The Artistic Self: Identity and Self-Representation in Nicholas Maw's *Life Studies* [Volume I]

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Die Kunst ist ewig, ihre Formen wandeln sich.
(Rudolph Steiner)

ABSTRACT

'The Artistic Self: Identity and Self-Representation in Nicholas Maw's *Life Studies*'
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In his article 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes posits that the intentions and identity of an author are irrelevant to the understanding of an artwork. Yet in his analysis of a text by Balzac, Barthes inadvertently demonstrates that there are basic thematic categories associated with an artist's identity, which are intrinsic to a work's interpretation. This thesis proposes that the author of an artwork functions as a semiotic curator, collating signifiers from within these external categories in order to reflect their understanding of the world. Taking as a case study Nicholas Maw's 1976 score *Life Studies* – a piece described by the composer as being based on his own life – this experiential understanding of identity and self is explored through the lens of David Hume's bundle theory, where the unified experience of self is created through the collection of a series of perceptions. This thesis hypothesises that there are five key categories of perception that constitute Maw's artistic self in *Life Studies*: simulacra, narrative, design, agency, and nostalgia. Methodologically, these five areas – or rhizomes – are presented through a tripartite study, in an attempt to combine the three distinct disciplines which the philosopher Gilles Deleuze believed approached a holistic understanding of reality: philosophy, analysis, and – in the accompanying portfolio – composition (creativity).

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NOTE ABOUT SCORE REFERENCES

With few exceptions, the works that Maw published with Boosey&Hawkes employ rehearsal figures rather than bar numbers. Accordingly, in this thesis, references from *Life Studies* will refer to points in the score using the term 'Fig.' for these rehearsal figures, with suffixes designating the number of bars before or after said figure. For example, Fig.IIe^{+2} refers to the second bar of IIe (taking the first bar to be IIe itself) and Fig.IVg^{-1} is the bar before IVg.

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Introduction

We do not see things
AS THEY ARE

We see them
AS WE ARE

(Anaïs Nin, *Seduction of the Minotaur*)

I

In his seminal article 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes posits:

> [W]riting is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin … that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost.[1]

In an oft-discussed argument, Barthes sought to deconstruct the traditionally understood role of author (or 'Author-God') seeking to negate the notion of a unique authorial voice in favour of equal qualities of 'readership' – the act of untangling the amassed signifiers which make up a text – to be shared between all who come into contact with a work, whether as instigator or receiver. Michel Foucault, in an article similar to Barthes',[2] suggests that the problematic nature of the author (or 'authorfunction' in his terminology) is due to a cultural expectation on the part of the reader to ascribe projections of their own understanding of the world to the name of the author. He writes, 'these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author … are projections … of our way of handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions

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[1] Roland Barthes. 'The Death of the Author'. *Image Music Text (*New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142.

[2] Michel Foucault. 'What is an Author?' *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Trans. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Oxford University Press, 1977), 113-30.

we practice. Furthermore, when we make these comparisons between texts, we look for unity, seeking to resolve 'contradictions', and relate together 'incompatible elements'.[3]

Foucault's and Barthes' positions assume both that these perceptions are in fact incompatible and that the author in question does not share them. When analysing a line from Balzac's novella *Sarrasine*, Barthes presents five supposedly contradictory views of the different interpretations an abstract reader may take. Yet, perhaps subconsciously, all five of these focus on two specific background themes of moral identity and constructions of femininity. These fundamental issues are key themes in Balzac's work, often recurring within the writer's broader aesthetic, and presenting a psychological and sociological portrayal of a society redefining notions of identity in the aftermath of revolution.[4] For Balzac, as for many writers, these important contemporary themes are of direct personal resonance, and indeed such basic categories are pertinent to societies at many stages in history. By presenting literary material within these categories, Balzac is creating a basic structure of self-projection of his experiences of the world, within which there is space – and indeed the requirement – for personal interpretation.

Thus we might see the role of the author as something of a semiotic curator, collating signifiers from the world in order to reflect their understanding of it. This complicates the identity of the author that Barthes and Foucault are trying to negate.

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[3] Foucault, 'What is an Author?', 125-126.
[4] Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', 142.

The author is a reader, but is ascribed a creative impulse through their ability to choose freely of the world around them. In this instance, the artistic self of the author is inherently represented by the type of content they draw upon. We experience the world through the categories with which we are presented, and then project our readership onto the abstracted signifiers within the framework of these categories.

II

This notion of experiential categories directly echoes the metaphysical writings of David Hume. Arguing in response to the Cartesian explanation of one's self as a known, monist substance, Hume writes:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.[5]

For Hume, there is no knowledge of a singular unified self to tie our particular impressions together: we can never be directly aware of ourselves, only of what we are experiencing at any given moment. Hume suggests that the self is a bundle of these ontological perceptions of the world – commonly known as the 'bundle theory' – and argues that our concept of the self is a result of our natural habit of attributing unified existence to any collection of associated parts. As with Foucault's concern over artificial unity, there can be no *enduring* self in Hume's model. Each bundle of perceptions forms the frame of self for one temporal unit, before new experiences create the next bundle.

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[5] David Hume. *Treatise on Human Nature I.* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2011), IV:6. See also Charles Taylor. *Sources of the Self.* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 128-9; 204-6.

This resonates strongly with specific notions of the creative or artistic self: a similarly unstable entity in constant flux, constantly experiencing new perceptions of the world leading to – inevitably – a number of different creative 'voices' and styles over the course of the artist's lifetime. For the purpose of this thesis I will make the admittedly simplifying assumption that an artist's perceptions of the world during the course of a work's creating period, just like the interests and obsessions which form the backbone of the piece, remain unchanged, and that the work is therefore a document of that period of time, and those perceptions of the world.

An ideal work to which to apply this conceptual model would be one that actively intends to document such perceptions. One such work is Nicholas Maw's *Life Studies*; a work for fifteen solo string players from 1976, commissioned by the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Maw writes that 'this work … is largely concerned with my reactions to non-musical experiences; I wished to make a more direct connection with such 'life experiences' and specific material than I have hitherto in my work.'[6] The composer has acknowledged that in creating the work he is directly portraying aspects of his self and his experience – the listener is invited to perceive the world through his eyes – yet he does not explicitly tell us how and where these aspects of self lie. This makes it the ideal case study to investigate Maw's artistic self, centred primarily around the time of composition but hopefully also capturing themes – or properties – which pervade Maw's artistic output more generally.

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[6] Nicholas Maw. Sketches for *Life Studies*. Aldeburgh Music Archive [accessed 1st June, 2014]. Final proof, before typesetting (with amendments) – 4th March, 1976.

This study focuses on five basic categories of perception, which echo the key biographical and social concerns in Maw's life during this period: Simulacra, Narrative, Design, Agency, and Nostalgia. These categories are presented as Deleuzian rhizomes, in that they are multiple, non-hierarchical, and have no fixed starting or finishing points in their interpretation as making up the documentation of Maw's artistic self. In order to experience Maw's composition as a Humean bundle in this way, the five rhizomes can be read in any order, so that they might be fully experienced as a non-linear, non-hierarchical multiplicity. This thesis represents one of the possible orders.

III

As discussed above, the self is a concept within our reason; an epistemological construct within the way we process experiences, rather than external fact. In order to examine such immanent notions, Gilles Deleuze proposes an embracing of all of a body of concepts (broadly speaking approaches), which we can employ to make sense of the world, 'like a surfer, riding the wave of thought'.[7] In his later work (c.1981 onwards), Deleuze distinguishes creative art, analysis and philosophy as three distinct disciplines, each approaching and analysing reality in different ways: the base concept of philosophy, the combinations of sensation and feeling ('percepts' and 'affects') in the creative arts, and the fixed reference points ('functives') of analysis. According to Deleuze, none of these disciplines enjoy primacy over the

[7] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* (Columbia University Press, 1996), 74.

others but each is a different way to approach fundamental metaphysical questions, 'separate melodic lines in constant interplay with one another.'[8] This study takes concepts from all three disciplines - philosophy and analysis in this thesis, artistic creation in the accompanying compositional portfolio – to address the notions of self, which are raised by Maw's work. In general terms, there is an attempt here to 'capture' the essence of the question – what is Maw's self in *Life Studies?* – through the mechanism of actualisation and counter-actualisation; the process of transforming an issue into a 'state-of-affairs', or concept (such as in a written argument) and back into a reality (such as in a new composition).

Deleuze claims that the concepts employed in this process become, in some way, the virtual forms that govern reasoning, and must always relate to the actual states-of-affairs being discussed through 'concrete instances of asserting, inferring and arguing'.[9] Therefore, when applying philosophical concepts to musical reason, as here, it is crucial to regard the 'philosophy of music', not as the philosophy whose role is to conceptually determine the object of 'music', but rather as the philosophy that emerges itself from the music.[10] In order to maintain music's presence as the fundamental object of investigation throughout, the concepts chosen in this investigation are primarily taken from continental philosophy, avoiding the subject-object discourse of the analytic tradition, and its methodology of discretization. Rather an approach from the hermeneutic tradition seeks to create a process of

[8] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 164.
[9] Ibid., 168.
[10] Cf. Andrew Bowie. *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11.

world-disclosure, of understanding questions of self and selfhood through a fundamental engagement with the autonomy of music as a human activity.

This hermeneutic approach extends into the musical analysis employed as well. The debate between hermeneutic and formalist methods of analysis has been well rehearsed, with a strong account in David Clarke's essay 'Between Hermeneutics and Formalism: the Lento from Tippett's Concerto for Orchestra (Or: Music Analysis after Lawrence Kramer)'. Clarke uses his analysis of the Tippett movement as the vehicle for a larger discussion of the binary opposition that is debated in numerous diatribes *pro* (Puffett) and *contra* (Kramer) formalism, arguing that the hermeneutic approaches associated with the hegemonic 'New Musicology' school are inherently limited in their subjectivity. Clarke posits that in their aim to contextualise the musical work in a cultural framework, Kramer et al. ignore the actuality of the text itself, of 'its own internal logic, its aims and its sense of purpose',[11] thus maintaining the need for an analytical formalism whose role is to seek an account of the work itself from the 'point where hermeneutic productivity gives out'.[12]

Where Clarke's account becomes problematic is his apparent need to take sides, veering towards the autonomist exponent of the formalist approach, even 'despite Kramer's many wise and persuasive words on musical meaning.'[13] Yet critique of Kramer's reification of subjective musical meaning reveals a positivist ideal that

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[11] Quoted in Kathryn Bailey Puffett, ed. *Derrick Puffett on Music* (London: Ashgate, 2001), 24.
[12] David Clarke. 'Between Hermeneutics and Formalism: the Lento from Tippett's Concerto for Orchestra (Or: Music Analysis after Lawrence Kramer).' *Music Analysis* 30, 2-3 (2011), 347.
[13] Ibid., 346.

belies the interpretive and aesthetic metanarrative of his own analytical method, with discussions of voice-leading or contrapuntal part-writing often prompting philosophical reflection or interpretation in terms of cultural meanings.[14]

The binary characterisation in Clarke's argument risks biasing his account against second generation analysts on both sides of his divide, typically far less constrained by the methodological tenacity of their chosen methods' originators, and thus able to develop working practices which combine the hermeneutic and formalist principles, rather than trying to bridge a conjectural gap between. Notable examples of such theorists include Kofi Agawu[15], a semiotician who adopts Schenkerian methods to support his hermeneutic readings, and Dmitri Tymoczko[16], a neo-Riemannian who includes several discussions of musical meaning in his approach.

The strategy presented here employs a similar combination of hermeneutic and formalist approaches, adopting a working method that accepts at its foundation Kramer's notion that 'music's lack of a word and sentence-level semantics does nothing to bar it from having meaning at the higher level of the work ... [so that] the presence or absence of semantic value at the lower levels belongs to the medium, music or language; [whilst] meaning belongs to the higher-level message conveyed by 'working' the medium-specific elements into comprehensible patterns'.[17] The

[14] For example, the analysis of the Cello Aria, 'Inviting and Resisting Analysis' in Ibid. 331-8.

[15] See Kofi Agawu. 'The Challenge of Musical Semiotics.' *Rethinking Music*. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, eds (Oxford University Press, 1998), 138-60.

[16] See Dmitri Tymoczko. *A Geometry of Music (*Oxford University Press, 2011).

[17] Lawrence Kramer. *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 15-6.

implication here, that meaning is present at a different level from structural function provides a useful foil to the philosophical discussions presented above. In seeking to understand structural functions, this investigation employs post-Schenkerian reduction theory. These reductions are based on hierarchical principles through prolongation[18] and note 'weight' (i.e. length of note values, octave displacement and orchestration) to remove surface embellishments in favour of 'background' structure. In many ways such reductions rely on the analytical 'instincts' of the analyst as much as is common within the study of tonal music. This mirrors the freedom of employment, the methodological playfulness of philosophical concepts discussed above, in order to create a suitable platform for the widest possible exploration of issues.

[18] Though this is not implemented in a strictly Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983) manner.

Simulacra

I

Historical identity - or at least the self-location of a compositional identity within the broader context of history - is clearly an issue that concerns Nicholas Maw. In an interview with Paul Griffiths, he states:

> I think it's quite clear in my music of the 1960s that it was written against the background of recent developments … I think what I did was like what Stravinsky did … when in his so-called 'neo-classical' works he put down his roots at particular points in musical history, enabling him to renew his language. I put down my roots in the place where I felt they needed to be put down; in the music of before the First World War.[19]

In many ways this practice of self-contextualising is an Adornian phenomenon. When creating meaning from the world, Adorno posits that artists transform elements of the world itself through 're-forming' discovered 'material'. This 'material' ('what artists manipulate: everything from words, colours and sounds through to connections of any kind'[20]) is not inert in its essence, but rather 'pre-formed' against a historical landscape.[21] The 're-forming' of such historically mediated material holds with it an implicit assumption of critical self-placement within the broader historical canon, and so through their aesthetic orientations, composers locate themselves in various debates and discourses through their praxis.

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[19] Quoted in Paul Griffiths. *New sounds, New personalities: British composers of the 1980s in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 170.
[20] Theodor Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 64.
[21] See also Andy Hamilton. *Aesthetics and Music* (London: Continuum, 2007), 79.

But in some ways this view of self-placement is an overtly reductionist one, reliant on the romanticized image of distinct lineages traced through a unified cultural history. In fact, there is an implication in Maw's words that the 'roots' he refers to are as much a part of the abstract aesthetic landscape of the musical canon as they are of a more general socio-historical backdrop. Autobiographical comments about his music being written 'against the background of recent developments'[22] suggest an artistic desire to engage with contemporary trends and compositional thought. Maw's concern is as much to situate his works against their wider historical contexts, as it is to answer the challenges of the specific historical moment.[23]

The most fundamental of these challenges, and the one that preoccupied Maw constantly was modernity and modern living.[24] As Anthony Giddens writes, in a period of increasing social instability, 'self-identity has to be created and more or less continually recorded against the backdrop of [the] shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions.'[25] These fragmenting tendencies provided a direct challenge to the Romantic aesthetic of unity to which Maw allied himself most closely, making Maw feel uncomfortable in the face of music's cultural response to modernity's fragmentations in the 1950s, specifically a Darmstadt version of the post-Viennese school 'that rejected too much of the past for my temperament.'[26]

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[22] Griffiths, *New sounds, New personalities*, 170-1.
[23] Cf. Slavoj Žižek. 'Brünhilde's Act.' *The International Journal of Žižek Studies*. Vol. 4 (2010), 3.
[24] *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 4th October, 2000).
[25] Anthony Giddens. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 186.
[26] Griffiths, *New sounds, New personalities*, 170.

II

To understand an artwork, Heidegger argues, the work's social and historical identity must be considered in the context of the world in which it exists.[27] This raises the paradox for Heidegger (which he dubs the hermeneutic circle) that no work can be fully understood as a wider unit in society without comprehending its individual parts ('the essence of the art'), but the 'being' of artwork, compromised by the effort to identify parts, cannot be comprehended as whole within the world ('worldliness of the work').[28] This worldliness – the work's place in the world and society – is as much defined in the modern period by abstract aesthetic criteria as its presentation by the artist to the world.

Whether or not the artist can fully comprehend the impact of their work's 'being in the world' – a problem to which Heidegger often refers – the discourse an artist creates around their practice at least locates their intention for a work's desired position in relation to history and society. An artwork's identity is inextricably linked with the identity of the artist, and in lieu of appraising the work's interaction with the world one could just as usefully examine the equivalence of the artist's relationship to the world, and examine how they situate themselves in their environmental context.

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[27] Martin Heidegger. *On the Origin of the Work of Art.* David Farrell Krell, ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 156.
[28] Ibid. See also Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962), 90-6.

Maw's self-created social and historical identity is particularly interesting then, both as a way to appraise his artwork, but also to further understand his engagement with modernity. However, looking at the composer's own constructed discourse around his practice also raises problems. In forging a social and historical identity through verbal discourse, Maw – whose rhetorical skill is often clumsy[29] – frequently presents over-simplifications of images and comparisons, which create problematic projections of his artistic self. This has led to two important misunderstandings of Maw's work being proliferated in the critical reception of his artistic projects. The most pervasive of these is that Maw's aesthetics were conservative, or 'regressive'.

In a rare example of Maw's commentary on another composer (he is far more prevalent as a self-critic) his relationship with the past is plainly apparent:

> [Boulez] distorts a world that we feel comfortable in, and which many people regard as the only musical world, the world of 19th-century Romanticism … Boulez also can be looked on as a fifth columnist: a disruptive force.[30]

This unwillingness to engage with, and – perhaps more importantly – be associated with Darmstadt and the Avant-garde was to become an *idée fixe* in Maw's engagement with the public. Negative sentiment appears frequently in his interviews and writings, with terminology like 'destruction' and 'ruin' of culture being invoked to imply menacing qualities, and metaphors of student composers 'sit[ting] at the

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[29] For example the unfocused verbosity with which Maw answers Donald Macleod's questions on *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 2nd-6th October, 2000).
[30] Nicholas Maw. 'Boulez and Tradition.' *The Musical Times*, Vol. 103 (March, 1962), 164.

feet of the Gods of Darmstadt'[31] suggesting a brainwashed and powerless devotion to the cultural reach of the movement. This frequent narrative of indoctrination – or perhaps interpellation, in the Marxist sense – by serial 'ideology', tallied strongly with the prevalence of Cold War reports in the media of the time.

Major social institutions are described by Maw as instilling manic 'fervour … [into] the post Viennese fanatics', describing key figures in this cultural epoch as 'positively distasteful' (Messiaen) or 'ambivalent' (Boulez) in a strongly negative way. This bias was inevitably taken up by critics who now linguistically associated Maw with a reactionary course against the mainstream of the serial Avant-garde, noticing that Maw 'didn't plunge into this ferment of post Viennese-school activity … [but rather] was able to stand apart and not get swallowed up.'[32]

In fact Maw is often given the status of an outsider in criticism, a lone figure standing apart from the world. This was a position that he perceived himself to be in during his undergraduate years at the Royal Academy. As the 'archetypal provincial boy … [in] the big city'[33], Maw felt out of his depth. A lack of previous exposure to contemporary music led him to feel 'uncouth, gauche and ignorant'[34] against talented peers such as Richard Rodney Bennett and Cornelius Cardew; a position which caused him much distress.

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[31] *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 5th October, 2000).
[32] Guy Dammann. 'Nicholas Maw: a Tribute.' *The Guardian* (1st November, 2011).
[33] Griffiths, *New sounds, New personalities*, 167.
[34] Ibid.

Even by the time he had established himself in the compositional mainstream, honoured with numerous important commissions – William Glock's Proms commission for *Scenes and Arias* being a clear example – and signed to a major publishing house in Boosey&Hawkes, Maw's self-determined discourse often still professes an 'otherness'. This romantic notion of the artist as 'other' was one of the key verbal signifiers that led from Maw's own discourse to the language of reception, with phrases like 'mining his own seam'[35] becoming prevalent in discussion of his music. In addition, frequent images of the composer 'awaiting inspiration' from an unspecified external source added to the romanticisation of his identity. Such comments were an important trope in Maw's disassociation from the serial Avant-garde, as they were a way for him to 'excuse' his compositional choices. By recurring reference to his working method as being in some way 'preordained', Maw was able to disengage himself from the apparent academicism of serialism's strictly pre-planned working method.

Indeed, by the time of writing *Life Studies*, Maw was not only becoming a general outsider from contemporary cultural practice, but a specific one, locating his work at certain explicit places in the historical continuum. Writing to his publisher before the premiere, Maw states that *Life Studies* 'falls into the same category as certain collections of studies for solo instruments, such as those of Chopin, Liszt and Debussy for the piano, or Paganini for the violin. I do hope that my work might live

[35] *Composer of the Week*, 5th October.

alongside these, and perhaps even be seen as their successor.'[36] By aligning himself with specific historical figures and the broad epoch of Late Romantacism, Maw is constructing a clear aesthetic identity, a sense of his artistic self in relation to history.

III

Maw's self-alignment with this Romantic stereotype of an artist, subjectively distanced from his surroundings and preoccupied with the immanent problems facing the world was not a helpful one, however. Far from creating the hope that Maw's return to archaic practices and influences would in some way redeem tonality – a composer working 'up the courage to defy history and to be himself'[37] – Maw's self-constructed discourse led to the negative implication that his art evaded a necessary artistic struggle with modernity in favour of fatuous nostalgia, choosing to ignore real-world issues by 'attempt[ing] to reconnect with the Romantic tradition that was broken with the onset of Modernism'.[38] Influenced by Maw's confused self-representation as a composer who 'simply wrote' music without considering the broader artistic implications, many critics, such as Peter Heyworth of the Observer, picked up on the music's echoing of the past as naive compared to the revolutionary innovations of the continental avant-garde.[39]

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[36] Letter included in the sketches, dated 6th February 1973. Sketches for *Life Studies*. Aldeburgh Music Archive [accessed 1st June, 2014].
[37] Bayan Northcott. 'Nicholas Maw: The Second Phase.' *The Musical Times* 128 (1987), 432.
[38] Andrew Burn. 'Nicholas Maw: An Obituary.' *The Guardian* (20th May, 2009).
[39] Quoted in Kenneth Gloag. *Nicholas Maw: Odyssey* (London: Ashgate, 2008), 6-7.

Yet this view of Maw as the conservative, compositional 'other' and rejecter of contemporary methods is a difficult image to tally with the music itself. Beyond Maw's formal appropriation of Classical movement types and forms, for example the amalgamation of sonata form and ternary scherzo in the first movement ('molto sostenuto') of his *Sinfonia*, each work in Maw's output relates to multiple pasts, moving frequently between musical models within one piece. Echoes of Berg's *Lyric Suite* in the *Sinfonia* sit alongside allusions to Strauss' *Elektra* – a piece which Maw came to know intimately through his analytical studies with Max Deutsch – in *Scenes and Arias*, for example. Yet these resonances, along with the negative value judgements of serialism in Maw's self-representations, belies his efforts to actually incorporate serialism for his own purposes, basing the complex harmonic structures of his works on rigid set matrices.

Indeed, for a composer whose working practice of sketching involved numerous serial-inspired methods, often constructing musical material out of strict rotational arrays and set manipulations (see Fig.1), it seems misleading that he should centre the public discourse of his compositional process around notions of inspiration. Similarly, the way that Romantic allusions are crafted into an otherwise contemporary idiom is a task handled with a compositional skill and flair that sit far from the conservative naivety that Maw seems keen to promote.

Rather than promote the warm nostalgia that one might imagine from hearing Maw's description of his practice, the inclusion of these Romantic tropes and allusions create an unstable aesthetic dialectic, in many ways analogous to the

'dialectic of actuality and persistence'[40] that Schoenberg acheives through utilisation of classical forms and procedures in his early serial works. As with Schoenberg, Maw's critical assimilation of historical elements into his musical material is accompanied by a compositional consciousness that seems to relish the dualism. Maw's creative spirit is expressed most fully when the plurality of stylistic influences are synthesised through conflict at every level of the music; both extroversive (topical) and introversive (formal).

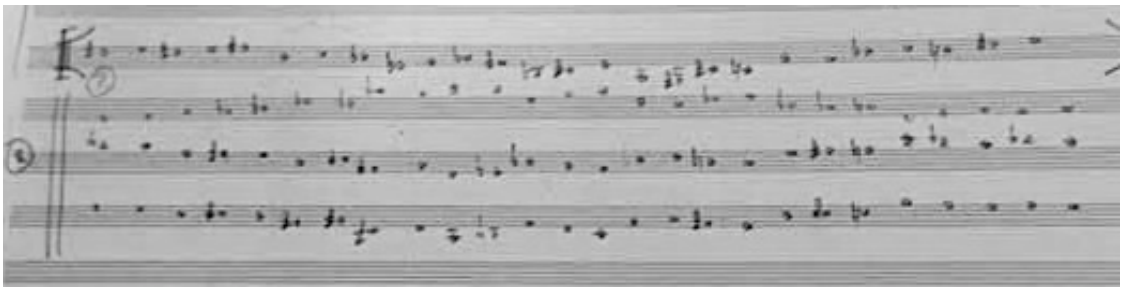

Fig.1a – Manuscript of pre-compositional material for *Life Studies*

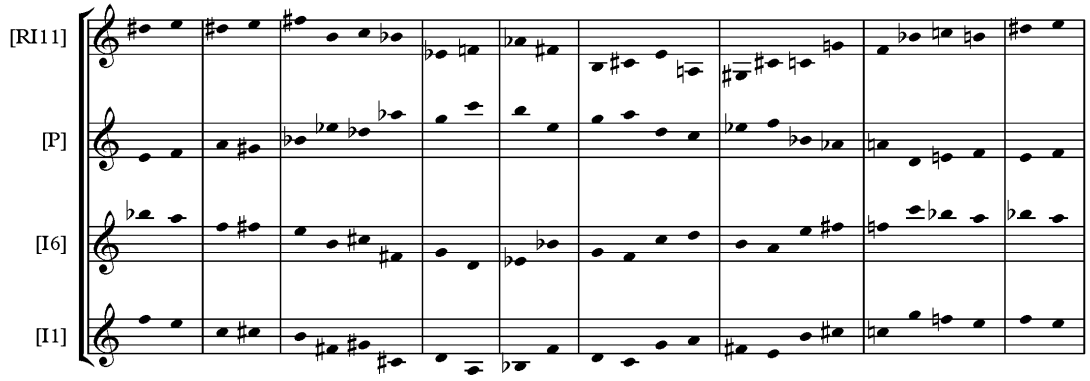

Fig.1b – Transcription, showing row type and transposition

[40] Klaus Kropfinger. *Über Musik im Bilde. Schriften zu Analyse, Ästhetik und Rezeption in Musik und Bildender Kunst* (Köln-Rheinkassel: Dohr, 1995), 254.

The pre-expressionist, Romantic language is absorbed in order to both create a synthesis with the serial, 'post-expressionist language' [41] and highlight the incompatibilities presented when the two idioms are amalgamated. This unstable synthesis, whilst providing the aesthetic drive from which the very identity of the work is formed – discussed later – further problematises Maw's public-facing construction of an historical identity, along with his subsequent categorisation as a conservative composer. In attempting to align his practice with specific historical figures as a 'successor', Maw is tacitly implying a belief in a Hegelian understanding of historiography, whereby a lineage can be drawn out of individual cultural strands.

This is clearly an overly simplified concept of the difficulties of historical reconciliation, and presents a naivety that is highly problematic for post-war artistic figures. In comparison with Hegel's dialectic – where opposites are synthesised into a unified movement – Adorno argues that in the post-war cultural climate, such reconciling of antithetical viewpoints is not possible. His alternative, a *negative* dialectic, proposes that opposites negate each other, yet refuse reconciliation or synthesis in a concept of the whole.

In fact Maw's music itself contradicts the impression he initially gives of continuing a broken lineage ('the only musical world') in such an unproblematic Hegelian manner. Such a historicised interpretation of the canon would not accept the introduction of serial elements as a linear development of, say, Chopin or Brahms.

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[41] Arnold Whittall. 'A Voyage Beyond Romance.' *The Musical Times* 136, no. 1833 (November, 1995), 575.

An acknowledgement of the cultural implications of alternative movements suggests that perhaps Maw, whilst he might not have recognised it himself, understood historical connectivity in a broadly rhizomatic sense. In contrast to the linear approach, the rhizome is an a-centered, non-hierarchical system that acknowledges the natural multiplicities in the world.

Introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in their seminal *Mille Plateaux*, the rhizome (literally 'mass of roots') is described as a map, 'open and connectable in all of its dimensions … detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification … Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways'.[42] This absence of traceable beginning or end[43] allows Maw to connect up points in the past with those in the present which complement his aesthetic desires and present a true self-representation of how he sees the world. Fabrice Fitch notes that 'the collective title of *L'anti-Œdipe* and *Mille Plateaux* is *Capitalisme et schizophrénie*. In this dualism, capitalism equates to arborescence and its stifling hierarchies, and schizophrenia to liberation from those structures, embodied in the rhizome'.[44] Maw's attempt to break down the historical structures and lineage of the academy (in its broadest sense) did indeed mark him as an outsider, but a progressive one, not the nostalgic romanticist he portrays himself to be.

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[42] Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 13-14.
[43] Ibid., 27.
[44] Fabrice Fitch. 'Agricola and the Rhizome: An Aesthetic of the Late Cantus Firmus Mass.' *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap*. Vol. 59 (2005), 92.

IV

In order to better understand 'Maw the progressive' we need to create an analytical template that is compatible with the rhizomatic thinking described above. One discipline where historical models are already conceived of using natural metaphors is linguistics, where the phylogenetic tree model of development has become a key tool in plotting simultaneous linguistic development over geographical and historical space.

In the philosophical and musicological canons, there have been numerous examinations of the connection between music and language. Several viewpoints exist, variously *pro* in Wittgenstein's argument that a musical sentence is nearly identical to a linguistic one based on intention and characteristic,[45] *in media* with Adorno's belief that 'music resembles … but is not identical with language',[46] and *contra* in Scruton's conclusion that 'there is no semantic structure in music' or possible communication of meaning given by convention.[47]

There is no space in this thesis to engage with the broad elements of this wider discourse, however.[48] Rather than appraise the efficacy of a linguistic comparison based on abstract philosophical thought, a linguistic metaphor provides a useful analytical analogy for understanding Maw's compositional thought, especially when

[45] Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (*London: Routledge, 1913), 42-3.
[46] Theodor Adorno. *Quasi una Fantasia*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. (London: Verso, 1992), 1.
[47] Roger Scruton. *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 210.
[48] Specific issues which cannot be addressed here include the syntax-level discussions of generative grammar, the postmodern theories of linguistic deconstruction, or the essence of metalinguistic relationship between music and language.

so much of his verbal discourse revolves around the linguistic metaphors of language, vocabulary and grammar. One particularly telling quotation of Maw's relationship to language and history is the following:

> I was always very fond of something that Tchaikovsky had done [in the *Rococo Variations*], the idea of taking over to some extent … your own idea of a previous vocabulary or language.[49]

A linguistic comparison to the pre- and post-Romantic elements of Maw's compositional voice may be the bilingual macaronic text of works such as Umberto Eco's *Il Nome Della Rosa,* or indeed the dichotomy of old and new presented in the macaronic texts Maw chose to set in *Scenes and Arias*. Here the old is placed alongside the new as structural equals. However, this connection of two points on the rhizomatic map is in many ways a superficial use of these powerful metaphorical tools, and it is a metaphor which does not seem to tally with Maw's concept of one language 'taking over' the other.

A far stronger analogy for his linguistic construction might be that of a creole language; a language derived from several strands on the map or branches from the tree, whose aesthetic goal is effectively to create a new vernacular language that still maintains its link with history. Creoles maintain the majority of their vocabulary from their parent languages – particularly that of the more dominant social group in the creole's construction (or superstratum) – combining this with a grammatical framework that differs substantially from those parent languages.[50]

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[49] *Composer of the Week,* 6th October.
[50] John Holm. *Pidgins and Creoles* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 96.

Whilst arguably a simplistic comparison to the creation of a musical score, this echoes Maw's description of his working method as using contemporary working methods to 'fill out a canvas constructed two hundred years before'.[51] Just as in a creole formation, the parental language in which Maw was culturally indoctrinated – pre-war Romanticism – becomes the *superstratum* (dominant) language and offers the bank of vocabulary, or musical tropes, while the immediate socio-historical situation – that of serialism – becomes the *substratum* (subordinate) language and offers its grammar.

An example of this is in the first movement of *Life Studies*. A large-scale palindrome, the movement is built grammatically around interweaving entries of a tone row, initially in prime form, and after reaching the axis of reflection, subsequently retrograde. These chains of set entrances drive the movement forward, both by their musical implications and function within a logical syntax. The elements that provide this underlying framework with its individual colour are the topical allusions which Maw employs. As with vocabulary, these are constantly shifting, but work with the grammatical elements to create the essence of the arch-like structure, amalgamating in the second part to give the feeling of a whole system unravelling (see Fig.2).

[51] *Composer of the Week*, 6th October.

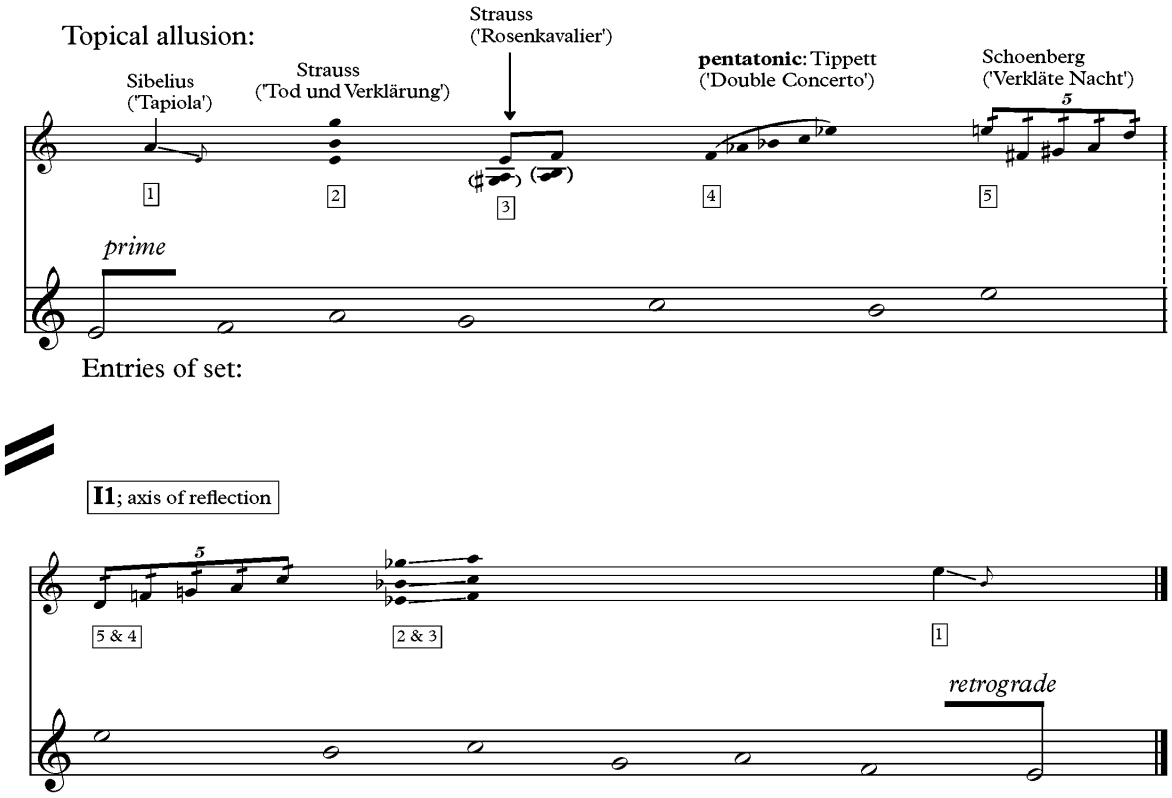

Fig.2 – Vocabulary elements in movement 1 of *Life Studies*

As well as creating an alternative way of analysing Maw's compositional language, this model helps us understand the composer's self-placement within a historical landscape. It is particularly interesting that tonal harmonies are synonymous not only with temporal points in the music's landscape, but also specific tropes. Gloag finds it difficult to explain these moments of recognizable pitch centres and triadic shapes, and is often concerned only with the impossibility 'to describe … any part of it, as "on a key"'.[52] But Maw's language suggests at least the possibility of such tonal tropes as direct signifiers for musical representations of the past, a musical metaphor for the old world. All tropes are taken from pieces of music about change and transformation in some way. The battle between an E-space and F-space here in the

[52] Gloag, *Nicholas Maw: Odyssey*, 3.

music's vocabulary, helps again to underpin the structural working of the (serial) grammatical element.

In general, Maw's allusions are not to specific pasts or historical struggles, but to a non-existent 'past', made up of numerous references and meta-references. This highly fragmented pool of references is built to create the feeling of an individual tradition; a rich imagined landscape of unconnected composers and cultural references. Ghosts of diverse composers appear throughout the score, including echoes of Strauss (the opening of movement VI), Berg (particularly movement I, as well as a quotation from the *Lyric Suite* at Fig.Va), Sibelius (the unison lines, modal harmonies and spacious landscapes of movement VIII), Walton (the driving rhythms and quartal harmonies of Fig.VIId) and Tippett (the singing, madrigalian lines of Fig.IIk).

Yet simultaneously this music represents no real or specific lineage, history or tradition. Maw's allusions are hollow simulacra, metaphors that have no original to begin with and elude to an invented other.[53] It is a simulation of a real-world process (in this case, the forming of a canon) that we can understand only as a mediation of reality. The composers to whom Maw refers are figures associated with a specific sort of bourgeois past, figures whose work was highly critical and progressive whilst being simultaneously comprehensible through a strong connection to romantic individualism.

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[53] Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (University of Michigan Press, 1995), 12.

Yet in some ways these fragmented allusions are to musical ideologies, rather than specific composers. Maw's connection with, and allusions to, these bourgeois societies is less about recapturing the romantic subjectivity maintained by these composers and submerged by high modernism, but rather than an attempt by Maw to bring these past circumstances back towards everyday praxis.

Narrative

> We understand the past correctly, only if we are able to confront it with the right image for our evolution. (Rudolf Steiner[54])

I

There appears, in the academy, a determined effort to taxonomise twentieth-century composers with regard to their relationship to modernism. Modernism as an aesthetic is often equated to being the 'artistic response to the issues of modernity',[55] where the renewed function of creative expression and 'testing of the limits of aesthetic construction'[56] is loosely conceived as a response to the problems of a world drastically altered by modernisation. Fundamental to this newly shifted ontology of art is a genre whose aesthetic lies in abstraction and challenge, where historical material is recast as an immanent critique, highlighting contradictions in society in order to offer possibilities for emancipatory social change.

A desire to shock replaces a desire to be beautiful. According to Adorno, 'a successful work is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradiction, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure'.[57] There may paradoxically be pleasure in these artistic experiences of the negative, the

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[54] Rudolf Steiner. *Das Wesen des Musikalischen und das Tonerlebnis im Menschen* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1923).
[55] Ezra Pound, quoted in Brad Bucknell. *Literary Modernism and Musical Aesthetics* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 134.
[56] Daniel Albright. *Modernism and Music* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 11.
[57] Theodor Adorno. *Negative Dialectics* (London: Continuum, 1981), 54.

fragmented – in many ways no different from the paradox of Nietzschean tragedy – but there is no beauty. That these works of modernist art question and provoke contradicts Kant's fourth and final criterion for a work to have beauty,[58] a negation of fundamental Enlightenment virtue and aesthetic so drastic as to lead Adorno to reject all beauty in modern art, through the infamous maxim that there can be no poetry after Auschwitz.

Nicholas Maw's music sits apart from this. Whilst his is clearly a fragmented idiom – crucial to an Adornian view of authentic modernism – it is neither directly 'shocking' nor denying of the Kantian notion of beauty. Maw's engagement with history is not one of conflict, rather of confirmation, providing an 'affirmation of how to pursue Romantic tradition in contemporary form',[59] with an instinctive melodic proliferation which Arnold Whittall cites as further evidence of Maw's debt to the late-19th-century masters co-existing alongside serial technique.[60] Yet the polarity of these musical influences creates a tension in the music 'when melody and harmony are least congruent, least integrated by traditional standards of tonal stability, and where dissolution rather than closure results'.[61] This instability is clearly evidence of a modernist *modus operandi* of conflict with the past, through the presentation of an aesthetic of discontinuity and fragmentation.

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[58] Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Judgement*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 76.
[59] Quoted in Kenneth Gloag. *Nicholas Maw: Odyssey* (London: Ashgate, 2008), 84.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

But in his readings of works by Maw, [62] Kenneth Gloag posits that such fragmentation is idiomatic not of modernist, but of postmodernist practice, where creativity becomes 'a species of problem solving for which any style or combination of styles can constitute the basis for construction'.[63] Indeed Maw himself often describes his compositional process as forming from an a-historical intertextuality:

> The whole of music history is available to us: we can hear it all in extraordinary profusion. We can plug in anywhere we like, in order to nourish our own music. In my own case, it was somewhere between 1860 and 1914.[64]

However Maw's music does not fit with the agenda of postmodernism, with its 'ironic, fragmentary mix of past and present compositional procedures embodying multiple temporal dimensions'. [65] Maw's historical references are coexisting, contained within the unified temporal plane of the present in order to validate – rather than destroy – the older idioms. Rather than the abstracted intertextuality of André Malraux's museum without walls,[66] it seems important to Maw where his material comes from, and is clearly presented as such. His procedure of engaging with the simultaneous presentation of these disparate historical elements in order to question – and ultimately celebrate – them is contrary to the aesthetic with which postmodern art is associated, in which the artist 'puts forward the unpresentable in

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[62] Gloag, *Nicholas Maw: Odyssey*, 1-13.
[63] David Roberts. *Art and the Enlightenment: Aesthetic Theory after Adorno* (University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 221.
[64] Quoted in Paul Griffiths. *New sounds, New personalities: British composers of the 1980s in Conversation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 172.
[65] Lawrence Kramer. *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 21-2.
[66] See André Malraux. *Musée Imaginaire* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996)

presentation itself'.[67] This is no better a model for situating Maw than the earlier modernism. The heterogeneity of Maw's output forms a critical framework for historical enquiry; a landscape which seeks beauty, albeit problematically, through engagement with its musical material and the best way to re-contextualise it. To adapt a discussion by Lydia Goehr, the ontology of Maw's works lies in the material's pretext (or expressive 'potential') whereas a postmodernist is concerned only with the material's context. Thus 'although postmodernism takes art to its limit, it functions less as an historical condition than as a continual possibility'.[68] In this light, postmodernism's aesthetic can be reduced to a nihilistic process of destruction; of *reductio ad absurdum*, where the real is continually re-contextualised towards the theoretical or imaginary.

Gloag too notes that a desire for the theoretical is absent in Maw's works, in favour of a more historically informed experience. In response, Gloag – still finding need to taxonomise – shifts his postmodern explanations of Maw towards a middleground proposition, in which Maw's music is explained as a Hegelian dialectic of modernism/postmodernism, which synthesises – or 'mediates' in Timotheus Vermeulen's terms[69] - both elements into a 'metamodernism'; an aesthetic which 'allows the possibility of staying sympathetic to the poststructuralist deconstruction of subjectivity and the self … and yet still encourages genuine protagonists and

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[67] Jean-François Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Trans. Brian Massumi (University Of Minnesota Press, 1984), 81.
[68] Alastair Williams. *New Music and the Claims of Modernity (*London: Ashgate, 1997), 124.
[69] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker. 'Notes on Metamodernism.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture, 2* (2010), 1-14.

creators and the recouping of some of modernism's virtues'.[70] This certainly reflects the objectivist qualities of historical conciliation that Maw's work presents, but seems too simplistic a description for a body of work whose aesthetic tensions make manifest a constant dialogue and questioning of history and the canon. The prefix 'meta' implies a removal from, or unburdening of, the historical engagement of both modernism and postmodernism, and is arguably a lazy way out.

II

Kurt Schwitters defines modernism as an aesthetic that must be 'distinguished by what it is and is for, rather than by what it is not and is against'.[71] Whilst seemingly contradictory, it is apparent in light of the modernism-postmodernism dichotomy discussed above that Maw's music falls on the side of critical modernism, yet a modernism which is *for* the past. In order to achieve this paradoxical goal – a celebration of the past through critical examination and re-contextualisation – this is a modernism which needs to be outward facing and communicative, rather than introspective. If finding a taxonomy is indeed a worthwhile exercise, the closest model to this is second (or second-wave) modernism; a term coined by theorists including Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf and David Metzer,[72] which promotes eclecticism and cultural engagement as a positive and reflective act (rather than the 'aimless

[70] Stephen Knudsen, quoted in Vermeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism.'
[71] Quoted in Karol Berger and Anthony Newcomb, eds. *Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity* (Harvard University Press: 2005), 283.
[72] See David Metzer, *Musical Modernism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Second Modernity: An Attempted Assessment.' *Facets of the Second Modernity*. Trans. Wieland Hoban. Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Frank Cox and Wolfram Schurig, eds. (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2008).

polystylism' of postmodernism[73]). Key to this aesthetic is a removal from the destructive tendencies shared by both first modernism and postmodernism,[74] critically transforming the negative aspect of post-war art work into a positive creativity, designed for an audience facing optimistic social and financial growth at the end of a difficult century.

In Mahnkopf's writings, this optimism is reflected in compositional unity:

> [Second modernism] is concerned with cohesive styles—i.e., styles that are coherent in terms of technique, material and semantics ... The second modernity does not define itself merely negatively as a rejection of postmodernism, however, but also positively, by expressing solidarity with the tenets of classical modernism and the avant-garde.[75]

It is clear that second modernism as a positive language need not present itself in the language of the avant-garde. In an interview with the Financial Times, Maw summed up his opinion of the avant-garde as 'one of the arrogances of the twentieth century that art has to contain only the new. Previously it contained something people knew and something they didn't know—and I suppose that's what I'm aiming at'.[76]

Maw's music engages directly with this issue by returning 'to the question (necessarily) avoided by postmodernism, namely how musical form can result from

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[73] Alastair Williams, 'Ageing of the New: The Museum of Musical Modernism.' *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 535.
[74] Cf. Hans Belting. *Art History after Modernism* (University of Chicago Press, 2003) 4-6; Albrecht Wellmer. *The Persistence of Modernity.* Trans. Wieland Hoban (London: Polity Press, 1991), 88-90.
[75] Mahnkopf, 'Second Modernity', 9.
[76] Quoted in Griffiths, *New sounds, New personalities, 176.*

a material that must first be produced for this formal genesis—or, to put it differently: how material and form can be connected internally, not simply meta-linguistically.'[77] A key example of this in *Life Studies* is in movement II. At the central point of the movement (Fig.IIh) there is a tonal break from the subsequently fluid movement between serial and freely post-tonal languages. As the music recapitulates the serial row of the opening – a key signifier of modernism – Maw recasts the music into a tonal A major, drawing the material and form into a cohesive unity of resolution. Yet as in a world fragmented by modernity, this allusion to stability is fleeting, and breaks down after the eight-bar phrase, first into a modal A Dorian, then into free atonality.

Tonality here is not a fixed, definable object. Rather Maw treats the 'many different types of tonality (very often affected by modal inflections from folk influence)'[78] as a compositional parameter, creating surface tensions and releases to lead the listener through his engagement with the past. The song-like shapes of his melodies imply phrase structure, whilst the shifting tonalities imply cadences, such as the chromatic movement onto A. This passage is intended to be immediately assimilated by the audience – it is an outward facing dialogue with history, where the material and its changing function is presented clearly to create a critically public 'discussion' of tonality and form. In an interview for the BBC Radio 3 programme *Composer of the Week*, Maw categorically states that his language is one for the audience, not the

[77] Mankhopf, 'Second Modernity', 10.

[78] *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 6th October, 2000).

composer. 'Where [the material] is coming from has got to be clear' and presented in a way which elucidates its musical purpose.[79]

In Jürgen Habermas' definition of Modernism, it is the connection – and equally importantly the *method* of connection – with the past that provides us with a true measure of the modern. The moments of tonal flux in Maw's music (described above) present a comparison, and thus connection with past which helps listeners to understand Maw's simultaneous criticism and celebration. Passages like these bring the authenticity of the past into the actuality of the present, with the 'secret' connection to the historical inspiring the modern, and – to paraphrase Habermas – the modernity itself creating its classicality.

In *Modernity: An Incomplete Project*, Habermas writes:

> Modern is valid now as that which helps a spontaneously-itself-renewing actuality of Zeitgeist to become objective expression. The signature of such works is the new, which is overcome and de-valorized by the novelties of the next style. But while the fashionable passes into the past and becomes old-fashioned, the [truly] modern maintains a secret connection to the classic.[80]

For Habermas, this notion of modernism stems directly from modernity, defined by him as 'the condition of the new, which lines the constantly changing path to the future'.[81] Like Walter Benjamin, Habermas traces this condition back to the mid-

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[79] *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 6th October, 2000).
[80] Jürgen Habermas. 'Modernity: An Unfinished Project.' *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on 'The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Passerin d'Entrèves, Maurizio, and Seyla Benhabib, eds. (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997), 127.
[81] Habermas, 'Modernity: An Unfinished Project', 34.

nineteenth century, where Romantic idealism becomes fused with the ideologies of the industrial revolution to create a world full of 'everlasting uncertainty … [where] all fixed, fast-frozen relationships are swept away, all new-formed ones become obsolete before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned'.[82]

The avant-garde's power and influence came from its ability to give expression to this deep-rooted sense of uncertainty of its world, but fundamentally began to split culture and society in a modern world with strict demands for functionality and communication. As Andrew Bowie asserts, music's worldly function is not to make the world around us 'completely comprehensible' but to provoke us to 'pursue as far as we can the attempt to comprehend it discursively'.[83]

Yet Habermas argues that if the aesthetic form it takes is no longer comprehensible, art has lost its capacity to undertake its fundamental task, of creating a commentary on life and on modernity. Modernism presents a retreat from the world into the 'untouchableness of complete autonomy'. [84] By failing to provide a critical commentary on the world around it, comprehensible to a wider audience, Habermas posits that art will inevitably become subsumed by the commodity culture it aimed

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[82] Karl Marx and Friederich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin Classics, 2004), 12.
[83] Andrew Bowie. *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 404. Cf. Schlegel's maxim that 'you would be distressed if the whole world … became completely comprehensible'.
[84] Jürgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.* Trans. Frederick Lawrence (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990), 92. Cf. Georg Hegel. *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics.* Trans. Bernard Bosanquet (London: Penguin Classics, 1993), 905.

to criticise, thereby losing the validity of the conditions which produced it, and its credentials as an emancipatory tool in the Enlightenment sense.[85]

Maw, in music that brings together recognisable elements of the past with technique of the present, provides a direct link with the audience, a comprehensible critique of culture that renews this emancipatory strength. Rather than engaging with modernism, it seems that Maw's commentary is, in Habermas' model, a critique of modernity. This social role placed Maw not as reactionary but as a communicative radical, an artist using older idioms primarily as a vehicle to communicate such a critique. Yet there are also certain ephemeral glimpses of these conflicts as reflecting other, more autobiographical concerns. Maw publically admitted that during the composition of *Life Studies* several aspects of his personal life came 'unstuck', including difficulty managing his depression, in turn leading to difficulties in his marriage.[86]

This in many ways is the closest to Heidegger's understanding of a social artwork, where the role of the artwork is to provide both a social commentary, designed to represent an element of cultural truth, whilst also to be a partner in the individual's shared understanding of 'that which is'.[87] Maw's music directly comments on a

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[85] Habermas ibid. See also Terry Eagleton. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1990), 349.

[86] *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 4th October, 2000).

[87] Martin Heidegger. *On the Origin of the Work of Art.* David Farrell Krell, ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 172. Cf. 'New music says something about music. However, that only makes sense if it says something about human nature as well.' Nicolaus Huber. 'Critical Composition.' Trans. Petra Music and Philipp Blume. *Contemporary Music Review*, 27 (2008), 565.

present fragmented by modernity, through a presentation of material largely from the past, but combined with a concern with a comprehensible formal presentation of these fragmented artistic materials representing a personally fragmented experience of world, which serves to open up a direct sharing of emotion with the listener.

Habermas concludes that if art wishes to complete the incomplete modernity project, it must refrain from legitimising itself through obscure constructions, which are so far removed from society so as to become meaningless. In many ways the human quality of Maw's commentary on modernity is a clear proposition for the completion of Habermas' 'unfinished project', and its attempts to redress the problematic relationship of art to society.

Design

I

Robert Lowell's *Life Studies,* upon which Maw's work is based, is an intense poetic 'breakthrough into [a] very serious, very personal, emotional experience' which had previously been considered taboo.[88] This style of writing became known under the umbrella term 'confessional poetry', and presented a new style of formal discourse—'paradoxical, ironic, whimsically oblique but capable of elegiac weight'. [89] To differentiate it from conventional autobiographical style, *Life Studies* employs numerous literary techniques to create a metanarrative of historical and personal reminiscence,[90] progressing from elaborately archaic pieces (Lowell's self-defined 'Imperial Style') employing traditional forms and rhyme schemes, via intricate and tightly-patterned homages to respected colleagues and family, to highly personal poetry in much looser metre, often strongly reminiscent of natural speech.

In many ways Lowell's texts are musico-literary in conception, with the fluidity of means of narrative expression similar to through-composed operatic constructs.[91] Peter Davison describes these texts as having at their core, an 'imaginary song … so strongly inspired by ambition, religious passion, poetic genius, and dementia … that [the work] give[s] off a powerful music, enthralling to some readers but puzzling to

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[88] Sylvia Plath in interview with Peter Orr (1962), quoted in Randall Jarrell. *Poetry and the Age* (University Press of Florida, 2001), 13.
[89] Ian Hamilton. Review of Robert Lowell: Life Studies. New York Review of Books (November 4th, 1982).
[90] Robert Lowell. 'After Enjoying Six or Seven Essays on Me.' *Salmagundi* 37 (1977), 112-115.
[91] See Elizabeth Hudson, *Narrative in Verdi: perspectives on his musical dramaturgy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 56-8.

others'.[92] When Maw was introduced to the work in the 1960s, he connected deeply with Lowell's highly personal subjects,[93] finding a shared interest in the core themes of childhood, memory, nostalgia and the discovery of a new voice. In addition, the development of literary method and practice that Lowell presents, and the aesthetic essence of a 'confessional' work appealed greatly to Maw, and inspired Maw to take Robert Lowell's collection as a structuring hypotext[94] for his own *Life Studies*.

Lowell's original does not serve as a direct source of inspiration for Maw's music, but rather as a formal conceit through which Maw's own compositional concerns can be explored. Maw's adaptation of structural elements in Lowell's *Life Studies* redefines the literary processes of the original in order to create a new, highly personal *formenlehre*[95] for the tonal teleology above, reimagining Lowell's four-part dramatic narrative as an allusion to the symphonic form [see Fig.3].

II

There are numerous theories of musical narrative in musicology, ranging from Nattiez' dismissive stance that music is inherently unable to narrate diegetically – professing that if we try to make it, we run a 'serious risk of slipping from narrative

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[92] Jarrell, *Poetry and the Age*, 54.
[93] Letter from Maw to his publishers (May 4th, 1967), Red House Archives.
[94] An earlier text which acts as a non-commentarial foundation to a subsequent work (or hypertext). E.g. Homer's *Odyssey* is the hypotext to Joyce's *Ulysses*.
[95] The implication of the term *formenlehre*, as opposed to musical form, lies in James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's concept of an imagined contract between composer and listener, suggesting how the audience is 'allowed' to conceive of the form of piece of music based on preconceived generic expectations.

metaphor to an ontological illusion'[96] – to the all-encompassing approach of theorists such as Reyland and Klein,[97] whose recent collection *Narrative and Music Since 1900* presents a range of semiotic approaches of narrativity and musical meaning from numerous theorists.

Lowell		Maw	
Part	Characteristics	Movement(s)	Characteristics
1	Formal (antiquated) construction and language, traditional rhyme schemes.	I	Formal process, palindromic construction.
2	Memories of childhood, youthful prosaic style to enhance nostalgia.	II	Use of Chopin quotation to create childhood nostalgia, with triadic progressions on C major enhancing youthful quality.
3a	Homages to writer-colleagues (and earlier figures) that inspired him. Formal metre, but no rhyme scheme.	III-V	Stylistic homages, with allusions including the Brahmsian treatment of 3rds in IV, and jazzy pizzicato bass solo in V. Traditional genres (=form) but does not conform strictly to the genres' expectations.
		VI	Intermezzo.
3b	'Celebrating the confession'. Both formal metre and rhyme scheme, yet new 'voice' found.	VII-VIII	Pull to D centre. Strong allusions to a rondo form, but different treatment to earlier; new 'voice' discovered by extended coda.

Fig.3 – Comparative table of musico-literary characteristics in *Life Studies*

[96] Jean-Jacques Nattiez. *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*. Trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton University Press, 1990), 61-3.
[97] Michael Klein and Nicholas Reyland, eds. *Music and Narrative since 1900* (Indiana University Press, 2012).

Carolyn Abbate claims that music can instigate a narrative only in the rare condition that an explicit narrator, or musical personae, 'tells' the story from the inside.[98] This need for characterisation, it seems, is too rigid an analogy. According to Gregory Karl, musical narrative '"has little to do with narrative" in the sense of a discourse telling or representing a literal tale through either mimetic means'.[99] More successful endeavours at interpreting musical narrativity are not attempts to find extramusical subtexts in abstract composition, such as – in Peter Kivy's view[100] – Newcomb's reading of Mahler's Ninth Symphony,[101] or (perhaps more humorously) the infamous goblins that Helen from *Howard's End* perceives 'marching across the universe'[102] in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Rather they are the product of the analyst's interaction with the music, such as those discussed by Byron Almén,[103] who presents the analogy of musical process as a plot, caused by the dynamism formed when an imbalance disrupts an initial set of hierarchies.[104] The dramatic metaphors of plot, tension, obstacle, delay, uncertainty, and closure which Almén adopt to offer new ways of considering music's temporal organisation resonate strongly with the 'Stanislavski System' of acting,[105] which seeks to create a holistic grammar of acting by directly linking narrative issues (like plot and closure) with psychological

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[98] Carolyn Abbate. 'Immortal voices, mortal forms.' *Analytical Strategies and Musical Interpretation: Essays on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Music.* Eds. Craig Ayrey and Mark Everist (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16-20.
[99] Nicholas Reyland. 'Livre or Symphony? Lutoslawski's Livre pour orchestre and the Enigma of Musical Narrativity.' *Music Analysis* 27, 2-3 (2008): 23. Cf. Gregory Karl. '*Structuralism* and Musical Plot.' Music Theory Spectrum 19 (1997): 13-34.
[100] Peter Kivy. *Antithetical arts* (Oxford University Press, 2009).
[101] Anthony Newcomb. 'Narrative Archetypes and Mahler's Ninth Symphony.' *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries.* Steven Scher, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 118—36.
[102] Chapter 5 of Edward M. Forster. *Howards End* (London: Penguin Books, 1910).
[103] Byron Almém. *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Indiana University Press, 2009), 51.
[104] Cf. Almen's concept of 'transvalutation'.
[105] Constantin Stanislavski. *An Actor Prepares* (London: Methuen, 1936).

concepts (such as tension, obstacle, and uncertainty). Almén's plot trajectory could easily have roots in Stanislavski's concepts of objective, defined as 'the goal of a character for a given unit [or scene] of the drama,' and superobjective; 'the overarching goal of a character'.[106]

These processes are shaped by forces of tension, the agency of Hegelian *Begierde* (desire) that creates a continual drive for fulfilment. In a musical context, the implication of *Begierde* is on a harmonic plane: the magnetic relationship of cause and effect that pulls certain notes towards others, inherent in tonal systems. This harmonic functionality is defined by Riemann as consisting of the three areas of preparation, tension and release,[107] represented by their prototypical equivalents of pre-dominant-function ('IV'), dominant-function ('V') and tonic-function ('I') respectively.[108]

In a post-tonal system of organisation such as Maw's, there is potential for the composer to use the structural ordering of pitches to create functionality through tension and release in a number of ways. The most common of these is creating a centricity, either of a single pitch or sonority, to act as base for other pitch classes to be magnetically drawn to. Magnetism is created by setting up tonal hierarchies

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[106] Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 34-6. See also Christopher Innes, ed. *A Sourcebook on Naturalist Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[107] This is not unlike Aristotle's tripartite theory of narrative as having a beginning ('Protasis') to introduce the situation, a middle ('Epitasis') to increase tension, and an end ('Catastrophe') to release or resolve the crisis. See Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin Classics, 1996).

[108] Hugo Riemann. *Katechismus Der Akustik: Musikwissenschaft* (Berlin: Kessinger Publications, 1891). It is interesting to note that Riemann uses the terms function (*Funktion*) and meaning (*Bedeutung*) interchangeably in his writings.

between particular categories, conceived around a particular object or set to which other members can be seen as more or less similar. For example, a standard tonal theory might include categories of <chord of the tonic>, <chords in the tonic key, other than the tonic>, with member objects including the dominant and subdominant and <chords outside the tonic key> with member objects including <chords whose roots are chromatic scale degrees>. Members of this latter set pull towards the members of <chords in the tonic key> and subsequently towards the <chord of the tonic> itself.[109]

Maw typically adopts this hierarchical model within a pan-tonal context,[110] defining the <set of the 'tonic'> by its location in the music (typically being the first sonority heard) and frequent subsequent recurrence. Pitches within this set are then used frequently at points of gestural closure and resolution, and are often doubled in other chords to promote the perception of stability, and create the impression of a pull towards them from pitches outside the set.

III

Life Studies is built upon the continual variation and development of a single melodic line, referred to here as the Ur-melody[111]. This expansive melodic line is strongly reminiscent of a tone row (see Fig.4) and treated with the continual variation

[109] For further discussion, see Lawrence Zbikowski. *Conceptualizing Music* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 30ff.

[110] A well-documented example of this being his use contrast of a structural 'tonic' and 'dominant' in Nicholas Maw's *Scenes and Arias*.[110]

[111] A term Kenneth Gloag adopts in *Nicholas Maw: Odyssey* (London: Ashgate, 2008) as a fond homage to the Schenkerian Urlinie, to describe a melodic line which is treated as the main source and foundation of musical material.

expected of its dodecaphonic counterpart. This Ur-melody becomes the protagonist; the primary 'character', whose continual transformation propels the work's narrative unfolding.

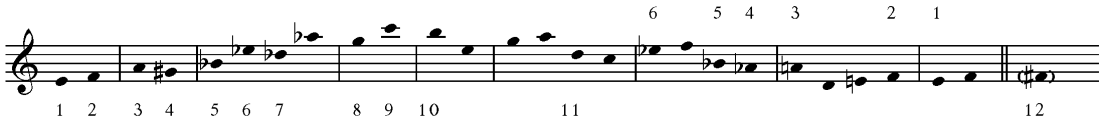

Fig.4 – Ur-melody (as presented in movement 1, bb.1-10)

First presented at the start of the work in its prime form, this protagonist (literally 'the one who plays the first part') contains the intervallic and harmonic content for the entire piece, for example the pentatonic quality of the four-note units which anticipate the central section of Movement I and the Chopin quotations in Movement II. Maw builds his long-scale tonal strategy for the piece on this Ur-melody, creating a series of hexachords formed by the simultaneous combination of multiple transposed rotations of itself to form the harmonic foundation for each movement (see Fig.5; the harmonic sketches taken from Maw's manuscripts, showing the composer's original compositional thoughts[112]). This material does not always appear directly in *Life Studies* in its final form, but much of Maw's harmonic thinking is evident through analysis of these ideas and agendas.

For example, whilst this material seldom functions as explicitly contrasting harmonic areas, in the manner of 'tonic' and 'dominant' chords discussed above, there is a long scale tension that echoes the harmonic structure of the final score. In these sketches,

[112] Nicholas Maw, Sketches for *Life Studies*. Aldeburgh Music Archive [accessed 1st June, 2014].

these harmonic foundations generated by the Ur-melody move gradually further from the tonal plane, initially moving 'flatward' towards the third movement and then subsequently 'sharpward'.

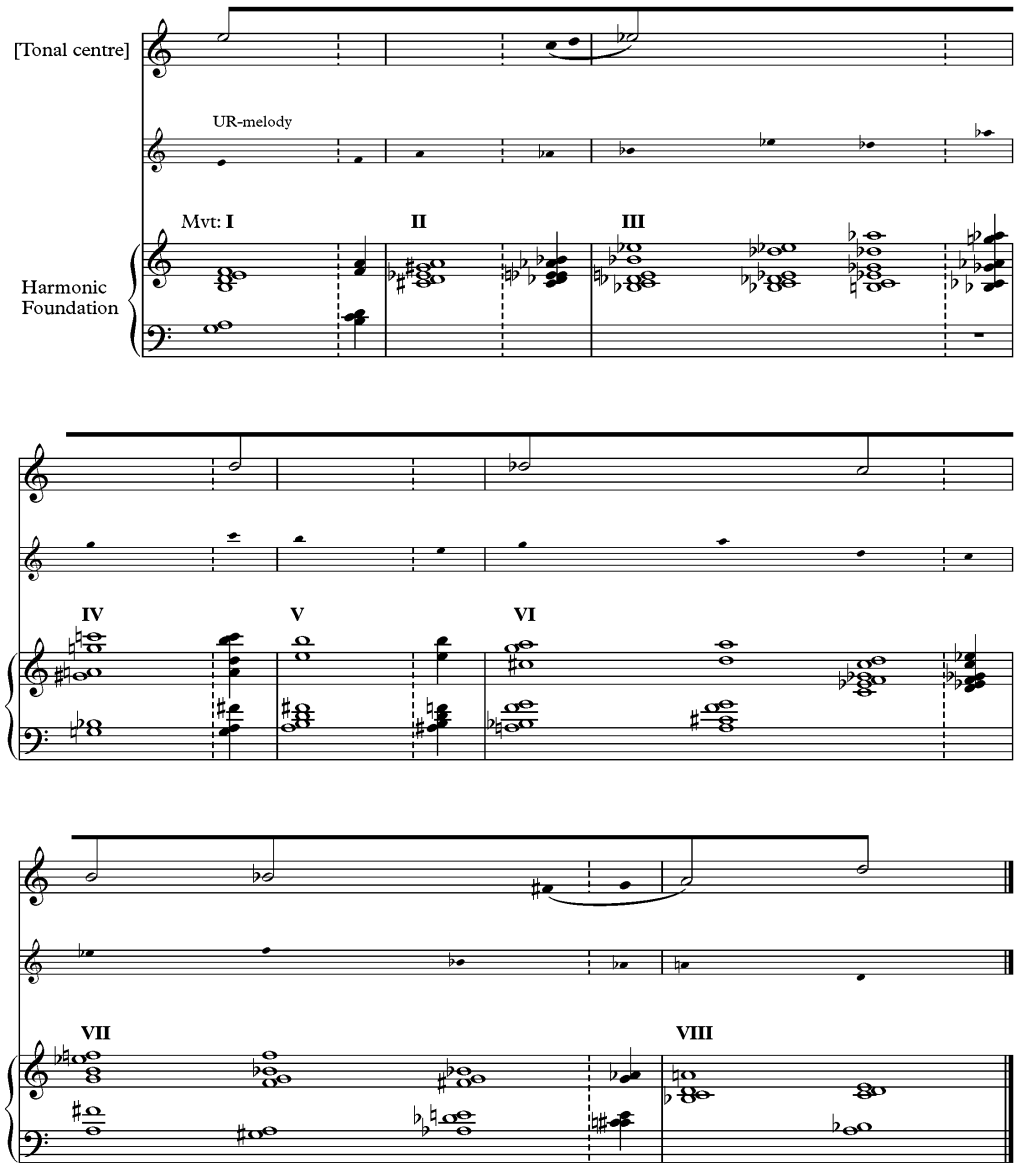

Fig.5 – Background level design of *Life Studies* from Maw's manuscripts

In classical theatre, this suggests the role of an antagonist, bringing conflict to the protagonist's situation and instigating a need for resolution, strongly reminiscent of

the narrative in a (tonal) sonata form movement.[113] The final harmonic point of arrival is similar to the initial tonal plane, alluding to this characteristic resolution of the protagonist's journey, but with the addition of a Bb sonority, the protagonist never fully returns to the initial tonal state. The antagonist's opposition has transformed the protagonist, suggesting a trajectory closer to the synthesis of a Hegelian dialectic than the 'good conquers evil' narrative of an Aristotelian dramatic structure.[114]

Overlaying this harmonic trajectory – or perhaps tonal agency – there is a more literal unfolding in the localised tonal centres of each movement,[115] creating two descending chromatic tetrachords followed by an ascending leap of a perfect fourth. As the harmonic narrative above, this '*Urlinie*' – in some ways akin to the Stanislavskian superobjective discussed above[116] – outlines a similar tripartite trajectory of presentation, contrast, and return in implied deep structure. The opening E centricity is transformed via the harmonic distancing ('antagonist') to the closure of movement VIII onto a tonal centre of D; the last presented note of the chromatic aggregate in the Ur-melody. This journey towards this final D is strongly

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[113] Echoing Kofi Agawu's 'beginning-middle-and-end paradigm'. See *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24-8.

[114] See Aristotle, *Poetics.*

[115] These manifest in either clear resolution onto a monophonic tonal centre (movements I, IV and VIII), triadic closure (II), or pitch centricity in harmonic construction (III, V, VI and VII).

[116] In *Der freie Satz,* Schenker describes the elaboration (*Auskomponierung*) and prolongation of a musical trajectory in terms that strongly resemble Stanislavski's discussion of the objective/superobjective elements of a character mentioned above. Schenker writes: 'In the art of music, as in life, motion toward the goal encounters obstacles, reversals, disappointments, and involves great distances, detours, expansions, interpolations, and, in short retardations of all kinds ... [t]hus we hear in the middleground and foreground an almost dramatic course of events.'

reinforced by the background level voice-leading in the bass as well as the supporting tetrachordal patterns leading from the *Kopfton* E to Db (C#), reaching further to an A (the highest, central pitch in the Ur-melody) before the final 'resolution' onto D. This hints playfully at the classic cadential figure of ii^{7}b – V^{7} – 'I' (or perhaps 'i') at an *Ursatz* level (Fig.6).

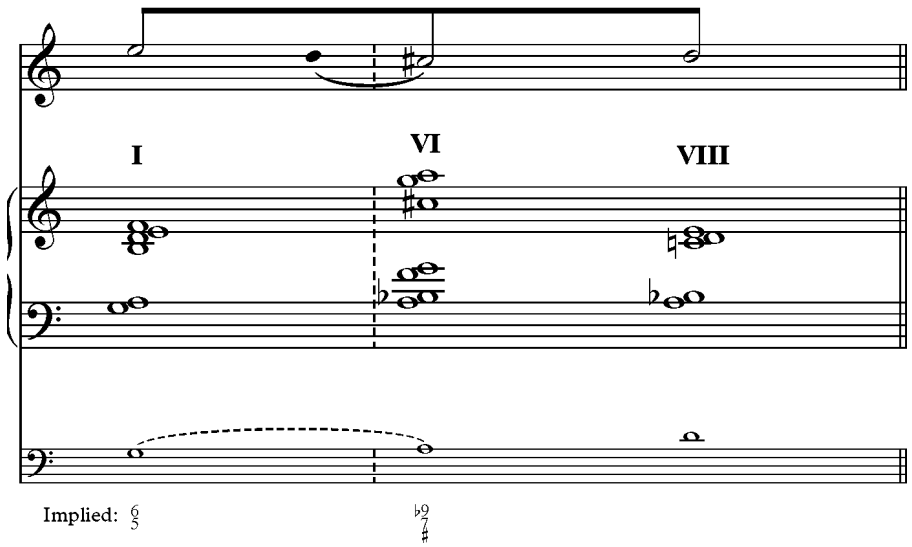

Fig.6 – Implied deep structure

Whilst the resolution onto a final unison D is unequivocal, the deeper level resolution is problematic for numerous reasons. Hints of Bb create an ambiguity, suggesting an interrupted cadence, whilst the lack of a third in the harmonic content of the final movement creates a sense of frustration, especially in light of the triadic conclusion of the second movement. The aggregate in the Ur-melody is only reached at the end of movement VII, where we finally hear a strong arrival onto F# (enharmonically Gb) - the aggregate's true finishing point. The overwhelming convergence onto a *fortissimo* unison D at Fig.VIIIs in the final movement creates a

superficial resolution. We do not hear it in the context of the F#, whose arrival lacked the appropriate sense of closure, leading us to feel the D conclusion as an disappointing post-thought, and denying the satisfaction of a proper closure.

Thus the potential for a tonally major conclusion becomes an object of desire. In contradiction to the Freudian view that we should avoid giving in to desires, Lacan believed that trying to achieve the desired in life is a basic aspect of the human experience. In Lacan's conception, our desires stem from a fundamental need for our ego (internal self) to reconnect with our 'real' self, the ideal of the *imago*, or mirror self.[117] This imaginary other, Lacan argues, is an impossible and fictional goal, as the other is misrepresented. We search for the *objet petit 'a'* - the object that will complete us – but this completion is unattainable. There will always be something missing.[118]

The arrival onto F# and completion of the Ur-melody's aggregate should have provided the release of desire. But this *imago* of satisfaction through completion was a fiction, a misrepresentation born of Maw's frequent repetition of the Ur-melody in its prime, untransposed form, which leaves the listener's ear perpetually hovering around E and F, in a journey to reach the structural F# it desires. Even when F# is reached however, the music is not able to conclude, confirming the impossibility of desire satisfaction and fulfilment of *'a'*, arrival at the imagined tonal goal.

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[117] Jacques Lacan. 'The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience.' *Écrits: A Selection.* Trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton & Co., 1977), 54.
[118] Cf. with Freud's concept of 'castration'.

Rather the fulfilment lies in the conflict, the way Maw's language thrives through the imposition of antagonistic challenges and restrictions to its expressive content to seemingly 'discover' itself. In Žižek's words, "desire's *raison d'être* is not to realize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire."[119] The earlier desire for the completion of the Ur-melody aggregate through arrival on F# is transformed into the desire for an illusory D major ending, taking over the role of unattainable other '*a*' and furthering the *jouissance* (pleasure and pain associated with the frustration of approaching the 'real' self) which propels the music forward to its conclusion.[120] Even then, however, the arrival point is not one of a triumphant major conclusion, but rather a unison D; further frustration of the perpetual desire for the unattainable which governs this work.

IV

This trajectory of conflict and frustration in Maw's work echoes Lowell's narrative structure. Both works share a similar setting up of initial hierarchies using styles received from contemporaneous trends, and the subsequent creation of conflicts designed to put these hierarchies in crisis.[121] Like Maw, Lowell's *Life Studies* 'understand[s] the world as a sort of conflict of opposites',[122] with both works attempting to resolve the latent potential of these semiotic oppositions. Maw's E-

[119] Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997), 39.

[120] The recollection of a similar discussion in Edward Cone's article on a Schubert *Moment Musicaux* which similarly denies the satisfaction of proper closure[120] serves as an apt reminder that obsession, 'breaking out' of tonal systems and subsequent lack of fulfilment are typically Romantic concerns.

[121] Cf. Edward T. Cone. 'Schubert's Promissory Note: An Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics'. *19th-Century Music*. Vol.5, No.3. (Spring, 1982), 233-41.

[122] Jarrell, *Poetry and the Age, 16.*

centric starting point, whilst clearly related to the final D resolution, is uncomfortable, just as the formalised constructions in Lowell's Part 1 echo their equivalents in Part 3b. With this shared narrative of transformation too comes a shared lack of fulfilment. Just as Maw's D-centric resolution is unsatisfactory, frustrated by a lack of full tonal completion, so Lowell relinquishes the triumph of a linguistic 'breakthrough' (or rebirth) to an aesthetic of sadness and confession.

Both of these plots share a long build up, intensifying the protagonist-antagonist polarity, preceding a small, and intense resolution, and accompanying the respective frustrated conclusion. These comparable narrative shapes – or 'dynamic curves'[123] in Ratner's discourse on musical narrativity – which present a line of action that unfolds through a gradual accumulation, and subsequent abatement of tension, are strongly reminiscent of classical theories of dramatic structure (see, for example, Fig.7)

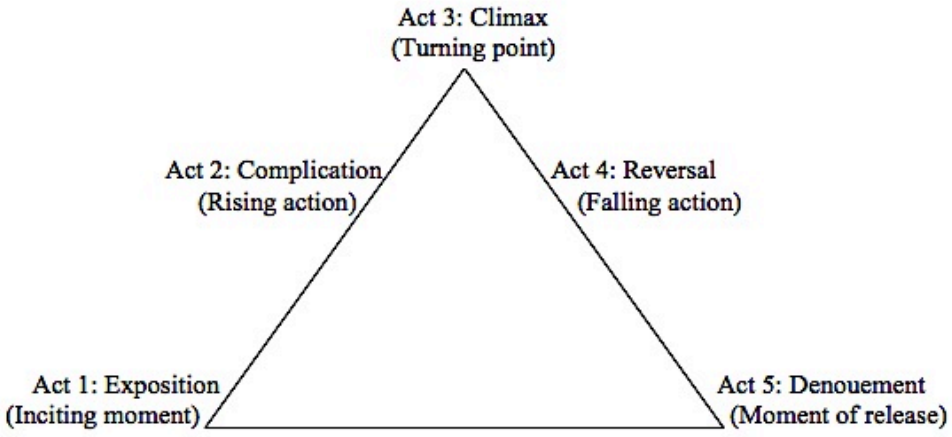


Fig.7 – 'Freytag's Pyramid': theory of dramatic structure [124]

[123] Leonard Ratner. *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 275-9.

[124] Gustav Freytag, *Die Technik des Dramas* (Liepzig: Berlag von S.Hirzel, 1863).

This arc also echoes the shape of the Ur-melody and elsewhere, although the shorter build-up and longer abatement here is perhaps more akin to a middleground (structural) sigh. The imbalance between long Exposition and Rising action and sudden Falling action and Denouement at the background level arc creates an aural, and indeed visual, representation of the failure of Maw to reach his tonal and structural closure, and Lowell to reach his poetic one.

V

Roland Barthes, in his introductory essay to the structural analysis of narratives, writes that to understand a narrative 'is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in "storeys"[sic.], to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative "thread" on to an implicitly vertical axis.[125] This implies the linking together of interconnected things (or events) diachronically to form a plot, driven by an uncertainty or problem, which must be developed and resolved by the function of ensuing events. Barthes refers to these plots as 'functional sequences', made up of 'functional units' and padded out by 'expansion' or 'catalysing' units (Fig.8).

Echoing Freytag's structure, the elasticated gap between the initiation unit (Exposition) and closing unit (Denouement) of a functional sequence, prolonged by the catalysing units (Rising action, Climax and Falling action) creates 'suspense' in the narrative thread. However, in a successful narrative, the momentum and 'pull'

[125] Roland Barthes. 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives.' *Encyclopaedia of Semiotics*. Paul Bouissac, ed. (Oxford University Press, 1998), 42.

that is generated between the initiation and closing units is mimicked at every level, so that the difference between contrasting smaller units also creates a potential energy in order to drive the material.

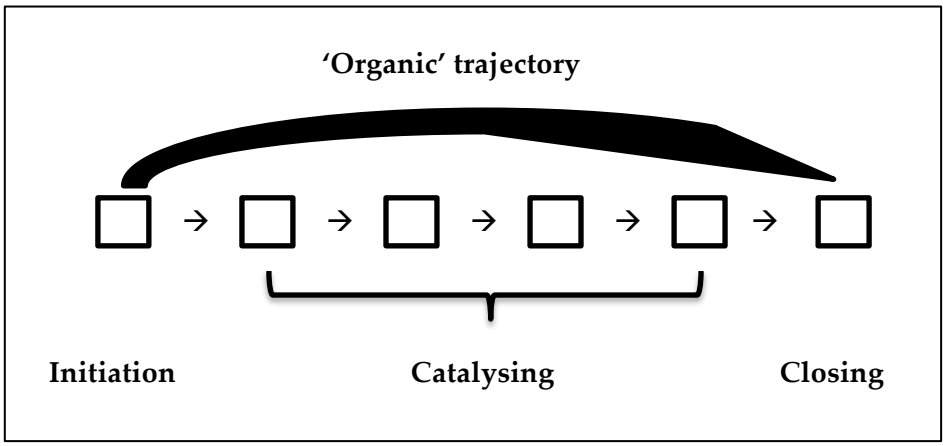


Fig.8 – Barthes' narrative concatenation

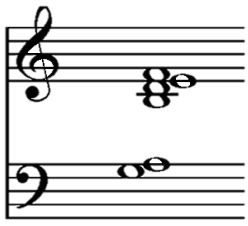
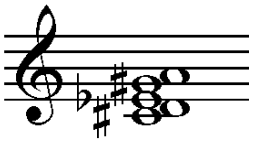
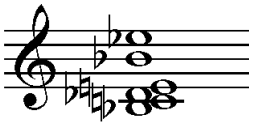
Both Lowell and Maw create their long-scale teleologies described above in this manner, with the negation of a singular aesthetic of continuity in favour of fragmented surfaces of disjointed poetic idioms and stylised Romantic character studies respectively. The heightened contrast between these miniatures propel the rhetoric forward, reminiscent of Evan Bonds' model of 18th-century musical oration,[126] with its focus on the contrasting function of distinct musical ideas as the basis for an elaboration of a central thematic idea.

Whilst Bonds employs a spatial discourse similar to Ratner, creating images of arcs and curves as metaphors for the inevitability of formal closure of his concatenated sequences, his model eschews the 19th-century concept of a musical work as an

[126] Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Harvard University Press, 2013), 63-9.

organic entity, an image that emphasizes the implicit autonomy of the work. The metaphor of trajectory – a useful conceit in perceiving the rhetorical journey – is built upon an understanding of the discrete units that make up such a narrative arc, particularly their inter-relationships and the internal processes that give them their own identity.

Maw's dramatic curve of exposition, protagonist-antagonist conflict, long period of intensification, short resolution and frustrated denouement is supported by the internal contrasts between each different movement, or Barthesian unit. The play of inter-unitary contrast, primarily in the parameters of harmonic function and stylistic mimesis, sets up tension which propels the dramatic arc (see Fig.9).

	Harmonic Area	**Textural Features**	**Literary Device**
I		Highly fragmented surface, numerous interweaving of solo lines with recitative-style tempi (in constant flux). Unsettling, introductory.	Exposition [initiation].
II		Warm, rich textures built on full sonorities. Ostinati act as the accompaniment to expansive melodic lines, creating movement.	Alternative reality of Chopin creates tension to drive the narrative forward [catalysing].
III		Revert to fragmented surface, with antiphonal sparring.	Rising action [catalysing].

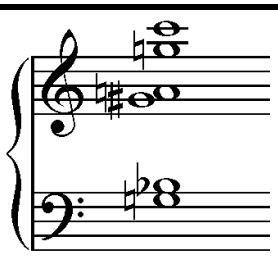
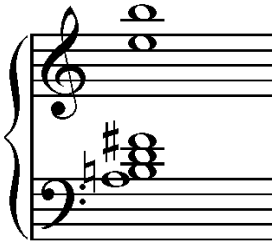
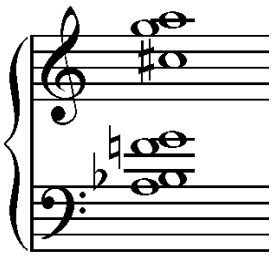
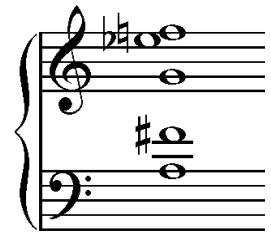
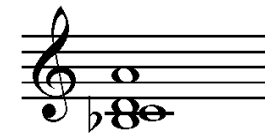
IV		Echoes of the warm sonorities of II, whilst ornamentation and undulating melodic lines in Orchestra 1 recall the virtuosity of movements I and III.	The 'other' of the trio section is strongly reminiscent of an *Analepsis* (an interjected scene that takes the narrative back in time from the current point the story has reached [catalysing].
V		'Jazz' double bass soloist as central point to antiphonal accompaniment from III with the rich homophonic texture of IV.	Return to narrative with highly stylised melodrama (a work that is characterised by extravagant theatricality and the predominance of physical action over plot development) [catalysing]
VI		Completely homophonic, *con sord*. leads to 'distance' in sound. Developing the antiphony of III and V.	Harmonic and textural instability lead to *Anagnorisis* (the point in a plot where a character recognizes the true state of affairs) [catalysing].
VII		Dramatic and virtuosic.	Climax, heightened harmonic and stylistic conflict break through to new language [closing]
VII		Fragmented like I, with solo melodic lines underpinned with recitative-like chordal interruptions.	Falling Action and Denouement (D-centric resolution) [closing]

Fig.9 – Comparative table of Maw's planned harmonic areas and textural features

Each individual movement in *Life Studies* acts as miniature volta; a turn or switch that emphasizes a contrast in ideas or emotions. The overarching harmonic conflict presented between movements and I and II is mirrored stylistically in each subsequent movement, with highly contrasting units further supporting the increase of tension that surrounds the narrative.

This stylistic and harmonic alternating of two worlds catalyses the linguistically transformative process of change in Maw's language from received serialism to the free post-tonal amalgam that is reached in movement VII. The initial declaration of the serially-derived Ur-melody at the start of *Life Studies* is a clear representation of the constructivist compositional thinking that drives the movement, including harmonic material conceived symmetrically around localised tonal axes, and the movement's palindromic form. This sets up a language of abstraction, which is immediately contrasted with the nostalgia and familiarity presented through the Chopin quotation that opens movement II.

This antagonism presents a contrast of compositional style with strong tonal allusions (e.g. triads of A minor at Fig.IIh and C major at Fig.IIu), creating an alternative reality, whose role is to set up a stylistic and harmonic tension, which will gradually infiltrate the stylistic world of movement I. The language and extroversive style of movement III returns to the abstract realm of movement I, with material audibly derived from hexachords. Resuming the original narrative thread heightens the contrast of II as a separate, antagonistic reality. Echoes of modal mixtures and enharmonic shifts in IV de-emphasize atonal collections, and serve as a preparation

for V, which presents the first real effect of the antagonist on the protagonist, as the musical material of III is heard again, transformed by the prism of IV (and indirectly II). Hexachordally derived material from III is distorted, a faint memory of the character of before, now harmonised using parallel sonorities, with elements of parsimonious voice-led resolutions (as opposed to hexachordal resolutions) creating a more organic and instinctive language.

In VI, the 'otherness' of II is felt most strongly in the muted homophonic writing, creating a Toveyan 'purple patch' (or intermezzo), that supports the harmonic reading of the strong A-centricity as a harmonic 'other' in the journey towards the D-centric conclusion ('*a*'). Yet in spite of its stylistic resemblance to II, this movement is a turning point (*anagnoris*), as it is the first time that the antagonistic world of II has been affected by the serial presence of I, and this leads to the desired breakthrough in the narrative climax of movement VII.

As the harmonic and stylistic conflict is concluded in extreme energetic and virtuosic gestures, so emerges an amalgam language with triadic elements and serial conception, harmonically mirroring the fulfilment of the arrival onto a local F# centricity, completing the Ur-melody and attaining a localised '*a*'. But then movement VIII frustrates this triumphant closure, with a superficially fragmented style similar to the symmetrical hexachordal design of movement I. This gives the feeling of redundancy, an inessential extra added in the manner of a Rousseauian supplement. In Rousseau and Derrida, the supplement's role is to enhance some seemingly 'natural' goal – in this case, a final uncomfortable attempt at fulfilment of

'*a*' through the D-centric conclusion – yet it is unnecessary in that process. As opposed to the archetype of a coda, the supplement attempts to complete something that purports already to be complete in and of itself.[127]

In the case of Maw, this manifests in a secondary attempt to aid the 'natural' conclusion of the gestural and rhetorical elements of the music extraneously, whilst contradicting the previous fulfilment of Ur-melody and harmonic structure. In many ways this outward impression of completion adds to the overall frustration of the gesture: adjunct and inferior to the main body of the work, acting as an image, or reflection of the preceding musical material, whilst paradoxically highlighting the initial lack within the main body that needed to be supplemented.[128] The true identity of the work's narrative is in effect temporarily subordinated to disappear in the face of superficial confirmation of its own *telos*, reinforcing the need for completion, whilst simultaneously pointing out the implicit lack in the work that it is needed to complete.

VI

At both levels of analysis, the same narrative occurs. The *telos* of conflict, desire for resolution, approach and partial fulfilment of desire and subsequent frustration at distortion of the schematic resolution appears at a longscale tonal level, where the harmonic *telos* of the work is denied by a problematic coda (or supplement), and a

[127] The closest comparison in the Classical canon seemingly lies in the normative codas of James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's 'Sonata Theory', which lie after the Essential Expositional or Structural Closures, and thus – unlike their deformational equivalents – do not offer further development of the harmonic material.

[128] Jacques Derrida. *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 142.

largescale structural level, where the conflation of style and topic is reached in movement VII and then frustrated by a return to the initial dichotomic poles in movement VIII. This is also mirrored at a local level, in individual narrative units such as the frustrated conclusions of harmonic and dynamic process in movement III.

The repetition of this narrative of attempt and frustration at every level implies that this schema is essential to the work. It recalls the Kierkegaardian notion of a diapsalmata – a refrain that acquires meaning or identity through its repetition at multiple levels of a work, stemming from a specific word or phrase found at the end of each of the Biblical Psalms.[129] Repetition of this uniform *telos* of conflict, attempted resolution and frustration at every level of *Life Studies* reinforces it to be essential to the work. Deeply entrenched within this diapsalmatic narrative of frustration of the objective and superobjective, each individual movement in *Life Studies* acts as a synecdoche of the whole, in the same way the two characters in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* portray dualistic views of the same frustrated existence.[130] This double narrative address the identity of selfhood as an extension to the various modern theories of human identity and action that define the self as an amalgam of discrete units.[131] Alasdair MacIntyre argues that the nature of these theories does not preclude the possibility of a genuine *telos*, but that analytical philosophy embraces a

[129] Søren Kierkegaard. *Either/Or* [Parts I]. Trans. David Swenson (Princeton University Press 1971), 31-4.
[130] For a full commentary, see John *Lippitt and Patrick Stokes, eds. Narrative, Identity and the Kierkegaardian Self* (Edinburgh University Press: 2015).
[131] For example Galen Strawson. 'Against Narrativity.' *Ratio* 17 (2004): 428–52.

'tendency to think atomistically about human action',[132] leading to an account of 'identity … in terms of [concatenated] events'.[133] As with Barthes' narrative theory discussed earlier, the diachronic combination of these events forms an overarching *telos*.

In drawing these events together into a narrative unity, MacIntyre seeks to find an alternative way of viewing the world where each element of our lives fits into such an overall teleology. This unity of narrative, according to MacIntyre, mirrors the unity of human life, and forges a link with our own reflexive ontologies. John Davenport, in his model of narrative identity, suggests that our experience in living out primary narratives means that whenever we create within the paradigm of narrative, whether this is in the form literature or biography, or more abstract rhetorical contexts like music, we often interpret patterns in our lives instinctively, using them to create secondary narratives based on our own identities.[134] This consistent reproduction of an autobiographical narrative equates to Kierkegaard's notion of a 'life-view', a template which controls the overall shape of our life experiences at a unified level, and becomes deeply imbedded in our self. Just as with MacIntyre's notion of narrative unity, this 'life view' guides our understanding of the world, and in reproducing an autobiographical narrative we instinctively equate the fictional protagonist with our self.

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[132] Alasdair MacIntyre. *After Virtue* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 204.
[133] Ibid., 217.
[134] John Davenport. *Narrative Identity, Autonomy, and Mortality: From Frankfurt and MacIntyre to Kierkegaard* (London: Routledge, 2012), 57.

A narrative structure such as this does not necessarily require narration (a common criticism which Davenport calls 'the logos fallacy'), and indeed this protagonist need not necessarily be a fictional character or figure, rather a general agency of rhetoric, such as a tonal trajectory. As Kierkegaard discusses in *Either/Or*, we do not consciously 'know our selves', but instead hide the truth of our selfhood behind layers of self-deception and general lack of awareness. We therefore have a reliance on the subconscious to reveal this truth; the aphorism upon which much psychoanalysis is based. Kierkegaard argues that contrary to the Freudian view of giving the ego more control over the subconscious aspects of the mind, letting the subconscious free through creative endeavours creates a reflexive experience, which, as discussed above, manifests a far better facilitator of the selfhood's truth through the realism of narratives.

It would be an over-simplification to equate Maw's life to the narrative structures in *Life Studies* as a clear manifestation of his subconscious protagonist. However given the subject matter implied by the work's title, a creative inquiry into life and personal experiences, there seems an implicit connection between Maw's own life, a biographical story filled with creative frustration in the form of large writing blocks, poor reviews for his major opera *Sophie's Choice,* and a protracted battle with mental health issues, and the *telos* of frustration in the work. Whether or not this is an example of the subconscious translating into creative outputs, MacIntyre, Davenport's and Kierkegaard's theories of narrative identity suggest at least an implicit connection with Maw's personal identity and the abstract protagonist's own narrative identity, even if not an explicit one.

Agency

I

In both Lowell and Maw, each movement or section functions as a discrete musical and poetic entity, accumulating to form one trajectory. Yet each individual element functions as a microcosm of the whole, often sharing elements of the dialectical process and static aesthetic of the overall trajectories and plots discussed above.

One such microcosm lies in the third movement, a Scherzo and Trio (see Fig.10). As with the overall structure, this movement presents a series of dualities, with tension created by the unfolding of musical material as it is explored and juxtaposed. These dualities are initially presented as clear antiphonal gestures; a fast *moto perpetuo* scurrying gesture in Group I (marked *forte*), fractured and brittle in contrast to the *pianissimo* chorale in a very high tessitura of Group II. The function of Group I is very much a disruptive one, with phrases lying over wide and angular intervals (for example the diminished 24th covered by the first violins in Fig.IIIa^{-2}), with the tessitura extended downwards by grotesque punctuating chords in the cellos and bass. There is a wide tessitura in the Group II melodies (e.g. the descending major 9th in Fig.IIIa^{-1}), but the swooping glissandi – extended from the end of movement one – have a lyrical effect, with their descending nature contrasting with the ascending phrases in Group I.

Section	Figures	Generic expectations of the Scherzo/Trio	Description
A	III-IIIc^{+7} (32 bars)	Rounded binary, regular phrase structures (often repeated with limited transposition/ transformation,[135] development of small cells of material, triple time.	Regular phrase structures with implied repetition and constant transformation, development of two small cells (discussed below), triple time.
B	IIId^{-5}-IIIi (32 bars)	'Pastoral' topic, fewer instruments (trio), movement to contrasting tonal area, typically subdominant, simpler forms.	Antecedent / Consequent phrase allusion (G-Ab/Ab-G), contrasting 'vocal' topic, fewer melodic lines
[transition]	IIIi-IIIj^{+4} (9 bars)		Transformation of material / tonal space
A (recapitulation)	III-IIIc (24 bars)	Return to primary tonal area, no change from the exposition of A.	Return to primary tonal area, no change from the exposition of A.
Coda	IIIk^{-7}-end (15 bars)	Consolidate material; hints at secondary tonal area.	Consolidate material; hints at secondary tonal area and material.

Fig.10 – Structure of movement III

As the movement progresses, this disparity is reduced. As Group I's fragments become increasingly shorter and the overall tessitura lower, the *pianissimo* of Group II begins to swell increasingly to create a *messa di voce*, up to *mezzo-forte*. In this diachronic unfolding, Maw conflates two seemingly contradictory musical gestures before subsequently resolving them, producing an abstract musico-dramatic strategy that initiates a narrative allusion over the musical paragraph (or 'A' section of this ternary movement, the passage until the 'Intermezzo' at Fig.IIId^{-5}). The dynamicism

[135] For example in the second movement of Beethoven's op.27 'Moonlight' Sonata.

of the Group I material wanes, and with the initial bursts of two bar material splintering into fragments (Fig.IIIc) there is a perceived change of hypermetre from crotchets to minims.

With the initial focus dynamically placed on Group I, each crotchet group (consisting of eight demi-semiquavers) is brought into relief against the larger scale metrical dissonance created by triplets and irregular rhythmic patterns in Group II, effecting a hazy distance between the two protagonists. Strong articulations at Fig.IIIa^{-5} marking out irregular bars of 5/4, 3/4 and 4/4, expand the hypermetre, and then as the focus shifts – partly due to dynamic sleight of hand – towards Group II, the hypermetre falls with the musical phrase, for example seeming to be in dotted minims at Fig.IIIc, and in larger four or five bar paragraphs by the arrival at the 'Intermezzo'.

Maw has now completely reversed the gestural functions of these two groups, so that Group II's vocal characteristic, in the foreground against Group I's background, develops into a warm vocal melody, while Group II's earlier foreground material has re-established itself with an accompanying function. There has been a flux of activity from dynamicism to stasis. The regimented rhythmic unison of Group I's earlier material has dissipated into a textured landscape of multiple simultaneous tuplets, creating an indistinct backdrop for the dynamically strong, unison Group II melody.

This reversal of foreground/background implies a gestural agency that works beyond the surface level discourse: the goal of the initially passive protagonist (Group II) is mapped onto a transgressive one – a process that is repeated during the

recapitulation and coda (with the material interchanged between groups in the latter). However, the repetition performs a different narrative function. The inverse situation of the 'Intermezzo' creates a narrative frame through which we can both retrospectively and pre-emptively reconsider the reconciliation of these conflicting teleologies, at once reassessing the process that has just occurred, and – assuming a collective memory that might anticipate a recapitulation of material given the implied form and genre – affirming a set of norms and expectations for future encounters (see Fig.10). [136]

II

This denial frustrates the very essence of the musical process, in this case, that of dying away. Approaching the music in these terms, considering its dynamic, processual, and emotional (modal) natures, provides an alternative viewpoint to examining the inherent narrative trajectories of the music. One such model of processual narrative is that of Algirdas Greimas as discussed by semiotician Eero Tarasti in his *Signs of Music*.[137] Central to Griemas' approach is the notion that action occurs when there is a discourse between subjects and objects, which are in either the act of 'being' (in conjunction) or 'doing'. Tarasti equates these two basic modalities with dissonance and consonance respectively, creating the basic opposition of tension and resolution that is central to the tonal system. However, when applied to post-tonal music, this binary leads to a new consideration of narrativity which

[136] For further discussion of re-assessing normative structures in temporal processes Joshua Mailman. 'Agency, Determinism, Focal Time Frames, and Narrative in Processive Minimalist Music.' *Music and Narrative After 1900*, Michael Klein and Nicholas Reyland, eds. (Indiana University Press, 2013), 125-43.
[137] Eero Tarasti. *Signs of Music: A Guide to Musical Semiotics* (Berlin: Gruyter, 2002), 24-7.

extends the basic concept of harmonic function, where progressions that effect resolution project the modality of 'being', whilst those that introduce tension simultaneously project 'doing'.

Consider, for example, the opening A section of movement III. As discussed above, there is a duality of conflict in the simultaneous processes, perceived as a period of flux, or – to take this analogy – 'doing'. This flux is based upon the seeming contradiction and working out of two conflicting elements. However, the dichotomy formed by these opposing elements is not as extreme as appears at the extroversive level, as both gestures stem from the initial vertical note group heard at the beginning of the movement. In Group 1 for example, development is built around Stravinskian rotations of the initial heptachord set out in the opening bar, and subsequently treated as a note set, 'P' (see Fig.11).

Meanwhile Group II's gesture is similarly based on the juxtaposition of octatonic and whole-tone elements, harmonising a retrograde transposition of P (D, C, Bb, Ab, [D], G, F), with the vertical element based on parallel transpositions of octatonic harmonies (e.g. Bb, B, C#, D, [E], F in Fig.IIIa^{-6}). Any deviations from P, for example in Fig.IIIa^{-5}, are based on R3 and R6.

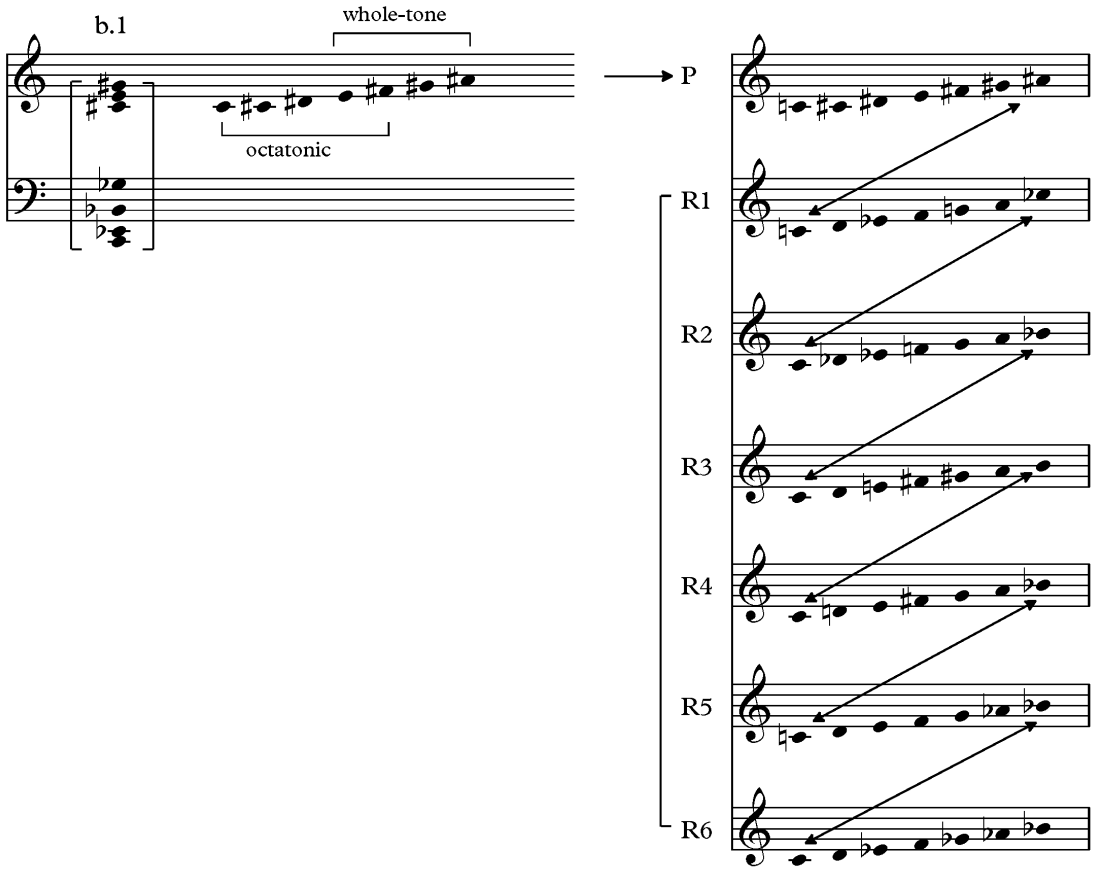

Fig.11 – core musical material and rotational development

Any apparent disparity between these two musical gestures, in fact is contradictory to the material stemming from elaborations of a single vertical combination; neither the parallel harmony of II nor the rotational cycling of I creating a strong sense of direction ('pull') or internal narrative. The perceived flux, or 'doing' of the individual processes is more of a commentary on the starting material: the octatonic scale with its internal leading-note functions is inherently 'doing' whilst the lack of internal pull in the whole-tone scale suggests that it is one of 'being'.

This is in direct contrast to Maw's use of harmonic and tonal function in the B section. Here, in the context of a seemingly static melody/accompaniment texture,

Maw introduces elements of voice-leading, with the accompaniment passage in Group I, whilst still based on the rotations of P, providing allusions to bass-led tonal harmony, and functional voice leading.[138] The pitch G was absent from the original rendition of R6 at the beginning of the movement (and throughout section A), now appears as the tonal focus of section B, initially the pitch centre of Maw's *Intermezzo* melody, subsequently reharmonised as the fifth of an implied C first inversion to provide the pivot for a large scale move to F (at Fig.IIIf) – a nod to the typical 'trio' section in the subdominant area – before a return to C minor territory (R2) leads back to the E centricity that opened this section. Yet this arrival back to E (and P) is denied its complete closure by a further descent to a supplementary Eb.

This B section provides a direct contrast to the harmonic stasis of A: the static B section is in fact 'doing', by creating an area of magnetic voice-leading to fully exploring the chromatic implications of the original P[139] within the apparent stasis. During the coda, the tension between the Fm/Eb allusions of this section and the octatonic/whole-tone space of earlier is highlighted by hearing both areas juxtaposed against each other in the final few bars, not so much seeking resolution, as highlighting the conflict.

The introversive agency created by areas of harmonic unity contrasting with areas of tonal allusion and functional voice-leading is initially at odds with the reversed processes occurring at the extroversive level. This creates the unusual and interesting

[138] Nevertheless these are still highly allusory, with a fluid relationship between functional and non-functional harmony.
[139] Much of the melodic movement expands upon the octatonic elements of P.

effect of experiencing two similar processes simultaneously at different rates: whilst the change of foreground perception and hypermetre discussed above happens over the course of the A section only, a larger change of perception occurs over the A+B sections, as focus shifts from the internal conflict of chord (expanded, conflicted, and resolved) and flux/stasis to the more external expression and stasis of the B section.

The movement from A (flux and stasis) to B is far more dramatic than the return to A afterwards. The dramatic tension of the contrasting gestures has been reconciled by our knowledge of the unfolding, and when the same process of dying away occurs at the coda (Fig.IIIk[-7]ff.), the trajectory seems fulfilled. However as soon as the repeated ostinato pattern figure has died away, a one-bar reminiscence of the 'Intermezzo' interjects. The desired outcome of the process has been thwarted; the structural closure of the movement alluded to, but denied in full by this supplement. Stasis is triumphant.

Nostalgia

I

> *In quella parte del libro de la mia memoria dinanzi a la quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica la quale dice: Incipit vita nova. Sotto la quale rubrica io trovo scritte le parole le quali è mio intendimento d'assemplare in questo libello; e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenzia. (*Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*)[140]

Dante's *Vita Nuova* is a highly personal work about the author's search for identity amongst the changing environments of his life: in the face of love, dealing with the grief of his lover's subsequent death, and finally engaging with a process of self-recreation and discovery as a single man. In these opening lines Dante sets up the premise – echoed several times through the work – that this act of examining his remembered past is a vehicle for self-discovery of his present self. It is only through first engaging with this story from his 'book of memories' that Dante can begin to move towards a new life ('*vita nuova'*).

It is clear that in his search for identity, the space created between past and present is important for Dante in the instigation of reflexive discussion. In the poetic medium, an interplay between the illusion of narrative continuity and a temporal fluidity (or perhaps, ambiguity) helps negotiate these connections between different

[140] Trans: 'In my Book of Memory, in the early part where there is little to be read, there comes a chapter with the rubric: *Incipit vita nova* ['here begins a new life']. It is my intention to write into this little book the words I find written under that heading - if not all of them, at least the essence of their meaning.'

chronological points in Dante's life in a way which affords analytical comparison. This method of engaging the past, by means of memory, to open up a critical future is not uncommon amongst writers engaging with self-representation,[141] not least because of the essential act of 'connecting' between commonalities that such a technique affords.

Dante's lines inspired Nicholas Maw to write an entire song cycle exploring similar themes of loss and self-discovery, *La Vita Nuova*, and clear elements of Dante's engagement with identity can be seen echoed in this work and the earlier *Life Studies*. A clear example of Maw looking to his remembered past occurs in the second movement of the latter work, which is based upon extemporisations of two short quotations from Chopin's op.28 preludes: no.3 in G major ('The singing of the stream'[142]) and no.23 in F major ('Playing water faeries') – both constructed around running *moto perpetuo* semiquavers.

Maw is explicit in making the connection between Chopin and his childhood, describing one of the lasting memories of his upbringing being his father – a local church organist – playing the op.28 preludes at home or hearing similar pieces on the gramophone.[143] This memory of Maw's, oft-quoted in media interviews throughout

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[141] Key examples include postmodern writers such as Italo Calvino or postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe. There is also a clear link with writers of self-help books; a connection which has been noted by critics including Harriet Rubin (2005) and David Bowe (2015). Cf. Michael Roth, who argues that 'memory is the key to [both] personal and collective identity … the core of the psychological self.' Michael Roth. *The Ironist's Cage: Memory, Trauma, and the Construction of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 8–9.

[142] Alfred Cortot's epithets, added to the work posthumously.

[143] *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 2nd October, 2000).

his life, shows his perception of a shared aesthetic between himself and the earlier composers: both figures feeling out of place in the local cultural and social climates, physically transplanted (Maw to London, Chopin to Paris) and looking to the music of their past to incorporate into their own musical idioms in order to find solace.

This sharing creates a temporal connection to two specific points in the past. The immediate memory is clearly a product of Maw's own personal experience; the episodic memory of specific times and places from within his own childhood. But simultaneously we are connected to the more abstract past of Chopin writing his op.28 preludes in 1835-9. This image does not hold the vivid and particular characteristics of Maw hearing his father play, but whilst it is not a specific memory, it still creates nostalgia for Maw,[144] albeit a cultural (rather than personal) nostalgia.

II

In quella parte del libro de la mia memoria . . .

The fluid opening of the second movement of *Life Studies* reflects the water-related themes of the two preludes quoted at the top of the score, but the comfortable tonality of Chopin's phrase is immediately distorted through the veil of memory, as the quotation is altered at the end (the final B-E becomes flattened) and then drawn through numerous transformations and variations. Maw introduces these variations heterophonically, to create a multilayered texture, with each entry of the original

[144] *Composer of The Week: Nicholas Maw.* (BBC Radio 3: 2nd October, 2000).

theme (R^0) or a variant of it (R) being constructed around an excerpt from the first movement, which resembles the outline of Chopin's original through the prominent interval of the sixth: g-(d)-e.

At Fig.IIa, this is then reversed for a second rotation (see Fig.12), highlighting the importance of the tones G-F/F-G, the keys of the two Chopin quotations. This process of wandering and return becomes the paradigm for this movement, with Maw constructing a formal scheme based around the frequent return of R, and closely resembling ritornello form. As with the Baroque manifestation of ritornello structures, R is almost immediately varied, and only heard complete and in its original key at the end of the work.

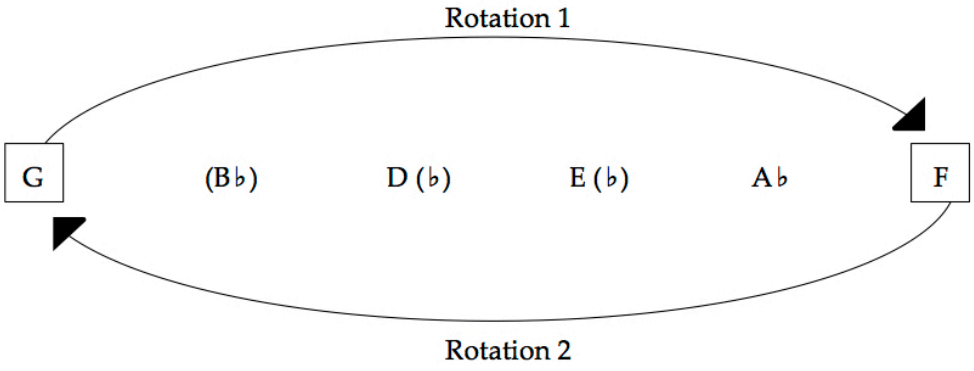

Fig.12 - Entry schema for theme R, showing the entry pitches of both rotations

This delayed return has strong reminiscences of a sonata-rondo form teleology, and indeed Maw alludes to various elements of sonata or sonata-rondo processes (see Fig.13). If the refrain is considered as a primary thematic group, then the first episode at Fig.IIh has strong resemblances to a secondary thematic group, being stated in a secondary tonal area and announced after a break in momentum (an

altered 'medial caesura'[145]). Elements of both of these thematic areas are brought in during a highly volatile and developmental middle section, before elements of both areas are brought together in a final reconciliatory section, preceded by a highly traditional re-transition (Fig.IIp) involving both thematic fragmentation and a series of held tonal pedals.

Formal model:

Refrain, R^0 – Episode 1 (IIh) – R (l) – E2 (m) – R(n) – E3 (o) – R (q) – E4 (r) – R (s)

However, this final section is problematic, as it avoids any of the principal traits of a sonata form recapitulation, such as the 'double return' of tonality and motif. Whilst Maw clearly incorporates formal allusions to sonata form, the processual elements at a surface level mask many of these elements. Conceiving of the work as a deformed Type 1 sonata form movement in this way (i.e. a sonata movement without recapitulation) negates the obvious, in this case, the strong, grounding quality of the ritornello section.

The underlying element of repetition that underpins each localised return of the refrain also drives much of the work's development. Whilst harmonically the first episode – or second thematic group – is based on the second Chopin quotation (a centric E with subsequent melodic focuses on the tertiary centres c-a-f-d) many of the section's key themes stem from the opening motif, with the central melody e-d-e-g (Fig.IIh) a direct inversion of the opening g-a-g-e.

[145] Prescribed by Hepokoski and Darcy's *Sonata Theory*

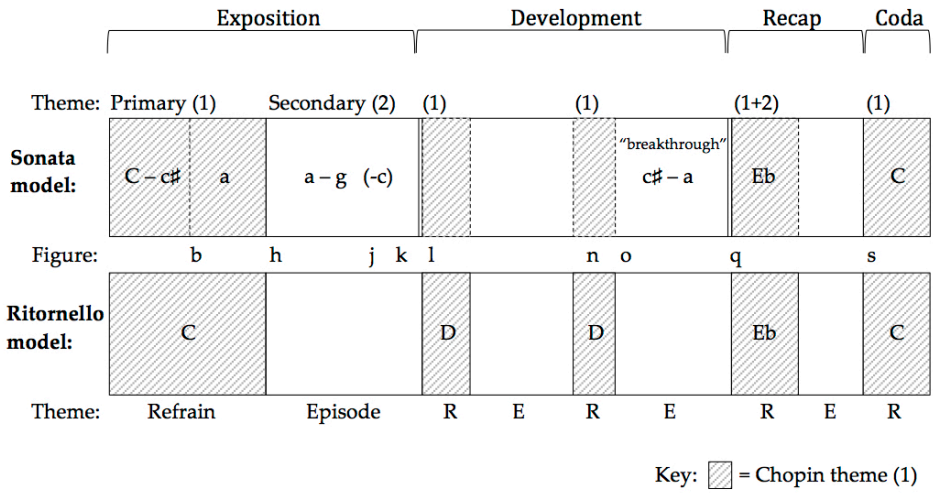

Fig.13 – Formal models, showing alternate readings of sonata / ritornello structures

Yet this monothematic thinking is seldom prominent in developmental passages in comparison to the direct iterations of R that punctuate the narrative. In between each repetition, the cycles of musical events increase in intensity, generating a drive towards the next point of R. These cycles simultaneously manifest growth and development of R, whilst ultimately resisting the relaxation that an iteration of R in its original form would afford. Indeed this utterance of R is only heard in the coda: the movement's ultimate goal.

The obvious connection between the movement's opening R and the equivalent moment in the coda gives a cyclical character to the work whereby the beginning and end of a work can be paradoxically both simultaneous (ostensibly we are experiencing the same event happening) and separated by the temporal continuum. However, the intense development that has occurred between the two presentations changes the context of the final R, so that it has the function of relaxation in comparison to the declamatory function at the movement's opening. This function of

the closing R is heightened by the harmonic tension created with each episode (see Fig.14).

After the opening, subsequent iterations of R occur at a pitch class progressively further removed from the initial plane of C-major. The harmonic 'potential' afforded by each rotation is created through a turning point (TP) which succeeds R. These turning points – or to use a Romantic notion, 'breakthroughs' – provide the formal energy to push the music through another cycle towards a yet further point of tonal contrast. The successive points of tension created by these tonal areas complement a similar process of tension on the plane of memory, as the desire for thematic recall becomes stronger.

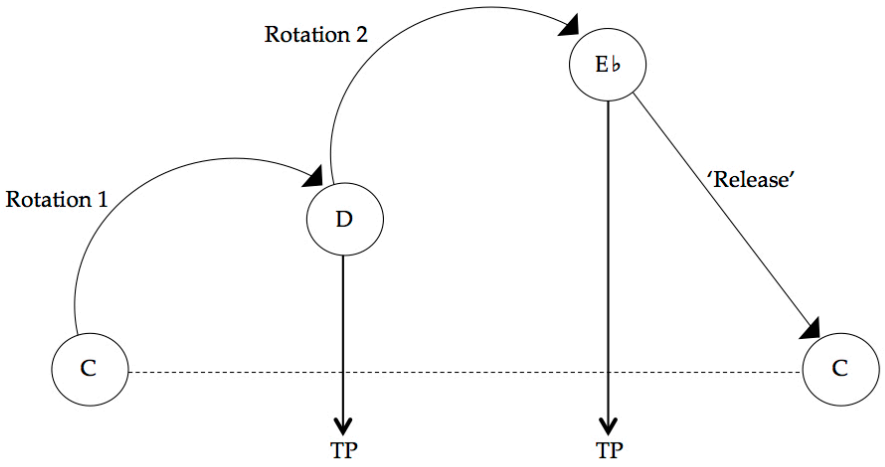

Fig.14 - Model of process, showing how the pitch centres of the Chopin material create turning points (TP), starting a new rotation in order to move the centricity away from the 'tonic' C, followed by a "release" in the movement's coda.

As the harmonic pull becomes heightened in the final section (Fig.IIq) so too is there an acceleration of memories, prompted by the until-now subconscious similarities

and connections between the thematic content in this movement. The music 'releases' back to the implied tonal home of C, and the final goal of the movement has clearly been realized. The past has been brought into the present, but it is a different past from the remembered; it is a past that now seems to have been reconciled with the present.

III

. . . non tutte, almeno la loro sentenzia . . .

This reconciled past reveals a hidden teleology in the movement: R^1 is, and has always been, simultaneously a memory and the unseen goal. The interlinked cyclical procedures discussed earlier create tension and distance from the regularly heard appearances of R, but R conversely re-grounds itself each time by reinforcing the non-linear time that the remembered connection to R^0 inherently brings. Each R is progressively more removed from R as they are placed increasingly further away along the diachronic plane, and yet paradoxically closer to R^1 at the same time, creating the retrospective understanding that the movement's trajectory was not about moving away from R^0 as the developmental style suggested, rather moving *towards* it; the known object of remembering which appears at the movement's completion (see Fig.15).

Time in this work is not linear. The ideal of memory and of the past, represented as R^0 by the Chopin quotation, is pitted against the 'actual' manifestation of the varied R. In the retrospective context of this, and subsequent appearances of R, each cycle creates stronger local senses of memory and context for R in the drive towards the apotheosis of convergence of the 'goal of the past' (R^0) and changing 'local memory of the past' (R). This convergence highlights – albeit retrospectively – the multilayered interaction of temporal strands in the movement, where past and present, memory and actuality combine.

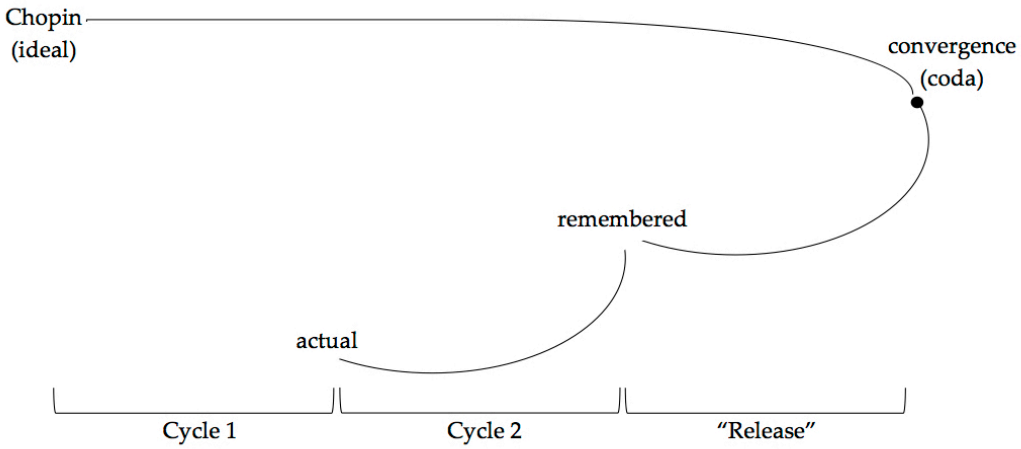

Fig.15 - Paradigmatic trajectory of Movement II, showing a spatial representation of the trajectory of the music to attain the remembered ideal (i.e. the Chopin heard in Maw's youth), achieving a convergence at the representational ideal (rather than the impossibility of the actual ideal; cf. Lacanian notion of the 'real')

These retrospective re-understandings of time are consistent with a crucial epistemic shift, whereby the perceived dependence of temporality on an external objective reality is negated in favour of an internal human subjective account. In the words of Benedict Taylor, 'time is … generated through the Self, through the Kantian contingencies of space and time or from the inherent nature of human consciousness

itself'.[146] This new self-created temporality is reminiscent of Dante's notion of self-creation through memory. As the initial, external view of the temporal generation shifts towards an internal temporality, so the temporal mechanism moves from the abstract to the hermeneutic. It seems that elements of Maw's adult identity are being discovered in this movement through the memory of his childhood persona.

However, this highly personal, Lockean model of subjective identity [147] is complemented by Maw's understanding of the Chopin quotation as featuring in a wider semantic – or cultural – memory. Maw's highly personal response, one full of autobiographical meaning, is played out on a more general plane by the composer's inclusion of ritornello elements in the movement's structure. Whilst the iterations of R and subsequent convergence of 'remembered' and 'ideal' versions of the Chopin quotation can be interpreted as references to a remembered home-life from the composer's youth, the physical manifestations of this quotation as a refrain creates an alternative, abstract level, where we experience the comfort of a localised 'home' that the repetition of R creates.

Each repetition of R, and the localized structural resolution that it brings, simultaneously creates nostalgia for R^1, but also consists of something that is wanted in the present. Musically, the initial R^1 and equivalent closing R both hold several markers for general childhood including a rocking, *quasi*-lullaby topos (enhanced in

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[146] Benedict Taylor. 'Cyclic Form, Time and Memory in Mendelssohn's A minor Quartet, Op. 13.' *Musical Quarterly*, 93/1 (2010), 32.

[147] See for instance Jeffrey Andrew Barash. 'The Sources of Memory.' *Journal of the History of Ideas.* 58 (1997), 713-4.

the opening by mutes) and implied C major/pentatonic tonality. The purity of this C major, attained only at the movement's conclusion, becomes a harmonic manifestation of the thing-which-is-wanted. This process of harmonic and motivic searching echoes on a general stage with the yearning for a specific childhood that Maw is playing out, helping us to empathise with the composer, and create a shared feeling of nostalgia – even when the nostalgia is for the extra-musical.

But there is a risk that this nostalgia is for an idealised and unreal past. Nostalgia is important in the construction of identity, as it implies an emotional connection to the past, rather than simply an acknowledgement of it. However such an emotional connection is often accompanied by a removal from the real, a mythical quality characteristic of the experience of nostalgia. Baudrillard calls such a form of nostalgia 'non-functional atmospheric value' and highlights how an object of *this* type of nostalgia 'is false in so far as it puts itself forward as authentic within a system whose basic principle is by no means authenticity … rather, the calculation of relationships and the abstractness of signs'.[148]

Baudrillard's implication is that the semiotic relationship that would be created between music and listener would connect the sound of Maw's past (through the Chopin quotation) to an independent reality where the real world is ignored, in favour of a constructed nostalgic world. This notion of a hidden reality is dangerous in the way in which it permeates the semiotic construction of day-to-day existence, but this reality itself is always condemned to the semiotic articulation; played here

[148] Jean Baudrillard. *The System of Objects.* Trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 2005), 78.

through a quotation of Chopin.[149] However, in the case of movement II of *Life Studies*, the nostalgia is not created through a symbolic representation of a specific object of otherness, rather through the transformation of that object. The object itself, the Chopin quotation, creates a memory rather than a nostalgia; an otherness of space and time, but not specifically of place. To put it another way, the object functions only as being an 'other', but would still create the same otherness if it were any other quotation of standard repertoire heard from a gramophone or piano in Maw's childhood.

This 'otherness' of memory acts as a Foucauldian heterotopia – 'a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable'.[150] As such, the heterotopia cannot be the instigator of nostalgia, as it transcends the longing for a specific home to return to (nostalgia etymologically stems from *nostos* — return home, and *algia* — yearning). Rather it is the temporal processes discussed above which create the nostalgia, and thus the 'other' of the heterotopia is brought into the real world, rather than acting as a window into an independent reality. Indeed, as the heterotopia created by R^1 is repeated throughout the work, its content becomes increasingly less important, as the temporal processes and repetition transcend the material reality of the music.[151] This transcendence through an almost religious ritual draws the music

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[149] Further discussed in Roger Scruton. *Understanding Music* (London: Continuum, 2009), 220-3. See also Theodor Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 142-8; Terry Eagleton. *The Ideology of the Aesthetic (*London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1990), 56-7.

[150] Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things*. Trans. Geoff Bennington (London: Pantheon Book, 1970), 31-2. See also Michel de Certau. *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other (*University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 73-6.

[151] Cf. Kierkegaard's notions of the religious in repetition, describing how 'repetition is and remains a transcendence' in Søren Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling, Repetition*. Trans. Howard

towards the purity of the final C-major triad without any sense of irony. It seems no coincidence that this movement was written only months after the death of his father, Clarence Maw, in 1972.

The very act of creating is, according to Melanie Klein, a form of healing,[152] and it is conceivable that composing with the elements of memory and nostalgia outlined above served for Maw as a way of psychoanalytically working through his grief. That Maw chose two quotations born out of the time spent with his father, clearly suggests that this movement acts, at least on one level, as an exercise in conserving the past, attempting to construct a site of memory, to retain an aspect of his childhood in perpetuity. As with Dante, the act of grieving for a loved one necessarily engages with a process of self-recreation and discovery. Searching for a new identity in the face of his father's death by returning to memories from childhood clearly has Freudian implications. The retreat back to the familial surroundings of Maw's childhood might therefore be considered a surrogate for the personal identity threatened in the loss of his father.

However, the process of repeated return that R goes through in this movement is transformative. Return and its capacity to overcome loss is a recurring theme in Freudian psychoanalysis, which suggests that repetition, like the rocking of a cradle, fulfills a deep-seated psychological need for comfort and consolation.[153] By constructing the movement in this ritornello-inspired form, Maw – whether

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V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton University Press, 1983), 186; see also 210.

[152] Melanie Klein. 'Infantile anxiety situations reflected in a work of art and the creative impulse.' *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 10 (1929): 436-443.

[153] Klein, 'Infantile anxiety situations', 438.

consciously or subconsciously – is using the compositional process to work through his grief. Just like Dante, the process opens up a new life, a new state of being for Maw. The final echo of R in C-major during the coda is not bittersweet or ironic. It is a suggestion that Maw has found his new identity, taking over the masculine subjectivity from his father; entering a new stage in his life.

. . . Incipit vita nova.

Epilogue: *On Life*

I

As a composer and an analyst, it is apparent that analysis often displays a compositional impulse while composition similarly displays an analytical impulse, both sharing the language of construction; in Agawu's words, 'the art of making, … [of] speaking of music as a language'.[154] In the same manner that analytical graphs function as symbiotic with the composition, leading the reader back into the music and altering their perception of the work,[155] so a new composition can highlight connections, undertaking an explanatory function which resonates with, and comments on, the world whilst simultaneously providing a new artistic truth.

Analysis often displays a compositional impulse while composition often 'display[s] an analytical impulse', but where 'intertextual analyses often succeed through simple verbal description there are good reasons to literally compose the proposed connections. We actually hear how these songs resonate with one another, comment upon and affect one another...in a way, the music speaks for itself.'[156]

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[154] Kofi Agawu. 'How We Got Out of Analysis and How to Get Back In Again.' *Music Analysis* 23, 2-3 (2005), 280.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Matt BaileyShea. 'Mignon: A New Recipe for Analysis and Recomposition'. *Music Theory Online* 13, 4 (December 2007).

To extend my multidisciplinary approach further, my intention is that the musical analyses I have presented should benefit from the reflexivity of my compositional praxis, and in turn that such praxis should gain from the formalist and hermeneutic perspectives of the analytical case study. To this extent, my accompanying composition portfolio, *On Life,* is an extension of my commentary of Maw's music, simultaneously adapting elements of his working methods to enhance and structure my own artistic aims, whilst also providing an additional level of commentary on his musical aesthetic and creative practice.

These compositions do not present direct re-compositions of *Life Studie*s; rather they translate the language of Maw's works into my own language, much inspired by the way Francis Bacon re-presents Velasquez in his triptych *Three Screaming Popes*, or Deleuze treats Nietzsche and Spinoza in his two eponymous monographs, re-staging their ideas in different and unexpected ways. This convergence deliberately aligns me with a tradition of composer-theorists, including Hans Keller – whose functional analysis involve a compositionally creative aspect – and his students,[157] and in more recent times composers such as Anthony Payne and Julian Anderson, who have published analyses of their colleagues' work,[158] as well as numerous philosopher-composers including Adorno and Deleuze.

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[157] Notable examples include Christopher Wintle and John Rogers, whose article `Pitch-Class Sets in Fourteen Measures of Mozart's Jupiter Symphony', Perspectives of New Music, 9/ii-10/i (1971), pp. 209-3, concludes with an excerpt of Rogers's *Trio for flute, cello, and piano*.
[158] For example Julian Anderson. 'Harmonic Practices in Oliver Knussen's Music since 1988.' *Tempo* 221 (July 2002): 2-14.

II

On Life is a portfolio of five compositions, inspired and influenced by my study of Nicholas Maw's *Life Studies*. It presents an interpretation of key autobiographical events from my own life in musical form, constructing a musical ontology that reflects my artistic and personal experience. In the manner of my analysis of *Life Studies*, the self I have portrayed here is conceived as polyvalent, making up the multiple elements of Hume's 'bundle'.[159]

Each piece represents a key moment in my life, and contains a clear theme (expressed in the title), which forms the basis of a key aesthetic, harmonic or structural idea. Chronologically, these works represent nostalgia for my childhood, setting texts from my favourite storybook in *On Childhood*; my journey into adulthood (and dance music) in *On Dancing;* failure to succeed at certain goals (*On Restraint*); the impact of mental illness on my life in *On Beauty*; my engagement with religion and faith in *On Belief*; and finally the celebration of achieving a Top-10 single in the music charts in *On Joy* and *On Joy 2* (an electronic remix of *On Joy*, included as a 'bonus track' in APPENDIX 2).

Creating a portfolio like this is similar to curating a cabinet of curiosities, where aspects of the curator/composer's artistic and personal experience are presented through a series of related, but contrasting *objets curieux*. For an artist, the act of curating is – as with composition – inherently reflexive. I am the protagonist in every

[159] See INTRODUCTION.

work, yet the works are not directly about me. They are equally commentaries, diaries and reflections on the numerous different aspects of self, and my perceived place in the world.

This portfolio is born out of a close textual analysis of Maw's *Life Studies*, which inspired much of the way I have chosen to manipulate musical material in my own works: thus the works presented here act as critical, non-verbal reflections on Maw's compositional procedures and aesthetics. I have used a similar analytical apparatus for discussing my compositions as that adopted in my discussions of Maw (for example post-Schenkerian reductions), to demonstrate the shared thought processes and formal conceits. However, these similar prototypes belie a different compositional aesthetic in my works from Maw's, notably lacking the external conflict and struggle present in *Life Studies*. Whilst clearly not akin to the 'new simplicity' compositional school, my music shows a concern with the distillation of musical and dramatic ideas to their essences, in a similar way to the aesthetic which science favours of the neat, compact and elegant, even in the most intricate theorem.

For me, artistic satisfaction comes from the challenge of distilling ideas to their simplest form. This desire to communicate with a simple *lingua franca* is not an attempt to 'dumb down'. Rather it is a translation into the vernacular, which I hope helps the listener to engage and empathise with the work, experiencing the music as a familiar thing, yet reheard as if new. It is my belief that this moment of cultural entrainment, or empathy, in music is the point where the 'other' of the subject – the meaning, or truth content of the work – is opened to the listener, and my role as a

composer is to facilitate this, to communicate directly the 'essence' of the work to the listener.

This 'opening up' of the subject is necessarily accompanied by a shift in focus of analysis and thought from structure and form (or 'functionality') towards the efficacy of musical means in its aim to reach the specific aesthetic goal of transparency. This in turn naturally leads to a shift in emphasis from detail towards more global processes of gesture and rhetoric – largely the terms I will be considering in the discussion below.

III

Key to my understanding of Nicholas Maw's *Life Studies* is an engagement with two linguistic conceptions: the rhetoric of late-Romanticism remembered from his childhood; and the serial grammar developed through tertiary education. I have taken this model and applied my own linguistic binary in an attempt to combine my inspiration from the standard concert repertoire[160] with my professional life as a DJ and producer of Electronic Dance Music (henceforth EDM).

In attempting to develop this concept, there have been three crucial aesthetic and technical issues to address:

[160] Music associated with concert or liturgical performance from the Renaissance to the present day.

1) Which aspects of each idiom to employ. From EDM, I have used topics and gestures such as modal bass-lines, which centre around the subdominant, phrases in parallel tenths and fifths, melodic and sonic gestures and shapes, and elaborate rhythmic patterns; whilst much of *On Life*'s harmonic thinking stems from concert music influences. This is due to the fact that EDM focuses on surface sophistication and intricacy, often neglecting the long-scale harmonic thinking commensurate with concert music.

   Whilst there are often elements of 'refrain' in my music there is a strong sense of 'unfolding' of musical material which EDM lacks, with individual pieces setting out a functioning primary 'tonic' area / pitch centricity and, typically, creating a tonal pole – or 'dominant' – acting as a magnetic other.

2) I have adopted the *Formenlehre* of EDM, which consists of the build up and release of momentum both harmonically and sonically through 'drops'.[161] These gradual build-ups are often underpinned by a regular metrical framework, as, according to William Rothstein, 'pop[ular music] does not manipulate phrase rhythm'.[162] To balance this, my music frequently sets up situations where the music is constructed from regular hypermetres, but contrasted with complex, or irregular, internal rhythmic structures.

[161] Miniature climaxes in the music where a change of rhythm or bass line occurs due to the sudden 'dropping in' of thematic or rhythmic elements.
[162] William Rothstein. *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), 124.

One such example is in Fig.16, where a perceived regular four-bar hypermetre is constructed from alternating formations of regular dotted crotchet and irregular minim / crotchet pulse-groups:

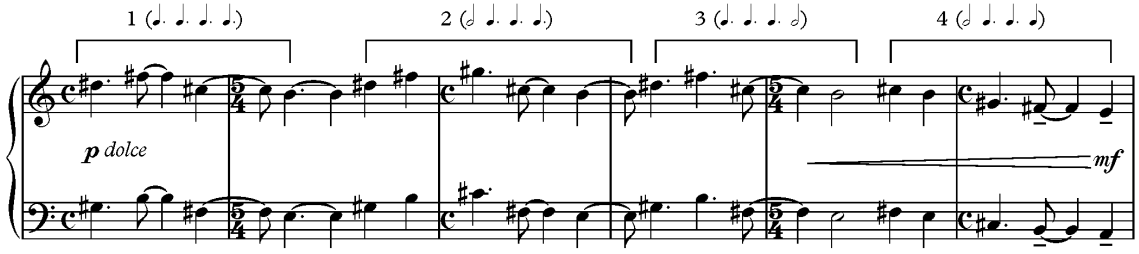

Fig.16 – Hypermetrical analysis of *On Childhood* (movement 1, bb.1-6)

3) Much of EDM is based on shifting cycles, due, in part, to loop-based technology such as Ableton Live, with each cycle subtly remixed using physical and digital technology. In achieving my artistic aim, I combine this notion with Schoenberg's concept of developing variation – where material is developed through the creation of a concatenated series of individual units, or variations – to create a developmental technique, used throughout my portfolio, in which exploration and expansion of traditional melodic devices is achieved through a series of 'remixes' of small units at both the micro and macro levels (see 'Bonus Track: *On Joy 2*'). This method of composition is most apparent in *On Dancing*.

IV

In order to facilitate this amalgam of EDM and the classical, I engage a creative process that reflects the creativity and creative processes from both worlds. I begin by sketching aesthetic concepts or atmospheres, often using words (especially adjectives) and occasionally rough shapes of phrases or harmonies. I will then bring these proto-ideas to my DJ equipment (Traktor S2 Decks, Traktor Kontrol F1, Logic Pro X, Ableton Live 9 Suite) and improvise or 'play' until I have a larger pool of ideas, which I will sketch as separate ideas on manuscript paper in short score (Fig.17). I then construct formal plans and structural shapes – which I will invariably break down further within the compositional process – and then will begin to write 'alla prima' onto full score, roughly at first, forming the outlines of phrases and harmonies, before spending time on the details of orchestration, harmonic direction and voice-leading.

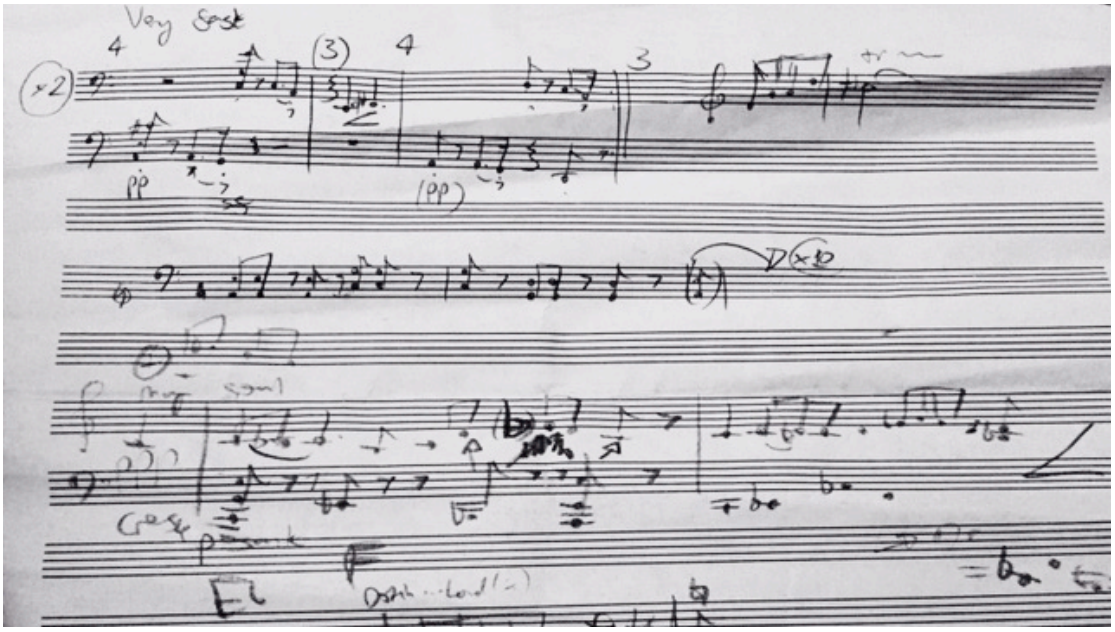

Fig.17 – Sketches for *On Groove I*, showing individual groups of ideas obtained through improvisation with Ableton Live software and Traktor DJ control decks.

What is attempted can be summarised in the words of Birtwistle, himself paraphrasing Ligeti:

> I like the idea that you get glimpses of a music … then it's cancelled and something else comes out. But I'm conscious that when I finish this bit it's got to *belong* in some sense. I can't suddenly have a piece of fifteenth-century music or whatever. And what comes after is something completely other. There's a continuum that's being cut up.[163]

This subversion frequently occurs with the ending of a piece; I may suddenly 'pull the camera out' in order to have an aerial view of the material, or bring in a new idea to unsettle the musical world that I have created. To really enjoy the least expected, there needs to be an aesthetic of familiarity beforehand. One technique that I employ often is to prepare an insignificant element, a supplement, which becomes increasingly more important in the music's construction towards the end of a piece.

[163] Fiona Maddocks. *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks - A Conversation Diary with Fiona Maddocks* (London: Faber&Faber, 2014), 96.

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