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A Pluralistic Spectrum of the Mimetic

by

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Abstract

Through the composition of ten pieces, I have explored the theme of mimesis and musical pluralism, especially as it occurs and applies in my own music. The following commentary begins by initially discussing my own context as a composer, providing an overview of the motivations that first prompted me to investigate and research this topic. After this background is explained, I examine key philosophical concepts connected to both mimesis and artistic pluralism, with the latter being chiefly concerned with how it affects the creation of new musical works.

With the above issues having been discussed, this context effectively frames the next seven chapters of this commentary, which involves analysis and examination of ten works I composed for this doctoral degree. This begins with a thorough analysis of two chamber works and then moves onto an in-depth elaboration about a more expansive ensemble work of forty-minutes. After this discussion, I present a series of mimetically related works; compositions more theoretical in design and concept, yet still illustrating and building upon the central theme of this artistic research. Lastly, three other works are examined, demonstrating similar and contrasting compositional approaches. The concluding chapter of the commentary presents a succinct but thorough overview of the ramifications of the above compositions — focusing primarily on the relative success of these works, as well as their shortcomings, potential for future exploration, possible refinement, and overall connection to the theme of mimesis and musical pluralism.

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List of Compositions

<i>Deportations</i>	Louella Alatiit (vln), Marla Hansen (vla), Maria Jeffers (vlc), Bathsheba Marcus Conley (pno). — premiere performance given at the Bloomingdale School of Music, New York City, USA, 05-13-2013.
<i>Air Troika</i>	Performed by the Gryphon Trio. Roy Thompson Hall, Toronto, Canada, 08-04-2014.
<i>The Duke of Green</i>	Camille Hesketh (soprano) and the Ethos Collective. Performed at the Van Dusen Gardens, Vancouver BC, Canada, 14-09-2014.
<i>Large Rhythmic Canon</i>	Unperformed to date.
<i>Valley of Years</i>	Unperformed to date.
<i>Lembah Tahun</i>	Unperformed to date.
<i>Ghost Estates</i>	Unperformed to date.
<i>Rustic Sea Riser</i>	First performance given by Marij van Gorkom; Brunel University, London, UK. 12-11-2014.
<i>veranderen stasis</i>	Workshop performance given by DistractFold; Brunel University, London, UK. 14-04-2015.
<i>Proposition of Fossils</i>	Performed by Omega Impact, February 16 th , 2016, at Splendor, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

1. Background

1.0 Aims and Motivation

When I began this PhD my compositional output had reached a point where there was a significant amount of stylistic divergence from piece to piece. The degree of variety in my music was a result of a compositional approach that consciously sought to explore specific material for the duration of a given piece. Additionally, it was common for me to compose with the aim of exploring a certain musical technique or style. However, once having done this, I often found myself moving onto a new work, and one that was typically concerned with exploring a different set of aesthetic interests. By itself this was not an issue, but as I developed a larger body of compositions I began to recognise that embedded within this approach was a certain imitative tendency. An approach that was not necessarily reverential towards achieving exact imitation, but more often than not, seeking to instead reveal, undermine, and call into question accepted norms, qualities, and tendencies characterising specific musical materials or styles. Given this, I came to recognise how my creative practice depended upon my own understanding of various expectations, especially those associated with certain musical material.

Results from this compositional approach were pieces that were often labelled, by others, as ironic. This observation led to a certain amount of research and self-reflection. From this I became aware of how this categorization was a consequence of an interest in purposefully re-ordering, taking apart, and thwarting many of the cultural expectations implied by both my choice and treatment of musical materials. And in light of this content, the artistic research I proposed for this PhD was focused on expanding this trajectory of composing; however, it was also focused on composing singular works, ones that would unify a plurality of my mimetic abilities within self-contained pieces. This was done intentionally, to stand in contrast to compositions composed prior to this PhD which were more homogenous in musical style and material. It is from this stance then that I now wish to use this commentary to document how a substantial and specific body of artistic research (ten compositions developed between the years 2012 to 2016) articulate this research position, as well as build upon many other interconnected issues.

In short, this written work seeks to discuss how a range of imitative techniques are present and have come to exist and emerge within my music. Moreover, regarding source material and musical models, this PhD research has been used to formally investigate how composing

can engage with a wealth of mimetic behaviours – thereby detailing how such comportment can be manifested in original musical works. Lastly, while this commentary seeks to provide an overview of compositional approaches I have taken during a particular period of my career (2012-2016), it also has been conceived as a document allowing for the emergence of new avenues that I could continue to explore in the future. Such future directions will thus be recognised throughout this commentary, especially when discussing works which clearly open the door for the creation of multiple interpretations and new versions.

1.1 Relevant History of the Composer

During my Master’s study, I first began to see imitation in a non-pejorative way. Overall, this was because this period involved a re-evaluation of the term, and I mention this experience only due to it being an important starting point for exploring related themes that are present throughout this PhD. In short, this earlier period, led me to explore how the notion of imitation, which in turn has now brought me to comprehensively examine the notion of mimesis within the creative arts. In view of this, the theme of mimesis, stands as a central pillar to this discussion and one I will repeatedly link with my creative work. Yet before moving onto this issue I need to first examine ideas surrounding imitation more closely; specifically, the way I have encountered such ideas in the field of musicology. One “discovery” (leading to my present artistic research) was the notion that a composer can anachronistically engage with the musical past; doing so by treating source material from other periods in ways that can be seen as being either: eclectic, heuristic, reverential, or dialectical¹. Essentially, Hyde’s model articulates how composers evoke the past whilst utilising musical models for the purpose of either combining them with a wide range of sources (eclectic); working with them in a method developed by one’s own intuition (heuristic); remaining predominantly faithful to an original (reverential); or by presenting opposing forces inherently contained within a work itself (dialectical). From this position I began to conduct research around the concept of imitation, which then led to the more central theme of mimesis in the arts. However, the latter term (mimesis) became a far more comprehensive concept to articulate my engagement and influence from musical models, both as they occurred in my older work and the way I have researched models and their impact on composing new compositions for this body of research.

¹ Martha Hyde, *Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music* (Music Theory Spectrum 18.2, 1996).

1.2 Mimesis: Conscious and Discreet

From this perspective, the main premise of this commentary is the notion and presence of mimesis in musical composition, and in particular, how it can be seen as a behaviour that operates either consciously or much more discreetly. Highlighting this awareness — or lack thereof — is vital for the purpose of this commentary, primarily to distinguish ways in which mimetic interaction with source material occurs. The latter has consequently prompted my invention and usage of the terms *conscious mimesis* and *discreet mimesis*. Using these terms is my attempt to distinguish activities involving ‘conscious borrowing’ and ‘less conscious’ imitative behavior; but to further clarify this, I propose that these terms should, for now, be understood to infer approaches towards the degree one takes towards an instance of mimesis. Namely, one either carefully aims to imitate a subject within a certain spectrum of obliqueness or exactitude (conscious mimesis); or — to the contrary — one goes about making music that only discreetly sounds-like a source(s) that one has encountered. Additionally, the latter involves a form of less or unconscious mimesis of source material, regardless to the degree of similarity or difference eventually manifested.

In this regard, quoting — or other sorts of behaviour — are methods that re-work pre-existing material and thus fall into the category of *conscious mimesis*. Whereas, *discreet mimesis*, implies activities have less conscious engagement (or even an unconscious engagement) with source material, or a certain type(s) of musical model(s). Therefore, when talking about my own music in this commentary I use this distinction to specify, distinguish, and clarify how certain manners of mimetic behavior refer, or infer, to a given source or a body of musical conventions.

1.3 Stepping Beyond Irony

As I mentioned earlier, a weighted critique once made of my music, was that it was ironic. Although, at the time, such a comment — which was both complimentary and critical — piqued my interest, and it did so in true ironic form, given that I was largely unaware of my own musical irony. And, in a slow response to this critique, I began to question how my music, or even music in general, could be considered ironic. This was especially so given music’s abstract nature as well as the wide range of historical definitions connected to the concept of irony. In light of this and other questions, the topic of irony remains on the periphery of this discussion; periodically being mentioned in order to clarify issues raised by my artistic practice. In this respect, touching upon the notion of irony means I need to deconstruct the claim that I wrote ironic music. Unravelling how this trait characterised my

own musical personality — especially prior to beginning this PhD — is embedded with ideas, approaches or methods I normally have used to bring forth my musical compositions. In particular, I would suggest my use of ‘creative musical games’ often resulted in this ironic categorisation. Additionally, the latter encompassed a certain proclivity to use personalised interpretations of other sources, as well as my own reaction to a much larger musical meta-narrative.

Overall, I have now come to recognise certain mannerisms as being central ironic features in my music; specifically, proclivities towards inverting many musical conventions. These especially include tendencies connected to parameters such as harmony, rhythm, form, and style. However, upon gaining more self-awareness of this ironic approach, I realised I was taking this type of aesthetic stance as a means to primarily distance myself from more authoritative or dogmatic positions on how music ought to be composed. This position can thus be seen as an ironic approach to using musical material within 'a later 20th century interpretation of the word', which is a point I mention only to clarify that my connection to irony was not based on the Romantic or the Socratic notion of the term.

Moving on from this self-analysis, I now see my music’s ironic implications resonating more with Richard Rorty’s stance: irony as a private attitude, whereby a composer (author) is deeply aware of the fact that their musical language is just one among others². Additionally, as Claire Colebrook suggests, my approach towards composing appears to be one that compliments Rorty's standpoint. And, in short this implies that any ironic quality in my work — prior and up until now — remains as an effort to free up space for my own creative explorations.

... adopting a tone of irony would allow for a plurality of stories and, further, that we would value a world in which competing accounts were possible. We would not be troubled by, nor would we violently react to, other narratives and language games. Irony allows us to inhabit our own context, acknowledge the existence of other contexts and enable our own context to be open, fluid and creative.³

Colebrook’s discussion of Rorty positions an ironic stance as inclusive, yet it also states that it is idiosyncratic to one’s own creative games (e.g. a part of one's musical practice). In personal support of this, I saw the success of my ironic approach — prior to beginning this PhD — as a productive period with numerous pieces being written in a range of musical styles. However the consequence of this was that such a pluralistic approach was harder to define and explain to others. Simply put, the fact that my music was not easily reducible to a

² Claire Colebrook. *Irony* (London: Routledge, 2004).

³ Claire Colebrook. *Irony* (London: Routledge, 2004). 155.

sentence or two, interfered with the comfort of being an ironic composer. In connection to this, any satisfaction derived from knowing my music was ironic was short-lived. Thus, striving for irony soon became an interest superseded by the concern that a pluralistic musical identity was hard for others to categorise, and therefore comprehend. Perhaps though, some acute anxiety from the latter realisation was then amplified by another critique I received, whereby my “composerly-identity” was compared to that of a musical chameleon. Naturally, any comparison to a camouflaging reptile prompts significant self-reflection, however, what I took from the comparison was positive: that being a musical-chameleon implied I had a knack for blending, changing, and being adaptable. All of this essentially suggested I was able to mould my musical practice into a variety of environments. Moreover, this ability to imitate, adapt, or take on aspects of musical styles was not negative, as the comparison did not imply a plagiaristic or uninspired aping of stylistic conventions.

1.4 Positioning Processes of Imitation

Yet, this ironic-imitative-chameleon-like association was (and still remains) hard to summarise. And within a competitively professional world — where sound-bytes are favoured over nuanced discussions about the complex nature of musical influence and one's mimetic reactions to it — the subject matter for this PhD inherently evolved to a place where I felt I needed to provide clear justifications for wanting to continue to explore processes of musical imitation in my work. With this in mind, the main difficulty in pursuing what is inherently central to this approach (as it was alluded to earlier) had much to do with clarifying the shades of meaning pervading the word ‘imitation’. Certainly, I found Kant’s championing of genius, and consequent denigration of imitation, running counter to my interests:

Even if a man thinks or invents for himself, and does not merely take in what others have taught, even if he discovers many things in art and science, this is not the right ground for calling such a (perhaps great) head, a genius (as opposed to him who because he can only learn to imitate is called a shallow-pâte). For even these things could be learned, they lie in the natural path of him who investigates and reflects according to rules; and they do not differ specifically from what can be acquired by industry through imitation.⁴

Although it is important to consider the ramifications of merely being a “shallow-pâte”, I also feel Kant’s view on imitation is very removed from the reality pervading the early 21st century. My personal opinion would be one that regards this period in history as a time that invites a myriad of ways for creatively producing and re-producing musical materials,

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*. Translated by J. H. Bernard. (Dover Publications, Inc. Mineola, New York: 2005). 115.

nevertheless this contemporary experience of our current historicity needs to be clarified and defined with respect to how such a perspective towards the past affects one's overall artistic activity. And, perhaps it is inevitable to say, that the lingering legacy of Kant's above critique is that the word imitation has been tarnished to such an extent that it often seems best to avoid its usage entirely. Yet regardless of this potential perception, I remained interested in the topic of imitation; however, I instead shifted my focus towards better understanding the mimetic impulse(s) within the ever-expanding genre of contemporary classical music. Hence it was from this perspective that I began to examine imitation as being embedded within the larger and more expansive topic of mimesis. Furthermore, I also wanted to re-position my research so that mimesis could be studied and would allow me to move beyond a more "limited" discussion of style and musical influence. In short, I had already begun to view mimesis as a series of actions that could more closely account for the musical parameter of style in my music as well as my overall approach towards composing. Moreover, the term better articulates an evolving and subjective position — one that suggests that the surface of a work, when being composed, can never be wholly or firmly fixed.

However, before elaborating on this point, I must also state how I see style as an essential parameter to the creation of my own music, and one that remains critical to the discourse of my activity within contemporary music. This is also a corollary I recognise between contemporary music and visual arts. For instance, Arthur C. Danto's notion is a relevant one, as he states that there are no more period-styles, or at least no more clear master narratives in art, and instead less a style of making art than "a style of using styles".⁵ From this, looms the persistent and rather titanic notion of mimesis; however, despite its apparent ambiguity, applying mimesis to define and articulate my own creativity has nonetheless been a more flexible and inclusive way to discuss my own *style of using styles*. Personally, composing with an awareness of style as a parameter is also a concept that is distinct, although embedded within, the concept of stylistic influence. And expanding upon this, I believe that if I were to only use stylistic influence to explain my music, then, consequentially I might convey that the parameter of style was something more settled — and thereby, my growth as a composer was a matter that was closed, "mature", or even at some point of unobtainable completeness.

⁵ Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997). 198.

Inherently critical to this discussion then is my position that the matter of style is a parameter that actually remains open and ought to remain unfixed; one that is best contained by understanding one's own interaction with the notion of mimetic comportment. This compensates for the apparent impossibility of grounding such a fluid parameter as 'style' or 'stylistic influence'. Yet, out of this proposition, is the fact that any composer, who (like myself) deals with 'a style about using styles', must also deal with important ramifications of mimetic modelling. In fact, much of this commentary sets out to examine ways composition becomes an emergent property and dialogue with our mimetic faculties. Furthermore, given this perspective, the relevance of mimesis remains all the more able to activate and articulate a broad range of imitative behaviours, a fact too that is continually encompassed within my own musical practice. For instance, the inclusivity of mimetic concepts inhabits mirroring and more oblique refraction of musical models, but also simultaneously accounts for the use of quotation, variation, and close-copying. In this capacity, mimesis — as opposed to a more limited discussion about stylistic influence — is more applicable for articulating and critically understanding such an artistic practice. Secondly, mimesis (at least its usage as a word) is somewhat buttressed by Adorno's employment and reference to mimetic comportment, which, according to Michael Cahn's analysis, has a certain semantic and philosophical appeal:

The attractiveness of Adorno's approach consists in bypassing the conventional understanding of mimesis as representation or imitation. For him mimesis is 'a process of making oneself similar to the environment' and in it 'the outside serves as a model onto which the inside moulds itself' (*anschmiegen*), but this does not imply ... that 'mimesis is an imitation of the environment.'⁶

The word *anschmiegen*, thus appears to denote that mimesis can be understood, via Adorno's approach, as an act that is more closely equated to matching the contour of something.

Personally, this view on the mimetic, which connects with a greater artistic aim, is useful to me in order to help me contextualise the origins and compositional processes operating in my music. And from this point of departure, I posit that my music results from a response to a certain cultural stimulus: namely, the culture of contemporary music and my general understanding of how my music is embedded within this socio-cultural phenomenon. This perspective also aligns well with the field of cultural studies, specifically, as Susan McClary describes it — claiming that cultural studies 'ought to make it possible to investigate the syntactical conventions that grant coherence to our repertoires and also to examine the ways

⁶ Michael Cahn, "Subversive Mimesis: T.W. Adorno and the Modern Impasse of Critique." *Mimesis in Contemporary Theory an Interdisciplinary Approach*. Volume 1. The Literary and Philosophical Debate. Ed. Mihai Spariosu (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1984).

music participates in the social construction, gender, desire, ethnicity, the body, and so on'.⁷ Furthermore, I would posit that inherent to what is definitive within McClary's notion of social construction, lies the mimetic aspect of one's own creative creation. Furthermore, Max Paddisson adds to the appeal of mimesis by suggesting that it is 'a concept that has been largely eclipsed on the one hand by the widespread use of terms like "representation" and "resemblance"', whilst also being overlooked due to 'the persistent and long-standing conviction that music above all arts is concerned with the expression of emotions'.⁸ Naturally, this is just the introduction to a commentary of artistic research where these issues are very much present, however, a full philosophical debate and argument about their relevance is not entirely possible within the confines of this document. Despite this, I still wish to conclude this introduction by saying that the term *mimesis*, and the wealth of material written on the topic, has proven to be a very effective and fruitful way of articulating how I continue to respond to my past and ongoing encounters with stylistic models — as well as being surrounded by a seemingly endless abundance of musical content. Additionally, the inevitability of moulding oneself — in response to a given environment — implies that casts are continually forged and adapted. This is something that in turn manifests hybridized and more fluid identities, standing in contrast to the idea that one's approach to music-making ought to be a 'mature' or a rigidly set thing. Finally, mimesis, suggests a significant space for this creative process to occur, allowing ample room for viable creative space which fosters an ongoing level of personalised artistic differentiation.

1.5 Compositions and Influences

It is also important to briefly state that my own approach to composing music in this PhD has focused also on a pluralistic approach. Nevertheless, this has not meant I have hermetically sealed myself off from listening and learning from composers who prefer to focus on an aesthetic that is stylistically singular. To the contrary, such forms of expression have often prompted me to wonder about the ability to hybridize them into a more pluralistic setting. In connection to this, I see the realm of my mimetic behaviour, existing first in relation to established musical models and material, and secondly, as an imitative behavior requiring clear skill and craft for rendering a successful combinatorial effect. Given too, that the latter requires one to creatively engage and contextualise a plurality of sources, the artistic practice

⁷ Susan McClary, *Paradigm Dissonances: Music Theory, Cultural Studies, Feminist Criticism*, (Perspectives of New Music, vol. 32, no. 1, 1994). 68–85.

⁸ Max Paddisson, *Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression* (Music Analysis, vol. 29, no. 1/3, 2010) 126–148.

often presented in this discussion frequently depends on encompassing and effectively positioning multiple elements in relation to one another. However, most at issue in this commentary is an exploration about my own compositional practice and how it seeks to articulate ways mimetic engagement can be filtered through many manners, methods, and techniques. Consequently, this process needs to be seen as vital for the sake of realising how I composed the ten compositions presented in this commentary. In doing this, my hope is that discussing this work will demonstrate and help articulate a more nuanced, forthcoming, and thorough perspective towards the origins and ideas behind the compositions presented in this PhD portfolio.

In summary, the discussion has so far provided a background and a framework for contextualising the music that will be presented in this commentary; hopefully too, this has given an initial understanding of my philosophical area of focus. In the next two chapters the topic of mimesis and musical pluralism will be discussed in more detail. And, with respect to the music in this PhD, ten compositions presented in this portfolio will demonstrate a variety of musical practices connected to the initial context established in these first three chapters. Starting at chapter four, detailed analyses of my musical works will begin, and this will typically involve substantial discussion with respect to contextualising specifics of my compositional practice and placing them within an artistic position embracing mimetic behaviour and musical pluralism.

2. Unravelling the Mimetic

2.0. Mimesis — Here and Now

Discussing mimesis, a theme central to this commentary, also means it is necessary to clarify how my use of the term specifically connects to my musical practice. In this discussion, I typically employ the term to encompass both its discreet presence (arrived at by various levels of inculturation) whilst also accounting for more conscious forms of stylistic imitation (i.e. compositions consciously evoking degrees of similarity with pre-existing musical sources). In this way, I wish to emphasise mimesis as behaviour (comportment) embodying the act of imitation, but also, as an act accounting for far more layered aspects of creativity. Yet for brevity, this commentary positions the concept of mimesis in connection to more recent writings on the subject, as well as maintaining an on-going dialogue with historical precedents connected to the term. Examples of historical precedents will therefore include discussions of mimesis dating back to the recent past as well as re-stating how the term was understood and used in other time periods (e.g. antiquity). For now though, the scope of this discussion, as it pertains to mimesis, can and should, be seen in step with the following:

Most often (but inadequately) translated from the Greek as ‘imitation’, mimesis describes the relationship between artistic images and reality: art is a copy of the real. But this definition hardly accounts for the scope and significance of the idea. Mimesis describes things, such as artworks, as well as actions, such as imitating another person. Mimesis can be said to imitate a dizzying array of originals: nature, truth, beauty, mannerisms, actions, situations, examples, ideas.⁹

The above definition suggests mimesis is far more than a simple copying or aping of conventions. Moreover, it is clear that the word needs to be thought of as a specialised approach towards imitation, not only as one reserved for the literal imitation of the natural world. In this capacity, and in relation to music, mimesis is better understood as behaviour interwoven among a wide range of imitative processes, actions, gestures, mannerisms, as well as previous examples from the musical past. In connection to this, Potolsky suggests mimesis is an act potentially containing, ‘a dizzying array of originals’. Expanding too on this notion, it should be noted that in an introduction to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Malcolm Heath, articulates Aristotle’s use of mimesis as being, ‘that of a similarity which does not rest wholly on convention’.¹⁰ This suggests that mimesis should not be understood as a process limited to the even harder to define notion of representation, but rather Aristotle’s concept of mimesis

⁹ Matthew Potolosky, *Mimesis* (New York: Routledge, 2006). 1.

¹⁰ Malcom Heath, *Aristotle’s Poetics* (Penguin Books Ltd., 1996) xiii.

should be likened to the idea of similarity in a way that does not need or directly imply any adherence with conventions. Moreover, Aristotle links mimesis and similarity in cases where we would find it odd to speak of imitation; he says, for example, that melody and rhythm can be “likenesses” and “imitations” of character and emotion (Politics 1340a18-23, 38f)¹¹. In this regard, applying mimesis — and viewing it in connection to music — presents the term as a process that can be understood as something engaging with inner states of character. Additionally, I would suggest that mimesis needs to be seen vis-à-vis likenesses created with pre-existing models; furthermore, such processes exist fluidly, on a spectrum of similarity and difference. This is again a notion that is all the more reinforced by Heath’s statement that:

... the similarity between the object and its likeness may reside in a more oblique and abstract correspondence (as the doctrine that music contains ‘likenesses’ of states of character proves). Nor need an imitation be a likeness of an object which actually exists.¹²

The contention of Aristotle then rests on the notion that mimesis may posit a more ‘oblique and abstract correspondence to another object’¹³. Such a statement is extremely important and also very applicable to my musical practice. Certainly, this is often the case when an object is referenced through inculturation, which when occurring in such a context, is described in this discussion my use of the term: *discreet mimesis*. Finally, the last important connection with Aristotle’s usage of the term mimesis stresses how the word denotes a continuous action, principally, one that human beings are naturally inclined to take part in:

Aristotle’s contention, then, is that human beings are by nature prone to engage in the creation of likenesses, and to respond to likenesses with pleasure, and he explains this instinct by reference to their innate desire for knowledge.¹⁴

Music, within this context, appears to be a highly mimetic art; and music’s use of mimesis can thus account for drastic differences in style, idiom or technical level. Moreover, music’s mimetic behaviour stems substantially from human desire and its response to acquired knowledge; a reaction entirely integral to the pursuit of the art and also critical for developing a power and reflexive clarity for understanding its numerable manifestations. This is especially so with regards to music’s forms and myriad occurrences; thus, any connection with mimesis, and an acquisition of artistic knowledge, confirms that — music — and specifically its composition, is an art greatly embedded in its own historicity.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. xiv.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Malcom Heath, *Aristotle’s Poetics* (Penguin Books Ltd., 1996) xiii.

Yet for the sake of comparison, mimetic interactions within the comparable field of literature — especially those pertaining to the concept of authorship — are well encompassed by the domain of intertextuality. Here, in the field of literature what emerges are strategies for creative assembly; inevitable tactics that are, in many ways, essential and relevant to how a composer composes his or her *jouissance*.

The world becomes one's own through an act of 'appropriation', which means that it is never wholly one's own, [it] is always already permeated with traces of other words, other uses.¹⁵

Admittedly, this commentary will only peripherally reflect upon ideas from the field of literary theory; doing so only when such connections can contextualise and engage with relatable concepts arising from my own artistic research. Limiting my inclusion of intertextuality in this discussion, as well as other terms from literary theory, has been done largely to maintain the focus of this commentary. Nevertheless, I will at least define my relation to intertextuality as a position in line with Graham Allen's perspective; and by this, I infer that composers are continually dealing with acts of appropriation. Furthermore, these objects of creation are permeated with ideas, content, and tendencies that overlap with other artistic disciplines. By extension of this, a composition can be understood as corollary to a literary text — a hybridized form of music embodying comparable positions to what Allen describes as a double-voiced discourse or the polyphonic novel, in which he states that, '[t]he discourse of characters . . . , exemplifies the intertextual or dialogic nature of language by always serving two speakers, two iterations, two ideological positions, but always within the single utterance.'¹⁶

2.1 Mimesis of Models (not birds)

Presently, it needs to be stated that mimesis does not imply an aural imitation of reality. Thus, within my compositions, musical mimesis, should not be conflated with an attempt to literally mimic natural sounds (e.g. from the non-human world, such as the mimicking of bird-songs). On the contrary, the music in this PhD has sought to focus on articulating perspectives of understanding and relating the concept of mimesis back to historical precedents; namely, that of models in music's history as well as a wide range of source materials from other musical traditions. However, the leap of comprehension I request the reader to make, is to understand these historical precedents as occurrences of "nature" (albeit, distinctly human ones). In so forth, I posit that interaction with forms of knowledge, inevitably attracts a level of mimetic

¹⁵ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (Second Edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2000). 28.

¹⁶ Ibid.

comportment, one that falls alongside a spectrum — one exemplifying, for instance, extremes between oblique reference and plagiarism. And, from this point of departure, it becomes conceivable to imply that cultural products, such as music, can be brought into a broader discussion about mimesis and artistic production.

Moving beyond the above point, mimesis, can now factor into this discussion in order to denote an engagement and imitation of a wealth of cultural artefacts, particularly those within the field of music. This is where a range of imitative types will be studied, including manners of imitation in which a composer consciously evokes a period-style from the musical past. Principally, this includes ways that fit within some of the categorisations I mentioned earlier: *eclectic*, *heuristic*, *reverential* or *dialectical*. However, combinations of these categories will also pertain to the discussion of my work, especially given the pluralistic approach of many of the pieces within this commentary. Yet, for the most part, positioning the notion of mimesis — alongside anachronism — will refer more to the following:

...[a] recognition of historical change also suggests that pieces will become 'dated' in the negative sense that they will eventually sound 'out of date.' Music, like the other arts, can incorporate or exploit this capacity for datedness, but only by juxtaposing or contrasting at least two different styles. That contrast or clash of period styles or historical aesthetics is the simplest definition of anachronism.¹⁷

2.2 Anachronism and Aesthetic Dissonance/Consonance

In reference to Hyde's view (above) on anachronism I now need to discuss what I refer to in this commentary as *aesthetic dissonance* and *aesthetic consonance*. Assuming first that the word "aesthetic" implies a set of rules or principles underlying a particular artist or artistic movement, then what my terminology asserts is that there is firstly a given level of stylistic plurality. Secondly, within this context, this terminology connects Hyde's conception of how two or more styles, when combined or juxtaposed, either compliment or contrast one another. In light of this, I believe that any process of creating *aesthetic concord/discord* is a notion that needs to be understood as a conscious device; moreover, this issue is one that frequently finds its way within many of the compositions found in this portfolio.

Overall, the interpretation of mimesis — in my own creative work — seeks to continually explore aspects connected to the expansive terrain of this concept. In light of this, framing the compositions in this portfolio requires this discussion to address specific differences in approach, whilst also examining the relatedness of my compositional methods to ideas,

¹⁷ Martha Hyde, *Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music* (Music Theory Spectrum 18.2, 1996).

concepts, and notions from philosophy, literature, and musicology. In accordance with this, considerable light must be shed on how my creative, but mimetic inclinations, engage with a certain musical historicity. In doing this, the aim of this research and its consequent discussion will present a more clearly formed, detailed, and well-explained analysis of how these creative processes have led to critically informed compositions portraying this perspective.

3. Making the Mimetic Plural

3.0 Aesthetic Dissonance / Consonance

The artistic research within this PhD has been focused on articulating notions of mimetic engagement as well as doing so in a context of musical pluralism. This has principally been achieved by composing a body of work for a range of musical ensembles. When examining these pieces in detail, significant and detailed insight into their practical origins will be provided, which will examine both their musical mechanics as well as their overall connection to the central theme of mimetic comportment (as it has already been discussed in the last two chapters).

Given that I have already explained how mimesis is to be understood in this text, and how it can in turn be connected with my creative processes, I will now discuss its importance within the context of musical pluralism. Foregrounding the latter, however, involves describing the way notions of stylistic pluralism pervade the ten musical works present in this commentary.

3.1 Inclusion versus Exclusion

By and large, the compositions in this PhD purposefully explored compositional tendencies based on inclusion rather than exclusion. From this perspective, musical material in these works needs to be largely seen as a repository of ongoing and abundant choices. This attitude — promoting inclusion over exclusion — naturally presents one with a wealth of materials to use for composition. This abundance of content however does not facilitate straight forward or easy paths. In short, the acceptance and challenge of dealing with a plurality of content, as opposed to a more singular approach that would limit one's aesthetic choice, underlines many specific compositional challenges. Despite this, my commitment to this position reflects a philosophical persuasion, one embodying the notion that, 'things are with one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything, or dominates over everything.'¹⁸

In view of this attraction to a curating more of a Jamesian worldview, the pluralistic approach naturally resonates with a compositional methodology manifesting itself closer to a federal republic than a kingdom or empire¹⁹. In this sense, each aspect of my music can be regarded as a function or a character. Of course, how 'each character' is to be understood is dependent on its context; furthermore, this implies that the actual elements or features used in my music

¹⁸ William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1977). 321.

¹⁹ William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1977). 322.

can freely be taken-up and developed further — or conversely, be abandoned if the music so requires.

From this position, my music reveals a process where I am actively taking and making decisions throughout the process of composition. And, embedded within this act, is the reflexive and more idealistic question of how best to serve the music I am creating. Here too, challenges of unifying a diversity of content, again touch on James' notion that *things* may be connected to intermediary *things*, with a *thing* which it has no immediate or essential connection with²⁰. From here, and when connected to composition, James' thought encourages many ways of working. This is an important consideration for my work, as I wholeheartedly admit to being a composer who is most often stylistically fluid, and therefore, I acknowledge a compositional vocabulary present in this commentary that moves along a spectrum of stylistic traits. Yet incumbent to this approach is that I also investigate how certain dualities and multiplicities of musical worlds can function within a singular work. This latter point is an essential aspect of this research, not only because such a manner of composing presents inherent technical challenges, but also because it establishes case studies for understanding how mimetic relationships emerge from composing with a plurality of sources.

Briefly clarifying the above, requires reiterating that I ideally see any mimetic re-creation — of an influence — as an action that strives towards alterity. This in turn fosters a combination of sources, which underpins my ontological position as one seeking to create music that is distinctive — regardless as to whether it closely resembles a model or not. Furthermore, throughout the discussion, I illustrate how combining a range of musical content has brought up certain aspects of dramaturgy and formal cohesion to compositional processes in my work. This view emphasises that my approach should be understood as standing in contrast to a method that may haphazardly yoke musical objects together. Although, the latter can be capable of activating a perceptible level of differentiation, often such an approach fails to yield the formal coherence of materials I am personally interested in attaining. In addition, this notion of formal coherence underlines how severe and profound contextual ramifications arise from composers' decisions to position a plurality of musical objects. This point brings up the relatable critique made by Martha Hyde, that eclecticism can, at its weakest simply sport or wallow with anachronism²¹. Yet on the other hand, when used with precision, it can

²⁰ Ibid. 321.

²¹ Hyde, 1997: 12

create a new vocabulary of power — a power that gains strength from rhetorical skill, rather than from a necessarily unified or integrated vision.²² In reference the latter, the operative words are *precision* and *rhetoric*; both of which are characteristics I am interested in bringing to musical works that evoke this type of eclectic approach.

However, notions of precision and rhetoric also connect to my earlier personal claim that a certain dramatization or, at least, an organisation of mimetic behavior, is in many ways necessary for a composer to create. In this regard, the formation of one's own rules and specialised treatment of material are still (for me) paramount. Moreover, I would say that this compensates for Kant's portrayal of mimesis being overlooked as being nothing more than a mere aping of conventions — a de facto refuge for artists lacking originality: 'Mediocre talents might be satisfied with aping conventions, but true genius finds its own rules in the process of creation.'²³ Kant's claim inherently suggests that poor imitation implies a manner of mimetic comportment whereby copying (without any re-invention) is the principle means of engagement with a model. However, this type of aping should not be conflated with what I am describing throughout this commentary, which is a far more nuanced and imitative process and one that is, more often than not, critical or at least reflective of mimetic impulses. In this respect, mimesis needs to be understood as denoting an involvement with behaviour and about consciously addressing one's relationship to and with an imitative practice. Nevertheless, I still would like to stress that my mimetic practice typically extends beyond a mere 'aping' of conventions and styles. And if it does not, it is because I am consciously seeking to create a sharp likeness to a pre-existing work or body of musical conventions. In support of this line of thinking, it needs to be stated that even Adorno's playfully ambiguous application of the word mimesis, still implies that mimetic comportment has the potential to transcend Kant's pejorative stance on the subject. Thus, Adorno's use of mimesis is more in-line with the scope of this discussion, which can be further clarified by Cahn's expedient interpretation of Adorno's usage of the term:

Partly responsible for the difficulty in distinguishing between imitation and mimesis is an insidious ambiguity [...] in the modern word. Adorno is fully conscious of this ambiguity and occasionally plays and puns on it. On the one hand imitation might designate (the production of) a thing like copy, but, on the other hand, it might also refer to the activity of a subject which models itself according to a given prototype [...] for Adorno, the first is a bad manifestation of imitation, the second is what he would properly call mimesis. The subject is required to assume an involved attitude in

²² Ibid.

²³ Potolsky, 67

the process of imitation as an adaptive ‘identifying with’ which is ‘guided by the logic of the object’.²⁴

From this it becomes evident that ‘better’ forms of mimesis tend to involve ‘the creator’ having an attitude towards imitation that consciously goes above the negative manifestation of mere copying. Here too, within the scope of my artistic research, I show how varied my own mimetic comportment can be. Therefore, the manner or severity of mimesis, which might ebb and flow between ‘extreme similarity’ and ‘obliquely referencing a model’, is not the only pertinent issue to address in my work. Fundamentally, this issue resonates with the way authors in literature also operate, as ‘they do not just select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of characters, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from the literary tradition’.²⁵ Akin to this literary focus, I still see value rhetorical sharpness; namely, the development of a musical narrative. However, despite my predilection for narrative, I would posit that, regardless of style, composers are still inevitably confounded by issues of mimesis — either consciously or unconsciously. And, by extension of this, an ongoing concern which manifests itself within the mimetic qualities of any work, is whether or not a composer has sufficiently distinguished their material to allow for an aura of difference (alterity) to emerge.

3.2 Progressing from this framework

Naturally, the purpose of this dissertation is to showcase my own musical works within this framework, and this mainly means I am seeking to present how my music reflects an array of mimetic practices. This, for instance, includes compositions having pluralistic leanings or works exhibiting a process of puzzling-things together (due to my engagement with multiple musical aesthetics in one piece). This approach, which has been extended to my work, typically exhibits a manner of composing demonstrating what I have coined as *aesthetic dissonance*. This term implies that musical content, may be purposefully arranged so it evokes levels of stylistic discordance. Most playfully, this has been used to describe a type of composing where an atmosphere of associations may result in something like *musical schizophrenia*. An example of this, in its most unrestricted, is found in *Proposition of Fossils*, which is both mimetically driven by a pluralism of musical and video content. Whereas, *Air Troika*, *Deportations*, and *veranderen stasis* all use "aesthetic dissonance" more cautiously, handling disparate musical sources with more attention to making smooth transitions from quite divergent musical worlds. However, in contrast to the more eclectic style of these

²⁴ Cahn, 1984: 34

²⁵ Allen, 2001: 11

pieces, a more limited amount of musical pluralism can be found in other works discussed in this commentary, such as: *Ghost Estates*, *Valley of Years*, and *Rustic Sea Riser*. These are all compositions revealing a much more confined approach with respect to stylistic focus — as they remain, by and large, contained with respect to the parameter of musical style.

Furthermore, the more monolithic *Large Rhythmic Canon* exists partially as a counterargument to other more pluralistic works found in this PhD. However, the singular and monistic orientation of the *Large Rhythmic Canon* can be seen as an argument that is refuted by it effectively existing as a type of musical-scaffolding; a large musical form providing structure to several pieces that also have a pluralistic musical language — or at least, have a more singular stylistic focus yet exist in multiple versions.

Overall, what is examined most in the following chapters is the processes and results that emerged from attempting to form a personalized stance on how similar and distinctively different musical-objects can be combined, superimposed, juxtaposed, or blended together. This focus has been taken purposefully, in order to broaden my own understanding and knowledge of this sort of musical exploration, and in the context of this research, to create a substantial body of repertoire that is reflective of this manner of artistic investigation.

4. Initial Concepts in Practice

4.0 The first two compositions

In light of concepts addressed so far in this commentary, it is now necessary to examine how these ideas initially factored into my artistic research. Thus, the discussion of the music in this commentary will begin with my examination of two works composed during the initial stages of my PhD studies, namely, *Deportations* and *Air Troika*. Both of these works were written to explore the idea of approaching mimetic activity from a more deliberate position, and in doing this, I used source material in a variety of ways. Secondly, these pieces are important within this commentary as they provide an initial demonstration of compositions resulting from combining two or three musical styles. In this way, they also reveal methodological principles I wanted to apply as a means of positioning my own work; specifically, those standing in connection to the philosophical ideas established in the previous chapters.

4.1 *Deportations* – Two Disparate Musical Types

*Deportations*²⁶ was prompted by a commission that stipulated a seven to ten-minute piece for piano quartet. However, a caveat that came with this commission was a request to engage with Hungarian folk music. The level of integration entailed by this reference was something I was at liberty to determine. But given my non-Hungarian origins and only having a basic familiarity with the genre, this consideration immediately proved to be a challenge.

Additionally, the wealth of pre-existing classical music already composed in connection to this theme — by composers like Györgi Kurtág, Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, and Franz Liszt — remained an intimidating legacy. Furthermore, I have always admired the heuristic manner in which composers, such as Bartók, approached integrating folk music with classical music, carefully blending melody and character with other features of western classical music (harmony, form, etc).

Noting the work of these composers made me very much aware that my piece would be affected by the content I would choose to engage with, and in this respect, I knew any such contact would inherently result in mimetic processes. This of course meant I would have to

²⁶ See Appendix 1 (1. *Deportations*, 4_Flett_Deportations_premiere.wav) Various players: live performance, 05-15-2013, Bloomingdale School of Music, New York, New York, USA.

find a viable piece of source material. However, my aim in looking for such material, was to find a reference that I could mimic, in a relatively faithful way, while also presenting this reference alongside music that might be totally unrelated to this folk reference. From this, my aim was to show how these two sound-worlds were at odds with one another, and in fact, could not actually be brought together so easily.

Nevertheless, the challenge of finding suitable source material led me to listen to a range of recordings of Hungarian folk music. From this research, I eventually stumbled upon a song on YouTube entitled *Szatmári Dalok*²⁷. The uploaded performance of this piece was performed by the Hungarian folk ensemble known as “Boglya Népzenei Együttes”. This work caught my interest, primarily for its unusual tuning and homophonic texture, yet due to its relative obscurity I had to transcribe a small section of the song myself.

Briefly expanding on this last point, it should be noted that my transcription was purposefully not geared towards a level of mimetic exactitude, for instance it was not on par with the musicological work of Bartók or Kodály, but was instead more about rendering a likeness to the song. In this regard, my transcription, whilst being faithful to the original version, admittedly lacks certain musical details (like phrasing, and notational attempts to achieve the performance style of Boglya Népzenei Együttes). This has not been done dismissively, or to appear only to provide a superficial reference to Hungarian folk music, it was largely a more pragmatic issue. Namely, the performance style of the ensemble (Boglya Népzenei Együttes) is on the whole so sophisticated that I felt I could not transcribe it in a highly detailed way without a more exhaustive examination of this musical style and its inherent qualities.

²⁷ Boglya Népzenei Együttes. “Szatamári Dalok – Életemben Mindig Szépet – Zúg As Erdő.” *YouTube*, 29 January 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-liOBIYSYI>.

The image displays a musical score for the piece *Szatmári Dalok*. It is divided into three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-5) includes Violin, Viola, and Cello parts. The Violin part begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 90$ and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Viola and Cello parts start with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The second system (measures 6-11) continues the Violin, Viola, and Cello parts. The third system (measures 12-17) also continues the Violin, Viola, and Cello parts, with the Violin part featuring a triplet of eighth notes in measure 13. The score is written in 4/4 time and the key signature has one sharp (F#).

Figure 4.1 – Flett’s basic transcription of *Szatmári Dalok*.

The above demonstrates the basic transcription I made of the *Szatmári Dalok*. In making this transcription many questions were raised about what to keep and what to omit. For instance, the matter most at issue was about what level of detail I needed for my transcription — especially since the material from this reference was going to be repurposed into my own music. This process additionally raised questions about how to compensate for idiosyncratic aspects found in the ensemble’s performance. In particular, the strings’ performance, which showcases a wonderfully rustic vibrato and highly specific intonation (one I have surmised is likely from the strings being in scordatura). This quality of intonation, as well as other issues of the performance style, remain so bound up in the specifics of the musicians’ practice that I decided (initially) not to render/imitate this aspect of the performance into my transcription. Instead, I focused more exclusively on the song’s pitch and rhythmic content. This line of reasoning explains why my transcription is brief, encompassing just the main harmonic progression of *Szatmári Dalok* (which, in the original, repeats the same progression for several minutes, until finally moving onto a new section).

In connection to this transcription (Figure 4.1) a few additional points still need to be mentioned, namely, the fact that I did not find it necessary to transcribe the second section of the song nor the lyrics of the melody in *Szatmári Dalok*. Also, I wish to remind the reader that in no way did my transcription try to faithfully emulate the scordatura of the ensemble (Boglya Népzenei Együttes); however, I will address issues connected to this point in subsection 4.2, when I discuss the use of microtonality within the revised version of *Deportations*.

Aside from these omissions, my overall mimetic interaction with this folk material was one that tried to be "relatively faithful". Still, a central compositional aim of *Deportations* was to contextualise my more reverent rendering of *Szatmári Dalok* alongside a more disparate type of music. In connection to this, the second type of musical content in *Deportations* now needs to be discussed. This content can be said to embody a type of mimetic interaction I have described as *discreet mimesis*. By this, I suggest that a musical point of creation (composition) may not reference a specific piece, it may instead acknowledge an overall musical influence or set of conventions — for instance, this could also include an inculturation of known stylistic references. In this way, *Deportations* provides a key example of this process, something that can be seen in the material I composed for the piano, which consisted mainly of ideas that were not based on any particular model, but instead, resulted from a *discreet mimesis* of a wide range of 20th century piano music. In this way, the piano part begins by alluding (non-specifically) to a general sound-world of atonality; thereby evoking the historicity of this aesthetic. However, any analysis of the music's content reveals no rigorous adherence to a systematic method of composing (i.e. serialism or a similar process). Due to this, the content is essentially a form of *discreet mimesis*. Pejoratively, one could say this is only a cheap imitation of 20th century modernist composing, yet this critique overlooks how this manner of imitation is less concerned with the details of its musical content, and is instead more concerned about the potential impact such a stylistic reference will make in a given context. In this case, when this musical content is heard, it quickly illustrates a sharp dialectical relationship with my own rendering of *Szatmári Dalok*. This interaction and inherent musical tension — *aesthetic dissonance* — is presented as the initial subject in *Deportations*, and this contrast is exhibited before developing and unfolding into a dialogue about the attempt to resolve such a musical dichotomy. To expand on the specifics of this aesthetic dissonance it is necessary to see how, in the initial exposition of *Deportations*, the piano material stresses less consonant intervals (specifically frequent use of major sevenths and major seconds).



Figure 4.2 – (bar 7 to 10) the tied notes (in both hands) are both intervals of a major 7th; moreover, minor and major 7ths characterise much of this passage.

This intervallic presence mainly serves to imbalance the persistent and regular harmonic movement of my transcription. The result of this union, initially apparent at the 2nd bar of *Deportations*, presents a jarring and obvious binary opposition between these two musical worlds. Instrumentally, the piano emphasizes this opposition even further, acting as the principal agitator by way of articulating another type of music clearly situated in contrast to the bucolic homophony of the string trio.

Structurally, *Deportations* begins simply by presenting this conflation of two unlikely objects; both of which gradually unravel over the course of the composition — but even from the first initial measures it is clear that there is a certain audible musical conflict. Also, despite the tension present between these two disparate elements, a break is soon found when the quote from *Szatmári Dalok* is suddenly removed. At this point in the work (occurring in bar 41), ‘the bottom’ of the music literally falls out, leaving the listener only to hear the piano, which — with its dissonant and wide use of register — is suddenly highlighted to drastically contrast the listener’s memory of the rustic string trio.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score begins at bar 41. The top three staves (Vln., Vla., Vc.) are in 4/4 time. At bar 42, the time signature changes to 3/4, and a box labeled 'A' with a quarter note and '= 70 slower' is placed above the first measure. The piano part (Pno.) is in 4/4 time. The piano part features dynamic markings of *ff* (fortissimo) and *ppp* (pianississimo). The score illustrates a sudden change in tempo and dynamics, marking the beginning of a new section.

Figure 4.3 – the above illustrates the sudden removal of the reference to *Szatmári Dalok*.

This musical break entirely changes the direction of the piece, and results in an ebb and flow that leads into one of a few developmental sections. The first of which (beginning at bar 42) presents a clear distinction from the exposition. This is primarily heard by the sheer dynamic contrast and the appearance of a new and more spacious musical texture. Soon though, this texture is allowed to continue for a number of bars — coloured with brief flashes from my rendition of *Szatmári Dalok*. These latter moments break through the music's resonant atmosphere, characterised by a high amount of sustain (right pedal) in the piano. Although, what is important to highlight in this transition section is how the time frame of the material from *Szatmári Dalok* has been significantly elongated. In turn, this reveals a far more indirect way of presenting the Hungarian folk material, and, is the first step towards developing a dialogue between the piece's two distinct forms of musical expression.

51

♩ = 80 - piu mosso

Vln. *ppp* *mp*

Vla. *ppp* *mp* *pp* *mp*

Vc. *ppp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

Pno. *p* *f* *mp*

(8^{va})

Figure 4.4 – The melodic reference (again to *Szatmári Dalok*) becomes broken within a more spacious and open texture.

The first inkling of there being a potential union between these musical polarities begins at bar 64. This occurs when the piano and the string trio begin to play off one another.²⁸ Here, for the first time, content between the two types of music are shared and exchanged between the piano and the strings. For instance, the louder musical material contrasts with the quiet section proceeding it; moreover, the dialectical give-and-take between the piano and the strings starts to take on a more definitive presence. These more frenetic exchanges continue, and lead to a few “gymnastic-like” passages, whereby motion is built up until it reaches a cumulative moment between bar 100 to 102; after which, a short piano segue acts as a bridge to the following stretch of the composition.

Here, at roughly bar 113, the piece audibly restates the musical material from *Szatmári Dalok* (see Figure 4.5 below). Yet this recapitulation is done with a significant amount of microtonal inflection (and once again, I will discuss the issue of microtonality later in more detail).

²⁸ For further reference see: Appendix 2, *Deportations*, 1a_*Deportations*_FullScore2013.

Figure 4.5 – recapitulation of the *Szatmári Dalok* material, yet now occurring with significant microtonal inflection (presently seen here in the viola and cello).

As this penultimate section eventually draws to a close, the last section of *Deportations* emerges as a final dirge — with drawn out melodic content, lifted from *Szatmári Dalok*. This section exhibits an orchestration of the string trio with a widely expanded register and with motivic re-utterances of the earlier piano material being spread throughout the slow movement of the music. Lastly, at bar 160, the final announcement of *Szatmári Dalok* is played by the string trio, done so subtly, by way of ghost-like natural and artificial harmonics.

4.2 *Deportations* – Microtonal Inflections

As a composition, *Deportations* can be seen as an evolving dialogue between two distinct and polarized styles. By composing the piece, I discovered that in order to satisfactorily resolve the dichotomy of these two elements — an intentional aim I was wanting to engage with — I was required to dedicate a significant amount of musical time to developing these two ideas. In light of this, the piece proved surprisingly challenging to compose and eventually required periods of revision at the later stages of this PhD (this actually resulted in two versions being realised). My decision to eventually revise the piece was also due to a compositional oversight present in the version that was premiered in 2013. Specifically, this version contained only a suggestion about how the string players would need to approach the topic of intonation; because I had only suggested to the performers, via email correspondence and in rehearsals, that they should try to adopt a more “rustic” performance practice. Although, this request was also accompanied by sending them a link to the performance of *Szatmári Dalok* by Boglya Népzenei Együttes, this suggestion proved to be too vague for the performers, who rather justifiably reverted to playing in standard equal temperament. However, their doing this did convince me that I had to eventually revise the piece, primarily to ensure it would

have a more perceptible amount of microtonal inflection. The reason for the latter this was twofold: first of all, it was well-connected to my initial mimetic aim of creating a more faithful imitation of *Szatmári Dalok*; and secondly, the presence of microtonal inflections suggest a more pronounced sense of agitation and conflict between the two musical polarities (the piano and the string trio). After all, any piece with name like *Deportations* cannot be an urbane cakewalk (at least in good conscious!).²⁹ Furthermore, I wanted the equal tempered sonority of the piano to purposefully jar (at specific moments) with the “unstandardized” tuning of the trio. In light of this, I eventually arrived at the conclusion that I would need to more consciously re-compose this microtonal element into the piece, which resulted in having to alter, tweak, extend, eliminate, and change many of the passages in *Deportations*³⁰ in order to create the second, and more definitive, version. Lastly, a rather cathartic moment in the 2013 version of *Deportations* was eliminated in the more recent 2015 version. This newer rendition of the work removed this section, which existed before the finale, replacing it instead with an extended dirge, lasting for about an additional minute.

²⁹ The name *Deportations* was originally chosen in response to my disbelief at the rise of ultra-right nationalist parties in Hungary that was occurring in late 2012 and early 2013. In this regard, the title was an unfortunate premonition of the increased political association the word would undertake within the course of this PhD.

³⁰ For a closer comparison between the original version and its revised version in 2015 please see: Appendix 2, 1a_*Deportations_FullScore2013* and 1b_*Deportations_RevisedVersion_FullScore2015*.

4.3 *Air Troika* – Balancing Three Musical Materials

*Air Troika*³¹ is a short seven-minute piece of music; it was written for a Canadian string trio (the Gryphon Trio). This collaboration took place whilst participating in a workshop I attended in Toronto. It should be noted that the Gryphon Trio are renowned for their performances of Romantic repertoire, as opposed to performances of contemporary music. I mention this point because this context encouraged me to explore certain qualities of Romantic music for this composition. This is a larger topic I will expand upon throughout this chapter, however, discussing *Air Troika* requires me to begin by stating that this piece essentially picks up where *Deportations* left off. In contrast to *Deportations* — which sought to explore combinations of two disparate musical idioms — *Air Troika*, attempted to do this but now with three types of disconnected musical materials. Thus, the compositional aim of *Air Troika* should be seen as different from *Deportations*, because I was never concerned with establishing a clear dialectical resolution between the different sets of materials used in *Air Troika* (which was more the case in *Deportations*). Rather, I saw this piece actually being about a certain pronounced disassociation of content; a type of composed musical schizophrenia, whereby an oscillation between a trio of pluralities would reveal a certain unanswerable question.

Perhaps this frame of thinking subconsciously drew me to Schumann's short piano miniature *Warum?* (Opus 12, No.3), which I re-encountered while playing through classic Romantic piano repertoire. After all, here too is a piece that posits a certain rhetoric of the unresolved. And indeed, after studying the work in closer detail, I began to wonder how and if *Warum?* could be recast in my music — so that it might elicit a rather distilled reference to Romanticism. In addition, I wondered if *Warum?* could be conflated with very different musical ideas, specifically ones I was working with or re-examining at the time. It was then from this compositional standpoint I set out to realise a piece which was in many respects trying to present a temporal juggling of three different musical objects. However, for the sake of this discussion, I need to clarify what these juggled musical objects were, especially before going onto examine their importance as examples of 'embodied mimetic comportment'. In short, the three different materials in *Air Troika* are as follows:

Material Type No.1

Consisting of my own variation on Schumann's *Warum?* Opus 12, No.3. An important feature of my variation is that it was transposed from Db major to G major. The register of the piano was also greatly expanded; additionally, the content of the original was extended by

³¹ For audio reference see: Appendix 1: 2. *Air Troika*, 4b_Flett_AirTroika_GryphonTrio.wav.

way of adding (roughly) 5 semiquavers in duration to every note's entrance. These points will naturally be expanded upon in greater detail later in this chapter.

Figure 4.6 – my variation on Schumann's Opus 12, No.3. Roughly adding 5 semiquavers in duration to every note's entrance from the original piece. Also transposed to the key of G.

Material Type No.2

Material Type No.2 is predominantly characterised by string writing that uses elements of the following techniques:

1. frequent glissandi and the presence of natural harmonics (see Fig 4.7a);
2. movement of the above happening by way of parallel, oblique, or contrary motion (see Fig 4.7a);
3. glissandi being connected to natural and artificial harmonics;
4. moments of 'grain' from increased bow pressure (see Fig 4.7b);
5. the piano which often plays a role as accompanying the aforementioned string techniques with quiet effects (such as silently depressing the keys in order to facilitate certain resonances, etc.).

Figure 4.7a – violin and cello: contrary motion of glissandi and the presence of natural (and artificial) harmonics.

Figure 4.7b – violin and cello: use of ‘grain’; more glissandi and natural harmonics.

Figure 4.7c – Extract of *Air Troika* showing a range of features that characterise ‘material type No.2’.

Material Type No.3

My own ‘harmonic schema’ (written in 2009) consists of an extensive array of chords, each of which has five or more notes per chord. This schema has a total of 108 chords, arranged in a chorale-like fashion and ranging in consonance and dissonance. However, the movement from each chord principally emphasise voice-leading from one chord to the next. Only 30 of these chords were used within *Air Troika*.



Figure 4.8 – an extract from the large harmonic scheme that was brought into *Air Troika*. The indicated time signatures did not factor into the present composition.

This synopsis of the three material types now allows me to discuss the overall aim or question raised by *Air Troika* — which is fundamentally centred around how I brought these diverse materials and their inherent stylistic implications into some type of union.

Admittedly, I was not looking for a type of union that would result in a “normative” musical form per se. Instead, I was rather trying to foster a perception of well-crafted-haphazardness; if nothing else, hoping to arrive at a type of musical composition showcasing a curious trilogy of married contrasts.

4.4 *Air Troika* – Integration of Material Types

I will now examine the numbered material types that were mentioned above. This will be done by first addressing the issue of mimetic comportment for each. Alongside this analysis, aspects pertaining to how each material type was integrated with the other elements will also be examined in detail.

Material Type No.1 (variation on Schumann’s *Opus 12, No.3*)

The manner of variation I used in regard to this reference mimetically differs to the way in which I approached imitating *Szatmári Dalok* (in *Deportations*). This was because my mimetic interaction with Schumann’s *Opus 12, No.3* was far more oblique and heuristic. The already mentioned change of key initiated this, however, it only reveals a cosmetic difference; whereas, the most integral alterations included drastically opening up the register of Schumann’s music and completely distorting the rhythmic values. An example of this process can be seen when Schumann’s miniature is compared to my very oblique imitation of the piece (Fig 4.9). Viewing this musical comparison reveals first how the original source material was initially transposed, and then how its harmony was unpacked and vastly expanded in register. Finally, the comparison also underlines how the material was rhythmically augmented, to such an extent that the mimetic resemblance becomes one that exists as an atmosphere, yet nevertheless, still alludes strongly to the original.

Figure 4.9 – the first line in this figure is from Schumann’s *Opus 12, No.3*. The first six bars of the latter piece connect to the extract of the piano part used in *Air Troika*, which was derived as a mimetic extraction of the aforementioned piece.

The above example³² still exists as a strong prospect for becoming a composition in its own right. However, for the purpose of this PhD, I did consciously refrain from realising this. Therefore, my mimetic comporment of Schumann’s *Opus 12, No.3*, remains as a sketch that was never completely finished, with only the first 16 bars of Schumann’s original having been carefully re-modelled. Nonetheless, these 16 bars of material led to a 40-bar sketch of my own. Thus, this limited amount of “closer imitation” still proved to be sufficient for my compositional aims; also, my limited and less faithful interaction with the original yielded enough new material (for my needs). This was because, while composing *Air Troika*, at a certain stage a heuristic but systematic process revealed itself, whereby Material Type No.1 started to become easily integratable with the other material types.

Material Type No.2 (String Sonorities)

Once again, my initial decision to transpose Schumann’s work (out of Db major) to the more “string-friendly” key of G major was an important decision for this piece; largely because much of the other material composed for the violin and cello was based on using the open strings of these instruments. Also, because I had decided that scordatura was going to be verboten in this piece, the harmonic 'gravity' of these natural harmonics resulted in 'the tonal centre' of G being a convenient and practical fundamental for these sections.

³² Appelby, Amy., Pickow, Peter. “The Library of Piano Classics 2” (AMSCO PUBLICATIONS, 1993) 272.

Figure 4.10 – The cello in this figure clearly demonstrates how the material was more effectively rendered around the tonal centre of ‘G’.

Material Type No.2, which remained far more undefined than my variation on Schumann’s miniature, is significantly harder to pinpoint with respect to its mimetic comportment.

However, for this case, I would claim that *discreet mimesis* is more at play. Despite this material type making no specific reference to an exterior model, the frequent glissandi and array of string techniques are all established tropes within contemporary music. And, in relation to *Air Troika*, I see my mirroring of this genre’s common characteristics as central to articulating a greater level of anachronism present in my piece. This is especially evident when this material is heard alongside (mixed) with mimetic echoes of 19th century piano repertoire. This proximity of unlikely styles leads to a certain aesthetic dissonance, and, in this regard, I feel that Material Type No.2 successfully renders its function within *Air Troika*.

Material Type No.3 (harmonic schema)

As it was briefly said before, the third source material present in *Air Troika* came about from re-visiting a large sequence of chords³³ I had developed for an earlier composition. However, if these chords are examined closely, they reveal a harmonic organization using 'synthetic chords', which exhibits influences absorbed from studying and listening to harmonic techniques from 20th century repertoire. And with respect to voice-leading and harmonic organization, there is also a clear influence in this type of musical organization which is connected to the sound-world of certain Dutch composers, such as Cornelis de Bondt and

³³ For closer reference please see: Appendix 2, *Air Troika*, 2c_AirTroika_HarmonicSchema.

Diderick Waagenaar. To briefly expand upon this, I should say that these two composes were influential with respect to harmonic organisation, as they had suggested harmonic structures like chorales that, despite being used with non-tonal chords, still can facilitate many traditional principles of effective voice-leading.

4.5 *Air Troika* – Combinations, Contrasts, and Irony

Composing with an increased multiplicity of materials within a single piece naturally calls into question the judgement of economy or the typical composer-bias towards using one musical style for a singular composition. Yet to assume that I was only arbitrarily grafting these elements together would be incorrect. Often, from a practical standpoint, certain adjustments to the outlined material still needed to be made; especially to smooth out overly rough disjunctions existing between certain content. In particular, I reduced the level of aesthetic dissonance caused by certain clashes of content by simply choosing to exhibit select materials earlier on in this piece. For example, Material Type No.3 (harmonic schema) often proved to be the most difficult to blend with the other material types. This is why, occurring at the beginning of the piece I introduced eight chords from this harmonic schema (this actually happens after a single bar of slow violin and cello glissandi, see Figure 4.11). I then gave these dense chords a wilder rhythmic character, something almost akin to a distorted “waltz”. This was done in order to familiarise the listener (early on) with what I would consider to be the most “unblendable” material in the piece. Additionally, by having the strings play quiet glissandi in the background my aim was also to have this initial exposition to feature both the sound-worlds of the harmonic schema as well as provide an introduction of the musical content characterising most of the string writing.

~ Initial Concepts in Practice (*Deportations* & *Air Troika*) ~

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Violin, Cello, and Piano. The top system contains the first three staves. The Violin staff (top) has a tempo of ♩ = 58, marked 'anxiously', with dynamics *p*, *f*, and *ppp*. A dashed line indicates a glissandi passage. The Cello staff (middle) also has a tempo of ♩ = 58, marked 'anxiously', with dynamics *p*, *f*, and *ppp*. The Piano staff (bottom) has a tempo of ♩ = 58, marked 'expectingly', with a dynamic of *ff*. A second tempo change to ♩ = 112-120 is indicated, with the instruction 'calm against crazy'. The bottom system contains staves for Violin (Vln.), Cello (Ve.), and Piano (Pno.). The Violin and Cello parts have dynamics *f* and *p*. The Piano part has a dynamic of *p* and features complex textures with triplets and sixteenth notes.

Figure 4.11 – The above demonstrates the wonky ‘waltz’ in the piano, introducing the most difficult material to blend at the initial opening of the piece. The violin and cello occupy a musical middle-ground, playing glissandi passages otop of this material.

As *Air Troika* develops an ongoing oscillation between the three sets of material soon becomes the established. However, the handling of this is often done rather quickly, with the effect being that the music becomes rather fleeting and skittish. Moreover, these quick exchanges between divergent materials present some inevitably ironic implications. For instance, there is the lingering presence that one is listening to a Romantic sound-world that has gone awry; and, with respect to this, any informed listener will perceive some degree of irony, especially in moments where the harmonic logic is playfully usurped by the piece

negating these Romantic expectations. For instance, this occurs in bar 25 (Figure 4.10), where the cello makes a glissando out of cadential phrase, which essentially spoils the musical convention. Additionally, this perfect cadence is stretched across 2 bars, yet as soon as the G major chord appears in bar 25, its resolution is denied by the cello sliding down to an A#. The consequent of this alters the context of this cadence. Initially this appears somewhat illogical, however, its purpose becomes clearer in the following bar, as the violin briskly runs through a six-note chord containing an A#. Of course, connections such as these provide tenuous, but nevertheless audible links between the these material types.

Additionally, the fact that the listener has already encountered the denser harmonic material (from the harmonic schema) makes its appearance more familiar and, to a degree, more dialectical as well.

Overall, the content within *Air Troika* is often presented in ways that inevitably ironizes the material. This was primarily done by the presence, or lack thereof, of standard harmonic conventions as well as unusual combinations of musical styles (typically ones that do not tend to be grouped together). These and other whimsical moments are sure to be heard and understood as having a degree of irony, but in many ways ironic positioning is rather unavoidable — emerging more as a consequence resulting from combining three different types of material. Furthermore, I feel that such an effect is enhanced by the relative short duration of the composition.

4.6 Air Troika - Form

Despite the overall brevity of *Air Troika*, I feel it is still necessary to mention key aspects of its form. In particular, the way in which my variation on Schumann's miniature was integral to helping me organise *Air Troika's* content. While the connection between my piece and this model is difficult to visually represent, there are many instances between bar 1 and bar 97 where my mimetic interaction with Schumann's material is clearly visible. Overall, my 40-bar variation of Schumann's piece appears 26 times within *Air Troika*. The following figure (4.12) shows a brief example of how Schumann's original miniature was transposed, extended, re-arranged and expanded in register.

The image shows a musical score for Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score is in 4/4 time and starts at measure 52. The Violin part begins with a second ending (II) and a dynamic of *mp*, followed by a *rall...* section and a *ppp* section. The Viola part starts with a dynamic of *pp* and a *rall...* section. The Piano part starts with a dynamic of *pp* and a *rall...* section. The score includes various performance instructions such as *much faster (crazed)*, *sul pont.*, and *harmonic gliss*. A red box highlights a section of the score from measure 88 to 96, which contains complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics including *f > ppp*.

Figure 4.12 – The section in red highlights content that originated from my oblique imitation of Schumann’s Opus 12. no 3. Similar transformations also occurred in the following bars: 14, 17, 21&22, 23, 25, 30, 32&33, 38&39, 43&44, 47&48, 51, 54, 58&59, 65, 67&68, 70, 80, 82, 84, 86 through to 88, 91&92, 94 to 96.

Air Troika, in contrast to the original, does not make any attempt to repeat the first 16 bars of Schumann’s Opus 12. no 3. In fact, instead of repeating this material the second section attempted to provide a livelier presentation of the three material types I have already mentioned. However, in the ‘B’ section of *Air Troika*, the integration of these material types was handled far more fluidly, increasing the overall montage effect of the three combined sources.

4.7 *Air Troika* – Reflecting upon the Merge

On the whole, *Air Troika* was a compositional challenge; secondly, it was an experiment that was, overall, successfully able to combine, bridge, and link rather unrelated musical elements into one piece. Naturally, this artistic research connects to philosophical ideas presented in this PhD, and with respect to this, the looming question arises as to whether *Air Troika* demonstrates the best way to contain a plurality of mimetically derived material. To this end, I believe *Air Troika* succeeds in so much that it consciously avoids exploring materials independently (e.g. as separate pieces) and instead, for the sake of the research within this thesis, it shows how ‘a mimetic tripartite’ can be heuristically constructed to house three different musical worlds under one roof.

5. Refractions and versions | *The Duke of Green*

5.0 Four Versions: *Keppel, Laurel, Mantis, Viridian*

In the last chapter, it was shown how *Deportations* and *Air Troika* demonstrated a more direct engagement with combining source materials. Additionally, both of these works were concerned with overtly combining divergent materials, and in doing so, they exemplify aspects of mimetic comportment within my work (especially with their use of discreet and conscious methods of mimesis towards source material). Also, another effect of this way of composing, is that dialectical implications are raised in relation to the different source materials that cause an obvious level of aesthetic dissonance. Consequently, this latter issue became a subject in both of these pieces.

However, *The Duke of Green* differs from *Deportations* and *Air Troika* because its mimetic character not only focused on looking outwardly (at various models) but also engaged within a type of self-referential mimesis. But before discussing the specifics of this piece, it first needs to be stated that *The Duke of Green* is a 40-minute long multi-movement work, which has four movements entitled: *Keppel, Laurel, Mantis*, and *Viridian*. Furthermore, at this point in this commentary, I must emphasise that these ‘movements’ are referred to as ‘versions’; surely a semantic distinction, but important given that these versions exist as four iterations of the same musical piece. Also, these four versions — when heard in a specific order — make up the entire piece, in one unbroken chain.

In light of the above, the key aim of this chapter is to examine *The Duke of Green* with respect to its implications of mimetic comportment and multiplicity. This will be done by first explaining the origins and motivations behind the piece. This will lead to a discussion about the way certain source materials were brought into the fabric of this composition. After discussing the piece’s use of mimetic comportment, which will address the source materials I used, I will proceed to cover how I composed an initial version of *The Duke of Green* (*Mantis*). This version (*Mantis*) needs to be closely examined, especially given its importance in understanding the entirety and the conceptual scope of *The Duke of Green*. After explaining this version, I will use it as a basis to contextualise the other versions, elaborating on how I copied and altered content from this version in order to create the subsequent versions: *Laurel, Keppel* and *Viridian*. Lastly, throughout this part of the discussion, I will

continue to allude to aesthetic and musical issues connected to framing the entire piece within the my artistic research. This will include expanding on the type and nature of source materials used for, as well as covering aspects of the piece's recursive nature, specifically its internal mimetic process and how this reflexively mirrors content from the composition back onto itself.

5.1 *The Duke of Green* – Origins & Intentions

The Duke of Green resulted from a commission supported by the Canada Council for the Arts. This commission was for a Vancouver-based ensemble known as the Ethos Collective (an ensemble of six musicians: flute, piano, two percussionists, violin and cello). In addition to composing for these instruments, the commission required me to also compose for the soprano, Camille Hesketh, who was working in collaboration with the ensemble. A second consideration of the commission was that *The Duke of Green* would highlight connections with extra-musical notions, principally those of sustainability and green architecture. Briefly referencing this artistic statement is necessary to show how the original grant application was designed to address certain social and extra-musical ideas.

Graham Flett will use his significant experience and interest in writing for non-traditional formats to focus on Ethos' strengths and interests, composing 15 minutes of original material whose layered combinatorial structure is expandable so that it may encompass an evening-length 60 to 80-minute performance. This open format of [the new piece] would lend well to repeat performances, the nature of Ethos Collective itself, and continued variations of the piece being performed within buildings considered to be models of environmentally sustainable architecture. This will create further awareness of these spaces while ... musically echoing the sustainable elements inherent in the chosen venues.³⁴

Grant-parlance aside, the intention of the commission required me to attempt to both successfully fulfil my own artistic interests as well as other philosophical and practical issues raised by the proposal. In short, composing this piece involved three main considerations:

1. Constructing a piece that could foreseeably last over 15 minutes but could also be expanded into something much longer.
2. Connecting the piece with larger ideas associated with environmental sustainability.
3. Working with an overall economy of musical material.

³⁴ Hesketh, Camille. 2013. Extract from the project description for the grant application submitted to the Canada Council for the Arts.

With these aims in mind light — and the already described focus of this PhD — I saw this commission as an opportunity to realise a long-durational work, specifically one connecting to my artistic research but also extending it in a new direction. This led me to view this piece as one that could stand in contrast to the two works I had already composed before (*Deportations* and *Air Troika*). Lastly, I also saw the opportunity to compose a longer work as a way to present concepts of mimetic comportment vis-à-vis a more gradual occurrence and unfolding in time.

5.2 *The Duke of Green* – Materials & Concerns

An additional issue that played into the aesthetic considerations of the piece was the ensemble's past repertoire. This consisted of music that indicated the group had a preference for playing music with slow tempi and with rather low statistical density. To a degree, this observation influenced my choice of materials and the overall slow tempo characterising the whole of *The Duke of Green*. Secondly, the ensemble's background influenced my choices of harmonies, musical style, and the overall performance practice I suggested in the notation of the piece. Although, a larger issue prompted by this composition was the more challenging task of deciding on how to artistically approach the considerations of the commission. For instance, part of these conditions challenged me to find suitable source material. And given that I had 'agreed to' engage with concepts of 'economy' and 're-use' meant that I needed to find material able to audibly embody such processes. This led me, for reasons I will soon explain, to seek out material where tonality was present as a reference point for the listener. Eventually, the musical reference I decided to use was one I found whilst playing through a collection of jazz standards, arranged for piano and voice³⁵. As the name suggests, *The Duke of Green*, was indebted to Duke Ellington's standard, *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*.

5.3 *The Duke of Green* – Ellington Reference

As I looked at the content of this song by Duke Ellington, I considered how referencing this particular tune would provide a familiar reference point for my piece. On account of this, embedding this song (as a clear tonal reference) was done primarily because I saw the material within this piece providing a sense of what I would call “a lingering sense of the familiar”. By this, I suggest that Ellington's reference would exist less as a song, and more as a cultural artefact, something memorable — persisting and resurfacing throughout the entirety of *The Duke of Green*. However, I also wanted the content of this particular standard

³⁵ Found in: WARNER BROS. *SWING! The Ultimate Collection*. (1998): 87.

(i.e. its harmony and rhythm) to remain malleable, existing in an abstracted iteration whilst still remaining obliquely connected to Ellington's original.

Evidence of this can be seen midway through bar 5 of *Mantis* (the initial version I composed). Here the music reveals a slowed-down rendition of Ellington's tune (*Don't Get Around Much Anymore*). This slowed down version is apparent by looking at the cello and keyboard, as both instrumental parts share the musical "quotation" (see Figure 5.1). Here I parenthesize the word "quotation" because I feel this musical reference is one that has been stretched out to such an extent that it becomes very hard to identify. Furthermore, the latter process was realised in a rather easy and simple way, simply by expanding crotchet and quaver values until they became minims and crotchets, respectively.

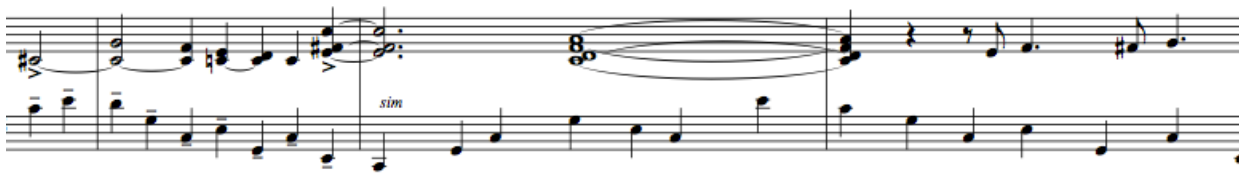


Figure 5.1 – with the tempo at crotchet = 55, this slowed down quotation (taken from *Mantis*) to a large degree obfuscates the reference to Ellington's original song.

Another aesthetic aim of expanding this "quotation" was my goal of thwarting possible associations that a potential listener might have with Ellington's original tune; whilst also serving to pique the interest of a listener via their odd sense of hearing familiar musical fragments. In this way, I sought to simultaneously obscure the Ellington reference but to also utilise the slow tempo to elongate the "quotation".

5.4 *The Duke of Green* – Carnatic Reference

Elaborating on another reference found within the version, requires me to also draw attention to the simple motif found in the opening of the piece. First appearing in the 3rd bar, with the occurrence of the keyboard, which plays a short and simple 3-note figure of C-G-C. This is a drone-like motif, actually directly alludes to the role of the tambura in South Indian (Carnatic) music. The tambura, which plays a consistent tonic-fifth drone in this repertoire, is thus mimicked purposefully by the keyboard, largely to foreshadow a larger element of content used that is present in all of the versions of *The Duke of Green* — one which is also highly mimetic of Carnatic rhythmic thinking (see figure 5.2 for more detail). This latter

rhythmic motif works within a rhythmic cycle known as *Misra Tala* (a 7-beat cycle)³⁶, and serves to create a symmetrical displacement of 3 different rhythmic values over the course of 6 bars of 7/8:

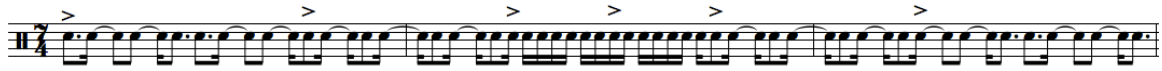


Figure 5.2 – The above demonstrates a displacement of *misra tala* (a 7-beat rhythmic cycle) spread out, in this example, over three bars of seven/eight time.

Although, within *The Duke of Green* I decided not to apply this technique in a fashion exactly corresponding to the above, and instead, space was inserted or allowed “to remain” within the rhythmic pattern. This was done by using tied notes that were not articulated or were altogether omitted from the pattern. Again, this can be seen in *Mantis* (first in bar 9, when the vibraphone makes its entrance in such a way that 'it plays around' this rhythm but avoids an exact copying of this Carnatic rhythmic idea). Here, both the notion of imitating and differentiating are in full force; the material has a strong relationship to the previous figure, but remains distinct from the model on account of these slight changes and an overall re-contextualisation.



Figure 5.3 – the vibraphone makes its entrance in such a way that it skirts around the aforementioned Carnatic rhythmic idea, whilst never overtly referencing it.

The musical effect of this creates a likeness of sorts, whereby, “a similarity between the object ... reside[s] in a more oblique and abstract correspondence.”³⁷

5.5 *The Duke of Green* – Laurence Crane: *John White in Berlin*

Laurence Crane’s work, *John White in Berlin*³⁸, was also a work that influenced this piece. Although, I admit that I did not set out to consciously reference this composition (i.e. by score study or through more direct emulation) I must acknowledge a level of discreet mimesis towards achieving a related atmosphere and clarity of orchestration that I found deeply appealing in this example of Crane’s work. Moreover, Crane’s ability to gradually

³⁶ Sankaran, Trichy. *The Rhythmic Principles and Practice of South Indian Drumming*. Toronto: Lalith Publishing. 1994.

³⁷ Malcolm Heath, Aristotle. Oxford. 1996: xiv.

³⁸ Crane, Laurence. "John White in Berlin." *YouTube*, February 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMhB66HRIUw>

reveal simple materials was something I saw as an exemplary model for this piece — especially given the commission’s stipulations and my idea to make multiple versions of the work. Though in contrast to Crane’s work, *The Duke of Green* sought to grapple with questions of how to integrate, imitate, and (re)present source material of others as well as my own. For instance, the already mentioned song — ‘*Don’t Get Around Much Anymore*’ — was brought together with a motivic figure clearly alluding to South Indian (Carnatic) music. Secondly, the focus of *The Duke of Green* is about exposing a gradual confluence of subtle changes, which is principally done by way of hearing a succession of four versions that underlines the similarities and differences present within each. Simply put, such an approach is entirely absent in Crane’s work.

5.6 *The Duke of Green* – Lyrics as Source Material

Before each version of *The Duke of Green* is examined on its own, the textual element of the entire composition needs to be explained. This is because, in contrast to the musical elements borrowed from Ellington — which were easier to obfuscate through my own compositional skills — the lyrics to ‘*Don’t Get Around Much More*’ (originally by Bob Russell, 1942) were harder to disconnect from their linguistic meaning. Furthermore, their meaning was far too “gushy” and direct for my piece; therefore I saw them being potentially catastrophic to the particular atmosphere I was composing. To overcome this, I avoided a direct re-use of the text and instead integrated parts of the text within my own system of invented solfège.



Figure 5.4 – The above examples is my invented solfège, which was incorporated to higher and lesser degrees throughout the four versions *The Duke of Green*.

The above system eventually led to a combination between the original lyrics, my own re-ordering of the text, as well as my own substitutions and injections of this sort of invented solfège. Also, an additional point to make regarding the text is the presence of there being an inverse relationship between its comprehension which stands in contrast to the salience (or lack thereof) of the music. By this, I stress that the lyrics and music have a somewhat right-angled relationship, that being: when the text is understandable (or closer to how the lyrics originally appeared in Ellington’s song) the music is contrastingly more opaque or open-ended. I mention this largely because I feel it should remain in the mind of the reader,

especially whilst analyzing/listening to the way in which each version of *The Duke of Green* differs.

5.7 *The Duke of Green* | Macro-Considerations, Ordering & Composing Versions

After having composed an initial version (*Mantis*), I was now aware of how this version represented a certain perspective on the musical materials I have so far discussed. This version also allowed for my musical ideas to emerge in a certain manner and focus. This prompts me now to discuss how I composed other versions of this piece — with each successive version dissolving a certain de facto authority created by the first version I had composed. Doing this forced me to accept the challenge that the three additional versions needed to be crafted uniquely (as opposed to appearing like cheap-imitations). Thus, my aim was to compose the versions with enough vibrancy, craft, and musical interest to ensure each could effectively vie with the others as being the ‘definitive version’. In attempts to do this, I was forced to recognise that each version of *The Duke of Green* needed to function as a self-contained work — with every version having its own subtle yet significant distinctions. A major way in which I realised this was by transposing each version down a half step. This technique, albeit simple, gave the entire composition a subtle amount of tonal variety. And, given the long durational timeframe of the work, I knew this elementary tactic of shifting tonal centres would rejuvenate the material throughout the entire piece.

Eventually, after composing all of the versions in *The Duke of Green*, I was left with the following order (*Mantis*, *Keppel*, *Laurel*, *Viridian*). All of these versions had the following tonal centres: C; B; Bb; A. However, after some thought, I decided to shuffle this order; beginning instead with *Laurel*, *Keppel*, *Mantis* and finally ending with *Viridian*, which resulted in the tonal-ordering being: Bb, B, C, A.

5.8 *The Duke of Green* | Transitions Between Versions (Live Audio)

As I became aware that each version would have its own tonal centre, this prompted me to consider how transitions from one version to the next would occur. The initial idea I had, to achieve transitions between versions, was to simply have the vibraphone play a simple and sustained motif of an interval of a major 10th, which would consequently foreshadow the next tonality within the series of versions. Thus, this vibraphone functions much like a bell, resetting the listener's ear and preparing them for the subsequent version which begins in a different tonal centre.

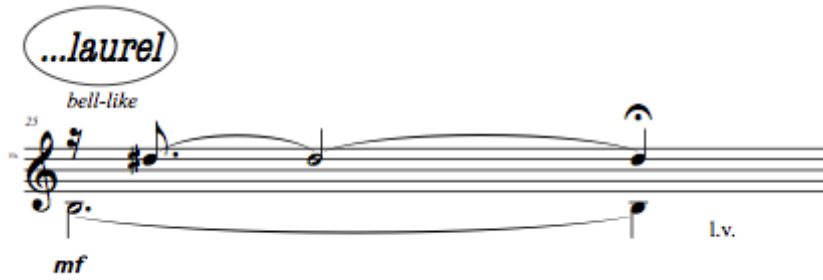


Figure 5.5 – here the vibraphone motif that precedes the version known as ‘*Laurel*’ is seen. This simple interval of a major 10th makes way for the new tonal centre, “erasing” the association to Bb. Similar content proceeds each version, accompanied by a short minute of processed audio (tape).

Although this motif ‘re-sets the ear’, I soon decided a larger transition section would enhance this effect, and more fundamentally re-orient the listener’s perception. This resulted in using a small amount of prepared audio (tape). Unsurprisingly, the audio used in these transitions reflects and reinforces my mimetic interests; because once again I featured Ellington’s ‘*Don’t Get Around Much Anymore*’. However, this time I did so by using a recording of the song. The audio from this recording was then transposed down several octaves, played backwards, and slightly processed. Additionally, I added a simple fade-in and fade-out to what was essentially a minute of audio (derived from this aforementioned process). Lastly, each audio transition was transposed slightly in order to be in the same key, reinforcing the tonality of the next version. Another point to mention around the subject of added audio, was the fact that when I came to compose *Viridian* (the last version in the series and also the last version composed) I decided to use this same audio material within the piece itself. Practically speaking, this only involved a percussionist in the ensemble triggering a few audio files throughout this version. An example of such an occurrence can be seen below:

The musical score for 'The Duke of Green' is presented in a multi-staff format. At the top left, a circled 'D = 25 secs' indicates a specific section. The Soprano line features lyrics: 'ee da crowd - ed the floor I heard they crowd - ee the floor as far as got the'. The Flute part begins with a dynamic marking of *p* and later *ppp*. The Violin part starts with a dynamic marking of *f*. The Percussion 2 part includes a section labeled 'audio starts' and 'plastic bag'. The Keys part has dynamic markings of *mp* and *mf*. The Viola part has markings 'gusto / all noise' and 'con scordino'. The Violoncello part has markings 'p' and 'strolla bowing'.

Figure 5.6 – this extract from the version known as Viridian, shows how the 2nd percussionist is simply instructed to trigger audio at the beginning of this section (section D).

5.8 *The Duke of Green* | Micro-Level Considerations

Matching the stipulations of the commission meant working with a relatively limited palette of musical sources. In this respect, the Ellington reference and the Carnatic motif were primarily the only two examples of conscious mimesis within the piece. However, once *Mantis* had been composed it served as a model for the three other versions. Yet my aim, especially with respect to making deviations in these successive versions, was about exemplifying how I wanted each version to be understood, principally because every version exists as a refraction of the others. Through such an action, a skewed mirror of my own making was held up to my own musical practice; obliquely engaging a mimetic practice of other sources as well as refracting my own musical mannerisms. The overall intention of this was to make identifying and locating a stable original less of a transparent process for the listener. In this respect, *The Duke of Green*, presents an unbroken chain of music, one that connects to a degree with notions presented in Stephens' text, 'Mimesis, Mediation and Counterfeit':

In presenting an unbroken chain of textual mediations, the sponsor/interpreter always risks encountering a Platonic reader, who will view the “links” as successive displacements or degradations of the text, rather than an Aristotelian reader with either a naive or sophisticated faith in mimetic replicability³⁹.

In light of this perspective, I would obviously suggest that I am trying to present sophisticated faith in mimetic replicability, which, in this particular composition, has clearly (and continually) been applied back onto itself. Such a faith in mimetic replicability lies partially in my own interest in keeping an overall economy of materials but also facilitating ways that these materials could be made distinct from one another. Another principle way of establishing difference between the materials in this work resulted from timbral substitution. Often events, as they occurred in *Mantis*, were kept between the other versions. In fact, much of the structural arc of *Mantis* was retained through the subsequent versions, however, certain sound events were saturated with greater amounts of noise. This is most evident in the percussion section, where more traditional textures such as a ‘brush on a snare drum’ were eventually worn down to only the rustling of a plastic bag or the unexpectedly (yet beautiful) rolling sound of a salad spinner.

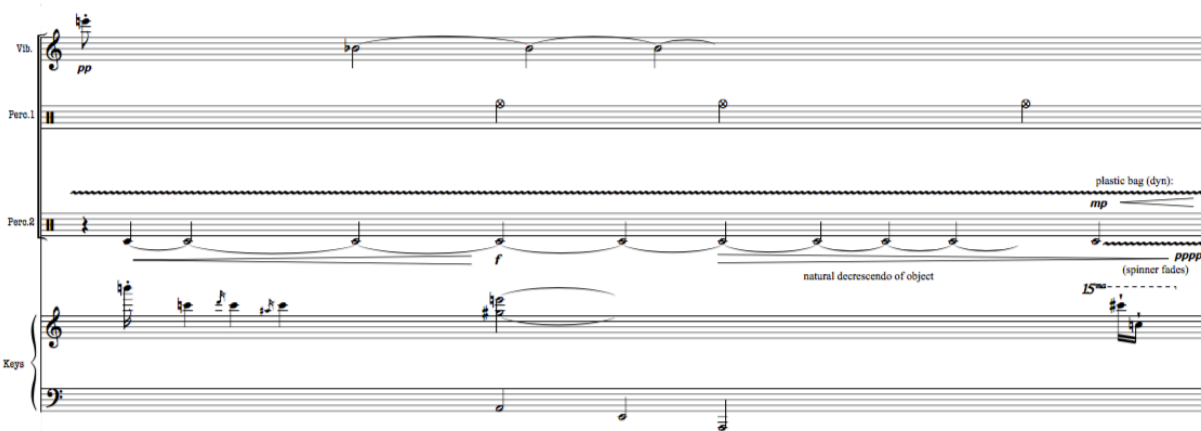


Figure 5.7 – in the present version (*Viridian*) the sound of a brush on a snare drum has been reduced (replaced) with the rolling texture of a salad spinner (percussion 2).

An overall looseness from the presence of proportional rhythm pervades the subsequent versions — evident in *Keppel*, *Laurel* and (to a lesser extent) in *Viridian*. This is important to mention, as it automatically decouples the music in the other versions from being so rigidly realised; whereas, a more exacting and traditional performance practice is requested and is indeed needed for *Mantis*. A potentially negative consequence of the latter performance

³⁹ Walter E. Stephens, *Mimesis, Mediation and Counterfeit* (Mimesis in Contemporary Theory: Volume 1 The Literary and Philosophical Debate, Mihai Spariosu [editor]) 1984: 255.

practice is that *Mantis* might potentially be heard as the most definitive-version. Yet I remain optimistic that its position (as the third version in a series of four) offsets the gravity of perceiving it in this manner, or perhaps contextualises it in a larger frame of time which renders its impact more compelling. Although in the end, this is something I will have to discover from the responses of listeners who know nothing of the processes I have so far described.

proportional rhythm = circa 25 secs

14

Sop. might have gone but what for might have gone but what ... for ...
click any available keys for added noise

Fl. *mf* *p*

Vla. *mp* *mf* *f*

Perc. II salad spinner, fast rotation that eventually becomes rather slow continue (solo)

Keys *f* *mp* *f*

Viol. *pp* *p* half finger as if playing natural harmonics

Vo. *pizz.* *f* *grain/noise* *sim. ... cord.* *p*

Figure 5.8a – Above, an extract from *Keppel* — showing the relative freedom of notation found in this version.

98

Sop. —

Fl. whistle tone
15^{me}
PPP

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 crumple crissy plastic shopping bag
mp
brushes on snare
f
ppp

Keys warm and mellow
p
f

Vln. f

Vla. mf

Figure 5.8b – Above, an extract from *Mantis*; it shows how this version uses a far stricter manner of notation.

Other details in *The Duke of Green* that need to be mentioned are how a similar distinction to the material in figure 5.9 was made in order to evoke different performance practices; for example, this can be seen when looking at the Carnatic rhythmic motif (mentioned earlier in this discussion). Evident in bar 7 of *Laurel*, this reference appears as a distilled fragment or an echo of how I first composed this motif in *Mantis* (the first version). At this point, this motif — played by the keyboard, violin and cello — function only as an accompaniment to the voice. However, when re-casted in proportional time, the presence of this material demonstrates only a basic acknowledgement to the musical idea borrowed from a Carnatic rhythmic motif (namely, it alludes to seven articulations at three different rhythmic speeds).

Figure 5.9 – An extract from version *Keppel*, showing seven articulations at three different rhythmic speeds. The rhythm has become far looser from a mimetic process and through the effacement of the first version (*Mantis*).

5.9 *The Duke of Green* | Discreet Mimesis (ongoing)

Within the versions *Keppel*, *Laurel* and *Viridian* I brought into the musical fold certain instances that evoke the notion of discreet mimesis. Examples of this can be seen by my general inculturation with contemporary music and its use of less standardised sounds. In addition, this is visible in many of these versions, where my non-standard use of percussion instruments included household objects such as: a salad spinner; two sandpaper blocks; a plastic bag; and a glass bottle (instead of the flute). Aside from perhaps the salad spinner — which I would assert to being (to the best of my knowledge) wholly original in the history of orchestration — these sounds reside well within a sound palette influenced and mimetic of selections of John Cage’s work.

Of course, it would be possible to spend more time discussing references (such as the latter) and other specific cases of internal mimesis found within the versions of *The Duke of Green*. However, a more ideal experience would be simply hear how these moments unfold in time, simply by listening to *The Duke of Green* in its entirety. In doing so, I believe the successive versions will present an overall feeling of re-use; whereby one piece is presented, only then to be gradually effaced by another. Finally, my belief is that processes of mimesis described in this chapter open up the music in such a way that it allows for traces of each versions’

predecessor(s) to inevitably oscillate in a spectrum of similarity and difference. And in short, through mimetic comportment of *Mantis*, *Laurel*, *Keppel* and *Viridian*, the musical world of *The Duke of Green* demonstrates an inherent questioning of the need for a definitive version.

6. *Large Rhythmic Canon*

6.0 Background – *Large Rhythmic Canon (LRC)*

Discovering laws involves drafting them. Recognizing patterns is very much a matter of inventing and imposing them. Comprehension and creation go on together.⁴⁰

Throughout the course of this PhD I worked on a musical structure (or musical form) that I refer to as the *Large Rhythmic Canon (LRC)*. At first glance, this idea — given its uniformity and formalised way of arranging rhythm — appears as a counterargument to the mimetic and inclusively pluralistic approach I have outlined so far. In response to this, the purpose of including this work is to show how a more singular (and rather monolithic) musical idea was first, initially realised; and secondly, to demonstrate how this singular idea lent itself to being re-configured into several distinct musical compositions. With the latter chiefly placing the *Large Rhythmic Canon* within the context of this discussion primarily by virtue of it being a singular work which, in practise, exists in many manifestations. This latter theme is what largely connects this composition with the theme of mimetic comportment that is central to this discussion. Therefore, I intend to use this chapter to connect the notion of mimesis and musical multiplicity in a slightly different way. Demonstrating an approach less focused on conflating divergent musical materials within a single piece, and instead, using this example to showcase how a singular musical idea can be continually rejuvenated vis-à-vis a range of mimetic means.

I will first begin by explaining the mechanics of the *Large Rhythmic Canon*. This involves discussing the *Large Rhythmic Canon's* simple yet complex rhythmic structure, which is (hence its name) the most important parameter of this idea. This requires an initial discussion about what is essentially an arithmetical process for organising semiquaver values over a substantial duration of time, given that the *LRC* is principally about representing how a limited number of different rhythmic values can overlap and interact. Also, the principle governing aspect of this canon is about how these rhythmic values have different durations, specifically occupying a period of time equivalent to 5, 6, 7, and 11 semiquavers. These different rhythms were then superimposed over one another, resulting in a very extended rhythmic structure — one that repeats only after the occurrence of 2,310 semiquavers (or nearly 145 bars of 4/4 time).

⁴⁰ Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1978) 22.

Another key feature of the *LRC* is that when each of these rhythmic values is applied to a line of music (so that they can be understood as traditional voices) the initial structure of the *LRC* reveals frequent alignments of two voices, as well as an occasional overlapping of three of these voices.



Figure 6.1 – In this draft rendering of the *Large Rhythmic Canon*, accents were used to distinguish instances of two-voice alignment.

6.1 *LRC* - Inserted Rests

The above figure (Figure 6.1) demonstrates the initial opening of the *LRC*, showing how the respective semiquaver values of 5, 6, 7, and 11 overlap. But this example also demonstrates how occurrences between these voices share entrances at the same point in time. In this way, overlapping periodicities (indicated by the presence of accents in Figure 6.1) become an important structural element in the design of the *LRC*. Furthermore, these moments are pivotal to the structure, as they provide meeting points between various voices. Additionally, these moments act as junctions for my own ‘interpretation’ of the rhythmic canon (which I will discuss later in this chapter).

For now though, expanding on the specifics of these musical mechanics also requires mentioning how these overlapping moments became places where I decided to cut into the *LRC*. This act of "cutting into the canon" was done for the purpose of inserting an amount of space (rest) between the rhythms. Similarly, the way in which the amount of rest was determined was also based upon an arithmetical logic — whereby the rest added to the *LRC* was exactly half of the canon’s total duration. Therefore, given the total duration of the *LRC* (2,310 semiquavers), this amount of time was then halved, making it equivalent to the proportion of rest I added (a total of 1,155 semiquaver rests). To illustrate this, figure 6.2 shows how the same section compares to the previous figure (Figure 6.1). By comparing these two examples it is clear how the amount of ‘rest’ was added to the canon’s structure – momentarily halting the impending meeting points between the four voices of the *LRC*.



Figure 6.2 – A later version of the *Large Rhythmic Canon* shows how moments of rest (space) were added to the canon’s structure (this is in contrast to what is shown in figure 6.1). An additional point to mention is how the initial beginning of the canon starts with each of the four voices setting off at the same time (an occurrence of unity that does not again until the canon has been fully completed). However, from this opening the motion of the four voices is quickly interrupted, and this is visible in the above example (at the end of the 2nd bar). This process was again repeated where shared entrances of two voices *would have occurred*. Such an intervention, delays the first occurrence of shared entrances; thus, instead of allowing the canon to continue, I decided to add a brief amount of space to the canon (for instance, in figure 6.2, where 10 semiquavers of rest were added). Lastly, in connection to this duration of added space and all added space present in the *LRC*, the main rule applied to these moments of rest was that no gap in the texture could be shorter than 3 semiquavers. This meant that the amount of time assigned to each break in the *LRC* was, to a certain degree, indeterminate. In practice though, this equated to an on-going subtraction of an amount of rest equivalent to 1,155 semiquavers. This specific amount of rest (1,155 semiquavers) was not an arbitrary amount, but was actually derived from a process of subtraction, whereby the total value of the rhythmic canon (2,310 semiquavers) was simply cut in half. Nevertheless, the way in which space was added into the texture was done by a fairly unrestricted process, one that could have resulted — if applied differently — in a range of outcomes.

6.2 *LRC* – Delayed Entrances

Another “procedural” detail of the *LRC* is what happens when two or three voices overlap. Clarifying this point requires explaining how changes were made to the entrance of other voices in the canon. Simply put, when three overlapping voices occurred, any other voice that was in the process of finishing, but was interrupted by the secondary process of adding rest, was now allowed to remain. However, once the canon resumes, the interrupted voice is

consequentially silenced for its remaining amount of duration. This is far easier to illustrate than discuss in words and evidence of this is clear in figure 6.3, where the first two boxes demonstrate short periods of rest (with rhythmic values of 5 and 6 semiquavers). Here, these moments occur at the point just before two other voices share an entrance. Figure 6.3 also shows how the entrances of these other two voices (with rhythmic values of 7 and 11 semiquavers) are briefly delayed. Again, emphasising the logic behind this last action can be explained by subtracting the remaining amount of time from the previous rhythmic values, as well as from the corresponding entrances found in the next instance of the canon.



Figure 6.3 – the above figure illustrates how at the end of bar 2, the 3rd and 4th lines of the canon are delayed by an equivalent value of 5 and 3 semiquavers (this corresponds to the remaining values of each line’s respective duration — provided that these notes had not encountered an instance of inserted rest).

In the boxes (see Figure 6.3) it is apparent how the duration of the rests are not consistent; and, as it was alluded to earlier, this aspect of the process was determined more freely. But despite this aspect of intuition, the process of adding periods of rest to the canon was still derived from subtracting the duration of the total value of rests, from a total duration of 1,155 semiquavers. Lastly, the size of duration of these periods of rest, was distributed in a more ad hoc manner, liberally spread throughout instances in the canon when two or three voices were set to overlap.

6.3 LRC - Instances of Three-Voice Alignment

One final rule within the canon concerns an exception to the idea of adding rests. This exception appears when three voices align. In such a situation, the canon is allowed to continue — unabated and uninterrupted by a period of rest. Practically speaking, this decision was made whilst composing an initial version of the string quartet that emerged from this musical form, and foregoing the rules in this context was largely done as a means to maintain harmonic sonorities for a longer period of time (please note that this issue will be explored more extensively in chapters 7 and 8).



Figure 6.4 – an example of three voice alignment (visible in the 3rd bar in the above example); the canon is permitted to continue for longer.

These described procedures create a start and stop motion, inevitably characterising the flow of events within the *LRC*. But this feature is also something I consider to be desirable, as it creates a structure that has opportunities to superimpose a range of material within its musical flow. Additionally, how this occurs throughout other pieces — based upon the mechanics of the *LRC* (e.g. *Valley of Years* and *Ghost Estates*) will be shown later on in this commentary.

6.4 *LRC* – Applied in my Compositions

With its arithmetic nature, the *LRC* represents the most rigidly formal musical idea within this PhD. Regardless of this strict approach, I still stand behind the notion that the *LRC* is a musical structure easily able to contain a vast range of musical content. Essentially, it is a musical architecture that can facilitate a range of pluralistic musical creativity and mimetic comportment. Moreover, how I actually used the *LRC* will be outlined in several of the following chapters in this commentary, as I discuss several examples of this musical architecture which emerged during the course of this artistic research. Thus, in summary, parts of — or the entire *Large Rhythmic Canon* — occur in four different compositions present in this commentary. These occurrences include my large-scale video piece known as *Proposition of Fossils*; my piece *Valley of Years* for pelog gamelan and string quartet; as well as my stand-alone string quartet entitled *Ghost Estates*; and finally, the *LRC* appears throughout my piece for solo bass clarinet and electronics (*Rustic Sea Riser*). However, before beginning to examine the specific cases of how the *LRC* was involved (in the above compositions), it is important to reiterate that I view the *LRC* as a musical structure, and once

~ *Large Rhythmic Canon* ~

again, a work that has a great potential for a variety of uses that are common to this discussion.

7. *Valley of Years* | composition for string quartet and gamelan

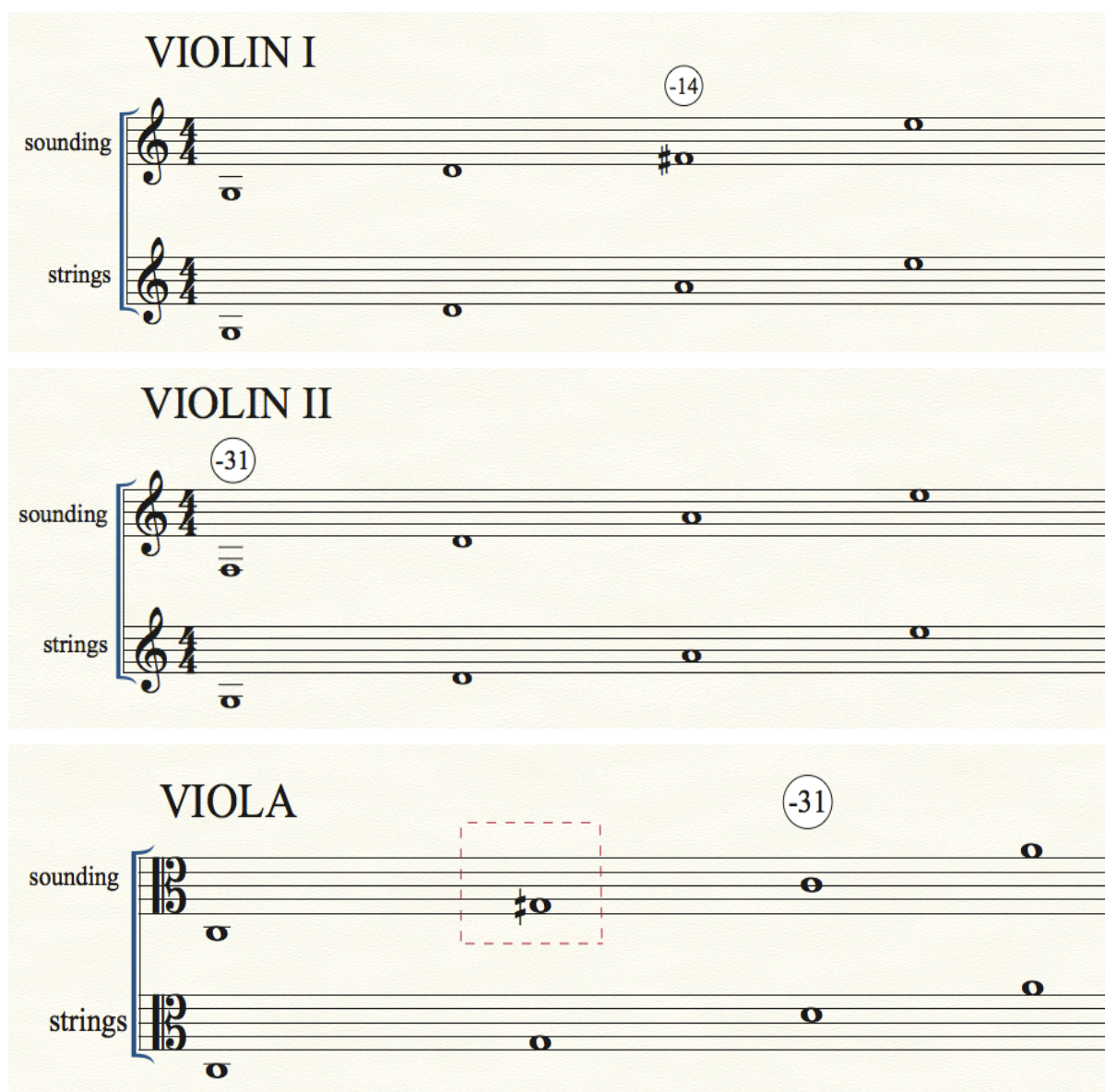
7.0 *Valley of Years* – Overview

Valley of Years was written for string quartet and pelog gamelan; it is a 14-minute work that predominantly focuses on presenting an integrated musical relationship between two contrasting musical genres. Extending from the previous chapter, the string quartet material was derived from many of the ideas found within *Large Rhythmic Canon*. This aspect of the work illustrates how mimesis and musical pluralism were applied to *Valley of Years*, as this composition is the first instance of a work exemplifying how a singular musical idea — that being the content of the *Large Rhythmic Canon* — was used to create several different and contrasting pieces. Moreover, by virtue of composing around the framework of the *Large Rhythmic Canon*, *Valley of Years* inherently exemplifies certain similarities to other pieces in this commentary, especially those also based on this structure (e.g. *Ghost Estates*, *Rustic Sea Riser* and parts of *Proposition of Fossils*). Additionally, a characteristic of *Valley of Years* is that the work contains materials that were later developed into two separate compositions. For instance, the detailed string quartet material in this composition eventually evolved into *Ghost Estates*; likewise, the gamelan parts within *Valley of Years* were extracted and developed into a separate work (*Lembah Tahun*). However, the combination between these two different sets of material remains the most important issue to discuss in this chapter, principally because this approach illustrates a complex duality between two very different strategies towards composition. This duality however does make *Valley of Years* comparable to *Deportations*, especially with respect to how it shares a certain dialectical relationship between two contrasting forms of music. However, with respect to how different musical styles were combined, there are many differences between these two works, ones which will become abundantly clear through the course of this chapter. Furthermore, *Valley of Years* presents a more nuanced dialogue between its source material, carefully highlighting a compositional focus concerned more with *aesthetic consonance*, principally manifested by the creation of a uniform type of composed hybridity.

7.1 *Valley of Years* – string quartet material and its content

An analysis of *Valley of Years* first requires a specific and separate examination of the string quartet material. This is due to the fact that this content reveals a close mapping of the aforementioned *Large Rhythmic Canon*. Secondly, it is important to mention that the content

of the string quartet material was, to some extent, developed from ideas in a work I composed in prior to beginning this PhD.⁴¹ This earlier piece however was a preparatory work, one written primarily for the sake of researching a microtonal scordatura that explored natural harmonics and just intonation. Still, I mention this older work principally because this same string quartet scordatura was incorporated into *Valley of Years*. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the specifics of this scordatura it is necessary to look carefully at figure 7.1, which demonstrates how, on average, one string of each instrument from the quartet was re-tuned by a specific amount (measured in cents).



⁴¹ Graham Flett. Canon Interruptus (2011). *YouTube*, 12-12-2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8oNAAzIRKE&t=158s>

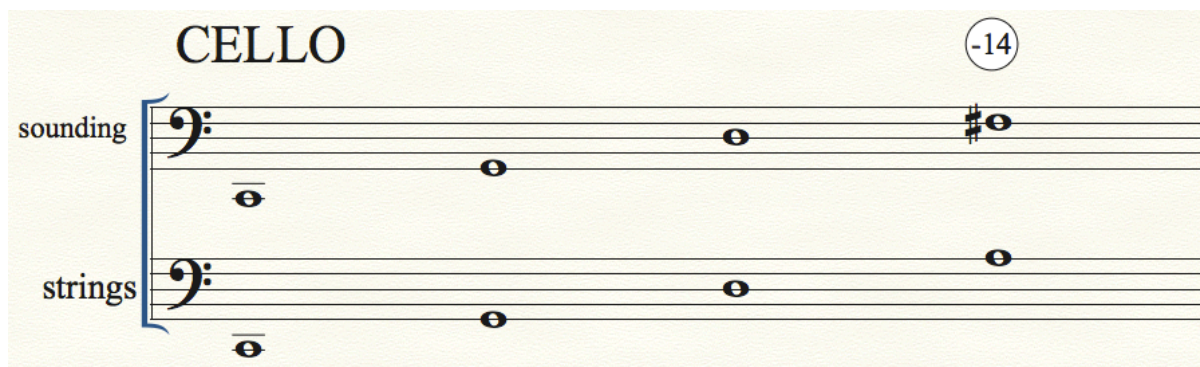


Figure 7.1 – This figure shows the scordatura for each instrument in the quartet. Cent deviations are shown in the small circle above the affected note, although this is not written for the quarter tone accidental in string III of the viola.

The second major aspect of the material applied to the *LRC* was a formidable "harmonic sequence" of chords. These chords consist of pitches derived from the fundamentals and natural harmonics found on the open strings; thus, this includes not only the open strings themselves (i.e. the fundamental) but also many of the harmonics found on each string and, in this case, extending all the way up to the 11th harmonic⁴².

Bar #	3	4-6	7	8
Vln I	IV ⁵ (x2) III ⁴ IV ⁵ III ⁴	IV ⁶ (x2)	IV ⁷ + III ⁶ + IV ⁷	IV ⁸ III ⁷ III ⁷ IV ⁸
Vln II	III ³ (x2) IV ⁴ III ³	III ² (x1)	IV ² (x2)	IV ¹¹ IV ¹¹ IV ¹
Vla	II ⁵ (x2) + I ⁴ + II ⁵	I ⁵	II ⁷ II ⁷ I ⁶	I ⁷ II ⁸
Vlc	II ⁴ — II ⁴	II ³	II ² I ¹	II ¹¹

Figure 7.2 – The above table shows how I created and organised a “harmonic” progression that was made from each instrument of the string quartet. Each string on each instrument was given a superscripted number, one corresponding to the partial to be performed. Repetition of a given pitch (harmonic partial) is specified by a parenthesis indicating the number of times a pitch is to be repeated. This was then mapped onto rhythms from the *Large Rhythmic Canon*.

Whilst the aim of this compositional technique was to exclusively use either open strings or natural harmonics, in practice, usage of artificial harmonics occurred when no audible difference in tuning could result (i.e. for octave harmonics such as the 4th and 8th partials). However, building upon the same manner of thinking seen in figure 7.2 revealed an additional type of arithmetic logic; this being one informed by the limitation of 11 pitches (including octaves) and that these pitches were available on each string of each instrument (see Figure 7.3).

⁴² see figure 7.2 [below] for a more detailed explanation.

Violin I

Listed ways playing harmonics (up to the 11th partial) as they occur in this piece.

top staff = sounding pitch
bottom staff = finger position

The image shows a musical staff for Violin I, labeled 'IV' on the left. It consists of two staves: a top staff for 'sounding pitch' and a bottom staff for 'finger position'. The notation shows 11 harmonics, labeled IV² through IV¹¹. Above the top staff, circles with numbers 2 through 11 indicate the harmonic number. The bottom staff shows the corresponding finger positions for each harmonic, with some harmonics (IV⁶ through IV¹¹) showing multiple possible fingerings. The sounding pitches are indicated by notes on the top staff, with some harmonics (IV⁶ through IV¹¹) showing multiple possible pitches.

Figure 7.3 – the 11 pitches per string (many of which are notated in all their available positions).

Overall, when the above was applied to the whole ensemble, there ended up being 44 available pitches⁴³ for each instrument, which presented a grand total of 176 pitches (although there is some overlap between octaves and harmonics that are either the same [octave doublings] or very close in frequency). Yet based on experience from my earlier preliminary composition, I knew I needed to make this material easier to play; this resulted in composing the string quartet material in *Valley of Years* in a way that players would only have to “move up” or “move down” the harmonic series. In principle, I surmised that this would more closely align with a player moving their left-hand either towards or away from the bridge of their instrument — thereby better enabling a player to find certain difficult harmonics (e.g. upper partials like the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th).

Another simplification I added to the organisation of this material was to structure the music so that performers only needed to play on two strings for every isolated rhythmic instance derived from the canon. This was an approach I hoped would maintain a more natural hand position for the performers (avoiding the challenge of them having to quickly move all over the neck of their instruments — which was another oversight I had encountered in the preliminary version). An illustration of this can already be seen from the opening of the piece, beginning with the first violinist on the 4th and 5th partials of string IV and III, respectively. The performer gradually proceeds to play higher and higher partials on these strings, moving their fingers accordingly, until they are playing the highest harmonics on these strings (e.g. the 10th and 11th partials). At this point, the course of the progression reverses and the violinist plays in a descending motion (towards the nut). This descent

⁴³ Granted there are some occasional overlaps of frequency between very closely related harmonics found on different strings: for instance, the 3rd harmonic on the G string of a violin sounds almost identical to the 2nd harmonic of the D string (only 2 cents apart). Similarly, with the viola and cello, such overlaps are inherent to this process of generating pitch material; however, timbral implications of sonority also reveal subtle distinctions in colour.

however takes place on different strings (III and II), and this downward progression (through the harmonic series) furthermore continues until the performer reaches the fundamentals of these open strings. From this point, the performer then moves to strings II and I, thereby beginning another “ascent” and progressing upwards (sequentially) through the harmonic series. This continues until the musician nearly reaches the bridge of their instrument (playing the highest and most extreme partials requested for this composition — the 11th and 10th harmonics). Finally, at this point, the performer proceeds (again) in a downward direction, progressing once more through the harmonic series, but this time on strings I and IV. Admittedly, this last combination of strings (I and IV) is the most difficult to realise, however, after this stage in the process, the whole sequence repeats — beginning once more with strings IV and III (see figure 7.4 for more detail on how this occurs in the actual piece) The aforementioned process occurs in a very similar way for the other string instruments, with the exception that it is offset for each instrument of the quartet⁴⁴. Some minor exceptions between this linear movement and realising a sounding ascent or descent through the harmonic series of course do occur; although, generally this direction of action articulates a process that I believe greatly improved the overall playability of the music — whilst retaining the sonority I attained in the earlier versions of this musical idea.

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet, labeled 'B' and starting at measure 13. It consists of four staves: Vln.I (plyd), Vln.II (plyd), Vla. (plyd), and Vc. (plyd). The score illustrates the progression through harmonic partials on the strings. The Vln.I staff shows partials IV¹¹, III¹¹, and III². The Vln.II staff shows partials IV⁸, IV⁷, I⁷, and IV⁶. The Vla. staff shows partials II¹¹, I², and III⁷. The Vc. staff shows partials III⁹, II⁷, and III⁷. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'.

Figure 7.4 – The above figure illustrates how the progression through the harmonic partials on the strings is organised. Although the process described in the text is not always immediately obvious, the music in this figure should at least reveal/suggest how such a process has been embedded and made very essential to the musical material.

⁴⁴ Please note that **Appendix 2 5a_valleyofyears** provides a more detailed example of how this process was formalised.

Compositionally, I formalised the process in this work by mapping every cell of a very extended microtonal harmonic progression (see Figure 7.5), which equated to the pitch-material becoming embedded with every rhythmic instance derived out of the *Large Rhythmic Canon*. Carrying on from this process also involved making micro-level decisions, like assigning the exact combination of the two harmonics (per instrument) to corresponding rhythmic instances. However, in order to realise the organisation of material (seen in Figure 7.5. next page), I made a sinewave rendition (mock-up) of the piece. Although, I have decided against including this electronic material in the appendix of this commentary, I nevertheless believe it is worth mentioning, as its presence is audible in other compositions in this portfolio (such as *Rustic Sea Riser* and *Proposition of Fossils*). Moreover, with regards to composing *Valley of Years*, the presence of this sinewave mock-up, allowed me to grasp far better how the microtonal chords would potentially sound, both as chords and within the context of the composition.

Vln1	IV ⁵ III ⁴	IV ⁶ III ⁵	IV ⁷ III ⁶	IV ⁸ III ⁷	IV ⁹ III ⁸	IV ¹⁰ III ⁹	IV ¹¹ III ¹⁰	III ¹ II ¹	III ² II ²	III ³ II ³	III ⁴ II ³
Vln2	IV ⁴ III ³	IV ³ III ²	IV ² III ¹	IV ¹ IV ¹¹	I ¹¹ IV ¹⁰	I ¹⁰ IV ⁹	I ⁹ IV ⁸	I ⁸ IV ⁷	I ⁷ IV ⁶	I ⁶ IV ⁵	I ⁵ IV ⁴
Vla	II ⁵ I ⁴	II ⁶ I ⁵	II ⁷ I ⁶	II ⁸ I ⁷	II ⁹ I ⁸	II ¹⁰ I ⁹	II ¹¹ I ¹⁰	I ¹ I ¹¹	I ² IV ¹	I ³ IV ²	I ⁴ IV ³
Vlc	II ⁴ I ³	II ³ I ²	II ² I ¹	II ¹ II ¹¹	III ¹¹ II ¹⁰	III ¹⁰ II ⁹	III ⁹ II ⁸	III ⁸ II ⁷	III ⁷ II ⁶	III ⁶ II ⁵	III ⁵ II ⁴

Fig 7.5 – The above figure illustrates how I organised the progression of natural harmonics. Each cell was applied to a given rhythmic 'instance' from the Large Rhythmic Canon. For each instrument, there was a choice of 2 harmonics per cell that could be found on the specified strings.

7.2 Valley of Years – Mimetic Qualities of the String Quartet

Now that I have thoroughly outlined the process of composing the string quartet material within *Valley of Years*, I should now state that in terms of timbre and sonority, this composition is again indebted to hearing James Tenney's *Arbor Vitæ*⁴⁵. This is especially so with respect to the parameters of timbre and sonority. Yet my approach to composition, namely the structuring of the material is an example of that is more obliquely mimetic of musical phasing processes, such as those present in certain minimalist music. Surely too, the medieval use of isorhythm, as seen in some of Machaut's work⁴⁶, is also a viable precedent for this type of musical organisation. After all, *Valley of Years*' clock-work obsessiveness — which is central to the way I arranged, composed, and structured the material — is, to a large

⁴⁵ Tenney, James. "Arbor Vitae (w/ score) (for string quartet) (2006)" *YouTube*, December 12, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nSigzXILME>.

⁴⁶ Guillaume de Machaut. "Music of the Middle Ages; Isorhythmic motet {de Machaut}" *YouTube*, 24-05-2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cu7-RV7XB9k>.

extent, reminiscent of certain examples of musical organisation from the Ars Nova period. But besides these more discreet forms of mimesis, *Valley of Years* demonstrates a mimetic compartment of style that is, on the surface, more akin to contemporary examples of using just-intonation (again, see James Tenney's *Arbor Vitæ*). This reference point is also combined with my own interpretation of the traditional realm of musical canon, which I believe eclectically evokes a rather particular stylistic world. Personally, I see this combination being dialectically challenged by my decision to weave and dovetail this canonic material within a work that also features gamelan. On this note, the details of this non-western musical element (gamelan) — and specifically, how it occurs in *Valley of Years* — now needs to be separately analysed. Unsurprisingly, this will involve explaining not only technical aspects of composing this material, but also addressing the aesthetic and cultural considerations connected to my inclusion of this non-western musical genre.

7.3 *Valley of Years* – Gamelan within the Context of Cross-Cultural Mimesis

In this part of the discussion, it is necessary to begin by unravelling some of the thornier cultural considerations brought up by this piece. First, my presence as a Canadian composer — and a PhD student studying in the United Kingdom whilst also living in the Netherlands — behooves me to consider certain issues of cultural appropriation. Secondly, I feel that I should preface any composition I write for gamelan by stating that I have formally studied the genre and performed in gamelan groups (mostly between 1999 and 2002). As a result, such musical experiences with gamelan music taught me a great deal about the mechanics of the music and the traditional role of the instruments. Moreover, through close exposure to the genre and continued contact with my former teacher (Andrew Timar) I have continued to foster an interest and affinity for the musical genre.

The above points should clarify that my aim with *Valley of Years* was adamantly rooted in avoiding any dated discourse or reifying an act of reckless cultural appropriation. In view of this, I remain certain that my use of gamelan cannot be dismissed or even maligned alongside Homi K. Bhabha's, as something like, “an act of the colonised being turned into a social reality that then becomes at once an ‘other’ whilst also becoming entirely knowable and visible.”⁴⁷ To the contrary, I feel I can refute this particular position by stressing that I have, at all costs, avoided any superficial depiction of the genre. Instead, I want to use principles of mimesis — particularly the moulding of oneself with characteristics and conventions from

⁴⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (Routledge, New York). 1994. 101.

this genre — in order to position my work as a hybridized piece, existing on par and optimistically bridging these two different cultural traditions.

In this way, *Valley of Years* needs to be understood as a piece seeking to use mimetic comportment towards gamelan's stylistic features, but one that has done so heuristically and still with a strong degree of reverence for both sources. That being, I developed the gamelan material so it hopefully can be perceived as deeply referential and indebted to this music's tradition (specifically, Javanese gamelan). Yet, analogous to this reverential treatment was the fact that I still wanted to retain an amount of distance to many of the established conventions found in the genre. In turn, this led me to develop a more heuristic approach to composing this material, whilst still using and alluding to many of the conventions found within the genre. How I actually did this will be covered in more detail in this chapter, presently though, I will discuss the origins and reasons behind composing this piece for gamelan and string quartet.

7.4 *Valley of Years* – Gamelan composition (origins and *laras pelog*)

My aforementioned interest and background with gamelan music prompted me to respond to a call for scores for gamelan and string quartet. This call for scores was connected to the 2013 Gaudeamus New Music week. And, after being asked to participate in this workshop, myself and several other composers composed short sketches for a Dutch contemporary gamelan ensemble (Ensemble Gendhing) who were also working alongside the Doelen String Quartet. Naturally then, this call for scores prompted me to begin thinking about a viable way to fuse pre-existing material for string quartet with additional material for gamelan ensemble (which I had already composed). However, for the specific discussion of this piece, it is important to mention Ensemble Gendhing for several reasons. First, their available gamelan instruments, and their respective tuning, had a lasting influence on how I approached writing this piece; for example, their listed instruments and information on tuning (see figure 7.6) presented me with a 7-note pelog scale (*laras*), one that I consequently used for composing this piece. Incidentally, Ensemble Gendhing use of a 7-note scale (*laras*) differs from commonly used modes found in pelog scales (which traditionally consist of five to six note subsets⁴⁸). Certainly, the connection to the latter tuning continues to have ramifications with regards to repeat performances, especially with different ensembles. Yet for now, I have decided that the best solution for *Valley of Years*, is one that is quite in keeping with a

⁴⁸ In a personal interview in 2016, Andrew Timar (Evergreen Gamelan Ensemble) discussed with me the standard conventions for using such subsets of a *laras*.

hierarchical importance commonly found in gamelan music. Namely, I refer to the way that — in a great deal of gamelan music — a critical parameter are not the pitches themselves, but rather, the positions that the notes occupy within an overall form and texture. From this observation it can be inferred that the position of the notes in *Valley of Years* could be potentially re-assigned to different and even a reduced pelog scale. Albeit, this would require significant re-writing, nevertheless, I believe that if this composition is performed by other gamelan ensemble (e.g. one that use a different tuning system) then provided that attention is given to the placement and duration of the notes I have written (along with respecting the melodic contour) a functional and acceptable compromise could be realised.

Furthermore, with regard to the repeatability of *Valley of Years*, another issue needs consideration: namely, that of the common incongruity between equal temperament and the generally unstandardised tunings systems typifying most gamelan ensembles. Overall, my awareness of this issue forced me to accept that the tuning of a given gamelan ensemble will always be unique; in turn, this prompted me to arrive at a solution to compensate for this issue. The solution to the above began by first accepting that my string quartet — written in just intonation — naturally evokes a certain connection to equal temperament. This lingering connection emerges on account of the cello being instructed to take an initial tuning reference from an equal-tempered source (e.g. a tuner). Consequently, all scordatura (re)tunings extend from this point of departure.

And, in order to address this issue, I explicitly state how the string quartet and gamelan ensemble can find a workable solution to the issue of tuning in the front matter to *Valley of Years*. This solution requires the cello to tune its initial D-string, not from equal temperament, but instead from the gamelan itself. This means that the cello tunes to the note known as ‘1’ (from a given pelog scale played by the large *saron*). Once this first tuning has been made (by the cello), the rest of the quartet can (re)tune from this reference.

Range and notation of gamelan *Kyai antara bawana lan bawana (pelog)*

ACTUAL SOUND (approximate pitch)

The musical score consists of 14 staves, each representing a different instrument in the ensemble. The instruments and their parts are:

- saron peking (sp)**: Treble clef, notes G^{na}, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- saron barung (sb)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- saron demung (sd)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, with fingerings (1 2 3 4 5 6 7) above the notes.
- gender panerus (gp)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- (pelog barung)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- gender barung (gb)**: Bass clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- (pelog barung)**: Bass clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- slenthem (sl)**: Bass clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- bonang panerus (bp)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, with G^{na} above the notes.
- bonang barung (bb)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- kendhang (see details)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- gambang (gbg)**: Bass clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G.
- kenong (N)**: Treble clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, with T and k above the notes.
- gong/kempul (GP)**: Bass clef, notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, with fingerings 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 below the notes.

Legend: T = kethuk, k = kempyang

Figure 7.6 – Ensemble Gending’s handout; approximate to equal temperament.

An additional, and personal observation I have made is that in many gamelan ensembles the pitch known as '1' — as it is most commonly found in pelog scales — is often in reasonable proximity to an equal-tempered 'D' (293.66 Hz, or an equivalent octave). This would most often make it feasible that the cello could tune to this reference. However, in any situation where this might not be the case, the more practical solution for the cello to take would be to take this initial reference from a different degree of the pelog scale (i.e. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). Doing the latter will of course greatly change the sounding result of the piece; and admittedly, more practice vis-a-vis performance will be needed to determine the potential outcomes of this aspect of the music. However, despite not know the full range of outcomes, I still remain confident that the material in *Valley of Years* is flexible enough, and well enough crafted, that the composition can accommodate this wide range of musical interpretations. Moreover, I expect the work to be capable of doing the latter whilst still exhibiting an internally coherent connection to the main parameters in focus, namely rhythm, timbre, and harmony.

7.4 *Valley of Years* – mimesis operating on several levels

My appreciation and performance-based knowledge of the musical world of gamelan encouraged me not to be in the business of ironizing the presence of this music. Thus, simply superimposing a microtonal string quartet on top of a work for gamelan was not something I was interested in doing when composing this work. On the contrary, *Valley of Years* is very reverential and hopefully 'culturally sensitive' to portraying a mimetic likeness to the tradition of gamelan — even though the piece is not based on a specific gamelan reference.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the piece uses certain musical features that are connected to gamelan repertoire, often in attempts to achieve a mimetic likeness to the musical language commonly found in Javanese gamelan. One such feature is the use of *alok*, which is described as 'a short vocal phrase of indefinite or indeterminate pitch' that enhances the mood within a composition.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Sumarsam. "Introduction to Javanese Gamelan." Wesleyan University, 2002. <http://sumarsam.web.wesleyan.edu/Intro.gamelan.pdf>

The image displays a musical score for a composition titled "Valley of Years". The score is arranged in five systems. The first system contains three vocal staves: soprano (sp), alto (sb), and soprano/double bass (sd). Each vocal staff begins with the instruction "vocal anticipation before gong" and features a dashed line indicating a melodic contour. The second system contains a Percussion (Perc.) staff and a Bassoon (N) staff, both also starting with "vocal anticipation before gong". The third system contains a Grand Piano (GP) staff, also with "vocal anticipation before gong". A large box labeled "L" is positioned above the first vocal staff, indicating a large gong. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 7.7 – the use of vocalization in anticipation of the large gong (gong-ageng) is a clear reference to the “alok”, which occurs before and after the “gong-ageng” is sounded.

The use of *alok* is just one feature that underlines how many traditional features of gamelan music were incorporated into *Valley of Years*. Similarly, an analysis of this gamelan part to *Valley of Years* reveals that the gamelan material is quite sparsely notated. This musical sparseness was realised because the gamelan part to the piece, is in fact, only a basic skeletal structure, or in gamelan parlance, a *balungan*. The latter term, defined by Sumarsam, is a melodic abstraction of a *gendhing* (composition) most often played by *slenthem*, *demung*, and *saron barung*.⁵⁰ Therefore presenting only this skeletal structure (*balungan*) was done on purpose, and when done in this manner, I believe the composition implies a clear level of mimetic comportment towards the gamelan genre as well as one of its important convention. The latter though was also my attempt to establish a melodic framework in *Valley of Years*, and one allowing gamelan musicians — such as those familiar with the Javanese style — to add or remove content depending on their own range of performance and aesthetic decisions

⁵⁰ Sumarsam. 2002.

they might potentially bring to the work. The sparseness of the material was additionally composed to indicate that the gamelan ensemble should not overpower the more delicate and quieter writing of the string quartet. Other aspects of my gamelan writing highlight a more conscious mimesis of traditional aspects within Javanese gamelan music. For instance, at the onset of the piece I consciously made a clear reference to the world of Javanese gamelan by including an introductory passage. This section references the convention of *buka* (an introduction to a composition). Despite the fact that this introduction is not wholly traditional, its musical openness acknowledges the convention in which many gamelan compositions begin — specifically by its durational length and open musical texture.



Fig 7.8 – This section references the convention of *buka* (a common, and stylised, type of introduction to a gamelan composition).

After the initial opening of the piece, an important structural element of the gamelan material begins to be more apparent; namely, the gong-cycle. This cycle relates to the presence and gradual unfolding of the *Large Rhythmic Canon*; a gong-pattern based that is based on the total number of semiquavers present in the *LRC* (including the canon and the inserted rests). In more simpler terms, this meant that the gamelan material (not including the introduction) was based on a total division of 3,465 semiquavers — a total duration which was in turn divided into 33 sections. Furthermore, each of these sections were based on rhythmic groupings using either 5, 6, 7, or 11 semiquavers as the main units of rhythmic grouping. And, within each of these sections the gong-cycle (between both the Kempul and the Kenong) further sub-divide these sections into smaller durations of crotchets or quavers (see

Figure 7.9). The above is also very referential to the presence of varying *iramas*⁵¹, a term which can be best understood as speed or musical subdivision. These different iramas were again achieved from re-grouping the semiquaver units of 5, 6, 7, and 11. Moreover, using standard principles of western *accelerando* and *ritardando* the speed of the composition was altered, with many transitions being emphasised by the presence of detailed percussion passages to provide and make more effective transitions of tempo (*irama*).

These gong patterns are also highly reverential towards Javanese gamelan as they are connected to the larger and harder to define concept of *colotomy*⁵² — which is a way of describing the rhythmic and metric patterns in gamelan. However, in *Valley of Years*, I decided to apply this concept by dividing total groupings into four even iterations occurring between the *kempul* (gongs) and the *kenong*. This manner of division (see Figure 7.9) is clear in the first section (or rehearsal mark H) where the large gong sounds and is then followed by the *kenong*. Following this, the large gong occurs again in the 3rd bar and is then followed by the *kenong* — these four iterations then complete one cycle. Overall, this type of cyclical thinking demonstrates how the principle of *colotomy* was clearly of concern (or at least on my mind) whilst composing this material.

Admittedly, what stands out as being the least traditional aspect of my writing for gamelan is my approach to the 7 pitches from the pelog scale. Here, my method for organising this parameter of the music was more informed by a (western) serialist approach. Evidence of this, is my preoccupation with having all seven notes present within each section; a preoccupation which is somewhat offset by a gong-cycle creating the appearance of a fundamental for each section. Although, an issue that arises from

⁵¹ Sumarsam. 2002.

⁵² Henry Spiller. *The Traditional Sounds of Indonesia, Volume 1*. (LABC-CLIO, Inc). 2004. 275.

The image displays a musical score for seven gamelan instruments: saron peking, saron barung, saron demung, Percussion, kenong, Kethuk, and gong/kempul. The score is organized into three distinct rhythmic cycles, labeled H, I, and J, which are indicated by vertical brackets on the left side of the first three staves. Cycle H is based on a 6-semiquaver grouping, cycle I on a 7-semiquaver grouping, and cycle J on an 11-semiquaver grouping. The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and melodic lines for each instrument. Measure numbers 55, 55, 55, and 55 are marked at the beginning of the Percussion, kenong, Kethuk, and gong/kempul staves, respectively.

Figure 7.9 – The above figure demonstrates three separate cycles as performed by the gamelan instruments. The groupings in the first cycle (H) represent a rhythmic grouping based on a duration of 6 semiquavers. The short, one bar cycle (I), is then based around groupings of 7 semiquavers; the next cycle (J) then shows how a grouping of 11 semiquavers is used in a similar way.

the latter approach to using pelog pitches is that it is primarily about achieving a greater (or maximum) amount “perceived” harmonic motion. This approach to organising pelog pitches, once again underlines a more traditionally western orientation towards composition, and is something I believe I inadvertently brought into the fold of this composition. Nevertheless, its presence does create clear distinctions between the many small sections that make up the entirety of the work.

7.5 *Valley of Years* – In Review

Broadly speaking, the end goal of composing this work was to have the gamelan material carefully bond with the detailed microtonal world of the string quartet. In doing so, the dialectical ramifications of both of these elements were purposefully combined and presented in a more holistic manner. Overall this was less about revealing drastic contrasts in the two sets of musical material, and was more about facilitating an atmosphere of "aesthetically consonant" hybridity. Finally, it should be stated that the level of detail and thought in the gamelan part within *Valley of Years* also prompted me to develop these ideas into an independent composition; a new work for pelog gamelan, entitled, *Lembah Tahun*, which can be seen studied in Appendix 1.

Fundamentally, the analysis I have provided of *Valley of Years* has been extensive.

Unfortunately though, its success as a composition remains to be realised in practise. In light of this and given the specific writing of the string quartet and certain undefinable aspects of gamelan (e.g. tuning) it is worth asking whether this work will be successful or not.

Regardless of this the exact outcome though, I am optimistic that the care, attention to detail, compositional craft, and the conceptual orientation of *Valley of Years* will make it possible to perform this piece with only needing to make small adjustments prior to a performance.

Moreover, I feel its presence as a composition remains important and exists as a highly valuable contribution to this body of artistic research.

8. Applying the *LRC – Ghost Estates & Rustic Sea Riser*

8.0 *Ghost Estates* (string quartet)

With respect to chronology, the composition of a number of works in this commentary overlapped, which in reality meant that I was frequently composing certain works at or around the same time. This is the case with *Valley of Years* and *Ghost Estates* (with the latter being based on an extraction of string quartet material from the former). Given that in the previous chapter I examined the string quartet material in *Valley of Years*, I will not provide an exhaustive account of the same material in the analysis of *Ghost Estates*. Instead, I will use this chapter to focus on covering key specifics in *Ghost Estates*, especially those portraying a mimetic likeness to *Valley of Years* but also illustrating how the same material was substantively altered and re-invented.

First, I will describe *Ghost Estates*' internal mimetic qualities, seeing that I want to emphasise how the piece alludes to an overall compositional approach of making versions. In this respect, this piece possesses many similar ideas to what was explained in *The Duke of Green*. Yet unlike *The Duke of Green*, which used the same instrumentation for each successive version, *Ghost Estates* exemplifies a version that has a reduced amount of instruments and is consequently less varied in terms of timbre. *Ghost Estates* therefore illustrates a stripping back of content, whereby the gamelan ensemble from *Valley of Years* has been deleted in order to create a new work that takes — as its starting point — the homogenous sonority of the same string quartet material. Importantly, this type of deletion removed the more pronounced dialectical relationship found in *Valley of Years*, which resulted from the combination of two disparate types of musical idioms. Moreover, the absence of this type of dichotomy presents a very different context for listening to what is, by and large, very related musical content. However, the more singular focus upon this material required several key adjustments, ones uniquely characterising *Ghost Estates* and differentiating it from how the material appeared in *Valley of Years*.

Ghost Estates therefore presents a clear focus on one singular type of material; this focus caused me to undertake certain adjustments to the content of the music. These adjustments will be looked at more closely, but first it is necessary to explain how *Ghost Estates* was composed after fully mapping out the pitch relationships for the string quartet found in *Valley of Years*. This is important because it was only after *Valley of Years* had been more or less composed that I was able to begin work on a separate piece that used the same type of

material. Composing the latter was furthermore assisted greatly by completing a finished sinewave version (essentially a "mock-up") of the material. Overall, this rather mimetic artefact allowed me to more readily experiment with the content; for instance, it helped to facilitate my decision to loosen the material's strict adherence to the structure inherited from the *Large Rhythmic Canon*. Thus, compositional decisions such as to extend, shorten, and adjust the string quartet material were made possible due to the availability of this mock-up version, because its presence allowed for a more intuitive type of composing — where I could quickly hear and assess the effects of such changes. Secondly, a brief comparison between *Ghost Estates* and the string quartet material present in *Valley of Years* is useful for illustrating the manner used to differentiate this material. For instance, Figure 8.1 shows an isolated section from the string quartet as it occurs in *Valley of Years* (the gamelan part has been removed in this figure). Apparent from this example is the presence of rests separating the changing ‘harmonies’ of the music. This musical tendency, one of stopping and starting, is persistent throughout the string quartet within *Valley of Years*; however, it also presented an opportune way to work with this type of content in *Ghost Estates*. And, in the case of *Ghost Estates*, I was able to use these open spaces to alter the music mainly by way of extending certain voices from the quartet and listening for the most engaging combinations of material that were already present from earlier formal processes (described in detail in chapter 7). All and all, these alterations in *Ghost Estates* presents a clear distinction from the way this very similar content exists in *Valley of Years*.

The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, consisting of four staves: Violin I (vln I), Violin II (vln II), Viola (vln a.), and Violoncello (vc.). The score is written in treble clef for all parts. It features a series of chords and intervals, many of which are labeled with Roman numerals and superscripts, such as IV¹¹, III¹¹, II¹¹, I⁷, IV⁶, II¹, III², IV⁸, IV⁷, I², III⁹, II⁷, and III⁷. Some labels are accompanied by '8va' or '15ma' indicating octave transpositions. The dynamics are marked with 'f' (forte) and '8va' (octave). The score shows a sequence of chords and intervals across four measures, with rests separating the changing harmonies. The first measure starts with a rest in all parts, followed by a series of chords and intervals in the second, third, and fourth measures. The score is presented in a clean, professional layout with a dashed line at the bottom.

The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, comparing two versions of a passage. The score is arranged in four staves: Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Viola (vln. a.), and Cello (vln. c.).

- Violin I (vln. I):** Shows two versions of a melodic line. The top version (Valley of Years) has an extended note in the 3rd bar, marked with a dashed line and '8va'. The bottom version (Ghost Estates) shows the original notation.
- Violin II (vln. II):** Shows an extended note in the 4th bar in the top version, marked with a dashed line and '8va'. The bottom version shows the original notation.
- Viola (vln. a.):** Shows an extended note in the 2nd bar in the top version, marked with a dashed line and '8va'. The bottom version shows the original notation.
- Cello (vln. c.):** Shows the original notation for both versions, with no extensions.

Dynamic markings include *mp*, *ppp*, *pp*, *mf*, and *p*. Articulation markings include *8va* and *15va*. Chord symbols like *IV¹¹*, *III¹¹*, *IV⁸*, *IV⁷*, *I⁷*, *IV⁶*, *II¹¹*, *IV¹*, *I²*, *III⁹*, *II⁷*, and *III⁷* are present above the notes.

Figure 8.1 – A comparison between the stand-alone string quartet of *Ghost Estates* (lower image) and the way in which the material was combined in *Valley of Years* (top image). In the lower image, the 3rd bar of violin I shows how one voice from the string quartet was extended; similarly, the 4th bar of the violin II and the 2nd bar of the viola part (which runs into the 3rd bar) were all extended. Whereas, the cello remains from the lower example (*Ghost Estates*) remains unaltered from how it occurred in *Valley of Years*.

Once again, the process of altering the voices (seen in figure 8.1), was achieved using rather intuitive means, however, that is to say there was no formal adherence to maintaining the strict still present from the *LRC*. Instead, I simply used a more intuitive manner of composing, which entailed a great deal of listening and assessing a limited range of options. These choices were based upon actively trying to find engaging combinations of pitches — particularly those with “lively” beat frequencies. Also, the frequencies chosen often resulted from my attempt to create audible continuity between the different harmonic instances integral to the entire composition. Lastly, other deviations distinguishing *Ghost Estates* from the string quartet within *Valley of Years*, were decisions specific to tempi— for instance, I decided to speed up certain passages whilst finalising the piece. Greater detail was also given to enhance the nuances in the string writing, such as including more specification with respect to *sul ponticello* and *sul tasto*. Fundamentally though, what remained intact was the overall structure of the string quartet — as it had been extracted from *Valley of Years*. Yet to reiterate, the essential quality of the musical structure in both *Ghost Estates* and *Valley of*

Years clearly remains inherited — and thus is highly mimetic — of the isorhythmic organisation first seen in the *Large Rhythmic Canon*.

8.1 *Ghost Estates* – implications of composition

Overall, I am content with the way *Ghost Estates* emerged out of a pre-existing composition (i.e. *Valley of Years*). Fundamentally, within this commentary I see the presence of these two works as a clear example of how I engaged in a mimetic practice that was more self-referential. *Ghost Estates* furthermore demonstrates a composition with a more singular musical style; however, it does this whilst obfuscating a more overt presentation of the canonic procedures described in chapter seven. Alongside this obfuscation, the creative potential and expressive possibilities of the same microtonal tuning system are thoroughly explored. Still, it should be remembered that *Ghost Estates* came into existence from first subtracting all of the gamelan material *Valley of Years*. This is important as such a process inherently underlines a clear connection to working with a plurality of materials, whilst illustrating a process representative of scaling back and focusing more exclusively on a singular compositional idea. Additionally, *Ghost Estates* demonstrates how the presence and the "scaffolding" of the *Large Rhythmic Canon* was once again used to organise and construct a composition of this nature.

And, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the string quartet material in *Valley of Years* used sonority and timbre in a way that was very much influenced from James Tenney's work *Arbor Vitae*. Naturally, *Ghost Estates* retains this same stylistic influence, yet the isolation of the string quartet material all the more highlights my degree of mimetic compartment of Tenney's model — a renewed context which reveals a more conscious influence of the timbral sonority present *Arbor Vitae*.

8.2 *Rustic Sea Riser* – origins and electronics

In connection to extending and differentiating musical material from *Ghost Estates*, *Valley of Years* and the *Large Rhythmic Canon*, I will now discuss how this also influenced a shorter piece of mine, *Rustic Sea Riser*, which was written in 2014 for solo bass clarinet, electronics, and film. This piece was conceived as a collaboration with the clarinetist Marij van Gorkom; and additionally, it was written around the idea of creating a solo piece for bass clarinet which could incorporate fixed-electronics and a film. Discussing its presence in the commentary connects its development to similar materials to those seen in both *Valley of Years* and *Ghost Estates*, however, the piece differs with respect to how I approached the element of film and music in several works contained in this commentary. This is an

important issue to mention, as it is relevant to my music and video piece (*Proposition of Fossils*), which I will discuss in chapter 10.

Chronologically, *Rustic Sea Riser* was largely composed while I was half-way through composing *Valley of Years*. Given this chronology I used its composition as a means to work through ideas I was developing for this larger composition. Perhaps though, the similarity between *Rustic Sea Riser* and *Valley of Years* is hard to discern from a score; nonetheless, the relatedness between these pieces is present mainly from the fact that the piece's form, tonality, pitch content, and rhythm were inherently re-mixed from *Valley of Years*.

Overall, the similarity between *Rustic Sea Riser* and *Valley of Years* is most easily heard in the fixed-electronics part that I composed for *Rustic Sea Riser*. This material is highly emulative of the form and pitch content used for *Valley of Years* — essentially it is refracted musical content from the latter composition. Also, a similar form is present within *Rustic Sea Riser*, namely a cyclical structure punctuated by gong-cycles that originated from the structure of *Valley of Years*. This is most evident from hearing low frequency tones, often ones emulative of gongs, that serve to punctuate the form of this piece. Moreover, many musical ideas in the electronic part of *Rustic Sea Riser* borrowed directly from the gamelan composition found within *Valley of Years*. Yet regarding the electronic-sonorities (tape-part) in this piece, the main difference was that I changed certain synthesizer patches (using Logic 9). This involved significantly altering them from factory settings, vis-à-vis changing envelopes and adding a host of filters until the sounds were, for me, sufficiently distinctive. A second element with *Rustic Sea Riser* — connected to both *Valley of Years* and *Ghost Estates* — is the presence of the sinewave sonorities heard throughout the piece's duration. This material was originally developed for my electronic realisation of the *Ghost Estates*, however, in *Rustic Sea Riser* I used many of the same electronic sonorities whilst also making a good deal of spatial and timbral variation to this material (i.e. panning and adding certain filters). Also, an entirely different element brought into the *Rustic Sea Riser* was my inclusion of a brief audio sample lifted from a piece by Cécile Babiolle⁵³ — namely, an online video of her 2012 piece *BZZZ!*. I admittedly pilfered a very small amount of audio content from this work; but I also significantly varied the material and largely layered it into *Rustic Sea Riser* in a way that this sample became part of the music's textural background.

⁵³ Small samples were taken from the audio for *Rustic Sea Riser*.
Cécile Babiolle. "BZZZ! (2012)" *Vimeo*. November 20, 2012. <https://vimeo.com/43903721>

8.3 *Rustic Sea Riser* – bass clarinet content

In *Rustic Sea Riser*, the content of the bass clarinet is chiefly melodic in nature. This melodic focus is largely because the content in this piece emerged from the same 'skeletal' gamelan melody (*balungan*) that is present in *Valley of Years*. However, not wanting or even being able to compose a gamelan piece for this solo instrument led me to also augment this piece with rather frequent usage of microtonality and multiphonics. Nonetheless, my use of microtonality and multiphonics had direct connections with trying to mimic non-standardised temperaments and timbral qualities in both gamelan ensembles as well as the sound world characterising *Valley of Years*. Thus, *Rustic Sea Riser* is work which evokes the core melodic quality of the gamelan part to *Valley of Years*, which was facilitated to an extent by adding microtonal accidentals. (see figure 8.2).

Principally, I believe my usage of multiphonics in this work was an interest that took the piece in a different direction — one that was less connected to other pieces presented in this commentary. For this reason, I need to mention that this interest was not consciously mimetic of any specific musical model. In fact, I only consulted documentation and met with performers to better understand certain characteristics about the instrument's abilities, which included learning more specifically about certain multi-phonics I eventually used in the work.

The image displays three staves of musical notation for bass clarinet. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It includes performance instructions: 'lip up' above the first note, 'ord.' above the second, and '(sim)' above the third. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes with various microtonal accidentals (sharps, flats, and naturals). A dynamic marking of *mp* is placed at the end of the staff. The second staff continues the melody with similar microtonal accidentals and a dynamic marking of *pp*. A bracket labeled 'submerged scene' spans the end of this staff and the beginning of the third. The third staff features a series of notes with dynamic markings: *mf*, *mp*, *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *pppp*, with a crescendo hairpin indicating increasing volume. The notation includes various microtonal accidentals throughout.

Figure 8.2 – An extract from the ending of *Rustic Sea Riser*. Evident in this example is the usage of a microtonal accidentals. These were included to create a non-tempered mode, evocative of a *laras pelog* used in *Valley of Years*.

This implies that despite having encountered and absorbed a wealth of musical examples for the bass clarinet, my mimetic compoment towards any specific musical models — from the instrument's growing repertoire — was unintended. Instead, any comparisons (surely some will arise from this work) resulted more from my choice to include multiphonics within this piece, as this was a decision with certain inevitable stylistic associations.

8.4 *Rustic Sea Riser* – Final Thoughts and Implications

Fingerings for both the microtones and multi-phonics within *Rustic Sea Riser* were worked out with both the original performer (Marij van Gorkom) as well with Enric Sans Moreana. On a practical level, the piece is now more indebted to the Sans Moreana, who took greater interest in the music and spent more time experimenting with possible finger-combinations for multiphonics that would better suit the piece as well as his particular instrument (see figure 8.3).

The figure displays four staves of musical notation for Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.) in G major, illustrating fingerings for a microtonal scale. Each staff is accompanied by diagrams showing fingerings for specific notes, with black dots for closed fingers and white circles for open fingers. The first staff shows notes from G4 to D5 with fingerings: G (index), G# (index), A (index), Bb (index), B (index), C (index), C# (index), D (index), D# (index), E (index), E# (index), F (index), F# (index), G (index). The second staff shows notes from G4 to D5 with fingerings: G (index), G# (index), A (index), Bb (index), B (index), C (index), C# (index), D (index), D# (index), E (index), E# (index), F (index), F# (index), G (index). A note marked with a vertical bar above it is labeled (G#). The third staff shows notes from G4 to D5 with fingerings: G (index), G# (index), A (index), Bb (index), B (index), C (index), C# (index), D (index), D# (index), E (index), E# (index), F (index), F# (index), G (index). The fourth staff shows notes from G4 to D5 with fingerings: G (index), G# (index), A (index), Bb (index), B (index), C (index), C# (index), D (index), D# (index), E (index), E# (index), F (index), F# (index), G (index). A note marked with a vertical bar above it is labeled (G#). A note marked with a vertical bar above it is labeled * Embouchure (lip-down).

Figure 8.3 – An extract from the front matter to *Rustic Sea Riser* showing the suggested fingerings for realising the microtonal scale.

Lastly, aside from the content of the bass clarinet, the main artistic impression made by *Rustic Sea Riser* is one exemplifying a multi-disciplinary approach to my artistic practice. This is important to mention, especially in connection to this piece, as this is an interest (from this stage on in my commentary) that will need to be discussed with other compositions. Essentially though, *Rustic Sea Riser* is the first work in this commentary to embrace the inclusion of film. Moreover, the presence of this film, along with other films used in combination with my music, will be more thoroughly discussed in a separate chapter of this discussion (Chapter 10, *Mimetic Wunderkammer*). However, at present, what should be said about this film is that it was principally composed "onto" the music, rather than the music being composed to support a fixed film. Therefore, a clear musical form was already in existence before I began to edit found video-footage onto the structure of the music. This process is important to mention as structural elements from both *Valley of Years* as well as the over-arching influence of the *Large Rhythmic Canon* were musical pieces that, by virtue of their embedded presence within *Rustic Sea Riser*, also affected the way the video content was edited. A primary example of this can easily be seen in the structural cutting of video, which corresponds with the presence of similar sections in the music of *Rustic Sea Riser*. This same structural design remains as an artefact in this piece, inherited from the gong-cycle in *Valley of Years*, but noticeable in the overall structure, musical flow, and video-editing featured in *Rustic Sea Riser*.

9. *veranderen stasis*

9.0 in brief

In this chapter, I will discuss a piece composed in 2015 which presently has the working title, *veranderen stasis*⁵⁴. Overall, *veranderen stasis* exemplifies how four rather divergent materials were presented and combined in a short chamber work. Moreover, the tactics I used in this piece led to dovetailed transitions between content evoking distinctly different stylistic periods. Lastly, even though the piece is not fully finished, its relevance to this commentary will be clear when the piece is examined to a sufficient level of detail.

9.1 *veranderen stasis*

The composition of this piece was prompted by a performance/workshop at Brunel University held in April 2015. The piece was written for five available musicians from the English Ensemble *DistractFold*, and was scored for: Bb clarinet, percussion, and string trio. Largely because I still view this piece as a work in progress, my analysis of *veranderen stasis* will be relatively brief. This is because, to some extent the work's incompleteness prevents a full analysis; nevertheless the composition illustrates a clear economical and pluralistic way of working with source material. For this reason, I want to examine its content and arrangement of material, primarily with respect to how *veranderen stasis* exhibits a manner of poly-stylistic composition and how it uses mimetic comportment to evoke musical references. These references include: Anton Webern's string trio (Opus 20); Schubert's string trio in Bb major (D.471); a more oblique reference to a quintessential moment from Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (the first bar of the piece, featuring a clarinet trill and glissando); and lastly, a percussion part uses a phasing technique rather similar to minimalist phasing techniques (however it stands greatly in contrast to many of the stylistic associations with this particular musical idiom).

9.2 Building from a fragment of Webern

In reference to Anton Webern's string trio (Opus 20), I need to first highlight the manner in which I feature this piece at bar 12, in *veranderen stasis*. This occurs almost by way of a direct quotation of Webern's aforementioned piece (see figure 9.1). In fact, only small changes to the arrangement of initial quotation were made, which specifically include extending its entrance and some of the notes from Webern's original. Thus, the original

⁵⁴ This translates – in slightly peculiar Dutch – to something along the lines of 'to change stasis'.

appearance of Webern's row (D#, E, Ab, G, D, C#, A, Bb, F, F#, B, C) is maintained in my work. However, the appearance of this fragment is more important to the piece than it initially appears, due to the fact that this element (of Webern's original pitch organisation) is consequently applied to other levels of *veranderen stasis*.

Fig 9.1 – Documentation showing the similarity between the first two bars of Webern's Opus 20 (top example) and how this reference was evoked starting at bar 12 in *veranderen stasis* (bottom example).

9.3 The Consequential Fragment

The effect of this pitch organisation on the rest of the material is visible by quickly looking at some of the other main figures in the composition. The clarinet trill, makes a literal but rather oblique reference to the beginning of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. This reference is not immediately obvious as the trill occurs many times throughout the piece. However, the way this musical figure is presented throughout much of the work is based on system of transposition, whereby a major 2nd trill reveals a relationship derived from Webern's original tone row (D#, E, Ab, G, D, C#, A, Bb, F, F#, B, C). This is more clearly understood by looking at figure 9.2 (below), where the first three iterations of this trill show how the same intervallic relationship (derived from Webern's initial row), which were consequently adapted onto the first three instances of this clarinet figure.



Figure 9.2 – These three extracts from *veranderen stasis* show how the trill of a major second is transposed in accordance to the initial tone row found in Webern’s string trio, Opus 20 (note: all examples are at concert pitch and in the treble clef).

Almost incessantly, the clarinet performs this “trilling gesture” throughout the first two thirds of the piece, all the while following an intervallic sequence derived from the same Webern fragment. Eventually, upon reaching its 11th iteration the clarinet breaks free from this figure and finally reveals a more developed version of the reference to Gershwin’s rhapsodic exposition (see figure 9.3).



Figure 9.3 – At bar 118 the clarinet at last breaks free from incessantly playing the trilling figure. This culminates into a clarinet glissando (*alla Gershwin*) in bar 121.

After this rather rhetorical gesture, the composition moves towards being more freely composed; and, apart from a few moments of recapitulation, it is from this point on that the more previously compartmentalized musical elements are more heterogeneously combined. After about a minute or so of being in this stage of development, the piece comes to a rather abrupt ending. This ending, albeit sufficiently functional, is still something I am not content with (and as I will later explain) and stands out as an aspect in the work I intend to revise in the future.

Figure 9.4a – After the Gershwin glissando reference the roles of the instruments become orchestrated and integrated together in a much more free manner.

Figure 9.4b – Additionally, this example further shows how the clarinet departs significantly from playing the trilling figure; instead (in this example) the viola has taken up this role, with the violin and cello echoing earlier content.

However, aside from focusing on the way that the work presently ends, I would now like to address yet another additional effect of the same Webern fragment within *veranderen stasis*. This is found that in the musical treatment of another re-occurring section that is played by the string trio; a rhythmic figure based only upon three pitches, that are adapted from pitch content which sequentially progresses through the 12 notes of Webern's initial tone row in his Opus 20 (e.g. D#, E, Ab, G, D, C#, A, Bb, F, F#, B, C). This is more clearly seen from looking at figure 9.5, which outlines the first occurrences of this musical event.

~ *veranderen stasis* ~

Figure 9.5 – The above string trio motif occurs throughout *veranderen stasis*; each time this motif occurs it uses three notes, moving in sequence through the original row, borrowed from the opening of Webern's Opus 20.

The content in the above figure once more underlines a type of organisation that was carried forth from the initial Webern quotation and into *veranderen stasis*. This fundamentally demonstrates a way of composing that evokes mimetic strategies to an extent where they influence the overall coherence and connection between the varied content present within the work.

9.3 percussion - a complex minimal gesture

veranderen stasis begins with the percussionist playing roughly a four-bar phrase (figure 9.6). With respect to its rhythm this phrase is rather complicated, as it purposefully alludes to common rhythmic mannerisms found in the style of new complexity (a musical style where these type of *nested-tuplets* are commonplace). This phrase presents all of the percussion sonorities found in the main percussion-setup (8 sounds) for this piece. Additionally, the phrase continues to be reiterated throughout *veranderen stasis*; although, a phasing process is applied to the same material.

Figure 9.6 – The opening of *veranderen stasis* demonstrates a rather tricky rhythm, one which then undergoes variations via a 'phasing' process.

This involves eight percussion sonorities being shifted through, a rhythm that is more or less the same. As a technique, this type of process borrows from minimalist music (e.g. Steve Reich's *Piano Phase*) — yet, the abstraction of the initial phrase, which is arrived at from both the rhythm itself and the absence of pitch, obscures any clear stylistic association with the aforementioned style. Instead, every time this phrase occurs, slight alterations are

presented by way of phasing the rhythmic-pattern. This underlines a process which essentially presents an atmosphere of similarity and difference every time this phrase re-occurs.



Figure 9.6a – The next occurrence of this percussion shifts the ordering of sonority by only one note. Overall, this 24-note percussion pattern is gradually phased throughout the entirety of *veranderen stasis*.

9.4 Oblique mimesis – Schubert quotation

Earlier in this chapter I addressed that Schubert's string trio in Bb major (D.471) was also a piece of music that brought into the fold of *veranderen stasis*. To briefly expand on how this was done requires it is necessary to compare my subtle imitation of these small borrowed fragments borrowed from this particular Schubert trio. For instance, the initial quote of Schubert, is a cadential passage from bar 25 (see figure 9.7). Granted that the tempo of Schubert's trio (D.471) is marked *allegro*; thus, the first alteration made to this content was to significantly slow down the music.



Figure 9.7 – Beginning on the last beat of bar 24 the above is a 'patched together' image of the short Schubert quotation (from D.471) that first appears in *veranderen stasis*.

Furthermore, it is important to note though that the register and initial pitch of this music is largely preserved in my rendition; however, quickly the music is obviously transformed via quarter tones and altered rhythms, offsetting the vertical relationships found in the original (see below). The general gesture of the phrase is also elongated, giving the listener some sense of romantic familiarity, yet this was done in a way where the sense of musical time was purposefully slowed down.

Figure 9.8 – The above (when seen in comparison to figure 9.7) demonstrates how elements of the Schubert phrase were preserved, whilst also being transformed into entirely different.

As *veranderen stasis* progresses, the same type of mimetic treatment is again applied to the same and many other short fragments from the same Schubert piece. However, in their successive appearances an important difference occurs. This is because the short musical fragments from Schubert were transposed according to the same intervallic structure borrowed from Webern's aforementioned tone-row. To clarify this, the original row (D#, E, Ab, G, D, C#, A, Bb, F, F#, B, C) was used to guide the way this content would be transposed each time it occurs in the piece. For example, the next time the reference to Schubert occurs, it consequently begins on Eb (see figure 9.9).

Figure 9.9 – the same imitated fragment from Schubert is now transposed a semi-tone higher; revealing an additional connection to Webern's original row – D#, E, Ab, G, D, C#, A, Bb, F, F#, B, C.

As figure 9.9 implies, there is a degree of repetition at this moment, principally because the same phrase from Schubert (see figure 9.7) is mimetically evoked, although now appearing a semi-tone higher. This type of compositional design is then applied to other selected fragments from Schubert's string trio (specifically bars 80 [twice], 89 [twice], 130, 132, 152 and 147). These obliquely mimicked Schubert moments are relatively easy to spot when looking through the score, however for reference, bars where this material occurs are as follows: 20, 39, 49, 67, 88, 93, 137, and 145. To any astute reader, the question may arise as

to why there are only eight such Schubert recreations instead of 12 (which can be inferred as being necessary if one logically extends the presence of Webern's transposition system to the this material). Once again, this absence personally underpins my claim that this piece is not fully finished, however, I would now wish to address this point by stating how I intend to complete the piece.

9.5 Future direction for the composition

As it has already been said, the present version of the score and the accompanying recording are a documentation of *veranderen stasis*, which is a work I view as not yet being entirely finished. Nevertheless, despite this somewhat incomplete status, I believe its present level of documentation sufficiently shows how the source material outlined in this chapter has been brought into 'a pluralistic spectrum of the mimetic'. Specifically, this includes my treatment of material — which underlines a methodical and controlled formalisation of very divergent content. Also, the compositional strategies employed in this piece demonstrate a variety of ways that I have reinterpreted conventional ways of structuring music, inherently recontextualising them in a dynamic and nested musical dialectic.

Lastly, with respect to eventually finishing this work, I would like to build upon (and conclude) some of the procedures I have presented in this chapter. Specifically, this includes the percussive phasing and including four more mimetic moments that evoke moments from Schubert's string trio in Bb major (D.471) — specifically with the aim to conclude the 12-tone transposition cycle). Finally, I also would like to take greater liberty with respect to integrating and mixing all of the materials so far discussed in this chapter, however, how this will exactly occur has yet to be fully realised.

10 Mimetic Wunderkammer

10.0 *Proposition of Fossils* – Aesthetic Objectives

The last piece that is part of the PhD commentary is *Proposition of Fossils*⁵⁵. It is a substantial work composed in 2015 in collaboration with the Dutch/Polish ensemble, known as Omega Impact and was written for the following instruments: recorder, clarinet, bassoon (doubling melodica and speaker), electric guitar (doubling speaker and singer), piano, percussion, double bass, and electronics. Furthermore, it should be noted that my amicable relationship with the ensemble incited a collaboration where I was encouraged — and felt comfortable — taking part as an electric guitarist. Additionally, my role as a performer was expanded (unexpectedly) to include performing as a vocalist, which also involved speaking and singing.

Proposition of Fossils is important to the commentary because it is likely the most overt example of a pluralistic and inclusive compositional approach found in this PhD. The piece essentially attempts to deal with presenting a multiplicity of source materials in one enclosed work. Its range of mimetic styles — both musical and visual — create a work that is inherently expansive and extreme in its combinatorial scope. From an artistic standpoint, this treatment of material demonstrates an approach trying to deal with an abundance of content. This fact alone, champions a montage approach to musical form; one underpinned by a constructed tension pivotal to both the music and video present throughout the work. In terms of duration, *Proposition of Fossils* is an important addition to this commentary, being that it is the second largest composition within this body of artistic research. Presently, the work lasts for 30 minutes — although at some point in the future, I would like to extend the piece into a larger theatrical (operatic) work. Yet for now, in its current form, the piece presents an abundance of both musical and visual content. Thus, in order to discuss such a composition I believe it is necessary to go over some of the main artistic objective(s) connected this multifaceted piece.

The duration alone (30 minutes) was a decision I made consciously, in order to realise a singular work with a significant duration that could inherently accommodate an expansive range of content (both musical and visual). Principally, I wanted to compose a piece that would reify the challenge of making a work out of many dissimilar and similar elements.

⁵⁵ For an online Audio-Video Reference see documentation of the 2016 performance at Splendor, Amsterdam: Flett, Graham. "Proposition of Fossils" YouTube, 25 April, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1473&v=FeEj2hNiCV0

Simply put, I was fully aware that inherent contrast(s) between source material would often be emphasised in this composition. In recognition of this, I saw the scope and duration of the work as necessary, largely to allow sufficient musical time to balance certain and inevitable 'paroxysms of incoherence'. Namely, this refers to moments of confusion (aesthetic dissonance) I knew would occur given the fact I was consciously sequencing many unrelated musical and visual objects into one work. Despite the challenges however of dealing with such an over-abundance of material, I still wanted to stress my attempt to overcome this incongruity of content. Essentially, I wanted *Proposition of Fossils* to reveal to a listener/viewer an effortless sense of fluid motion; one existing despite the incongruity of some of the connections made between the content in the work. In pursuing this and other aims, I arrived at an analogy for this compositional intention: experiencing this composition in a way that one would experience a carefully curated walk through a *wunderkammer* (cabinet of curiosities). Moreover, the aesthetic of this *wunderkammer* analogy can be applied to both to the musical and visual domains present in *Proposition of Fossils*.

10.1 Propositions of Precedent (Models)

Musically speaking, the wide range of content in this piece includes my acknowledgment and often oblique referencing to material connected to traditions of serialism, jazz, electroacoustic composition, indie rock, free improvisation, and other iterations encompassed with contemporary classical music (e.g. Robert Ashley's video operas). The content also includes sections of other compositions already discussed in this portfolio (such as *Rustic Sea Riser*, *Valley of Years*, and other works I will mention later on in this chapter). Compositionally, once I had arrived at seeing the totality of musical content I wanted to work with, I began to envision ways of reinforcing and narrating the material's stylistic distinctions vis-à-vis film. In this regard, reinforcing both musical distinctions between content as well as similarities accomplished by creating a filmic narrative; a manner of "narration" that was carefully constructed (edited) from an array of found video sources⁵⁶. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the way I composed this piece began from the perspective of music coming first. However, as the compositional process took root, a few filmic passages took precedence over certain musical decisions. However, it is safe to say that the process of music-leading the image, and vice versa, was treated with a good deal of give and take.

⁵⁶ A full list of sources appears in the credits of the film and in the videography of this text.

Elaborating specifically on the musical influences of Negativland⁵⁷ and Robert Ashley⁵⁸ I mention first the video-operas of Robert Ashley for providing me with a clear model of how I could combine video, music, and text. Clearly, I felt connected to these examples whilst composing this piece. Moreover, I believe this influence provided a clear model for my own conscious mimesis of these sources, although my mimetic approach to this example was handled with a degree of quantifiable reverence and jest. The other model I see as being connected to this piece was to a group known as Negativland. This San Francisco group (who were influential in my youth) did not consciously affect decisions whilst writing *Proposition of Fossils*, however, their catalogue of video-work offers a very relevant precedent to the type of montage form visible in the composition. Retrospectively, I also now see Negativland's work as being discreetly influential; a lasting influence and discreetly mimetic with regards to my use of text and electronics into the entirety of this piece. Yet when speaking about the wealth of musical content existing in this piece, it is clear that there are many influences and mimetic impulses at work. For instance, in *Proposition of Fossils* many of the allusions to source material are on the whole not objects I closely copied. Instead, I would posit that I often made use of a type of mimetic comportment that only sought to portray a range of musical characters and associations. In this regard, my oblique mimesis was less concerned with bringing forth close copies and more interested in revealing skewed and distorted refractions of these sorts of musical examples. In short, *Proposition of Fossils* does not manifest very relatable forms of close mimetic comportment (e.g. to Ashley, etc.), rather, it offers up comparable musical equivalents — purposefully conceived to create provocative levels of similarity and distinction.

10.2 *Proposition of Fossils* — Video Content

With respect to the content of the video, it can be said that the imagery largely dealt with the following themes:

- i) Flying footage: the act of flying features heavily in the film, and this was taken primarily from drone-cameras as well as other fast-moving video (for instance, drones that were falling or spinning out of control and landing in water or on the ground;
- ii) subterranean or water based footage: for example, “amateur submarine” videos as well as aquatic content (often featuring jellyfish). This content also included footage from drone-cameras after they had crashed into water and were either submerging or had completed this process;

⁵⁷ Webdrude. "Truth in Advertising – Negativland". *YouTube*, 27 March, 2009.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQqWh8xfLgg>

⁵⁸ Ashley, Robert. "Perfect Lives 1 – The Park Privacy Rules." *YouTube*, 4 November, 2013.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgS_TYh1rO4&t=269s

- iii) content depicting singular and more static narratives: characterised mostly by the three memorable characters/people cruising down a river in a speedboat — essentially the protagonists of the film. Also, seen in the footage of an old man swimming and pensively in thought;
- iv) unusual or rather surrealistic content from old TV commercials: 1980s and 1990s TV content was featured, alongside other light-hearted elements (e.g. the two rather misplaced dogs);
- v) visual curiosities: moving images and those principally connected to ground-based footage or content portraying travel and movement (trains, cars, roller-coasters) were often used to pace the video content;
- vi) video featuring aspects of war, artificial intelligence, video-games, and the ‘presence’ or suggestion of surveillance.

The above taxonomy *Proposition of Fossils'* video content is still not entirely complete, yet it provides an overview of the many visual threads contained in the work. Naturally, relating this content back to music requires me to discuss how I superimposed the video footage with composed musical passages. Explaining this will also then give me a chance to discuss the musical source material of *Proposition of Fossils* in more detail, thereby revealing specific manners and examples of mimetic comportment within the work. Also, I will use this analysis to highlight other instances of how several of my own pre-existing compositions were refracted and incorporated into the fold of this composition.

10.3 Proposition of Fossils – Musical Content

Similar to the video content that was just outlined, the musical content in *Proposition of Fossils* was also extensive and divergent. For now though, the musical material can be summarised as follows:

- Electroacoustic (Featured Moments and Background)
- 12-tone Motives & Textural Elements
- Debunker (piano piece) & Interlude
- Timbre, Detuned & Prepared Electric Guitar & Improvised Elements
- Spoken Text & Eventual Song
- Refracted works (or my own pre-existing)

These musical categorisations are only presented to guide the reader with this discussion of this composition, it should be noted that there are many overlapping moments between these classifications. Thus, the proceeding text will focus on musical and mechanical specifics found in the music, as well as providing necessary insight into the content and conscious imitation (when present) of other sources.

10.3.1 – Electroacoustic Material (Featured Moments and Background)

There is a significant amount of electronic-sounds present within *Proposition of Fossils*.

Overall, these sounds can be grouped into two main divisions material, with a smaller third

set being possible to classify as chiefly assisting with musical transitions and providing sonic colour. I will elaborate on the first set of electronic-materials, by describing how it was largely based on a single audio-file entitled *June-Chord*. The origins of this material went back several years (to a time in 2011), however, the actual audio content of the file was a progression of chords, made as a sequence of 5 separate musical lines. In turn, these lines were given specific waveforms (sinewave and squarewave) and were then assigned corresponding amplitudes. This sequence, which is closest to its original form, is heard in the initial exposition⁵⁹. Yet throughout the piece this material is constantly transposed to reinforce the various tonalities suggested by the performed musical material. This results in creating numerous transpositions of this chord, as well as reduced versions (where only one voice was present or the speed of the audio-file was sped up to a point that the connection to the initial audio was no longer audible).

With respect to interacting with notions of copying and differentiating content, the above discussion needs to be seen as an act that once again demonstrates mimetic comportment within my music. Granted, in this commentary, this is the first time I have discussed this process in connection with electronic composition; nevertheless, many techniques used to compose the electronic textures in this piece, were, for the most part, my reference to tried-and-true vocabulary of composing with this medium (transposition, speeding audio up, decreasing/increasing tempi, playing things backwards, etc.). Additionally, other electronic material used for *Proposition of Fossils* were based upon specifically tuning sinewaves to realise microtonal sonorities (chords). This interest, again connects to the sinewave material I composed for *Valley of Years* and *Ghost Estates*; although, unlike how it is presented in these works, *Proposition of Fossils* was chiefly about using these sounds far more freely and liberally. This is to say, in *Proposition of Fossils* I was re-visiting my own material in a way that was more akin to as if it were a found object. Thus, there is no adherence to a canonic structure with any of the audio borrowed from *Ghost Estates* or *Valley of Years*. And more often, this and other electronic material was assigned to certain video sources in this work. All of this suggest that the electronic materials in *Proposition of Fossils* existed more as surface feature of the music.⁶⁰ And upon first hearing these materials, it is understandable that they may be perceived like *flotsam* and *jetsam*; content initially seeming to bob

⁵⁹ Please see Appendix 1, audio for *Proposition of Fossils*, specifically: 10c_junechord

⁶⁰ A separate addition to the audio appendix, has been included with this commentary, so these sounds can be heard more independently. Please see Appendix 1, audio for *Proposition of Fossils*, specifically: 10d_noise_texture2

inconsequentially throughout the piece. However, this same content does at times play a more pivotal role, first by accompanying the music as an electroacoustic component and secondly, servicing the music at key moments by bridging disjunctions between disparate styles. The former aspect (accompanying) is evident where there is a clearer presence of electroacoustic tapestry (see bar 68, when the audio-sample of a Danish ‘can compactor’ is first featured). Overall, it can be said that the main role of the electroacoustic and electronic-material was to provide an ‘undercoating’ for other events to occur, and to actively bridge discontinuities between diverse sets of musical material. In this way, there are moments when certain pre-recorded audio mimics sounds from the musicians or vice versa. For now however I will elaborate on these characteristics when I discuss the sonorities produced by the prepared electric guitar.

10.3.2 – dodecaphonic motives and textural elements



Figure 10.1 – The above (bar 12) is the first occurrence of the guitar in *Proposition of Fossils* playing what is essentially 12-tone material. Although, it is not shown in this example, there is very little else happening when this figure is played by the guitar.

Throughout *Proposition of Fossils* the electric guitar frequently presents dodecaphonic fragments, yet none of these moments posits a reverent attempt to adopt a strict technique of serialism. And, although similar musical figures frequently appear throughout the 30-minute duration of the piece, it should be noted that there are, for instance, no retrogradable forms (etc.) of this basic row. Instead, the appearance of such musical content creates an atonal atmosphere, where the presence of material with no real tonal-centre fosters a mood in contrast to a more tonal and modal-oriented trajectory.



Figure 10.2 – Bar 91, presents another example where the guitar plays material that is evocative 12-tone music. However, this example also shows that there is a deviation in the order of pitches that was shown in the example in figure 10.1. Although, it is not shown in this example, there is very little else happening when this figure is played by the guitar.

Eventually, content such as that in figures 10.1 and 10.2, are orchestrated in ways which emphasize their anachronistic musical reference. A principle example of this occurs during a

later section in the piece, when this 12-tone motif develops into a musical episode having a pronounced and consistent groove (circa bar 277). Despite the music being rhythmically *in the pocket*, the unusualness of the pitch material (derived from the 12-tone row) can be heard to clash with the groove-oriented texture. Similarly, the electronics (tape-part) suggests an additional level of contrast, highlighting a certain musical anachronism present between the eclectic mixing of these different and unlikely musical unions.

Figure 10.3 (bar 277) – The above extract shows how the guitar-line, which is similar to the guitar-lines seen in figures 10.1 and 10.2, is expanded and orchestrated in a different context. The tempo in the above figure is *moderato*, and with the presence of the drum-beat and bass-line, a clear and consistent groove emerges from this texture.

10.3.3 - *Debunker* (separate piano piece) and interrupting interlude

Also present within *Proposition of Fossils* is an interlude that is broken up and interwoven throughout the work. This interlude, entitled *Debunker*, resulted from a transcribed improvisation of my own piano playing — separately refined into a solo piano etude (see figure 10.4 for an extract of this piece). Thus, the origins of this solo piece give the material a rather extemporized quality, especially when re-contextualised within *Proposition of Fossils*. Additionally, it should be stated that *Debunker*, prior to the composition of *Proposition of Fossils*, already existed with a companion film⁶¹; the impact of this was that parts of this initial film (and its music) were imported into the final version of this composition. This

⁶¹ Flett, Graham. "Debunker" *YouTube*, 22-01-2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=35&v=X5R9zXLnW7o

principally included using moments that were most opportune within this new context, but I also orchestrated parts of *Debunker* throughout the ensemble, often to enhance its musical clarity within the texture. The latter usually included extending sections from *Debunker* in order to provide greater connection to some of the following musical elements or ideas. In practice, this meant that the piano material often extended out from itself, effectively merging, growing, or becoming dovetailed with, for example, the pre-recorded (tape) parts. Overall, both the musical and video content from the film version of *Debunker* was integrated into *Proposition of Fossils*, with the effect being one that was largely used to interrupt a more established narrative line in the piece. This tactic was also one that was consciously reminiscent of television commercials — albeit, perhaps ones from a bygone era. In this way, they can be understood as interruptions that suddenly appear to thwart and disrupt a given narrative-line.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system is in 4/4 time, marked with a tempo of quarter note = 98. It begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with several triplet markings, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and triplets. The second system continues the piece, showing a change in time signature to 3/4 and back to 4/4, with a dynamic of forte (f). The third system starts with a piano (pp) dynamic and a 5-measure rest in the right hand, followed by a crescendo to forte (f) and a change in time signature to 4/4.

Figure 10.4 – At bar 68 in *Proposition of Fossils* there is a sudden flash of musical content that is rather stylistically different from what has already occurred. This was done on purpose, to introduce material that is stylistically provocative (i.e. aesthetically dissonant). The origins of this particular content come directly from a short piano piece entitled, *Debunker*.

10.3.4 – Timbre, Detuned & Prepared Electric Guitar & Improvised Elements

For a composer, a collaboration with an ensemble inevitably involves careful consideration of the involved musicians' performance practice. On this note, I should state that at times collaborating with *Omega Impact* was unpredictable; their logistical reality does not easily allow for ample time to work on a piece's details. And such challenges become all the more compounded by the fact the ensemble plays without a conductor. Yet, despite these situational factors, a more positive attribute of the group is that they are far more adept and relaxed about doing things in the moment, namely: improvising or taking spoken and textual direction. These qualities prompted me to retain a degree of openness in the notation, largely because I was comfortable that select sections could be more effectively filled-in by using guided forms of improvisation and instruction (see figure 10.6).

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Piano (Pno.), Percussion (Perc.), and Double Bass (D.B.). At the top, a box labeled 'R' indicates a 15-second duration. The Piano part is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the instruction 'guiro the keys or make a grating percussive sound' and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Percussion part is written on a single staff with the instruction 'make a grating / scratchy sound' and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Double Bass part is written on a single staff with the instruction 'make a grating / scratchy sound' and a dynamic marking of *mp*. All three parts feature a long, horizontal line that spans the duration of the section, with some vertical tick marks indicating specific points in time.

Figure 10.6 – At bar 98, simple but effective instructions were used to create an improvised texture; this was also accompanied by the electronic (tape) part.

My awareness of there being little rehearsal time also encouraged me to re-consider the need for extreme exactitude in my notation. This is most clearly visible in the part for *prepared electric guitar*, given that only textual instructions have been used. Nevertheless, this openness of this notation was effective, easily accommodating the unpredictable quality of the instrument. Additionally, notating the part in this way avoided the music from becoming unnecessarily bogged down with overly complex information, which in this particular case, was not required for the musical atmosphere I was creating. Similarly, other instruments in *Proposition of Fossils* were also notated in the same type of fashion, with sections suggesting freer interpretation by way of open-notation or simple textual instructions (see figure 10.7).

AA 26 seconds

Pno. *f* interior harmonics
pick your favourite partial and never repeat the same tone

Improvise - cymbal scrapes, build tension with image

Perc.

Figure 10.7 – The above illustrates how simple textual instructions were used to communicate to the musicians about how to produce certain sounds and sonorities.

10.3.5 – Spoken text & Eventual song

Throughout the course of *Proposition of Fossils*, there are several moments where spoken text is interjected into the texture of the music. In total, this spoken text appears six times: beginning first early on in the work (bar 24) and then re-appearing intermittently throughout the piece (bars 31, 51, 77) and also happening twice around bar 124. For the performance (featured in this portfolio), it was decided that the spoken text would be divided between two speakers (Grzegorz Marciniak and myself), consequently making the text more spatialized (antiphonal) as well as more rhythmic. Breaking up the text was done by devising an alternating pattern in which the text was read, with the division of roles being indicated in the score by using bold or italic typeface (see below). Additionally, the inclusion of such text, appears early on in the piece, which was done deliberately — evoking a traditional, albeit bizarre, sense of filmic narration.

Restive formation, based on the principle *that its circulation of content would overspill the container*.

Now in the same formula; Narcissus — in a similar kind of deception — the self, brought onto the still water, drawn from, confidence encoded into a dull belief.

System granted to bequeath those who **ramble up** and offer a level of **prominence**; something like **a fair hand**.

From where a reasoned position can deduce: What's up? Where's down?

Speaking of dreams and having a contemplative attitude about almost all of those terrors (terrors).

Requirement number one, a degree of unknowing, that puts the wolf far away from the sheep.

Figure 10.8 – The above is the full text as it occurs in the first half of *Proposition of Fossils*. The text takes on an antiphonal effect, as its utterance is divided between two performers.

The above text was, to a large extent, incorporated into the piece precisely because it created a more elusive and provocative atmosphere — inviting the listener/viewer into a surrealistic world. The unusual visuals and musical counterparts also added to this quality, with the text serving as a more poetic narrative, contained within the piece. Yet, at a certain point (after bar 124) moments featuring spoken text altogether stop. In fact, it is not until the 'final act' of *Proposition of Fossils* (bar 306) that this same text returns, however, the recapitulation of this text occurs in the form of a dramatic song that concludes the composition.

Restive formation is gone, but I remain here
Based on the principle that the circulation of content
Would overspill the container
Yet I remain here
Those who ramble up
And take a level of prominence
Something like a fair hand
From where a reasoned position
Can deduce: “What’s up? Where’s down?”
Now in the same formula
Narcissus – for a similar kind of deception
The self, brought onto the water
Confidence encoded into a dull belief.

Figure 10.9 – the above text shows the lyrics that were written for the concluding song that is present within *Proposition of Fossils*.

10.3.6 Presence of other works (from the portfolio) and a general summary

As it has been briefly mentioned already, *Proposition of Fossils* is a work with many connections to not only exterior musical models but also to many of my own compositions presented in this commentary. In fact there are clear passages within *Proposition of Fossils* that were directly lifted from *Rustic Sea Riser* (specifically all passages where the bass clarinet is the focal point of the music). Likewise, my electronic rendition of *Ghost Estates* was frequently used as audio content for the accompanying "tape-part" in the composition. And, as it was already discussed in this chapter, my transcription of a piano improvisation, known as *Debunker*, was integrated into several key moments of the musical fabric of *Proposition of Fossils*. In this regard the work is very much an amalgam of materials from other compositions. However, the combination of all the materials discussed in this chapter were assembled with a clear purpose and done consciously, celebrating an aesthetic of

unexpected montage and eclecticism. Nevertheless, given the wide range of musical sources and their presentation, an inherent critique of the work is that, on the whole, its holistic impact is too diffuse and unfocused. Undoubtedly, the integration of video combats aspects of the latter critique, given that the video accommodates and compliments the polystylism of the music — enhancing connections and adding a greater contextual affinity to the work's entirety. Lastly, *Proposition of Fossils* pushes the limits of my own musical eclecticism, doing so to a point I cannot easily surpass, at least not without designing a more rigorous organisational structure or system for grouping and containing such an abundance of musical and visual content.

11 Conclusions

11.0 Summation

In review of the ten pieces discussed in this body of artistic research⁶², it is now possible to take perspective on the merit and success, not only of the compositions themselves, but also of the methodologies taken to engage with the themes of mimesis and musical pluralism. Specifically, this will include a critical summary of the main compositional approaches taken and discussed within this commentary, as well as outlining potential future directions presented by these creative paths.

11.1 more often dialectical, heuristic and eclectic; less reverential

Undeniably, the scope of this commentary has been extensive. Yet creating a wide range of musical examples was intentional, as it facilitated a more thorough exploration of how mimetic comportment and musical pluralism tend to affect and shape my work. Secondly, composing a wide range and large amount of music connects with a fundamental issue brought up early on in this commentary, that being how mimetic comportment can exemplify Martha Hyde's four categorisations of imitative tendencies (i.e. reverential, heuristic, eclectic, and dialectical). Judging from the compositions featured in this discussion, I have concluded a significant amount of my music is concerned about dialectical ramifications posed by the combination of different types of source material. The latter notion, when understood pluralistically, further quantifies my own reference to notions of *aesthetic dissonance* and *aesthetic consonance*; terminology invented for this discussion for the purpose of clarifying how combining styles of music may compliment or inherently cause stylistic friction. Likewise, other dialectical concerns have been raised by the need to carefully position a plurality of mimetically conceived source material. However, in contrast to the frequency of this dialectical focus, my work rarely emphasised a reverential adherence, or connection with, known stylistic conventions. Instead, heuristic positioning or accounts of 'rule-making' led to the creation of a more self-referential forms of mimetic comportment — principally evident in *The Duke of Green* and also visible in the way the *Large Rhythmic Canon* was conceived and repeatedly applied to subsequent works, for instance *Valley of Years*. As examined in detail in chapter seven, *Valley of Years* did depict a reverential affinity to many tropes found in Javanese gamelan. However, evoking such tropes was done in a manner that was, by and

⁶² All ten pieces were discussed at length except *Lembah Tahun*, which was only mentioned in passing within chapter seven. The score to this work is part of Appendix 1.

large, mimetically oblique; typically demonstrating a heuristic approach, whereby I made and applied my own rules to a given context. Of course, certain works (e.g. *Proposition on Fossils* and *Air Troika, veranderen stasis*) consciously took an eclectic and dialectical position with respect to integrating and combining a critical mass of source material. In addition, the overall success of these aforementioned pieces (or any lack thereof) was dependent to a degree on the amount of rhetorical precision brought to these respective works.

11.2 Realising Initial Aims

In reference to my initial goals with this artistic research, this project was born out of an artistic postulate that sought to compose singular works with a limited plurality of mimetically derived source material. In view of this, *Deportations*, *Air Troika* and *veranderen stasis* are all good examples of this initial goal. Moreover, these pieces are comparable — despite the fact that they all use greater and lesser amounts of divergent content. These three compositions also articulate Danto's notion of *a style of working with styles*, doing so in ways which avoid over-emphasising an ironic intentionality (which was another aim of this project discussed in chapter 2). In connection to this style of working with style, *Deportations*, *Air Troika* and *veranderen stasis* are clear examples of how I applied a limited plurality of mimetic comportment to the context of singular works. Specifically, *veranderen stasis* (despite its unfinished status) demonstrates a type of musical pluralism that is, on the one hand, divergent in its content, and at the same time able to easily transition between pronouncedly different stylistic periods that are referenced. Hence, *veranderen stasis* uses a style of combining styles — bringing together quite different content and all the more illustrating how combining such material can actually result in what I have referred to in this commentary as *aesthetic consonance*. In view of this, I need to acknowledge that, achieving smooth transitions between distinctly different stylistic material, was complimented by using certain logical strategies, largely as a means to organise and shape contrasting content. However, in contradistinction to the smooth transitions between the stylistic discontinuities in *veranderen stasis*, *Deportations* and *Air Troika* revel in a more intuitive compositional approach — one far less formalised and often composed to highlight stylistic incongruities between disparate material.

11.3 An (over) abundance of content – dialectical eclecticism

Within this portfolio, *Proposition of Fossils* used the largest amount of source material; it also remains the most eclectic work found in the ten pieces in this portfolio. Principally, the

original intent of the composition was to use an array of eclectic material, creating an ongoing sequence of dialectical relationships emerging over a 30-minute duration. Certainly, of all the works in this portfolio, it is obvious even from the first few minutes, that the parameter of style in this piece has been used very pluralistically. In particular, this involved a manner of composing where a wide range of musical content was positioned in parallel to rhythmic editing of the accompanying video. In this regard, the multimedia aspect of the work is important and paramount to the piece's success and organisation. Contrarily, I believe an analysis or only listening to the music of *Proposition of Fossils*, might leave the listener adrift in what I have described as a *musical wunderkammer*. Thus, I am very conscious that the use of musical material in this work is uneconomical, and for this reason could be criticised for lacking rhetorical precision. Nonetheless, I still view the total impact of *Proposition of Fossils* — including both its musical and video elements — as being wholly effective. This view is based on the fact that the work consciously stresses the existence of clear dialectical relationships, and well-raftered relationship between sound and image. This paramount duality also manifests itself from the video and musical content, fusing together in an approach I now recognise as fundamental to the oscillation between whether these two elements are portrayed in the foreground or background of the work. Moreover, acknowledging the interplay inherent to these two forms of media has convinced me that this duality is actually an aspect I would like to accentuate further in any future performances or expansions of this work. Taking stock of the success and shortcomings of *Proposition of Fossils* behooves me to acknowledge a substantial potential for enhancing the presentation of the filmic qualities of the piece. For instance, exemplifying the roles of the musicians could be an element to explore further, primarily as a means to illustrate more connections and distinctions between the music and the analogous video content. Additionally, the video in *Proposition of Fossils* could include a more nuanced theatrical presentation; for instance: using this aspect of the work to visibly highlight the performers' musical roles and thereby bringing an enhanced level of theatricality to what is, essentially, an interdisciplinary work. Lastly, two final points about *Proposition of Fossils* would include the fact that I still need to make minor revisions to the score, and secondly, the piece needs greater rehearsal time in order to allow for the piece's musical details to be better realised in future performances.

11.3 Internal mimesis – a means to making many versions

A prominent theme arising from the practice discussed in this commentary has been the notion that mimetic comportment can be based both externally as well as internally. In

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reference to the former, this topic has been discussed by addressing prominent musical models by other composers or by attributing a degree of mimetic comportment to musical traditions outside of the western canon. In this regard, my degree of mimetic comportment has often been quantified throughout this discussion by employing my own terminology of *conscious* or *discreet* mimesis. Reference to the latter suggests that mimetic comportment can be more internal; implying that, after an initial engagement with exterior models and/or content, a personal mimetic impulse can actually be redirected towards a (re)interpretation of one's own music. In light of this, the best and most poetic illustration of this manner of mimesis presented in this commentary was *The Duke of Green*. Overall, I believe this to be the case because *The Duke of Green* succeeded on two main levels. First, it was able to articulate a nuanced manner of mimetic comportment; namely, an approach limited in content but still evocative of material representing a gulf of stylistic preferences (i.e. Duke Ellington, Carnatic music, and some of Laurence Crane's work). Secondly, using an economical amount of material specifically the version known as *Mantis* — *The Duke of Green* demonstrated a method of composition informed by self-referential mimesis, with the version known as *Mantis* becoming a model that was refracted into the creation of other versions. In doing this, I believe *The Duke of Green* managed to delineate a way of composing that de-stabilised the need (and ability) for the listener to effectively discern and locate a definitive version of the work. Additionally, this process was entwined within a process of refracted mimetic behaviour, akin to a manner of palimpsest-like copying; and eventually leading to a process where subtle alterations emerged via the creation of the three subsequent versions (*Keppel*, *Laurel* and *Viridian*). In short, I believe this contributed to *The Duke of Green's* novel form of compositional praxis. And, this manner of composition was all the more complimented by the long time-frame of the piece, whereby repetition and economical use of material helped to create an easy to discern, if not, hypnotic musical form.

Other works in this commentary, also exhibiting similar traits of self-referential mimesis, include *Valley of Years*, *Ghost Estates*, *Lembah Tahun*, *Rustic Sea Riser* and *Proposition of Fossils*. The main way in which these works are mimetically self-referential is that, to varying degrees, these pieces all connect with material developed first within my more open work: the *Large Rhythmic Canon*. For instance, *Valley of Years* faithfully used the structure of this canon, making use of both the durations of the notes (i.e. the mechanics of the canon) and the rests between the canon's iterations. In short, both these aspects of the *LRC* emerged vis-à-vis a binary musical relationship, specifically between two contrasting materials (musical content for string quartet and gamelan). Furthermore, as this work was composed,

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two separate extractions were made from this piece; this resulted first in *Ghost Estates* (for stand-alone string quartet) and then, *Lembah Tahun* (for gamelan). These two works unquestionably resulted from a mimetic processes of copying via deletion (with *Valley of Years* being used as the initial model). Clearly though, *Valley of Years*, *Ghost Estates* and *Lembah Tahun* all exist in conjunction with one another, and although they share many similarities, their differences also pose the unanswerable question about which piece is the most definitive. Nevertheless, the more fundamental — and less subjective — issue posed by these related pieces is how these compositions uncover and expose processes of mimetic differentiation. In short, what is essential to this process, is noticing how a multiplicity of compositions emerged from a methodology of composing, one that purposefully sought to re-interpret a given and limited set of materials. This can be clearly seen in the combination of the *Large Rhythmic Canon* and the microtonal relationships found in the string quartet material (to both *Valley of Years* and *Ghost Estates*). This is a key example, illustrating how changing the stylistic focus allows similar, or even the same content, to be manifested in distinctly separate compositions.

Similar processes of internally-oriented mimetic refraction are also evident in *Rustic Sea Riser* and in *Proposition of Fossils*. Although, given that *Rustic Sea Riser* is a solo work for bass clarinet and electronics (tape), it initially shows less in common with the more "fanciful" instrumentation of *Valley of Years* — likewise, this also applies to the microtonal world seen in *Ghost Estates*. Yet the entire tape-part for *Rustic Sea Riser* owes its origins to an electronic rendition made to assist with my composition of *Ghost Estates*. This underlines a step-wise mimetic process, whereby other compositions were mimetically integrated into other works in this commentary. Thus, beginning initially with *Valley of Years* — which was again developed out of ideas in the *Large Rhythmic Canon* — I next took the step to reduce this piece into a stand-alone string quartet (*Ghost Estates*); after this process materials from this piece (a sinewave mock-up) found their way into both the structure and content of *Rustic Sea Riser*. Then, this latter composition was augmented so it included visual content, which was a decision that significantly changed the aesthetic quality of the work. Lastly, this interdisciplinary quality of *Rustic Sea Riser* was developed further, as the musical and video content found in this piece was later incorporated into large sections of *Proposition of Fossils*.

Overall, the above process of developing compositions illustrates a type of mimetic compartment that I methodically applied to my own content. Primarily, I believe this was a successful strategy, as it created a continual unfolding of subsequent compositions — pieces

sharing content yet still being internally divergent. This was also a process essential to lending each work a sufficient amount of mimesis but also integral in creating a respective sense of alterity too.

11.4 Shortcomings

Any artistic project of this scope is sure to reveal certain shortcomings, and with respect to this PhD I recognise two major drawbacks in its approach and actualisation. First of all, within the ten compositions in this portfolio, I acknowledge that there could have been a more outspoken example of a piece which brought together a greater extreme of stylistic content. Naturally, in light of my examination of a diverse piece like *Proposition of Fossils* this seems rather peculiar to say; however, the reality is that the majority of content used for this work — and others like it — remained safely within the stylistic domain of classical, jazz, world music, or electroacoustic music. In this respect, my study could have been more consciously broad if it would have included a work that was more outspoken in terms of referencing source material less commonly found in contemporary classical music, whilst still examining the principle theme of mimesis and musical pluralism. Nevertheless, visible in the ten compositions discussed in this commentary is a fully adequate attempt to include a wide breadth and variety of source material; moreover, my familiarity with this musical/cultural content did allow me to compose more easily and readily. Perhaps though, writing a piece that addresses the previous point and thereby extends mimetic comportment into domains uncommon to contemporary classical music, is an avenue I could explore in future work.

With respect to the how the many of the compositions in this portfolio originated, it should be mentioned that only two pieces that resulted from commissions having specific stipulations. Fortunately, these two pieces (*The Duke of Green* and *Deportations*) did not impose limiting conditions on the approach I could take with respect to composing work that would articulate the central themes posed in this discussion. Secondly, these commissions provided clear opportunities for performance, whereas several other pieces in this commentary were conceived without the presence of a clear commission. This latter point is necessary to mention, as it had both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, creating work that was not beholden to a specific commission allowed me to compose music that was more unrestricted with respect to exploring combinations of instrumentation and extremes in duration and style. Conversely, the consequence of not always having a commission — or, in the worst case, any possible context to workshop or collaborate with a group of musicians or

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an ensemble — led to several works in the portfolio being entirely unperformed (i.e. *Large Rhythmic Canon*, *Valley of Years*, *Ghost Estates* and *Lembah Tahun*). Comparably, other compositions were only performed to levels that were not fully representative of their compositional design (e.g. *Air Troika*, *Rustic Sea Riser*). The overall impact of such a situation has admittedly made it more difficult reflect about the apparent success and shortcomings of these works. Therefore, rectifying this shortcoming must be the next step in the process of completing and finalising these pieces, and one I plan to coordinate in the near future. Nevertheless, despite certain pieces in this PhD portfolio lacking this final stage of actualisation, I am wholly confident the scores and the depth of this commentary presented here exemplify a thorough and thoughtful investigation into my engagement with mimesis and musical pluralism.

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Video Sources

~ Note: The following are all the video sources I used to create my own video montage in *Proposition of Fossils* and *Rustic Sea Riser*. My usage falls under fair use, given that my work is i) transformative and ii) limited to short samples under 20 seconds, and iii) educational in nature and, for the following examples, has not been composed for profit.

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Appendix 1 – Portfolio of Compositions

Title of Work	Instrumentation	Score (or music) reference from commentary
1. Deportations	<i>Piano quartet</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1a_Deportations_PremiereVersion2013 • 1b_Deportations_RevisedVersion2015
2. Air Troika	<i>Piano trio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2_AirTroika_FullScore2015 • 2b_AirTroika_SchumannWarum • 2c_AirTroika_HarmonicSchema
3. The Duke of Green <i>~ Versions ~ Keppel, Laurel, Mantis, Viridian</i>	<i>For ensemble: soprano, flute, keyboard, percussion (2), violin, cello,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3_TheDukeofGreen_FullScore2014.pdf
4. Large Rhythmic Canon	<i>Open instrumentation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4_LargeRhythmicCanon2016
5. Valley of Years	<i>Gamelan (pelog) and String Quartet</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5_Valley_of_Years2016
6. Ghost Estates	<i>String Quartet</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6_GhostEstates2016
7. Lembah Tahun	<i>Gamelan (pelog)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7_LembahTahun2016
8. Rustic Sea Riser	<i>Bass Clarinet, electronics and film</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8_RusticSeaRiser_FullScore2014
9. veranderen stasis	<i>For ensemble: Bb clarinet, percussion string trio</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9_veranderenstasis_FullScore2015
10 Proposition of Fossils	<i>For ensemble: recorder, bassoon, e.guitar & prepared guitar, drum-kit, piano, double bass, electronics, vocalists & singer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10_PropositionofFossils_FullScore2016

Appendix 2 – Audio and video documentation

Audio and Video documentation to *A Pluralistic Spectrum of the Mimetic*.

All files listed have been submitted with this commentary.

Audio Track Description: information about the performance/players is listed below, as well as an explanation as to whether or not the music or material in question is finished or a draft or a sample of material from the actual piece.	File name The file names below correspond with how the pieces were referred to in each chapter in the commentary. Please cross reference with the coloumn on the left.
1. <i>Deportations</i> Premiere Performance. Bloomingdale Music School, New York City, 2013. Louella Alatiit and other performers.	4_Flett_Deporations_premiere.wav
2. <i>Air Troika</i> Performance prior to premiere. Recorded in a quiet room in Roy Thompson Hall, Toronto, 2014. Gryphon Trio.	4b_Flett_AirTroika_GryphonTrio.wav
3. <i>The Duke of Green</i> Premiere performance, Van Dusen Gardens, Vancouver BC, Canada, 2014. Camille Hesketh (soprano) and the Ethos Collective.	5_Flett_DukeofGreen_Keppel_sept14.wav 5_Flett_DukeofGreen_Laurel_sept14.wav 5_Flett_DukeofGreen_Mantis_sept14.wav 5_Flett_DukeofGreen_Viridian_sept14.wav
4. <i>Excerpt from an older piece</i> <i>(for discussing the nature of string quartet material)</i>	7_Flett_Bozzini_SqExample_2011.wav
5. <i>Rustic Sea Riser</i> Live performance. .intro in situ, Maastricht, Netherlands. 2018. Bass clarinet – Germaine Sijstermans.	8b_Flett_rusticseariser_2018.wav
6. <i>veranderen stasis</i> Premiere performance. Brunel University, London. 2014. Ensemble Distractfold.	9a_Flett_veranderen_stasis_2015.wav
7. <i>Proposition of Fossils</i> (full recording) second performance. Splendor, Amsterdam, Netherlands. February 2016. Omega Impact and Graham Flett (e.guitar and vocals).	10a_Proposition_of_Fossils_2016.wav
8. <i>Proposition of Fossils</i> audio content (example1)	10b_Danishcompact.wav
9. <i>Proposition of Fossils</i> audio content (example2)	10c_junechord.wav
10. <i>Proposition of Fossils</i> audio content (example3)	10d_noise_texture2.wav
11. <i>Proposition of Fossils</i> musical material used in the piece which was based on a transcribed improvisation of the following audio; performed by the composer, circa 2015.	10e_debunker.wav

Video Description:	File name
12. <i>Proposition of Fossils</i> (live performance, edited and mixed)	See YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeEj2hNiCV0&t=366s