaves the novelist doing exercises'.¹⁸¹ From here, the lecture moves 'rather nervously towards the idea of "rhythm"', which he declares is 'sometimes quite easy'.¹⁸² He suggests that there are two kinds of rhythm: the first, 'quite easy' kind, can be found at the start of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, which 'starts with the rhythm "diddidy dum"', which we can all hear and tap to'; but, he continues, 'the symphony as a whole also has a rhythm – due mainly to the relation between its movements – which some people can hear, but no one can tap to'.¹⁸³ He elaborates on the difference between these two modes of rhythm:

This second sort of rhythm is difficult, and whether it is substantially the same as the first sort only a musician could tell us. What a literary man wants to say, though, is that the first kind of rhythm, the diddidy dum, can be found in novels and may give them beauty. And the other rhythm, the

¹⁷⁹ Forster, p. 39.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 145.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 145.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 146.

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 146.

difficult one – the rhythm of the *Fifth Symphony* as a whole – I cannot quote you any parallels for that in fiction, yet it may be present.¹⁸⁴

Despite describing the simpler of the two rhythms as ‘tappable’, he also states that it may be defined as ‘repetition, plus variation’, which suggests that it is more about patterns that emerge across the text than metric occurrences within passages of a text.¹⁸⁵ He does provide an example of the simpler rhythm at work: he says of Proust’s *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* that ‘the book is chaotic, ill-constructed, it has and will have no external shape’, ‘and yet it hangs together because it is stitched internally, because it contains rhythms’.¹⁸⁶ In this regard, it is clear that musical structure, at least in an abstract form, can be responsible for narrative coherence in prose. The description of Proust’s work also indicates that can such an interpretation of rhythm can support contingent, but separated, elements of a story – threading them together despite other textual deficiencies. Certainly, as Forster has demonstrated, the two rhythms allow us to articulate – by employing musical analogues – how certain structures operate across a literary text.

Forster’s arguments have considerable resonance with the work carried out in this chapter; the first kind of rhythm – which one can ‘tap to’ – has been explored in quite a literal, metrical sense in Conkling’s poetry earlier in this chapter; but Forster’s other formulation of this simple rhythm, with ‘repetition, plus variation’, has also been evidenced in ‘The Bloody Chamber’.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, the frequent and repeated passages of ‘The Bloody Chamber’ that involve the protagonist sat playing the piano would satisfy

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 146.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 149.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 146.

¹⁸⁷ The title of Forster’s lecture series names ‘the novel’ as the primary form under consideration in his talks, but his persistent reference to general ‘fiction’ throughout the series indicates that the claims he makes here are equally applicable to the short story form.

Forster's idea of this particular rhythm; it in fact parallels the example he draws on from Proust's work – a recurring violin sonata.

The more 'difficult' rhythm of the two is not so much concerned with singular moments but considers 'movements' across a piece of fiction as a whole. Indeed, he goes on to outline how such a rhythm would operate, by asking:

Is there any effect in novels comparable to the effect of the *Fifth Symphony* as a whole, where, when the orchestra stops, we hear something that has never actually been played? The open movement, the andante, and the trio-scherzo-trio-finale that composes the third block, all enter the mind at once, and extend one another into a common entity. This common entity, this new thing, is the symphony as a whole, and it has been achieved mainly (though not entirely) by the relation between the three big blocks of sound which the orchestra has been playing.¹⁸⁸

Yet, this is the rhythm for which Forster cannot provide an example; he is hopeful, though, that there 'yet may be one'.¹⁸⁹ I would suggest, however, that the later sections of this chapter have gone some way to offering a demonstration of what Forster is describing. The overarching musical and narrative structure of 'The Bloody Chamber', as a whole, is only manifest as a result of the connection between its opposing themes and corresponding structural elements – the 'big blocks'. Thus, elements of Forster's 'difficult rhythm' – particularly as he describes the relationship between 'movements' – have been illustrated in the structural map of Carter's short story devised above.

One thing evident, from Forster's description of these rhythms, is that fiction can be read as an analogue of musical structure and, as a result, musical structures can offer a functional reading of a literary text. It suggests that one may approach the criticism of

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 149.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 149.

narrative prose with the same critical perspectives one may apply critically to music: rather than drawing aural comparisons between literature and music, as had long been done – typically – in poetry, Forster derives his critical readings from recognising formal patterns in a text in much the same way one would attempt to recognise patterns in music. In many ways, the act of listening is aligned with the act of reading, and in recognising patterns in literature – by means equivalent to those you would in music – the ear becomes the eye.

The intermedial work in *Aspects of the Novel* is rather rudimentary, if not embryonic, and Forster himself acknowledges that his ideas here are not fully formed.¹⁹⁰ Notably, the *Aspects* do not feature in Wolf's appraisal of works which focus on the musicalisation of fiction, despite Forster's works of fiction making several appearances.¹⁹¹

Similarly, Forster's analysis does not go as far as this thesis into the nuances of metric and thematic elements of musical structure in literature and, indeed, is only brief in his exploration of the impact such a critical approach can have. Nevertheless, Forster's work begins to consider the structural parity between musical and literary forms. His two rhythms acknowledge both a technical relationship with music and a thematic – symbolic – relationship with music.

E. K. Brown's response to Forster's final Clark Lecture also takes the form of a lecture series; what constitutes less than a third of one of Forster's lectures seemingly becomes the foundational basis of four lectures on *Rhythm in the Novel*. Indeed, Brown notes that a book he will be 'much concerned with in these discourses' is *Aspects of the*

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 134.

¹⁹¹ Wolf, pp. 33, 126, 225.

Novel, referring of course to the published volume of Forster's talks.¹⁹² It is perhaps also notable that E. K. Brown first begins to deliver his lectures merely a year after Calvin Brown first publishes *Music and Literature*. Despite the proximity of these two writers in name, time, and critical interest, neither demonstrates any awareness of the other's work.

Among other things, Brown's work in the *Rhythm in the Novel* lectures reasserts Forster's claims regarding the use for music as a structural analogue for works of literary fiction. He extends Forster's model for two rhythms, highlighting that the simpler rhythm is – generally – more concerned with an order that emerges from patterns, while the other depends 'mainly, but not entirely, on a relationship between the larger parts of a novel analogous to the relationship between movements in a sonata or a symphony'.¹⁹³

He concedes that 'he may not fully understand it', but knowledge of the rhythms has enabled him 'to read a number of novels with an increase of pleasure and insight'.¹⁹⁴ Brown bestows a new name on each of Forster's observable rhythmical devices, which brings an appreciated clarity to proceedings: he renames the 'difficult rhythm' a rhythm of 'interweaving themes' and dubs the simpler of the two a rhythm of 'expanding symbols'.¹⁹⁵

Brown is an even greater advocate for the existence of a literary instance of Forster's difficult rhythm and, in the final lecture of his series, offers up Forster's own 1924 novel, *A Passage to India*, as such an example. Outlining the structure of the text,

¹⁹² E. K. Brown, *Rhythm in the Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 4.

¹⁹³ Ibid, pp.58, 63.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

Chapter Three

Brown notes how he thinks the elements of Forster's novel are arranged into 'blocks', each with its own pacing, internal structure, and thematic tone.¹⁹⁶ He goes on to describe the how the organisation of these components not only illustrates the 'interweaving themes' of Forster's difficult rhythm, but does so in a way that mirrors the very musical analogue which Forster himself employed to explain the rhymical device, Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*: 'Three big blocks of sound – that was Forster's account of rhythm in the *Fifth Symphony*. Three big blocks of sound – that is what *A Passage to India* consists of'.¹⁹⁷ He concludes, in precis of his argument, stating that 'reduced to the barest terms, the structure of *A Passage to India* has the "rhythmic rise-fall-rise"', which, he adds, 'Forster found in the greatest of novels'.¹⁹⁸ Notably, this rhythmic structure is also mirrored in 'The Bloody Chamber' as observed above: 'reduced to the barest terms' the protagonist's narrative is free-imprisoned-free.

The last act of this chapter, then, has been to extend the hopeful work of Forster and E. K. Brown to a reading of Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber'. Brown considered Forster's work a successful example of how musical structures may be used to interpret the organisation of themes and patterns across a whole literary text, and – despite tempered by fugue form rather than the symphony form – the same has been established for 'The Bloody Chamber'; fundamentally, musical structure has been employed as an analogue to the structure of Carter's text and informed a new critical approach.

This chapter has not only looked at literary rhythm in the 'simple' sense, as Forster puts it, in the metrical work of poetry and repeating patterns in fiction; it has also

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 113.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 113.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 113.

explored the complex ‘difficult rhythm’ of overarching musical structures in prose. Perhaps this chapter may offer some contentment to Forster and his disciple, as not only does it demonstrate that resistance to such ideas has waned, but – despite the doubts of the two scholars – they have been pursued with enthusiasm.

Conclusion

In terms of theoretical scope, this chapter has spanned from Ancient Greece, through the Renaissance, to contemporary criticism. However, despite the millennia between these perspectives, the focus has remained centred on attitudes toward form. Form has persisted throughout this chapter; through its rudimentary use in poetry; to its transformative principles of intermediality and metaphor; to the role it plays in the structures of music and literature. A number of historic, critical, disagreements have generated discussions within this chapter that reconcile previous misgivings regarding the suitability of musical structure in literary form. Moreover, this chapter has engaged with current criticism on intermediality and challenged the reader to readdress some contemporary perspectives that may not draw accurate conclusions.

This chapter has also shared a number of both subtle and overt connections to the thesis’s other chapters and key texts. For example, the use of sound to signal the passage of time is a narrative tool I have earlier explored in *Troilus and Cressida*; the mechanical playing of ‘The Bloody Chamber’’s protagonist arrives almost in homage to the first chapter’s discussion of the symbolic connection between typewriters and

pianos. By considering the fundamental make-up of both musical and literary structures, we have looked at how the two share common formal qualities, and – much like Eduardo Miranda’s accomplishments with DNA that were described at the start of this chapter – we have examined how these building blocks can help us comprehend the inherent musicality of literature.

Sections of this chapter have shown the value that considering musical structures can bring to literary criticism. From a metric perspective, we have catalogued a number of attempts to align poetic scansion with musical notation. From an aural perspective, we have considered the role of sound and musical key in relation to compositional and artistic processes, particularly where poets and writers have intentionally invoked music in their work. Additionally, this chapter has examined how – through either artistic intention or inherent formal aspiration – literary texts can represent and, to some extent, even mimic musical structures. I produced an innovative annotative system, which combined musical score and poetic scansion, allowing me to undertake an analysis of Conkling’s poetry and establish any similarity it may have shared with the musical form it was ostensibly based on. The perspectives of Wolf and Brown were used to establish how the narrative of Carter’s short story operates according to the models of a musical fugue. In undertaking this analysis, I was able to challenge a common misinterpretation of Brown’s argument regarding the fugue form in literary prose.

Thus, a focus on the invocation of musical structure in literary form has been used to both challenge existing scholarship and produce new readings of both prose and poetry, directly contributing to the thesis’s objective to demonstrate the critical value of using elements of music in literary analysis.

Conclusion and Coda

Conclusion

This thesis has ushered together apparently disparate forms and established a useful connection between music and literature, suggesting that such a relationship can be the basis for valuable new interpretations of literary texts. It has discussed converging theories of both musical and literary practices, finding parity between both art forms. These perspectives were contextualised by three main invocations of music – the instrumental, the sonic, and the structural – and applied to readings of drama, poetry, and prose. The subsequent treatment of these musical invocations has resulted in the employment of innovative critical analyses.

In the examination of the creative tools of music and literature, which constituted the first chapter of this thesis, I explored the connection between artists, their work, and their audience. This involved reconciling rational and spiritual conceptions of creativity and imagination. These ideas were subsequently employed to re-read the poetry of Wallace Stevens to better understand its musical claims. Scholarship that had been previously undertaken on one of the central poems of this chapter, ‘Peter Quince at the Clavier’, was readdressed to focus the analysis on the poem’s musical elements. Similarly, my application of Heideggerian principles to the tools of artistic creativity, in a way which aligns the mechanical processes of the typewriter with keyed musical instruments, has not been done before. The research undertaken for this chapter unearthed patent designs which had previously been thought lost. The description of these designs, for William Church’s type-setting apparatus, has helped to highlight the developmental relationship between typing and playing, particularly concerning the

function and evolution of the keyboard. Thus, chapter one not only demonstrates how a piece of literature can invoke instrumental elements of music, and how such an invocation can be used to produce a new reading of said literature, it also illustrates a deeper, practical connection between the acts of writing literature and playing music through the respective instruments of each craft.

Chapter two contemplated Shakespeare's use of off-stage sound. I established that the trumpets of *Troilus and Cressida* represent a semiotic system which uses sonic signals to provide the audience with information about unseen actions. This semiotic mechanism was also explored in *Macbeth*, where it was demonstrated that the sound of knocking meant more than simply the arrival of a guest. This chapter also considered how dramatic action can occur without dialogue, or visual cue, but maintain the audience's comprehension of events. Apostrophe and language formed the two most prominent areas of analysis, but the chapter also probed the importance of the audience's role in interpreting sound signals and fragments of music. The translation of these sounds into meaningful parcels of information was compared to a similar exchange in *Dido and Aeneas*, an opera and a form more commonly associated with music. The explorations of this chapter fill a critical vacancy in the academic landscape of *Troilus and Cressida*; I have illustrated how the sonic constitutes an important part of the play's dramatic development. Thus, by looking at how a literary text invokes elements of music, chapter two supports the overall argument of this thesis which proposes that considering a text's musical invocations can provide new readings of the work.

The third chapter, which set out to explore the structural invocations of music as they occur in literature, involved mapping the historic connection between the two artistic modes and demonstrating how this lineage may aid contemporary literary analysis. It began by exploring the critical heritage of form more broadly, through Plato,

to the work of George Puttenham, whose Renaissance perspectives on poetry were overtly linked to conceptions of music. This genealogy of form helped establish the fundamental elements shared by music and literature which, in turn, allowed me to discuss the formal structure of poetry and prose at text, stanza, and line level, with an appropriate musical analogue. Chapter three devoted much of its attention to Grace Hazard Conkling's 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden', which had received scarce academic interest prior to this thesis. It also examined the ways in which musical notation has been used in poetic scansion. For this, I formulated a combined approach to such annotation that allowed for Conkling's poem to be rhythmically compared to the musical piece from which its formal structure was ostensibly borrowed.

The investigations of chapter three also extended to prose and explored the critical works of Calvin Brown and Werner Wolf. I established that much of Calvin Brown's hesitancy to consider prose a suitable analogue for musical form was a result of his contemporary frames of reference. I suggested that the advent of postmodernity brought with it the potential offer of texts which satisfy Brown's conditions for adequately observing prose employing musical structure. I argued that Angela Carter's short story 'The Bloody Chamber' presented an example which occupied this space. Having explored and set out the different ways one may interpret musical form in literature, I was able to demonstrate how Carter's story engages with musical structures in both content and form. I used musical theory and Brown's own critical perspectives to illustrate how the narrative structure of 'The Bloody Chamber' exhibits elements of a musical fugue. At the same time, this chapter clarifies an often-contentious point of scholarship – namely that Calvin Brown does not, as Wolf suggests, reject the possibility of literary fugues in prose forms. Thus, this chapter not only offers an example of a text

Coda

which demonstrates the use of musical form in a way anticipated by Brown's writing, it suggests that Wolf has perhaps misinterpreted Brown's position on the use of fugues in prose. Both of these outcomes help achieve the objective of this thesis to demonstrate that, by considering the musical invocations of a literary text, one can challenge existing scholarship and produce new readings of a work.

This thesis has established several perspectives on how one may employ musical context to engage in new critical readings of literary texts and, as a result, has delivered on its objective to engage with – and enhance – a framework for critical analysis in terms of musical invocation in literature. It has demonstrated the value that considering the instrumental, sonic, and structural ways a text engages with music can bring to the interpretation of a text. In doing so, it has shown how such considerations lead to a synergy between the forms of music and literature. The outcomes of each chapter illustrate how an invocation of the musical can be used within the context of specific case studies, but they also make incremental contributions to the thesis's aim to demonstrate the critical benefits of using the invocations of music to challenge – or support – existing scholarship, and to produce innovative interpretations of a text.

The work done here contributes to a growing field of scholarship on the relationship between music and literature; the implications of this research, then, emerge not only from results of my specific case studies, but in the potential that the assertions of this project may help influence the methodology of future research in musico-literary endeavours.

Coda

4.1 – Clinching

The conclusions of this thesis are broad and potentially distinct when one considers each of the invocations addressed as separate ideas. However, there are numerous occasions throughout this thesis which draw different invocations of music together. For example, the examination of the sonic in *Troilus and Cressida* drew on the findings of chapter one's exploration of the instrumental. Similarly, chapter three also draws on chapter one's explorations of creativity, and the role of the artist, while calling back to chapter two's explorations of sonic apostrophe as well as further engaging with the invocations of the sonic. This last chapter of the thesis began to demonstrate a synergy not just between the forms of music and literature, but between the different invocations that have been established throughout the work. Ultimately, the consolidated consideration of instrumental, sonic, and structural invocations of music can only bolster one's critical reading of a text. Thus, in this coda, I offer an example of what a combined reading may look like and the form such an analysis may take. As a result, the last act of this thesis is to demonstrate how one may apply the aggregate findings of the previous three chapters to a text. Additionally, this coda serves to highlight the possibility for future research and identifies a body of work – that of Louise Bogan – which has the potential to be the subject of further musico-literary study, particularly one driven by the same invocational categories as this thesis. Ahead, I provide rationale for why I consider Bogan's work fertile ground for future research and offer an initial analysis of one of her poems.

The description of this closing section as a 'coda' serves two purposes. The first is that it draws on a coda's tendency to 'clinch' together the themes of a piece of music, and the second is that in employing a musical term I am engaging with the same kind of

272

musical allusion that is explored in this thesis.¹ Given the connections between musical and literary structures explored in the previous chapter, it is reasonable to expect that the final part of this thesis inherits its formal make-up from music. This coda, in a bid to illustrate the goals of the thesis in both form and content will act more as a discursive body of writing, than simply a summative conclusion; in doing so it will at least attempt to imitate the properties of a musical coda.

As I have mentioned above, this concluding section will draw together the previous subjects of each chapter and apply them in chorus to a reading of a text. Thus, ideas of musicality, as they have been viewed in their instrumental, sonic, and structural senses will be considered anew in reference to the poetry of Louise Bogan. The primary aims of this coda are to consolidate the propositions of this project in practice rather than theoretic academic assertion and to act as a proving ground to test the findings of each prior chapter of this research. As a result, Bogan's work becomes the location at which we 'clinch' the distinct – but interlinked – invocative threads of this thesis and synthesise their use together, ultimately demonstrating how one may employ a combination of musical invocations to produce a new reading of a text.

4.2 – Louise Bogan – Musical Melting-pot

Biographically, Bogan is a poet whose life was subtly and persistently paired with music. Elizabeth Frank's monograph on Bogan notes that 'music was bred into' Louise's early life and that her mother, May, 'sang and played the piano', while 'from the age of six or

¹ 'Tail. Originally a section of a movement added at the end to clinch matters rather than to develop the music further. However, in the symphonies of Mozart, Haydn, and especially Beethoven, the coda came to have integral formal significance, becoming at times a second development section and sometimes containing new material. Later composers have increased and extended this tendency.' Michael Kennedy, *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 152.

seven, Louise took piano lessons and played five-finger exercises'.² Bogan, too, in her own writing indicates some of the extent of her relationship with music. From her youth in the aptly named Ballardvale she recalls 'music, in those days, belonged to its own time and place', before describing the frequent musical features of her daily routine and the music interests of her neighbours.³ In her autobiographical *Journey Around My Room*, Bogan bashfully contemplates her musical talents: 'I am a terrible accompanist, I may add, especially for Strauss and Debussy songs which have eight or nine sharps or flats, and interpolated measures in 5/4 time. But it is more fun than writing'.⁴ This passage clearly highlights Bogan's musical literacy. It also reveals a rather humorous contrast that Bogan herself felt between the acts of writing and playing.

There has been some previous work on musicality in Bogan's work. Notably, Jacqueline Ridgeway in her 1984 book, simply titled *Louise Bogan*, acknowledges the parallels with music in the poet's work, suggesting that 'the fact that for her rhythmic elements constituted form, and that they served to express the otherwise inexpressible, ties poetic form very closely with musical form'.⁵ Ridgeway also observes that 'Bogan often used musical terms and metaphors in her poetry' and that – as evidenced by notes and comments on her own manuscripts – she often 'thought of some of her lyrics as being accompanied by music'.⁶ Similarly, Carol Moldaw suggests that 'music is the central image of many of Bogan's poems' and that such an image is constituted by

² Elizabeth Frank, *Louise Bogan: A Portrait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 18.

³ Frank, p. 18

⁴ Louise Bogan, *Journey Around My Room* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), pp. 123-124.

⁵ Jacqueline Ridgeway, *Louise Bogan* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p. 1.

⁶ Ridgeway, p.1.

‘sound and rhythmic motion’.⁷ Many of these aspects of Bogan’s work will be explored ahead, while equally casting the reader back to the work of the earlier chapters.

4.3 – Musical nomenclature

One of the most immediate and notable connections Bogan draws to music in her poetic work is in the titles of each piece. Among the many ‘songs’ and ‘chansons’ that populate her oeuvre, one also encounters references to specific musical instruments or even technical elements of musical composition. In a way that harks back to chapter three and the attempts to explore the success of Grace Conkling’s ‘symphony’ as symphony, Louise Bogan’s intentional suggestions to her audience, of her poems’ musical nature, take place before the work even begins.

The Blue Estuaries, published in 1968, collects together the poet’s five previous volumes of poetry along with some unpublished works. In suggesting Bogan’s oeuvre as a potential site for further research, I have considered how her body of work relates to the three categories of musical invocation explored in thesis. Below (see *fig.15*), I have collated the poems contained within *The Blue Estuaries* and organised them according to the way each work engages with the invocations of music.

⁷ Carol Moldaw, ‘Form, Feeling, and Nature: Aspects of Harmony in the Poetry of Louise Bogan’, in *Critical Essays on Louise Bogan*, ed. by Martha Collins, (Boston: G. K. Hall &co., 1984) pp. 180-194, p. 182.

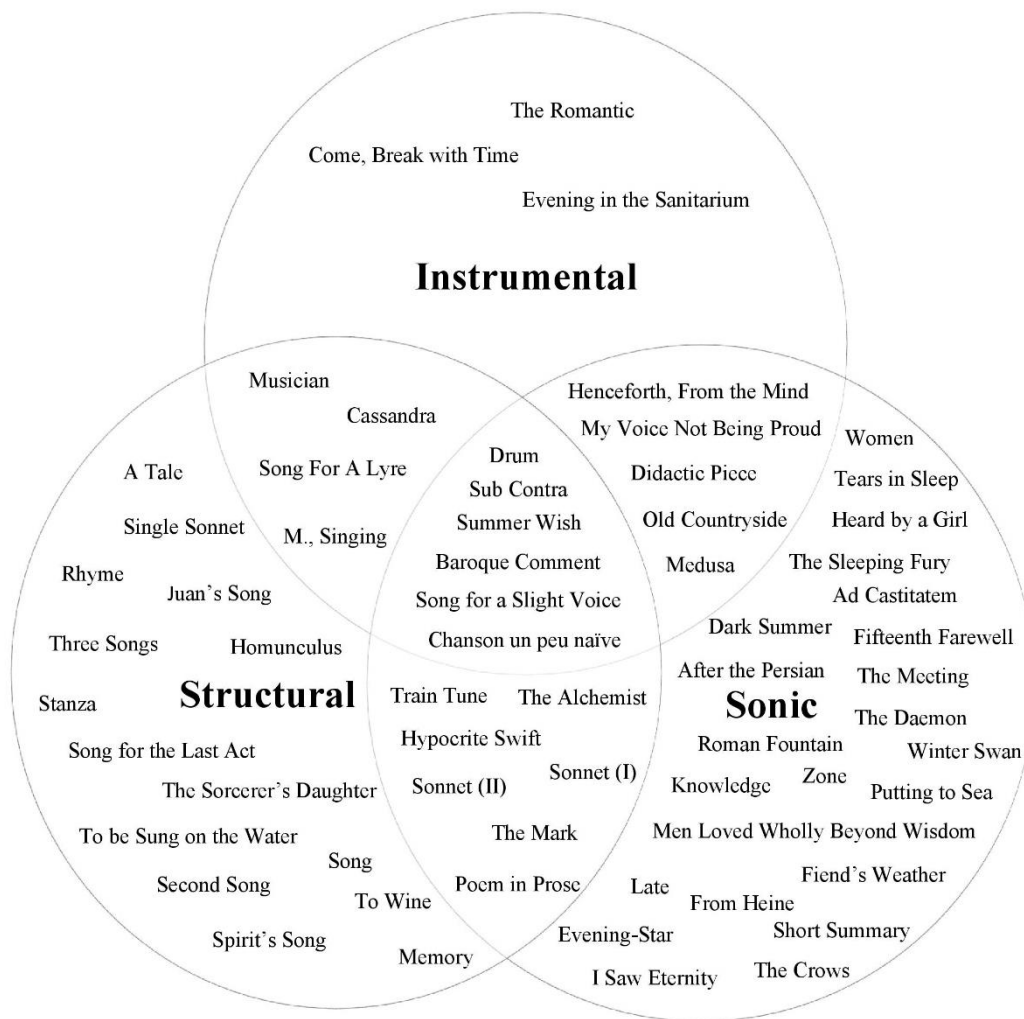


Fig. 15 – A Venn Diagram Illustrating the Shared Musical Invocations in the Work of Louise Bogan

Notably, of 103 poems, only a third do not contain a significant musical invocation. In considering the body of Bogan’s work in this way, one can recognise a number of interesting patterns in terms of the collection’s relationship to music. For example, the sonic is frequently invoked in Bogan’s poetry and is done so without also engaging another invitational category. Yet, conversely, very few invoke the instrumental without further invoking the sonic or the structural.

Arranging Bogan's poetry in this way allows us to consider not only the broad ways her work explores a relationship with music, but how we might group the poems thematically according to such a relationship. This is particularly useful for any future project undertaking research on Bogan's use of musical invocation.

For the remainder of this coda, I will be taking a closer look at one of the poems that occupies the central section of the Venn diagram above. The aim of this will be to not only illustrate how all three invocations of music can present themselves in single text, as this thesis has already presented instances of overlapping invocations, but to also reinforce this project's aim to demonstrate how readings of such invocations are a valid avenue for literary criticism. Bogan's work lends itself helpfully to these efforts as her oeuvre is populated with poems possessed of deliberately musical titles, inviting the reader to explore the connection to music she has wilfully evoked: 'Juan's Song', 'Girl's Song', 'Song for the Last Act', 'Three Songs', and 'Song for a Slight Voice' providing only a slight sample of the overtly named works.

Although I only focus on one poem in this coda, the diagram above clearly indicates the rich possibility held by Bogan's work for further musico-literary analysis. Using the last poem I mentioned, 'Song for a Slight Voice', we can begin to map how the work of the previous chapters allows us to read and criticise a text in light of its invocations of the musical.

4.4 – Song for a Slight Voice

As I have noted previously, the poem's title, 'Song for a Slight Voice' acts as an instant indication of musicality. The piece's title not only directly evokes musical form with the use of the word 'song', it suggests how such a song should be performed. We have seen something similar before, in the poetry of Grace Conkling, in section 3.3 of this thesis. Conkling marked sections of 'Symphony of a Mexican Garden' with musical indicators

of tempo and key. The difference, here, of course, is that Bogan has not used the traditional Italian musical term, nor does it refer to tempo. Rather, she has employed English to inform the reader of a particular timbre for performance. By giving the poem such a title, Bogan provides an illustration of the way that all three of the invocations discussed in this thesis can work in conjunction with each other. ‘Song for a Slight Voice’ is instrumental, since it gives the reader instructions as to how their voice – their own instrument – should be used to ‘play’ the poem. It is also sonic, since this instrumental direction will in turn influence the sound produced when the poem is recited or ‘played’. Finally, it is structural, in the sense that the ‘song’ form is directly referenced, and in the way that the combination of instrumental and sonic invocations encourages the reader to ‘play’ the poem rather than read it.

The use of English, opposed to the typical Italian, has perhaps two results: the first is that the nature and intended reading of the poem are made clear to all, whether musically trained or musically illiterate; the second is that the title may be read not as musical instruction but as dedication. Regardless, both interpretations still offer the poem as a musical form – a song. In any productive reading of the poem, then, we must consider what ‘slight voice’ might mean in terms of poetic form.

‘Slight voice’ suggests an underwhelming or hushed tonal register, certainly a voice with more gentle intonation than regular speech. James Murray Brown’s *Handbook of Musical Knowledge*, which has been previously used in this thesis’s attempt to derive a musical analogue for poetic works, attributes ‘in a subdued manner; in an *undertone*’ to the term *sotto voce*.⁸ It would be facile to claim one could simply

⁸ James Murray Brown, *A Handbook of Musical Knowledge – Part One: Rudiments of Music* (London: Trinity College of Music, 1967), p. 49.

Coda

whisper Bogan's verses and achieve the intended musicality, when it is wholly possible that there is further evidence of such *sotto voce* in the content of the poem. Interestingly, however, the sonic qualities of the poem seem at odds with the *sotto voce* direction, as evidenced below:

If ever I render back your heart
So long to me delight and plunder,
It will be bound with the firm strings
The men have built the viol under.

Your stubborn, piteous heart, that bent
To be the place where music stood,
Upon some shaken instrument,
Stained with the dark of resinous blood,

Will find its place, beyond denial,
Will hear the dance, O be most sure,
Laid on the curved wood of the viol
Or on the struck tambour.⁹

Semantically, the poem contains words like 'plunder', 'firm', 'shaken', and 'struck', which are not terms one would typically associate with 'gentle'. Admittedly, isolating individual words, however, does little to address the poem's overall impression. Yet, even at a phonological level, the few 'voiceless' or 'soft' syllables that recur throughout the text are not widespread enough to produce an unavoidably 'slight' reading of the poem.¹⁰

However, it is not only in phonetics that one may generate the illusion of *sotto voce*. Indeed, if we look back to the emphasis the title places on the performance and 'playing' of the poem, we come to understand the way in which a 'slight voice' works

⁹ Louise Bogan, 'Song for a Slight Voice', *The Blue Estuaries* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), p. 47.

¹⁰ 'Voiceless' consonants, such as 'p', 's', 't', are called such because during their production the speaker does not employ the larynx – just as one would do to whisper. An abundance of these consonants would have perhaps suggested 'Song for a Slight Voice' possessed a 'voiceless' quality.

throughout the text. In a silent, internal reading of the text, which therefore does not engage with the poem on a sonic or instrumental level, the imagery created in the stanzas above may seem to be associated with vindictive glee – in lines such as ‘delight and plunder’ – or even anger – ‘your stubborn piteous heart’. Indeed, without the playing direction presented in the poem’s title, a performer may have chosen to manifest either of these emotions in the tone in which they recite the work. Accepting the poem as song, and therefore performing the text with a ‘slight voice’, alters the sonic landscape of the work and in doing so brings an alternative mood to the piece, imbining it with mournfulness rather than anger. The *sotto voce* nature of Bogan’s ‘Song for a Slight Voice’ not only gives an indication of the way the poem should be read, but brings something further to its meaning in the form of tone and emotion.¹¹

Perhaps a precedent for this can found in an example from music. The *sotto voce* direction appears in the ‘Lacrimosa’ movement of Mozart’s *Requiem in D Minor* mourning mass, arriving abruptly after a slow *crescendo* from *piano*:¹²

¹¹ In ‘Linguistics and Poetics’, Roman Jakobson points out that the emotive function of language is not limited to the information contained in the message but the way that the message is delivered. He argues that simply lengthening or shortening a vowel sound in a word can radically alter the sense of the message intended by it: Roman Jakobson, ‘Linguistics and Poetics’, in *Style in Language*, ed. by Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 350 – 377, p. 353.

¹² Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Requiem in D Minor*, arr. by Vincent Novello, (Boston: Oliver Ditson and co., 1860), p. 34, bars 7-9.

Coda

The musical score for the Coda section consists of four staves. The lyrics are in Italian and are repeated across the staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The fourth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: ju - di - can - dus, ho - mo re - us., La - cri - mo - sa. The score includes dynamic markings: *cresc.*, *f*, and *sottovoce*.

Perhaps Mozart’s employment of the term suggests one of the ways the content of ‘Song for a Slight Voice’ lends itself to a *sotto voce* reading. Interestingly, such a perspective also fits in with the second, dedicatory, interpretation of the poem’s title above.

‘Lacrimosa’ comes from the Latin for ‘weeping’ and its use as a musical motif emerges from the Catholic Requiem Mass. While the language of ‘Song for a Slight Voice’ is not one necessarily of sanctity, it does conjure images of reverence and grandeur. Thus, we might contemplate that Bogan’s poem shares a further connection with modes of *sotto voce* beyond the musical direction of ‘slight voice’. The frequent use of the conditional tense, for example, also frames the poem in a tone evocative of loss that marries well with the mournful tone a *sotto voce* performance would bring.

The title of Bogan’s poem, then, is a clear indication of the way a musical reading of a text – which pays attention to its song structure, engages the vocal instrument and follows the sonic directions provided – gives us access to elements of the text which may otherwise be overlooked.

Although less overtly, implied musical direction pervades the structure of the poem through its grammar and punctuation. It is striking to note that the poem is

comprised of just two sentences; the first occupies the entirety of the opening stanza, but the second is deliberately drawn-out across the following two. The resulting fevered breathlessness reaches an agitated state in the first two lines of the final stanza: ‘Will find its place, beyond denial, / Will hear the dance, O be most sure,’. Here, the shortness of the clauses illustrates the speaker’s intention to qualify and reinforce their apostrophic warning. The cluttering of commas creates a drastic shift in stress, at least in an aural sense, and generates an emphatic staccato – as if it were coming almost naturally through panted breath. The grammatic structure of the text influences the way the reader’s instrument – their voice – is being used and thus also alters the sonic outcome of the poem.

Beyond reading ‘Song for a Slight Voice’ as a manifestation of *sotto voce*, there is another obvious musical allusion in the poem; the last two lines of each stanza describe the use, or body, of an instrument. There are cursory remarks made about ‘some shaken instrument’, and the tambour, but the viol in particular emerges as central to the ‘Song’. Taking only the instrumental invocation of music, the reading that emerges is that the ‘slight voice’ is that of the instrument itself; a viol temporarily silenced as the musician contemplates playing on. However, by considering the structural, sonic, and instrumental invocations of music together in the poem, we arrive at another interpretation.

In two of its three stanzas, the poem has a regular ABAB rhyme scheme. In the first stanza, on the other hand, the first and third lines do not rhyme. However, this break in the sonic harmony of the poem does not render it any less musical. Indeed, the contrast it creates mimics the effect of a discordant chord in a work by, say, Berlioz, drawing attention to how the other harmonies of the piece are being interrupted.

Coda

In this case, the non-rhyme encourages us to seek the musical elsewhere; and, as the sonic falls away, the instrumental rises to take its place. The word ‘heart’ which ends the first line is subsequently paired with the word ‘strings’ which comes at the close of the third. This structural pairing, of heart and strings, reveals another instrumental metaphor at work in the text. Indeed, it creates the impression that the stringed instrument played throughout the piece, is the heart as much as the viol. The notion that ‘heartstrings’ are the subject of musical ‘playing’, opposed to a viol, brings a darker tone to the earlier, mournful imagery. In this respect, the last stanza then tinges the voice with mockery as it taunts ‘will hear the dance’.

Perhaps more so than where the musical structure works without interruption, the hidden instrumental connotations here foreground the way changes to sonic and structural features of a text, such as the rhyme scheme, can reveal deeper, more musical meanings. Crucially, though, a reading which looked only at structural, sonic, or instrumental features as separate invocations would miss the interweaving of heart and strings and therefore the way that the musicality of feeling permeates the poem. It is only through allowing these different invocations to work as a cohesive whole, in synergy with each other, that we can begin to see the extent to which ‘Song for a Slight Voice’ relies on music not just as imagery, but as the foundation for its emotional tone.

Thus, this coda has explored an example of Louise Bogan’s poetry in a way that consolidates the three previous case studies of this project. It has demonstrated how one may use a literary work’s invocation(s) of music to inform a new reading of the text. Beyond this, it has illustrated how one may arrive at a unique interpretation of a work by considering the combination of all three invocations.

A Final Note

The objective of this last section has been to bring together the various invocations of music explored throughout this thesis and examine how they manifest in the work of one writer. Therefore, the conclusion of this project has not simply been a summative account of what has taken place in each prior chapter, but a constructive application of their findings. The coda has also offered an insight into potential opportunities for further research and suggested that the work of Louise Bogan is a strong candidate for future musico-literary analysis.

In ‘clinging’ together that which has been previously established, this closing study of the thesis has reframed the assertions of the work, as a whole, allowing the conclusion to emerge from the evidence of practical application. As a result, the coda has reaffirmed the aim of this thesis in general; to demonstrate how readers may look to the musical invocations contained within a work of literature and use them as a means for forming a new critical approach to the text. In the case of the sonic, which is perhaps the most straightforward but has great capacity for diversity, this can be done through the use of phonetic patterns, the distribution of rhyme, or in the introduction of a non-lingual form of aural communication. Much of the sonic is reliant upon, and exploitative of, the structural invocations of music one may encounter, be that in the metric organisation of a poem, or the narrative development of a novel. Most distinct, however, is the way literature may invoke the instrumental. This has been examined from both a physically creative standpoint, looking at the production of a text, and by considering the implications of involving musical instruments in a work of literature. This thesis has also demonstrated how the invocations may overlap in a single text, leading, at times, to interpretations that engage all three at once.

Coda

The case studies I have offered in this project represent a way of reading literature that engages with the creative act and the production of art, be that musical or literary. Ultimately, this thesis has demonstrated that, by considering how music is invoked in literature, one may produce a more nuanced interpretation of a text than had they pursued a musically uninformed reading.

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