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convergence of music, painting, and language*

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1

Adorno's Physiognomical Image of Mahler: the convergence of Music, Painting, and Language



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26 JAN 2009

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ABSTRACT

This study makes a case for the manifestation of mannerism in the music of Mahler through a close reading of Adorno's monograph on the composer, concurrently supporting the theory that mannerism is a distinct style, not limited to fixed periods, conditions in art, or media. The label 'Mannerism' connotes the style of sixteenth century Italian fine art, circumscribed by various art historians in the twentieth century. This study argues that the style is evident beyond the constraints of the sixteenth century, through the investigation of its manifestations in different artworks, created both in earlier and more contemporary times. The argument is constructed from a detailed comparison of the characteristics of the style in the paintings of sixteenth century Italian artists Arcimboldo and Parmigianino, the early twentieth century music by Schoenberg and Mahler, and Virginia Woolf's last novel. The comparison is facilitated by the utilisation of Barthes's writings on Arcimboldo, John Ashbery's poem about one of Parmigianino's paintings, and, predominantly, Adorno's interpretation of Mahler. The study also addresses issues that concern a comparison between different media, such as the problematical nature of the convergence of the arts. For example, the comparison of linguistic elements in both Arcimboldo's and Mahler's artworks is difficult to conduct without implying that art or music *become* language; the notion of a painterly language, or a musical language is complex and ambiguous. The study deals with the issue of whether one medium has to be fundamentally similar to another, in order to identify common characteristics between the two. In accordance with Adorno's writings on this paradigm, the conclusion drawn supports the position that the style of mannerism can be identified as manifesting itself in different mediums, without the necessity to scrutinise the fundamental connection between music, painting and literary forms.

Introduction

Words move, music moves
 Only in time; but that which is only living
 Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
 Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
 Can words or music reach
 The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
 Moves perpetually in its stillness.¹

My primary focus for this thesis is Adorno's perception of Mahler's music in his monograph on the composer: *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy* (*Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik*)². I argue that it is possible to view Mahler's music as a manifestation of *mannerism* as a means to understanding it, by drawing parallels with the so-called period of 'Mannerism' in the sixteenth century.³ In the chapter of the Mahler monograph entitled 'Tone', Adorno draws attention to particular aspects of the music, such as the duality between major and minor sections, the treatment of which 'earned Mahler the charge of mannerism.'⁴ Adorno's theory is based on the idea that Mahler abstracts and reifies the material of the romantic Austro-German music tradition, a language considered to be exhausted, and he makes it speak again for a second time; he writes that 'Mannerism is the scar left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression.'⁵ I examine Adorno's claim of the mannerism of Mahler, looking at the categories of his material theory of form that he applies to the music in his monograph on the composer. I also compare Mahler's

¹ Eliot. 'Burnt Norton'. In *Collected Poems (1909-1962)*, 189-95. London: Faber and Faber, 1974. 194

² Adorno. *Mahler, A Musical Physiognomy*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

³ I am referring to the 'Mannerism' applied to the artworks of the sixteenth century, sharing John Shearman's view that the sophistication which produced the freakish complexities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were not a true musical Mannerism. He writes that 'They do not represent a pervasive *stylistic* phenomenon.'; Shearman. *Mannerism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967. 97

⁴ Adorno 1992: 21

⁵ Adorno 1992: 22

mannerism to the artworks of the sixteenth century that are together defined as the period of 'Mannerism' by some art historians in the twentieth century, refuting the idea that mannerism is limited to this period. I argue that it is a valid style in art, which is characterised by the manipulation of an established 'language' in a bizarre and grotesque way.

In the first chapter, I explore definitions of mannerism in order to set the context for this study. The label 'Mannerism' is a modern invention based on the vague word *maniera*, used by sixteenth-century Italians to mean anything from 'manner' to 'method'. Art historians such as Hans Sedlmayr (1896-1984) argue that mannerism is the 'anticlassical style', at the end of an era. In his book *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center (Verlust der Mitte: Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit, 1948)*, Sedlmayr writes that 'At the end of the era, for instance, Arcimboldo painted human heads composed entirely of sea-shells or pieces of vegetables, thus producing an entirely Surrealist effect.'⁶ Here he makes the connection between sixteenth-century mannerist art and the movement of the twentieth century – Surrealism; however, he insists that it is an effect produced at the close of this period of Renaissance canonical balance. Whereas Claude V. Palisca points out in his book entitled *Studies in the History of Italian Music and Music Theory* (1994) that John Shearman was the first to break away from the definition of mannerism as the end of an era, Shearman regarded mannerism not as a break with the classical style, but as an eruption within it.⁷ In his book entitled *Mannerism* (1967), Shearman argues that 'Every work of art has the right to be judged on its own terms, and the tolerance we now extend to Baroque art should also be extended to

⁶ Sedlmayr, Hans. *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006. 190

⁷ See Shearman 1967; referred to in Palisca. *Studies in the History of Italian Music and Music Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 283

Mannerism.’⁸ Adorno takes a view similar to that of Shearman, urging us to see Mahler’s mannerism not as a desperate attempt at achieving goals analogous to the earlier composers of his epoch, whose language he rearticulates for a second time, but as a treatment of form that speaks for itself. He writes of Mahler’s music in the same chapter entitled ‘Tone’, that ‘Mahler heats it up from within, from an expressive need, to the point that it again becomes incandescent, speaks, as if it were immediate. Exploding, it accomplishes what was later taken over by the emancipated dissonance of Expressionism.’⁹ Adorno’s idea suggests that Mahler’s mannerism does not mark the end of an era in music; if anything, it proposes exactly the opposite – that in Mahler you see the beginning of the achievement of the ‘New Music’ of the twentieth century. Perhaps, as in Shearman’s theory, it does not mark an end of an era, or a beginning, but is, instead, an eruption within one. In the first chapter, I also explore the discrete moments that embody mannerism in Mahler’s music, such as ‘breakthrough’ (*Durchbruch*) and the major-minor manner that Adorno draws attention to in his Mahler monograph. In addition to Mahler’s music, I examine the manifestation of mannerism in Schoenberg’s music, which strengthens the case for mannerism as a distinct style.

In the second chapter, I go into more detail about Mahler’s mannerism according to Adorno, when I compare it with the techniques of distortion employed by the paintings of the sixteenth century Italian ‘Mannerists’. I explore the paintings of Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527-1593), conducting a detailed study of the mannerist aspects and the similarities between his artworks and Mahler’s music in their treatment of material. Consequently, I draw parallels between Adorno’s interpretation of Mahler’s mannerism, and the ‘Mannerism’ of the sixteenth century, in order to

⁸ Shearman 1967: 188

⁹ Adorno 1992: 20

argue that mannerism is a style of which Mahler's music is a manifestation. An important issue in this study is the problematical nature of the convergence of the arts. I deal with the difficulties encountered, such as the question of where the boundaries lie in the comparison of two different media, such as music and painting. In this section I draw on Adorno's hypothesis in his essay entitled 'On Some Relationships between Music and Painting' (1965), that 'The convergence of the various media becomes evident through the emergence of their character as language.'¹⁰ I will investigate the common linguistic elements in artworks by both Arcimboldo and Mahler, also asking the question of whether one medium has to be fundamentally similar to another in order to identify common characteristics between the two. The comparison of language-like constituents in both Arcimboldo's and Mahler's artworks is difficult to conduct without implying that art or music *become* language; the notion of a painterly language, or a musical language is complex and ambiguous. I am not looking to interpret Arcimboldo's paintings in terms of twentieth-century ideals, but instead, I want to examine the treatment of the material itself – the style, and compare it to that of Mahler.

In the third chapter I compare Mahler's mannerism to that of the Italian mannerist painter Girolamo Parmigianino (1503-1540), looking at one of his paintings entitled *Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1524). I investigate a common link between the painting and Mahler's music, revealed by modern American poet John Ashbery, in his poem (1975) that shares a title with the painting by Parmigianino that inspires it. Ashbery refers to the notion of 'frozen gesture'¹¹, which Adorno also mentions in his monograph on Mahler, a concept developed in a musical context in the essays of

¹⁰ Adorno. 'On Some Relationships between Music and Painting' *The Musical Quarterly*, 79, No. 1, (Spring 1995): 66-79. 71

¹¹ Ashbery. *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror: Poems*. Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1977. 82: line 520.

Brian Ferneyhough. Ashbery also makes a reference to Mahler's Ninth Symphony in the poem, and throughout the poem, he expresses aspects of Parmigianino's painting that overlap with Adorno's cryptic recount of Mahler's music. The poem provides a means of looking at the convergence between the type of mannerism in Parmigianino's painting and Mahler's music. I will use the concept of the 'frozen gesture' as a pivot to compare Parmigianino's painting with Mahler's music, in order to build a case for the manifestation of this style – mannerism – in Mahler. The gesture is related to Adorno's theory that 'it is the refusal of synthesis, of reconciliation between subject and object, which produced mannerism.'¹² The refusal of synthesis between subject and object is apparent in the work of the sixteenth century mannerists, most noticeably in Arcimboldo's paintings, and also in Mahler 'in terms of the play of major and minor modes in his music.'¹³ The 'frozen gesture' is most noticeable in the interstices, the ruptures, which are characteristic in the style of mannerism – a 'brokenness'¹⁴ that Adorno notices in Mahler. This characteristic becomes a central theme in my investigation of mannerism.

In the final fourth chapter I investigate the notion of mannerism as a style that is manifest in literature also, exploring a novel by Virginia Woolf – *Between the Acts* (1941) – that I think exhibits the characteristics of the style that I have observed in the sixteenth century paintings and also in Mahler's music, such as a lack of synthesis between subject and object, resulting in 'frozen gestures'. I begin by investigating Adorno's likening of Mahler's music to forms in literature, such as the novel, to continue to follow up Adorno's hypothesis that 'The arts converge only where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.'¹⁵ The study of Woolf's novel provides

¹² Witkin. *Adorno on Music*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 116

¹³ Witkin, *ibid.*

¹⁴ See Adorno 1992: 24

¹⁵ Adorno 1995: 67

further evidence of the manifestation of mannerism in different media and historical periods, supporting the theory that mannerism is a style which is not limited to the sixteenth century or relegated to the definition of a state or condition such as 'lateness'.

Chapter 1

Such stunning reversals of natural patterns and human conventions betrayed a loss of direction that often led artists to look at the world upside down.¹

In this chapter I look at different definitions of mannerism by art historians and musicologists, in order to argue that it is a distinct style that is manifest in other artworks, rather than limited to the sixteenth century, or the end of particular eras. Mannerism is seen as a curiously inexpressive state that luxuriates in making bizarre connections. It is sometimes attached to 'lateness' in periods of art history, whereby previously powerful styles and elements are made to express again, but the gestures are worn out, creating scars, as Adorno claims when he writes that '[m]annerism is the scar left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression.'² He suggests that 'Mahler makes the language of second nature eloquent'³, an idea that I will investigate in this thesis. I do not refute the image of mannerism as the scar left behind by a worn out language, and I agree with the theory that it is connected to 'lateness' with regards to Mahler, insofar that it is most manifest in his late works. However, I disagree with the limitation of mannerism to a state, or condition of 'lateness', or to fixed periods of history. Sedlmayr argues that 'The deeper relationship ... between Mannerism and modern art lies in their sense of the nearness of death and in the divorce that appears in it between man and nature.'⁴ Although, Shearman argues that 'It is difficult to imagine a period more alien to Mannerism than the first half of the twentieth century (which is, perhaps, why Mannerism has not been

¹ Maiorino, Giancarlo. *Portrait of Eccentricity: Arcimboldo and the Mannerist Grotesque*. London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991. 5s

² Adorno 1992: 22

³ Adorno 1992: 21

⁴ Sedlmayr 2006: 190

approached straightforwardly, on its own terms, but deviously).⁵ However, I would argue that mannerism is irrefutably a style that is manifest in artworks created in the twentieth century, and other centuries for that matter, and it is not limited to being a condition of ‘lateness’ in the style of an era or period, but rather, as Shearman argues, it is an eruption within one.⁶ In this chapter I will explore this idea in relation to sixteenth century mannerism, and also to mannerist works in twentieth-century music by Mahler and Schoenberg.

The *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English* defines mannerism as 1. ‘a habitual gesture or way of speaking or behaving; 2 the use of a highly distinctive style in art, literature, or music’⁷; and distinctly, as ‘a style of 16th-century Italian art characterized by distortions in scale and perspective.’⁸ Mannerism in the sixteenth century is a term applied in the early twentieth century to the collection of styles, specifically referring to painting, sculpture, and architecture, that hypothetically arose after the Sack of Rome in 1527⁹, emerging as a reaction to the High Renaissance, which culminated in the early 1520s. The High Renaissance is characterised by ideals such as ‘balance’ between statics and dynamics, and between *plane* and *space*, which are epitomised in the Italian Renaissance sculptures of

⁵ Shearman 1967: 186

⁶ See Shearman 1967, referred to in Palisca 1994: 283

⁷ *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English: Revised Third Edition*, Authors, editors, contributors – Oxford Dictionaries, Oxford University Press (2005) see website at: www.AskOxford.com

⁸ Oxford Dictionaries, *ibid*

⁹ For a detailed historical study of mannerism in painting in sixteenth century Florence and Rome, see Woldemar and Janson. *History of Art: The Western Tradition*. Indianapolis: Prentice Hall PTR, 2004. 488; they write that: ‘Among the trends in art in the wake of the High Renaissance, Mannerism is the most significant, as well as the most problematic. The original meaning of the term was narrow and derogatory. It referred to a group of mid-sixteenth century painters in Rome and Florence whose ‘artificial style’ (*maniera*) was derived from certain aspects of Raphael and Michelangelo. This phase has since been recognized as part of a wider movement that had begun around 1520. Keyed to a sophisticated taste, early Mannerism had appealed to a small circle of aristocratic patrons such as Cosimo I, the grand duke of Tuscany, and Frances I, the king of France. The style soon became international as a number of events – including the plague of 1522, the Sack of Rome by Spanish forces under Charles V in 1527, and the conquest of Florence three years later – drove many artists abroad, where most of the style’s next phase developed.’

Michelangelo (1475-1564). The rebellious subjective freedom of the period referred to as mannerism, on the other hand, is a stark contrast¹⁰, the seditious character of which is thought of as a precursor of the deconstruction of the concept of art in the twentieth century. The definition was initially limited by art historians in the twentieth century to the style that developed predominantly in Europe during the sixteenth century, and some art historians and musicologists still believe this to be correct. The word mannerism also denotes a style of French florid contrapuntal polyphony superseding the *ars nova* in the late fourteenth century, often referred to as *ars subtilior*.¹¹ However, the characteristics of mannerism are not limited to either the fourteenth or the sixteenth century, which I will demonstrate through the study of manifestations of this mannerism in different artworks created both in earlier and more contemporary times.

Carl Dahlhaus reconsiders mannerism in music in his text: *Schoenberg and the New Music* (1987). In the essay entitled “‘New Music’ as historical category”, he refers back to the question of the ‘New Music’ that has occurred in musical history. Dahlhaus draws our attention to the *musica reservata*, a style or, perhaps, a performance practice attached to the music in the latter half of the sixteenth century, frequently described by art historians as mannerism. There is also controversy surrounding the issue of when styles such as *seconda pratica* begin, a term coined by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). Dahlhaus favours the argument that the earlier

¹⁰ The scholar, social constructivist, and philosopher of mathematics: Paul Ernest (1944 –) expresses this sentiment as follows: ‘The transition to Mannerism manifests itself most strikingly in a profound change of taste, a collective mood of a feeling of crisis. There is great fatigue with the classical, with harmony and measure, with the ideal. Fascination shifts towards the extreme, the eccentric, the fantastic, the artificial, the strange. The achievements of the previous period are not thrown over, but are viewed in a different light.’: Ernest, Paul. *Mathematics, Education and Philosophy: An International Perspective*. Bristol: The Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis inc., 1994. 172.

¹¹ “‘Ars subtilior’ suggests intensification of the rhythmic paradigm of the *ars nova*; a similar process may have taken place in melodic and harmonic design, including techniques for using accidentals.’ For more see Brothers, Thomas David. *Chromatic Beauty in the Late Medieval Chanson: An Interpretation of manuscript accidentals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 138

monodies and madrigals, and not just the more expressive, chromatic style in the later part of the sixteenth century and the early Baroque, are all mutually interacting forms within this style of *seconda pratica*. He refers to Helmut Huccke's description of the earlier styles as having a simplicity which serves as a stylistic mask.¹² Dahlhaus goes on to identify the fact that scholars have fought shy of proclaiming a mannerism in music history to which analogies in literature and art history are lacking, particularly for the period around the eighteenth-century. He argues that the label mannerism would be of little importance if there were not a characteristic common to all mannerisms. Naming composers that span at least three centuries of music history, Dahlhaus highlights the features of mannerism, naming technical ostentation and an extreme degree of expressiveness in the music of Marenzio (1553-1599), Gesualdo (1566-1613), Stamitz (1717-1757), C. P. E. Bach (1714-1788), and Berlioz (1803-1869). He writes that a feature of mannerisms is an exposure of 'the means', which are not fully subsumed in the 'result'; the nuts and bolts of the product are not concealed, but presented for all to see. This is evident in the distortion by means of fragmentation of material in mannerist artworks by Arcimboldo and by Mahler. Sedlmayr describes this tendency of mannerism, comparing it also to modern art:

Mannerism has the habit of patching a picture together out of various bits of reality and out of figures of different sizes, and of mingling classical forms with others, such as Gothic. Its feeling for antiquity is the feeling a man has for something dead, a world of shreds and fragments. It produced the patchwork picture and has a number of other affinities to modern art.¹³

Earlier than Dahlhaus's essay, the debate about mannerism and the twentieth-century conception of *maniera* among art historians grew to a climax in the 1960s, and it was

¹² Huccke, 'Das Problem des Manierismus in der Musik: Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch, im Auftrage der Gorres-Gesellschaft, NS 2. Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1961. 219-38; cited in Dahlhaus, Carl. *Schoenberg and the New Music: Essays*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987. 11

'Das Problem des Manierismus in der Musik', , im Auftrage der Gorres-Gesellschaft, NS 2 (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot) (1961) 219-38)

¹³ Sedlmayr 2006: 190

most intense among music historians in the 1970s. Palisca writes that ‘‘mannerism’ in the sense of a multifaceted style or wavering stylishness, can occur at any time in history, today as well as the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.’¹⁴ He argues that mannerism as a style may be recognised whenever it occurs, and called by that name if the concept illuminates the phenomena it describes, which also encompasses arts that are not based in visual media. He argues that mannerism is ‘a name adopted from art history to designate what only comparatively recently has been recognized as a movement separate from the traditional sixteenth-century idiom.’¹⁵ This recognition was made by John Shearman; however, Shearman argues that conceiving mannerism as a movement altogether, like those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as if it had a conscious direction, is an anachronistic idea if it is projected back into the sixteenth century. He writes that ‘[s]ince the sixteenth century embraces some remarkable different styles, Mannerism as a concept became, not unnaturally, strained.’¹⁶ Palisca engages with this theory when he points out that it is now recognisable that within a period of time, some musical works can be identified as manneristic and others may be identified as anti-manneristic, because composers can create ‘kinds’. He concurs with Shearman when he argues that calling an entire period of music history mannerism is a mistake, because ‘it glosses over the diversity of musical expression that every age has enjoyed. Even within the *oeuvre* of a single composer there are mannerist pieces and others that are not.’¹⁷ The audacity of

¹⁴ Palisca 1994: 313

¹⁵ Palisca 1994: 278; Palisca writes that a good case for adopting the term mannerism to designate what only comparatively recently has been recognized as a movement separate from the traditional sixteenth-century idiom, is made by Wolf in ‘The Aesthetic Problem of the *Renaissance*’. *Revue Belge de Musicologie*, IX (1995): 83-102; also see Lowinsky. ‘The Problem of Mannerism in Music: An Attempt at a Definition’. In *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance and Other Essays*, ed. Bonnie J. Blackburn, 106-53. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

¹⁶ See Shearman 1967: 16

¹⁷ Palisca 1994: 313

composers venturing to express intensely passionate texts identified in this phase of musical history is classified as *seconda pratica* by many musicologists.

Only fifteen years before Palisca, Canadian musicologist Maria Rika Maniates had embraced mannerism as a period – claiming an entire century for the movement, as an epoch between the renaissance and the baroque. She argues that mannerism in the sixteenth century *is* a major phase in Western European music that is inadequately understood. Maniates conducts a study of the viability of mannerism as an historic-stylistic concept that arises out of musical patterns evident in the practice of thought about music between the years 1530 and 1630 in her book *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530-1630* (1979). She argues that an understanding of this concept, in both its broadest and most narrow relations to musical activity during these years, can help to clarify for us the fundamental changes in musical style that took place between the Renaissance and the Baroque. She points out that the Late Renaissance or Early Baroque, now referred to as the *Age of Mannerism*, ‘seems to offer alluring parallels to avant-garde art of our own [twentieth] century.’¹⁸ She argues, however, that this comparison poses methodological problems, and so she attempts to take a more historical approach, drawing ideas from primary sources. Maniates recognises the potential issues of paralleling mannerism in the sixteenth and twentieth century, particularly the threat of endangering historically viable concepts and overplaying the serious psychological interpretation of abnormal styles. She writes that:

Scholars ascribe the spiritual tension they detect in mannerist art to a cultural situation informed by all sorts of crises. Innate feelings of alienation are aggravated by unstable relationships with a volatile society. Artists therefore emphasize their individual styles in a self-conscious way and rebel against established conventions that they find meaningless.¹⁹

¹⁸ Maniates. *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530-1630*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979. 3; here Maniates refers to the avant-garde art of the twentieth century.

¹⁹ Maniates, *ibid.*

Shearman attacks the use of terms such as ‘tension’ in the explanation of mannerist art, arguing that it was not caused by the sack of Rome at all, or by the Counter-Reformation. He urges us to see that ‘tension’ has an early twentieth century period flavour, specific to an expressionistic interpretation, imposing contemporary standards on the works, rather than an historical approach. He writes that ‘the equally popular notions of ‘anti-classicism’ and ‘reaction’ also have their historical contexts in the twentieth century, rather than the sixteenth century, and sometimes these interpretations have additional overtones of Surrealism and Dada.’²⁰ Shearman highlights the problems of this twentieth-century interpretation of mannerism, when the sixteenth-century mannerist works were created in and for a cultural world with ideals remote from our own. He writes: ‘The assumption, once made, that Mannerism was a phenomenon that can be explained by modern terms of reference – our prejudices and problems – leads in extreme cases to the assertion that in Mannerism is the beginning of Modern Art.’²¹ Shearman is by no means arguing that the past is the same as the present. He argues that mannerism is the ‘stylish style’ rather than a phenomenon, which is manifest in other ages, for example:

in the eighteenth century ... there occurred a resurrection of the spirit of Mannerism, not just of its bodily forms. In Rococo decoration, or furniture, there was a direct revival of the most extravagant grotesque-work of the sixteenth century; and decoration lost once more the qualities of energy and structure as its function returned to giving pure delight, to simply being beautiful.²²

Maniates suggests that mannerist artworks flaunt formal complexities and through this they exhibit deliberate intellectualism, and, as a result, each creator strives for his own personal solution, turning to distortion when the situation reaches exaggerated proportions. This argument suggests that the artworks of the period she refers to as

²⁰ Shearman 1967: 135

²¹ Shearman 1967: 136

²² Shearman 1967: 182-3

mannerism were somewhat synthesised and man-made, as she implies that the wilful caricaturing of recognised techniques is playful and affected. However she considers the possibility that this *distortion* mirrors the grotesque aspects of an irrational world, which communicates sincere conviction. Maniates combines these two aspects of mannerism when she assesses this 'phase in Western music': 'If playfulness has a spiritual quality, it can be bold, pungent, and challenging. ... But the paradox of Mannerism is that it presents a precarious balance between intensity and superficiality.'²³ She attempts to balance the facile and the deeper aspects of this mannerism in her study, which coexist in various degrees in the period as a whole and in the works of the individual artists. Maniates does not limit mannerism to the distinctly grotesque works of the sixteenth century, such as the madrigal, which exposes the collapse of balance in the polyphony of the High Renaissance. Contrarily, she introduces a diverse thesis on a mannerism that encompasses an appreciation for any individual and distinctive stylishness within this period in history between the years 1530 and 1630. She argues that 'the fundamental motivation behind all innovations, whether theoretical or practical, whether mildly progressive or wildly iconoclastic, is an acute consciousness of style.'²⁴ Maniates extends the boundary of mannerism from the end of an era to an entire century; however she remains adamant that mannerism is a phenomenon. I would agree with Shearman that conceiving mannerism as a sixteenth century movement, as if it had a conscious direction, is an anachronistic idea, and that manneristic, and anti-manneristic traits, can be found in artworks within other periods of time.

André Malraux (1901-1976) writes in his psychology of art *The Voices of Silence* (*Les Voix du Silence*, 1951): 'A style is not merely an idiom or mannerism; it

²³ Maniates 1979: 4

²⁴ Maniates 1979: 177

becomes these only when, ceasing to be a conquest, it settles down into a convention.'²⁵ Perhaps he refers to mannerism here as a tendency or trait, rather than as a valid style. Palisca questions whether 'mannerism is a concept imposed on the creative products of the late sixteenth century retrospectively or a quality consciously put there by their creators.'²⁶ He argues that mannerism is at least partly a conscious seeking after style, and to choose a manner or imitate one is a style-conscious act. A personal musical style, on the other hand, is a result of a multitude of decisions, made independently of any concern for style.²⁷ However, it is difficult to discern which acts in the creation of a work are made independently from the 'concern for style'. Furthermore, I would argue that the style which seeks a *stylishness* – the exaggerated nature of mannerism through the use of distortion, which is one of its defining features – is a valid style in itself. To Shearman, mannerism is 'the stylish style'; taking the translation of *maniera* literally, he defines mannerism as a style stressing qualities such as grace, complexity, variety and difficulty. He writes: 'Mannerism should, by tradition, speak a silver-tongued language of articulate, if unnatural beauty, not one of incoherence, menace and despair; it is, in a phrase, the stylish style.'²⁸ Shearman's theory abolishes the idea that mannerism is a style attached to a convention in one particular period, or the end of an era.

Robert Witkin elucidates what Adorno means by Mahler's mannerism in his book, *Adorno on Music* (1998): 'It is the refusal of synthesis, of reconciliation between subject and object, which produces mannerism. This lack of reconciliation –

²⁵ Malraux. *The Voices of Silence*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1953. 318

²⁶ Palisca 1994: 285; Palisca writes that: 'the music critic enjoys the opportunity, not shared by art and literary critics, to hear his interpretations tested in performance. An anachronism will often be more glaringly exposed in the hearing of it than through intellectual reflection.' He argues that, for these reasons, it is perhaps more important to the music historian than to the art or literary historian as to whether mannerism is imposed on artworks by critics.

²⁷ See Palisca. 'Ut Oratoria Musica: The Rhetorical Basis of Musical Mannerism', in Palisca, *ibid* (1994) pp. 282-311.

²⁸ Shearman, *ibid* (1967) 19

Mahler's mannerism – is seen, in one of its formal aspects, in terms of the play of major and minor modes in his music.²⁹ As Adorno writes himself, '[a]s a deviation from the major, the minor defines itself as the not-integrated, the unassimilated, the not yet established.'³⁰ The refusal of synthesis – the non-integrated fragments in Mahler – is often perceived as irony. In his review of Mahler's Ninth Symphony (1908-1909), Robert Anderson writes that the 'symphony emerges as a late, luxuriant fruit of a tradition that was indubitably great.'³¹ He argues that:

a natural cheerfulness makes it hard for me to take the woestruck arguments too seriously. Which is nothing to do with Solti's committed performance, and the prodigies of virtuosity achieved by his team. If the Chicago violins are scarcely more secure at Mahler's giddy heights than others before them, that's another strand to the composer's irony. But these fine players do all they can to integrate the sprawling work...³²

However, Adorno does not perceive Mahler's irony as a late, luxuriant fruit; on the contrary, he sees it as central to Mahler's *modernism*. As Witkin argues, 'In Adorno's treatment of modernism, Mahler is a composer who excels at the creation of this tension between expression and form, especially the art of using the musical language inherited from Viennese classicism against its own inherent intentions.'³³ Witkin suggests that elements of the music, such as the grand symphonic style, the elaborate programmatic content, and the evocations of nature are all there but are deployed in ways that deconstruct the very model from which they are drawn.

Adorno compares Mahler's music with the late-Romantic symphonic writing of Tchaikovsky or Dvořák, two composers who are associated with the *end* of the Romantic period. He contrasts the tendency of these composers to place the 'fictitiously popular specification of the themes ... so far in the foreground as to

²⁹ Witkin 1998: 116

³⁰ Adorno 1992: 20

³¹ Anderson, Robert. 'Review of Mahler's Symphony no. 9; performance by Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Solti'. *The Musical Times*, 124, No. 1687 (September 1983): 553.

³² Anderson, *ibid.*

³³ Witkin 1998: 116

devalue the invocation of mediating categories of the classical tradition ... to theatrical claptrap or padding'³⁴, with Mahler's fragmenting of similar material. He argues that this is *involuntary* vulgarity in the late-Romantic symphonies, whereas it becomes in Mahler a conscious provocative alliance with vulgar music. Adorno writes that 'His symphonies shamelessly flaunt what rang in all ears, scraps of melody from great music, shallow popular songs, street ballads, hits.'³⁵ The scraps of melodies are Mahler's brokenness, and Adorno argues that 'The traumatic tone in Mahler's music, a subjective moment of brokenness, is not to be denied, and secured him against the ideology of *mens sana in corpore sano*.'³⁶ This is Mahler's tone – a style that is manneristic – which does not force the music to conform to the *involuntary* vulgarity of late-Romantic symphonic writing, but determines the music as a part of the modernism of the twentieth century, perhaps even postmodernism. His manneristic treatment of musical material in the Ninth Symphony is similar to that of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, which I will investigate later in this chapter; this strengthens the claim that mannerism is not limited to a particular era, or condition of a phase in history. The fragmentation of the debris of melodies, styles, and forms of the musical past – Mahler's alliance with the musically vulgar – is the grotesque aspect which is comparable to other mannerist works. Paintings by Arcimboldo are identified by the mosaic-like fragmentation of objects on the surface of his composite heads, which are distorted to reveal the human-like face. In the twenty-six years that he spent as a court painter, Arcimboldo produced abstruse and bizarre portraits in which faces are composed of flowers, fruits, objects, or animals, as, for example, in

³⁴ Adorno 1992: 35

³⁵ Adorno, *ibid.*

³⁶ Adorno 1992: 24; *mens sana in corpore sano* translates as 'a healthy mind in a healthy body', originating in Satire X of the Roman poet Juvenal (10.356); for Adorno's treatment of this famous Latin quotation, see Adorno. 'The Schema of Mass Culture'. In *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 61-97. London: Routledge Classics, 2001. 63

his most famous work, the portrait of Rudolf II as the ancient god Vertumnus, the Roman god of vegetation and metamorphosis (see Appendix 1). Art critics have credited him with anticipating Surrealism by hundreds of years, examining these artworks as precursors of movements such as mannerism, symbolism, surrealism and expressionism.³⁷ His style was, in fact, rediscovered by the Surrealist artists of the early twentieth century; for example, the paranoiac-critical method of Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) was manifestly influenced by Arcimboldo's Mannerist paintings.³⁸

Arcimboldo distorts the portrait of the face using abstract, reified objects, and Adorno suggests that Mahler distorts forms in a similar way in the Ninth Symphony. He writes that, in Mahler's music, residues of the subject are left where the music has not been entirely objectified, as it was in Expressionism³⁹, where music became a 'seismogram of the soul.'⁴⁰ The subjective left as a residue – a strong current below the façade of the fragmented surface of the music – is met by the objective world, disembodied, impervious to concepts. In the chapter entitled 'Tone' of the Mahler monograph, he explains that '[i]t is not so much that subjectivity is communicated or expressed by music as that in it, as in a theater, something objective is enacted, the identifiable face of which has been obliterated.'⁴¹ Adorno's image of Mahler's music as a face made up of objects – as a physiognomy – is distinctly comparable with Arcimboldo's composite heads, a montage of objects which are not smoothly

³⁷ Caswell, Austin B. 'The Pythagoreanism of Arcimboldo'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 39, No. 2, (Winter 1980): 155-161. 155

³⁸ 'The Arcimboldo Effect' exhibition at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice in 1967 showcased a lot of 'double meaning' paintings, all of them connected to the secret technique of Arcimboldo. See Shteir and Lightman. *Figuring it Out: Science, Gender, and Visual Culture*. Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, 2006. 167.; For an example of the 'paranoiac-critical' method, inspired by Arcimboldo, which Dalí has used in his work, see appendix 2 which depicts the painting entitled: *The Persistence of Memory* (1931).

³⁹ Ronald Taylor writes of Expressionism as a movement that had flourished from about 1906 to the early twenties; 'It had been composed of a series of small groups complexly inter-related and extending over the visual arts, music and literature.'; Taylor. 'Presentation I'. In *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Frederic Jameson, London: NLB, 1977. 12

⁴⁰ Adorno 1992: 25

⁴¹ Adorno, *ibid.*

connected, but poke out sharply and grotesquely. And yet, they come together to form a whole. Adorno writes: '[t]he complexion of his music repels a synthesis without contradictions. Its opposite, that which perennially resists fusion, is called manner; it testifies to an attempt that is ever renewed and ever in vain.'⁴² He continues: 'it is not a mark of musical inadequacy but embodies a content that refuses to be dissolved in form.'⁴³ The first movement of the Ninth Symphony – the *Andante comodo* in D major/minor – follows a narrative which juxtaposes life and death, as many critics have suggested, which is symbolised by the major and minor modes. The unconventional parallel major-minor relation of the two opening thematic groups negates the fundamental drive in the sonata form by reducing the dynamic tonal polarity. Through this disturbing treatment of convention in Mahler's major-minor manner, the mournful theme is interrupted by great, passionate ruptures, bursting through the object layer on the surface of the music. These discrete moments in Mahler's music are described by Adorno as 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*); he writes that 'his fractures are the scriptures of truth.'⁴⁴ For a musical example of 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*) in the first movement of the Ninth Symphony see bars 71-82; at bar 80, the second subject erupts in a burst of passion (*etwas frischer*) (see Appendix 3). Adorno's 'breakthrough' – a rupture in the music – is reminiscent of Shearman's theory of mannerism, not as a break with a classical style, but as an eruption within one.⁴⁵

Adorno also refers to the other essential genres in Mahler's idea of form: 'suspension' (*Suspension*), and 'fulfillment' (*Erfüllung*) when he writes of the 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*). He argues that the breakthrough is always suspension –

⁴² Adorno 1992: 23

⁴³ Adorno, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ See Adorno 1992: 166

⁴⁵ See Shearman 1967; referred to in: Palisca 1994: 283

that of the immanent context – but not every suspension is a breakthrough, suggesting that the intention of the breakthrough is gradually mediated. He writes: ‘the suspensions give notice to formal immanence without positively asserting the presence of the Other; they are self-reflections of what is entangled in itself, no longer allegories of the absolute.’⁴⁶ He argues that the suspensions are retrospectively caught up by the form from whose elements they are composed, and that the ‘fulfillment fields’ achieve by form:

by their relation to what preceded them, what the breakthrough promised itself from outside, and what the symphonic-dramatic type reserved to the explosion of the moment. In Mahler the breakthrough is momentary; the suspensions stretch themselves out, fulfillments are thematic forms of a specific nature.⁴⁷

In this momentary ‘breakthrough’, the more intense, subterranean level of Mahler’s music rises up from the deep core of the composer’s voice, through the fossilised layers constructed of historical material, to the surface, in a passionate rupture; this discrete moment is also identifiable with characteristics of mannerism. Like Shearman’s definition of mannerism as the ‘stylish style’, these gestures in Mahler are manneristic in this way because they are easily characterised by the huge, often exaggerated gestures, full of irony; this effect is achieved in the manneristic ‘balance between intensity and superficiality’,⁴⁸ to return to Maniates. Adorno demonstrates the context of the breakthrough in Mahler when he writes that:

The genius of Mahler’s sense of form is manifested when, in the midst of the ravaged total situation, he places an inordinately long and intense, unbroken upper-voice melody, as if that state needed the other extreme, a self-contained part that makes itself independent of the whole, and which begins to glow in its surroundings, which cannot contain it.⁴⁹

There are many similarities between the mannerisms of different periods, which, in part, provides a case for mannerism as a style that is manifest in artworks not confined

⁴⁶ Adorno 1992: 43

⁴⁷ Adorno, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Maniates 1979: 4

⁴⁹ Adorno 1992: 52

to specific periods or limited to being a condition of 'lateness' in the style of an era. However the comparison between techniques of distortion in works by Mahler and sixteenth-century painters, such as the fragmentation of material that is typical in the work of the artists, confuses the matter somewhat, because this distortive technique could be easily confused with a symptom of disintegration and aging. Maniates provides an argument for mannerism as a period or a weaker style at the end of an era, and she makes some interesting points, but it is nevertheless clear that the type of distortion I have found is not limited to a symptom of senescence or to fixed historical periods. The alliance with vulgarity, to form a grotesque whole from the scraps of tradition is present in Arcimboldo as he combines the idea of a traditional still life, often made from a representation of fruits or other still objects, with the traditional figural portrait, using fragments of the former to create the latter. In their combination he achieves an effect that is aesthetically grotesque. Just as Arcimboldo manipulates tradition to create new expression, Mahler combines the scraps of melody from great music – shallow popular songs, street ballads, and hits – to forge an original stance; it is not *new* material, but a new treatment of older forms. And although his music binds itself to traditional material, turning towards the past, the grotesque element created by his brokenness is visionary. In the first chapter of his Mahler monograph 'Curtain and Fanfare', Adorno states that 'Mahler sketches a puzzle composed of the progress that has not yet begun, and the regression that no longer mistakes itself for origin.'⁵⁰ Adorno viewed the serialists of the twentieth century with a mixture of admiration and suspicion. In his essay 'The Aging of the New Music' (1955) he accuses the music of an aspiration towards a pure formalism, and towards senescence, because it

⁵⁰ Adorno 1992: 17

lacks expression and ‘critical impulse’. However, a pioneer of atonality and the serial technique – Arnold Schoenberg – was venerated by Adorno in his writings.

In his book *Schoenberg Chamber Music* (1972), Arnold Whittall argues that ‘it is undeniable that *Pierrot Lunaire*, mannerist rather than expressionist in its synthesis of order and disorder, is crucial to Schoenberg’s development.’⁵¹ Whittall writes that in *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), Schoenberg finally abandoned the tendency to asymmetrical, non-repetitive forms that he had explored in *Erwartung* and the *Sechs Kleine Klavierstücke* (1911). He argues that it is only in the specifically contrapuntal movements like No.8 ‘Nacht’ – a passacaglia, and 18. ‘Der Mondfleck’ – a blend of fugue and canon, that show such tendencies, whereas ‘other movements still shun the exclusive exploitation of traditional forms which was to be one of the salient features of the early twelve-note works of a decade later.’⁵² Schoenberg’s twenty-one miniature melodramas for Sprechstimme and chamber ensemble sets German translations of the poems by Albert Giraud also entitled *Pierrot Lunaire* – meaning moonstruck Pierrot. The moon is associated with lunacy, an idea that Schoenberg plays with in No.18 ‘Der Mondfleck’ (The Moonspot), in which Pierrot is trying to remove an illusory moonspot from his back that is reflected by the moon, which he perceives as tangible. The music plays games with the images, as Pierrot toys with the moonspot in the words of the poem; and yet, it is in a totally strict form of a double canon and three-part fugue (see appendix 4 for the words to this movement). Exactly half way through the music, at bar 10.5, the canon turns around, rendering the instrumental parts as a palindromic crab canon, identical when it is played forwards as when it is played backwards. This is a literal representation of going backwards, musically miming Pierrot trying to shake off the illusory speck that the clown

⁵¹ Whittall, Arnold. *Schoenberg Chamber Music*. London; BBC, 1972. 29.

⁵² Whittall 1972: 29-30

perceives to be real. This double canon is a conceit, because there is no essential connection between the words and the turning backwards, and so Schoenberg has established one in the music. Schoenberg's experimentation with the conceit, the games that he plays with the images from the poems, are the mannerist elements of the work; the order and disorder that Whittall writes of are apparent in this movement, where *Pierrot* is always on the edge of disorder and insanity. There is conceit upon conceit, the synthesis of this order and disorder resulting in the delicately ironic and ambiguous mannerism. It is ironic because the 'synthesis' of order and disorder is a conceit itself, as the fact that the music turns around and mirrors itself in the middle of the movement has no actual relation to the words themselves, or to the action of *Pierrot*, but is purely musical. So it is actually not a synthesis, but, instead, a non-integration.

It is no coincidence that *Pierrot Lunaire* was written only three years after Mahler's Ninth Symphony. The mannerist synthesis of order and disorder, or, rather, non-synthesis, in 'Der Mondfleck' is comparable to the refusal of synthesis between subject and object that produces mannerism in Mahler, to come back Adorno's theory that this lack of reconciliation is seen in the play of major and major-minor modes.⁵³ This refusal of synthesis is seen in the aspects of mannerist works such as the fragmentation and exposure of 'the means', which are not fully subsumed in the 'result'. Palisca describes characteristics of mannerism in music, like its artistic and architectural counterparts, as tending towards overstatement, full of restless activity, sharp colour contrasts, unresolved tensions, asymmetries, clambering ornamentation, and prone to rapid changes of mood and texture.⁵⁴ These are all aspects of music associated by some scholars with the end of eras, periods, and styles. The clichés in

⁵³ See Witkin 1998: 116

⁵⁴ See Palisca 1994: 278

Mahler, gestures that are almost a parody, such as those signifying an opening or an ending, and scooping strings rising up to a point, are where he draws on familiar gestures and exaggerates them. These gestures are already exhausted from their overuse by other composers, and the fact that they are made to speak again is grotesque. As Adorno writes:

Mannerism is the scar left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression. Mahler's deviations are closely related to gestures of language; his peculiarities are clenched in jargon. Some of the jerky repetitions of motives, at once violent and inhibited, in the major section of the Funeral March of the Fifth Symphony are paradigmatic. Sometimes – and not merely in the recitative – Mahler's music has so completely mimed the gesture of speech it sounds as if it were speaking literally...⁵⁵

The clichéd gestures in Mahler are the jargon that Adorno writes of in the extract above; they are almost a parody, like in Schoenberg's 'Der Mondfleck'. However, this grotesque tone that results from the mannerist treatment of material is not necessarily indicative of a weaker, feebler attempt at expression by Mahler and Schoenberg at the *end* of a period. As Dahlhaus writes:

Scholars no longer dispute that mannerism is a style in its own right and not merely a decadent form. Despite this, however, the prejudice that it always represents a late stage, the end of a development, has proved particularly tenacious – even though the concept of experiment, with which one tries to overcome one's perplexity in the face of certain manneristic conceits, in itself implies that we are dealing with beginnings which provoke consequences. . . .the idea that mannerism is always a late stage which is followed by nothing but stylistic decay must be abandoned, as must the complementary prejudice that beginnings are always popular and simple.⁵⁶

Although a worn out language is distorted and made to speak for a second time, the two composers have made a conscious decision to do this, using traditional and often more archaic forms deliberately; Schoenberg uses incredibly rigid and complex forms that are hundreds of years old, like the canon, fugue and passacaglia in *Pierrot Lunaire*. This rediscovery of mannerism as a trend is associated with the 1920s, and it is manifest in Dalí's works as I have already suggested. Neither Schoenberg nor Dalí are associated with the decline of a style or phase; on the contrary, they represent the

⁵⁵ Adorno 1992: 22

⁵⁶ Dahlhaus 1987: 11

new modernism of the twentieth century. However, it is the ‘New Music’ of the twentieth century that Adorno accuses of senescence, the music that he describes as a windowless monad – a term coined by Leibniz⁵⁷ – pointing to the deliberate purpose of this music to close itself off from anything beyond itself.

In this chapter I have considered problems in the comparison between sixteenth-century and twentieth-century mannerism, such as the discrepancy between translations – and therefore definitions – of the Italian term *maniera*. I agree with Shearman’s argument, that the imposition of a concept with twentieth-century undertones is problematic for a study of sixteenth-century art because the sixteenth-century mannerist works were created in and for a cultural world with ideals remote from our own.⁵⁸ A comparison between artworks created in dramatically different periods causes many concerns; however, it is important to note that I am not making a claim that the modern art of the twentieth century began with Arcimboldo, or that the two different cultures are inextricably linked. It is Shearman’s position that mannerism did not even exist as a phenomenon, but it is, instead, a problem of method, translating *maniera* as style – the ‘stylish style’. Adorno describes mannerism in a similar way, as ‘the scar left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression.’⁵⁹ In this passage, Adorno also writes that ‘Mahler’s deviations are closely related to gestures of language...’⁶⁰ This observation can also be made about Arcimboldo’s paintings, which I will demonstrate in the following chapter; I will explore the common link between Arcimboldo and Mahler in Adorno’s concepts of gesture and language-character. I will investigate the meaning of Adorno’s suggestion that ‘[s]ometimes – and not merely in the recitative – Mahler’s

⁵⁷ See Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *The Monadology: An Edition for Students*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991.

⁵⁸ Shearman 1967: 135

⁵⁹ Adorno 1992: 22

⁶⁰ Adorno, *ibid.*

music has so completely mimed the gesture of speech it sounds as if it were speaking literally...'⁶¹ in relation to the attestable linguistic aspects of Arcimboldo's paintings. In his essay 'On Some Relationships between Music and Painting' (1965), published six years before the Mahler monograph, Adorno puts forward the idea that 'The convergence of the various media becomes evident through the emergence of their character as language.'⁶² This argument is different to Adorno's notion of mannerism as a scar – as the worn out gestures in a language no longer capable of expression – because Adorno looks at *language* itself, rather than referring to a 'musical language', or a 'language of painting'.

I will explore Adorno's argument about the 'language-character' (*Sprachcharakter*)⁶³ of Mahler's music, and compare it to the linguistic elements in Arcimboldo's paintings, in order to challenge the notion of mannerism as a *style* that is manifest in artworks from different periods of time. The convergence between the style of mannerism in the paintings and the music is not necessarily identifiable through the emergence of their character as language. I am analysing this concept of 'language-character' in both the paintings and the music in order to question Adorno's hypothesis about the convergence of the arts, and also to shed light on his suggestion of Mahler's mannerism. In turn, this will reveal the type of convergence that exists between the work of Arcimboldo and Mahler. This convergence is most obvious in the symptom of mannerism that is the grotesque element; the exaggerated gestures of the sixteenth century mannerist paintings distort the figures represented, in a similar way to Mahler's exaggerated, passionate ruptures, which Adorno describes as 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*).

⁶¹ Adorno, *ibid.*

⁶² Adorno 1995: 71

⁶³ See Adorno. 'Music and Language: A Fragment'. In *Quasi una fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 1-8. London: Verso, 1998.

Chapter 2

In his fashion, Arcimboldo, too, is a rhetorician: by his composite heads, he casts into the discourse of the Image a whole bundle of rhetorical figures: the canvas becomes a real laboratory of tropes.¹

In the previous chapter I established the idea of mannerism as a style that is manifest in the sixteenth century in the paintings of Arcimboldo, and also in the twentieth century in the music of Mahler and Schoenberg. In this chapter I will explore artworks by Arcimboldo and Mahler in greater detail, in terms of the similarities in the treatment of material in the work of both artists. My aim is to build a case for mannerism as a distinct style that is manifest in Mahler as well as Arcimboldo, and, as part of my aim, to understand what Adorno means when he argues that aspects of Mahler's music, such as the major-minor manner, 'earned Mahler the charge of mannerism.'² According to Adorno, the function of Mahler's major-minor manner is that it 'sabotages the established language of music with dialect.'³ In the case of Mahler, the distorted language is the Austro-German music tradition on which he draws; it is the grotesque in Mahler, according to Adorno's idea of '[m]annerism [as] the scar left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression.'⁴ I will investigate this theory in the mannerism of both Mahler and Arcimboldo, in order to support Shearman's claim of mannerism as a style rather than a phenomenon that is limited to specific eras, such as the sixteenth century. I will begin, however, by comparing the language-like elements in the work of both artists. In the chapter entitled 'Tone' in the monograph, in conjunction with his theory of Mahler's music as a manifestation of mannerism, Adorno suggests that this music mimes the gesture of

¹ Barthes. 'Arcimboldo, or Magician and Rhétoricien'. In *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard, 129-148. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. 136.

² Adorno 1992: 21

³ Adorno 1992: 23

⁴ Adorno 1992: 22

speech.⁵ This is very interesting, because Arcimboldo's mannerist paintings are also accredited with displaying a linguistic component, as demonstrated by French literary theorist Roland Barthes in his essay 'Arcimboldo, Magician and Rhéteur' ('Arcimboldo, le mage et rhéteur', 1978), quoted at the head of this chapter. I will explore Barthes's theory of Arcimboldo as rhetorician, and also Adorno's theory of Mahler's music as miming the gesture of speech, in relation to Adorno's hypothesis, in his essay 'On Some Relationships between Music and Painting' (1965), that '[t]he convergence of the various media becomes evident through the emergence of their character as language.'⁶ In his 1991 book: *Portrait of Eccentricity: Arcimboldo and the Mannerist Grottesque*, Giancarlo Maiorino writes: 'The mannerist convergence of art, literature, and theory has made an "intermedia" methodology all the more compelling. Multidisciplinarity cannot but secure a firmer hold on a culture that courted the fantastic in all forms of expression.'⁷

To encapsulate Adorno's entire Mahler monograph is to look at one of the opening paragraphs:

In his work a purely musical residue stubbornly persists that can be interpreted in terms neither of processes nor of moods. It informs the gestures of his music. To understand him would be to endow with speech the music's structural elements while technically locating the glowing expressive intentions.⁸

Here he is not suggesting that the music has a linguistic quality, but, rather, that through theory, one can endow the music with speech. However, Adorno goes on to write that 'Mahler's music has so completely mimed the gesture of speech it sounds as if it were speaking literally, as was once promised, in musical Romanticism, by the title of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*.'⁹ This statement proposes that there is something language-like about the manner in which Mahler's music expresses. He

⁵ See Adorno, *ibid.*

⁶ Adorno 1995: 71

⁷ Maiorino 1991: 9

⁸ Adorno 1992: 3-4

⁹ Adorno 1992: 22

gives a musical example of the trio of the Scherzo in Mahler's Seventh Symphony, which is also an example of the complete use of the minor-major manner. Adorno suggests that instrumental song phrases here sing an imaginary text. He writes that: 'Song and symphony meet in the mimetic sphere that exists prior to neatly separated genres. The song's melody does not duplicate the words' meaning but assigns it to a collective tradition.'¹⁰ I would argue that beyond the intonational aspect of speech, it is contentious as to whether the gestures in the music can imitate spoken language. If Mahler does imitate the gestures of spoken language, it could be argued that this is a conceit rather like in Schoenberg's 'Der Mondfleck', in the sense that there is nothing purely musical about the linguistic meaning of speech. The connection between music and speech is forged by the composer if this is the case, although, in contrast to the act of Pierrot Lunaire turning backwards, which has no tangible connection with the fact that the music turns around and mirrors itself in the middle of the movement, there is a relationship between the gesture of speech, which partakes of language, and the gestures in music, which are habitually set to texts, that also partake of language. However in his essay on the relationship between music and painting, Adorno insists that the two aspects of art's similarity to language – the mimetic and the communicative – are contradictory. He writes: 'Music and painting become writing through their renunciation of the communicative, which is precisely the element, in both media, that is in truth unlinguistic, because it suggests what is merely subjectively desired.'¹¹ He also argues that '[t]he arts converge only where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.'¹² The theory put forward in this essay is embodied in Adorno's idea of the purely musical residue that informs the gestures of Mahler's music in the passage from the Mahler monograph quoted above. If it is

¹⁰ Adorno, *ibid.*

¹¹ Adorno 1995: 72

¹² Adorno 1995: 67

this purely musical residue that is involved in the speech element of the music, it begs the question of whether the rhetorical element of Arcimboldo is informed by a purely visual or pictorial residue in the paintings as well. If this is the case, then, perhaps, the linguistic components of the artworks are arbitrarily connected to images, in a conceit similar to that in Schoenberg's 'Der Mondfleck'; and, possibly, this is a feature of the style that is mannerism. When I analyse the paintings, I will address this point.

Adorno's theory that music, specifically 'autonomous music', has a 'language-character' (*Sprachcharakter*) is what he refers to when he writes that Mahler's music mimes the gesture of speech. In his article 'The Language-Character of Music: Some Motifs in Adorno' (1991), Max Paddison explores the 'linguisticity' of autonomous music – its similarity to, and yet difference from, language – through a close reading of certain motifs in the work of Adorno. In using aspects of Adorno's thinking to discuss the language-character of music, Paddison stresses the multi-layered and open-ended character of a musical meaning that is concurrently immanent-formal, social and historical.¹³ He points out that:

It is because of its autonomy-status, Adorno argues, that music has become language-like in its own right. In becoming separated from direct social function, it has developed its own internal dynamic, one of increasing logicity, rationalization and technical control of all aspects of its material.¹⁴

Adorno argues that the emergence of the arts through their character as language is the opposite of linguistic gestures, or speaking behaviour, or of music and painting to the extent that they are about telling a story. Where music is expressive, it has no direct meaning; with its long association with metaphors of language, music becomes regarded as a kind of language without concepts: a form of 'conceptless cognition'. In

¹³ See also Paddison. 'Adorno's Aesthetic Theory'. *Music Analysis*, 6 (1987): 367-72. 355-77

¹⁴ Paddison. 'The Language-Character of Music: Some Motifs in Adorno'. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 116, No. 2 (1991): 267-279. 269

his article: 'Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking? Adorno and the Problem of Musical Analysis', Max Paddison writes that:

musical works constitute a mode of conceptless cognition [*begriffslose Erkenntnis*]¹⁵, and can be understood, in that they are not only meaningful in terms of their inner relations, but also point beyond themselves to tell us something about the world and our relationship to it...¹⁶

Adorno sees 'expression' as the result of the conflict between mimesis and rationality within the musical work, as a kind of 'interference phenomenon',¹⁷ which is the element that gives music its ability to 'speak' to us. This is what Adorno describes as the 'language-character' (*Sprachcharakter*)¹⁸ of music, which constitutes this form of 'conceptless cognition', and the 'subjective paradox of art'.¹⁹ He writes that art aims at the aesthetic creation of blind expression, rather than rationalisation, on the basis of reflection (form).²⁰ However, in *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (1993) Paddison points out that 'the contradiction presented by the Subject-Object relationship in art works is that rationality (as construction) is geared towards the production of something which is 'irrational' – at least from the perspective of instrumental reason.'²¹ This contradiction in the subject-object relationship of the artwork brings us back to the

¹⁵ When Adorno suggests that music has a 'language-character', and that it constitutes a form of 'cognition without concepts' (*begriffslose Erkenntnis*), he is referring specifically to what is usually called 'autonomous music'. By 'autonomous music', Adorno refers to that tradition characterized by the rise to dominance of instrumental music in the West, in the period roughly from the European Enlightenment to the present day. It is a music which has freed itself historically from direct social function and from dependence on words. See Martin Zenck, *Kunst als begriffslose Erkenntnis: Zum Kunstbegriff der ästhetischen Theorie Theodor W. Adornos* (Munich, 1977), section III, 'Erkenntnischarakter der Musik', 93-162; cited in: Paddison 1991: 269; Within the category of 'autonomous music', Adorno often refers to the music of Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern.

¹⁶ Paddison. 'Immanent Critique or Musical Stocktaking? Adorno and the Problem of Musical Analysis'. In *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, ed. Nigel C. Gibson, and Andrew Rubin, 209-233. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. 209

¹⁷ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004. 167; Cf Original p. 174; in Paddison 1993: 119

¹⁸ See Adorno, 'Über das gegenwärtige Verhältnis von Philosophie und Musik' (1953), *Gesammelte Schriften*, xviii (1984), 160-2. *Sprachcharakter* can be translated variously as 'language-character', 'linguistic-character' or 'speech-character'; cited in: Paddison 1991: 269

¹⁹ Adorno 2004: 167

²⁰ 'Art aims at the production of a blind quality (expression) on the basis of reflection (form), the emphasis being on the aesthetic creation of blind expression, not on rationalization; it aims at 'the creation of things of which we do not know what they are'; in Adorno, *ibid*; Cf Original p. 174; in: Paddison 1993: 120

²¹ Paddison 1993: 143

idea of mannerism as the refusal of synthesis between subject and object, which creates a tension in the artwork. Mannerism subverts expectations, offering disharmony, disorder, and disunity in the place of balance, order, and unity.

Adorno writes that Mahler's music does *not* express subjectivity, but that subjectivity takes up its stance towards objectivity inside the music. He argues that its nature is that of divergence, the tone produced by the mediation of the rigid, polar moments of the major-minor manner within the musical material. He writes:

In his major-minor manner a relation to the world's course is distilled: aloofness from what violently rejects the subject, longing for it, after the final reconciliation of outward and inward. . . . The long neutralized minor, sedimented as a formal element in the syntax of Western music, only becomes a symbol of mourning when modally awakened by the contrasting major.²²

It is in this major-minor manner that Adorno identifies a type of mannerism within Mahler's music; he writes that, from Mahler's earlier songs with piano to the Adagio theme in the Tenth Symphony, Mahler's persistent idiosyncrasies play with an alternation of the 'major and minor modes'. He argues that, from single phrases in which major and minor alternate abruptly, through the construction of motives, to the elaboration of large-scale forms, it is the technical formula in which the excess of the poetic idea is encoded. Adorno illustrates this argument with examples of Mahler's works that have at their core the dualism of major and minor modes. He highlights the transition from major to minor – the lowering of the major to the minor third – as the unifying moment of the whole work, and also the first movement of the large scale work – the Ninth Symphony, as a form which is elaborated in its organisation around the traditional dualism of major and minor sections. The melodic line of this work oscillates between major and minor thirds, or other intervals which possess the major-minor character, while still preserving the same motives. He writes that: 'This earned Mahler the charge of mannerism. Its rebuttal requires reflection on expression in

²² Adorno 1992: 25-26

music. This is not the expression of something specific; not by chance does the marking *espressivo* appear widely in his scores. It aims at marked intensity.²³

Adorno argues that Mahler's major-minor modes disrupt the balance of tonal language,²⁴ creating a 'brokenness' through the lack of reconciliation between subject and object. With reference to this 'brokenness', Adorno makes a very interesting allusion to the *trompe-l'œil*.²⁵ He comments about Mahler's duration:

But the epic type of symphony enjoys time to the full, abandons itself to it, seeks to make physically measurable time into living duration. Duration in it is itself the imago of meaning – perhaps to resist the encroaching anullent of duration in the production of late industrialism and the forms of consciousness adapted to it. No longer is time to be subjected to a musical *trompe-l'oreille*; it is not to masquerade as the moment it is not.²⁶

Adorno has flipped the well-known phrase: *trompe-l'œil*, literally translating from the French as: 'deceives the eye', implying that a musical *trompe l'oreille* is therefore transliterated as: 'trick of the ear'. Mahler's music does not attempt to conceal the problems of its form, or glue together its garish fractures; instead, it embodies a fractured terseness of themes and forms. Unconventionally, his manner, or *duration*, rebels against the prefigured and involuntarily vulgar aspect of late-Romantic symphonic writing, particularly the so-called national schools, such as Tchaikovsky or Dvořák, which impose an obligatory guarantee of *coherence* that makes everything more than it merely is. Adorno writes that the antithesis of this *trompe-l'oreille* is already present in Schubert's 'heavenly length':

Not only are the melodies, from which his instrumental movements are sometimes unwilling to tear themselves away, so complete in themselves that the thought of development applied to them is unseemly; but also the desire to fill up time with music, to resist transience by that which has the right to abide, itself becomes a musical wishful image.²⁷

²³ See Adorno 1992: 21

²⁴ Adorno, *ibid.*

²⁵ *Trompe-l'œil* a still-life painting etc. designed to be so lifelike as to create a three-dimensional illusion of reality. [F, lit. 'deceives the eye'] in Pearsall and Trumble, eds. *Oxford English Reference Dictionary; Second Edition, Revised*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 1542

²⁶ Adorno 1992: 73

²⁷ Adorno 1992: 73

In his early essay 'Schubert' (1928), Adorno argues that Schubert's forms invoke what has already appeared, rather than transform something that has been invented already. He writes that Schubert's themes occur as 'truth-characters', his artistic remit as the restating of their image, passionately, again and again, once it has appeared. He notes that:

Schubert's themes wander just like the miller does, or he whose beloved abandoned him to the winter. Those themes know of no history, but only shifts in perspective: the only way they change is through a change of light, and this explains Schubert's inclination to use the same theme two or three times in different works, and different ways; he does so most memorably by repeating the lasting melody which serves as the theme of a set of Piano Variations, as a variation theme in the A-Minor String Quartet, and in the *Rosamunde* music. ... the wanderer encounters these themes in new lighting – they are timeless and appear to be disconnected, isolated [26].²⁸

Adorno argues that Mahler's music, on the other hand, does not masquerade as the moment it is not, but embodies the distortion, at an opposite pole to Schubert's 'heavenly length', because it refuses to gloss over the fractures.

Familiar old forms and styles are reified and distorted in Mahler, in his treatment of the mimetic form of the *dance*, for example the treatment of the traditional Viennese Ländler and the Waltz in the second movement of the Ninth Symphony.²⁹ Traditionally, the former is charming, and melodic, with rubato; Mahler presents it here as a grim parody, somewhat clumsy and rough, as he instructs. Mahler's Fourth Symphony had presented a more traditional Ländler in the second movement. However, the second movement of the Ninth Symphony, which Adorno describes as a development-scherzo, is grotesque because spectral fragments of material float around on the surface of the music, which is where we see the lack of synthesis between subject and object. This brokenness is evident in Mahler's music in

²⁸ Adorno. 'Schubert', *19th-Century Music*, XXIX, No.1 (1928): 3-14. 10

²⁹ The second movement of the Ninth Symphony *is* actually a Ländler itself, however, it is distorted to the point that it no longer resembles a dance at all, adjusting and disfiguring traditional chord sequences to the point of *almost* unrecognisable. It evokes the second movement of Mahler's Fourth Symphony in the distortion of a traditional dance into a dance of death.

the fact that '[a]brupt shifts are preferred to imperceptible modulations.'³⁰ The movement has three main groups: the *Ländler* in C major; a much quicker waltz in E major; and a quasi upper-Austrian, slow-motion *Ländler* theme in F. See the figures below for an extract of the score depicting the quicker waltz and the slower *Ländler*. The motive components of the groups are then tirelessly combined.

Figure 1 – 9/II, 33 after [18] depicting the quicker waltz in E major –

1. VI.
2. VI.
Vla.
Vcl.
Kb.

Poco più mosso subito. (Tempo II.)

Figure 2 – 9/II 32 bars after [21] depicting the slow-motion *Ländler* theme in F –

1. Ob.
1. Fag.
2. & 3. Fag.
1. & 2. Hr. in F.
1. VI.
2. VI.
Vla.
Vcl.
Kb.

Molto riten. - - - Tempo III. (Ländler, ganz langsam.)

There is something figural, and bodily about the ancient, prelinguistic forms of dance, which invokes a style that once had a function; Mahler distorts these forms deliberately, just as Schoenberg parodies traditional, and more archaic forms in

³⁰ Adorno 1992: 27

Pierrot Lunaire, only three years after Mahler does in the Ninth Symphony. We see how the music rebels against the involuntary vulgar aspect of late-Romantic symphonic writing, in allowing itself to deliberately appear as grotesque, as do Arcimboldo's grotesque mosaic faces constructed from vegetables, disrupting the balance between *plane* and *space* of the High Renaissance. Like in Mahler, the fracture between subject and object remains quite separate, refusing to merge into one; it prefers to appear as shattered into fragments. This is what I think Adorno means when he writes: 'It is not so much that subjectivity is communicated or expressed by music as that in it, as in a theater, something objective is enacted, the identifiable face of which has been obliterated.'³¹ To view Arcimboldo in the same way would not be appropriate, because the faces are identifiable through the arrangement of objects, which has not been obliterated; however, the surface, constructed of objects, is punctuated by fractures.

In Mahler, the disunity is in the 'brokenness' of the music, Adorno argues, through his alliance with the musically vulgar, and the fragmentation of this debris of melodies, styles, and forms of the musical past. In Arcimboldo you can see a *brokenness* between the objects, such as the fruits and the vegetables, that are painted in different formations to form the composite heads. In Mahler you hear a *brokenness* between the musical objects, which you can perceive, like the visual fractures in Arcimboldo, as a tangible *gap*. The mannerist face in Arcimboldo's work is a detached, abstract mask, not concerned with 'paint quality', unlike an expressionist painting; this is applicable to the brokenness of Mahler's music, if you visualise it as a detached mask that is not concerned with unity. This connection is strengthened by Adorno's vision of Mahler's music as a face of objects, a physiognomy of a music

³¹ Adorno 1992: 25

with a complexion, 'which repels a synthesis without contradictions ... that which perennially resists fusion, is called manner...'³² The composite faces in the works of two vastly different forms, created in dramatically different periods of time, distort in a similar manner in order to express, which supports the argument of mannerism as a style. However, this does not prove that convergence between the two forms is evident through the emergence of their character as language; to question this hypothesis I must look at the linguistic components of Arcimboldo's paintings.

In his essay entitled 'Arcimboldo, Magician and Rhétoriqueur', Barthes projects the idea of Arcimboldo as a visual 'Rhétoriqueur' onto the examination of the artist's works. He analyses the composite heads of Arcimboldo paintings, establishing an analogy between the pictorial techniques and rhetorical figures of speech. Barthes refers to 'Les Grands Rhétoriqueurs'³³, who were a school of poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, analysing the painting by Arcimboldo entitled: *Autumn* (1573), (see Appendix 1) as he finds within it linguistic subtleties. He writes: 'It is as if, like a baroque poet, Arcimboldo exploits the 'curiosities' of language, plays on synonymy and homonymy.'³⁴ He argues that the painting *Autumn* has a linguistic basis, and rather than creating signs *per se*, Arcimboldo's imagination is strictly poetic, instead combining the signs that are already in existence, and permeating and deflecting them, as a practitioner of language does. He draws an example from the painting as he focuses on the eye of the composite head: 'the (terrible) eye consists of a little prune. In other words – in French, at least – the botanic *prunella* becomes the ocular *prunelle*, our word for eyeball.'³⁵ This observation illustrates Barthes's notion

³² See Adorno 1992: 23

³³ Les Grands Rhétoriqueurs were a school of poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, though the word itself means *rhetorician*. See Kibler, William. *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Routledge, 1995. 411-412

³⁴ Barthes 1985: 130-131

³⁵ Barthes 1985: 131

that Arcimboldo exploits the 'curiosities' of language; the example is Arcimboldo's visual inference of homonymy, because the implication of one word has a dual linguistic significance, within which are contained two different connotations. However, these are two arbitrary words, both of which serve to represent the 'eyeball' in the painting, whether the meaning is enhanced linguistically or not, which begs the question of whether this actually helps us to gain a deeper insight into the mannerist aesthetic of the work. This linguistic subtlety in Arcimboldo's *Autumn* is not the same as the concept of Mahler's music miming the gesture of speech; it is a literal analogy to the arbitrary word which describes the object, which in turn *represents* the body part, rather than miming the gesture of the word, or of speech. It is clever trickery accessible only to a knowledgeable audience, and a conceit like in Schoenberg's 'Der Mondfleck', because there is no essential connection between the words and the eyeball itself, or the prune, which, incidentally, is miming, or, rather, embodying the eyeball in the vegetable eye-socket, and so it is a double conceit.

The extra linguistic subtlety in *Autumn* – the exploitation of the 'curiosities' of language – is superfluous, because there already exists a conceit in the fact that there is no essential connection between the prune and the eyeball that it embodies. Unlike the subtle play on language, the lack of synthesis between the prune and the eyeball is clearly visible to the viewer, and Arcimboldo does not attempt to disguise it as a prune. The distinction is clear between the other fruits and vegetables, and decaying leaves and wood which embody anatomical parts of the figure displayed; there is no attempt to make each object merge so it is unidentifiable as an object. In a similar way, the layer of reification in Mahler's music exposes the raw material – the fragmented debris of melodies, styles, and forms of the musical past – the 'nuts and bolts' – in an attempt to embody, rather than to create an illusion to fool the listener; it

does not hide under any gloss. Adorno makes this observation when he writes that 'The layer of reification in Mahler's music, implacably opposing the illusory reconciliation of antagonistic elements within the unreconciled, is not a mark of musical inadequacy but embodies a content that refuses to be dissolved in form.'³⁶

Adorno goes on to liken this layer of reification in Mahler to nature:

Unseduced by the romanticism of authenticity and essence, Mahler never pretends to show that naked state of being unmetaphorically, as something existent. Hence the brokenness. What in Beethoven still masquerades as jest – the birds at the end of the scene by the brook grinding like mechanical toys; the involuntarily comic aspect of the primeval symbols in Wagner's Ring – become the a priori form of all that in Mahler's music is called nature.³⁷

Adorno argues that 'Mahler's nature passages can be defined in general as exacerbated deviations from high musical language...'³⁸; one might be tempted to compare this to Arcimboldo's deviating method of using natural materials such as vegetables to make the grotesque mosaic of the human face. It may be significant that the element of nature in the work of both artists is the factor which is connected with the embodiment. This notion of embodying the objects, without an attempt to disguise what they actually are, or to pass them off as subject, is a similarity between the way that Arcimboldo and Mahler treat material, without suggesting that painting becomes music, or vice versa. The notion of Mahler's music or Arcimboldo's painting as speech, or as a linguistic form of expression, is redundant in the comparison that I have just discussed. However, Barthes *insists* that Arcimboldo makes painting into a veritable language.

Barthes highlights the difference between the two articulations in language: the division between words, and in turn, the division of words into sounds (or into letters), The word produces units each of which already has a meaning, and the sound

³⁶ Adorno 1992: 23

³⁷ Adorno 1992: 38-39

³⁸ Adorno 1992: 16

or the letter produces non-signifying units, a phoneme in itself signifying arts. He writes that:

it is quite possible to decompose the “discourse” of a picture into forms (lines and points) but these forms signify nothing before being assembled; painting knows only one articulation. Hence, we can readily understand the structural paradox of the Arcimboldesque compositions.³⁹

Barthes is arguing that Arcimboldo makes painting into a veritable *language* because he is giving it a double articulation. He refers to the composite head of the painting referred to as: *Calvin* (1566).⁴⁰ (See Appendix 2). The painting is a caricature of the legal profession of the time, with a sneering fish mouth and a poultry face. Barthes argues that the head of *Calvin* first decomposes into forms that are *already* nameable objects – in other words, *words*; a chicken carcass, a drumstick, a fishtail, etc: and these objects, in turn, decompose into forms which in themselves signify nothing. He suggests that there is a double scale of words and sounds; everything functions as if Arcimboldo had upset the pictorial system, abusively doubled it, ‘hypertrophying’ within it the signifying, analogical possibility, thereby producing:

a kind of structural monster, source of a subtle (because intellectual) uneasiness, even more penetrating than if the horror derived from a simple exaggeration or a simple mixture of elements: it is because everything signifies, *on two levels*, that Arcimboldo’s painting functions as a rather alarming denial of pictorial language.⁴¹

In the section of *Language the Unknown: An Initiation into Linguistics* (1989) entitled ‘Visible Language: Painting’, Julia Kristeva writes:

In the classical conception of art, painting is considered a *representation* of reality, which it is placed before in the mirror position. It *tells* or it *translates* an act or a story that really exists. For this translation it uses a particular language of forms and colors which, in each painting, are organized into a system founded on the pictorial *sign*.⁴²

³⁹ Barthes 1985: 134

⁴⁰ The painting referred to as *Calvin* is entitled: *The Jurist*, also known as *The Lawyer* is a caricature of the French Protestant theologian during the Protestant Reformation: John Calvin, born Jean Cauvin (1509-1564). See Kriegeskorte. *Giuseppe Arcimboldo*. Köln: Taschen, 2000. 36

⁴¹ Barthes 1985: 135

⁴² Kristeva, Julia. *Language the Unknown: An Initiation into Linguistics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989. 3:12

This language of forms and colours, to which Kristeva refers, resonates with Barthes's theory of Arcimboldo as a visual 'Rhétoriqueur'. Although, in his earlier essay 'Is Painting a Language?' (1969), Barthes writes that: 'there is no question of "applying" linguistics to the picture, injecting a little semiology into art history; there *is* a question of eliminating the distance (the censorship) institutionally separating picture and text.'⁴³ Kristeva points out that several different problems, not yet resolved, have been raised by the perspective of the defining of the pictorial sign as the *iconic* sign, as an image ('icon') of a referent that exists outside the system of the painting. She asks: what are the components of the iconic sign, and should we say that it is the painted object with respect to the real object? She also asks the question: 'But isn't the specificity of pictorial language then destroyed by reducing its components to the components of a spectacle outside the painting, whereas the language specific to the painting is a language of laws, forms, and colours?'⁴⁴ She proposes that the answer lies in questioning the concept of *representation*. The painting's code is joined to the history that surrounds it and in this way produces the text constituted by the painting. This 'becoming-text' of the painting, whereby one understands that the painting, and consequently the iconic sign, does not represent a real language. Instead, a 'simulacrum-between-the-world-and-language' on which is based a whole constellation of texts that interact with and are added to each other in a reading of the painting that is never finished. She stipulates that '[w]hat one believed to be a mere representation turns out to be a destruction of the represented structure in the infinite play of the correlations of language.'⁴⁵ This conception of pictorial language suggests that the 'pictorial code' is in close relation to the language that constitutes it, and

⁴³ Barthes. 'Is Painting a Language?'. In *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard, 149-152. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. 152

⁴⁴ Kristeva 1989: 312

⁴⁵ Kristeva 1989: 313

pictorial representation refers therefore to the network of *langue*⁴⁶, which emanates from the simulacrum represented by the pictorial code, but dissolves it by surpassing it.

Kristeva writes of this ‘pictorial language’ within the context of ‘structure’ – the painting as a structured code which triggers a signifying process that arranges it – leading us to explore the laws of symbolisation. She suggests that the process which ‘decenters’ the painting’s structure and goes beyond the pictorial code itself – a process that, in classical painting, took refuge in the painting’s ‘text’ – penetrates the object itself. She writes that: ‘The object then ceases to be a painted object in order to become an infinite process that takes into consideration the whole of the forces that produce and transform it in all their diversity.’⁴⁷ Therefore the painting is no longer an object; its representation is replaced by the process of its reproduction. However, Kristeva is writing about the ‘modern’ painting and sculpture by artists such as Matisse, Pollock, Rothko etc. for which, as she argues, painting has become a process of production that does not present virtually any sign or meaning. She states: ‘This is how (modern) *painting* silences verbal language, which was usually added to (classical) *paintings* claiming to be *representation*. Before painting, phantasies cease, speech stops.’⁴⁸ It is not useful to argue that Arcimboldo preceded modernism in painting by hundreds of years. However, he did play with the idea of representation of verbal language, and although he does not silence it in the same way that the modernists and the expressionists do, he does make an observation about the language

⁴⁶ In the work of the postmodernist: Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), and generally in the structuralist position, *la langue* is made up of the totality of paradigmatic elements (lexis) and their syntagmatic possible relations (grammar); the total structure of a language at any given point. The *parole* is the meaning of a given enunciation, which is determined by its differential relation to the *langue* rather than in direct reference. This relates to signification and the notion of ‘direct expression’ in the previous sections of this thesis. See also Readings, Bill. *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

⁴⁷ Kristeva 1989: 314

⁴⁸ Kristeva, *ibid.*

that the 'classical' paintings lay claim to as representation, in the deliberate linguistic significance he attaches to the paintings. He draws attention to the representation aspect in the deliberate attachment of literal linguistic values to the objects in the paintings. This is a factor in the argument for Arcimboldo's works as a radical mannerism, rather than as a late, feeble attempt at a collapsing style restricted to an era. However, this is more noticeable in the refusal of synthesis between the object and the part of the anatomy that the object embodies, rather than in the subtle play on language demonstrated by Barthes in the painting entitled *Autumn*. Unlike the clever linguistic trickery, the lack of synthesis between the prune and the eyeball is clearly visible to the viewer, and Arcimboldo does not attempt to disguise the fact that it is a prune. In this sense, the gestures are informed by the purely pictorial, like Mahler's purely musical residues, which Adorno argues informs the gestures of his music. Perhaps Arcimboldo's clever linguistic trickery is merely a private joke for the educated, or can we read more into the linguistic and musical elements that he quite deliberately manipulates in the choices he makes about the paintings?

Another link between Arcimboldo's paintings to language is brought into focus by Jesús Cora in his essay entitled: 'John Donne's Arcimboldesque Wit in "To Sir Edward Herbert. At Julyers" A partial Reading' (2006). (See appendix 3 for this text). Cora refers to the 'verse letter', by the English metaphysical poet John Donne (1572-1631): 'To Sir Edward Herbert, at Julyers' (ca. 1610), claiming that it is 'Arcimboldesque'. Cora demonstrates how Donne's rhetoric in the verse letter, especially his technique of the extended conceit, is primarily based on a Renaissance adaptation of the ancient mnemotechnics of the Art of Memory. This particular technique is used here not to memorise a text, but to create it. Cora doesn't follow any particular literary criticism theory or linguistics school. It is a close visual (iconic)

reading of the language of Donne's texts, although he refers to Barthes's essay: 'Arcimboldo, le mage et rhétoricien'. The verse letter is based on the portrait of Sir Edward Herbert by an unknown hand, however he writes that:

... it is my contention that Donne's text, besides retaking some notions in Herbert's poem, is also the result of the combination of the Arcimboldo composite heads and the portrait of Sir Edward Herbert ... as an underlying iconographic programme on which the metaphors and other figures of speech in the text are based.⁴⁹

He argues that Donne relies on an iconographic sequence that incorporates real visual materials existing outside the poet's mind which his words reproduce and have as a source of imitation and derivative wit in the composition of a new, original text. These materials, Cora suggests, are eight of Arcimboldo's paintings of composite heads (*Earth, Autumn, Summer, The Cook, Water, Air, Fire, and The Librarian*), an anonymous engraving *The Fool's Head World Map*, which is sometimes attributed to Arcimboldo, and the portrait of Sir Edward Herbert by an unknown hand, possibly after a miniature portrait by Sir Isaac Oliver. He writes that Donne's language in the verse letter has: 'an ekphrastic function intentionally devised to reproduce the elements of Arcimboldo's composite heads.'⁵⁰ Cora insists that the appreciation of Donne's display of wit and satirical intention towards Herbert depends on the identification of Donne's ekphrastic reproduction of Arcimboldo's composite heads, however the ekphrastic nature of his language is not evident or direct at first, because the poem is not devised to be mere facile description or reproduction of the pictorial details of the paintings. The 'ekphrasis' that Cora writes of refers to the graphic, and often dramatic description of a visual work of art.⁵¹ This rhetorical device is used in the poem which I will analyse in the following chapter – the modern American poet

⁴⁹ Cora. 'John Donne's Arcimboldesque Wit in "To Sir Edward Herbert. At Julyers" A partial Reading'. In *Writing and Seeing: Essays on Word and Image*, ed. Rui Manuel G de Carvalho Homem, Maria de Fátima Lambert, 61-78. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. 62

⁵⁰ Cora 2006: 63

⁵¹ James Heffernan defines 'ekphrasis' as the 'verbal representation of graphic representation' in Heffernan. 'Ekphrasis and Representation'. *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 297-316. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 299

John Ashbery's analytical poem: *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975), which bears the same name as the painting which inspired it produced in 1524 by Parmigianino. I have not discussed Cora's essay on John Donne's 'Arcimboldeque wit' in fine detail, because Cora is in accord with Barthes as he analyses the linguistic devices within Arcimboldo's paintings as a foundation for his study; however, the concept of 'ekphrasis' is interesting. Instead, I will return to the question of whether the rhetorical elements in the paintings are relevant to the discussion of embodiment, and subsequently, to the argument of Arcimboldo's mannerism as comparable with that of Mahler.

Barthes does combine the notion of Arcimboldo as a rhetorician with this idea of embodiment when he looks at the painting entitled *The Cook* (c.1570), which is a visual pun that can be turned upside-down to make one face become the other, and vice versa. (See appendix 4). The composite head is constructed of kitchen utensils and food, and it comes together as a whole to make the face, and also to form the meal as it is served; the striking feature is the dish that becomes a makeshift helmet for the figure in the original image when the painting has not been rotated. Barthes suggests that everything is elaborated within the field of commonplace metonymies, and from the dish, metonymically inferred is the man whose professional utensil it is. He understands it as compared with the work of the poet Cyrano de Bergerac,⁵² as an endless exploitation of the literal meaning of a perfectly banal metaphor in the language. If ordinary discourse compares a headdress to an overturned dish of food, Arcimboldo takes the comparison literally, makes it into an identification: the hat becomes a dish, the dish becomes a helmet (a 'salad,' *celata*). Barthes argues that this

⁵² Hercule Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655) was a French dramatist and duellist; his works of literature fit into the seventeenth century genre of 'scientific travel fiction' alongside the likes of Johannes Kepler and Jules Verne. See De Witt. *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. 40

procedure functions in two time frames: at the moment of the comparison, it remains one of pure common sense, proposing the most ordinary thing in the world, an analogy; 'but in a second time frame the analogy goes wild because it is radically exploited, carried to the point where it destroys itself as analogy: comparison becomes metaphor: the helmet is no longer *like* a dish, it *is* a dish.'⁵³ The dish in *The Cook* is not like the 'prune eye' in *Autumn*; there is no homonymic or metalinguistic device employed to infer the meaning, arbitrarily, of the word for the 'eyeball', which appears as a prune to the viewer. The dish *is* a dish, and cuts across the linguistic barrier of metaphor to become the *image* of what it *is*, in a fashion; it becomes an allegory.

Barthes writes of a metaphor which oscillates in this painting, turning on itself, and only arrested by the title, which determines it as the portrait of a *Cook*. There is a relation of these images to language, through reversal of devices such as metonymy, whereby Arcimboldo uses objects to imply words, or other objects, rather than using speech to refer to the name of objects or concepts. Barthes argues that there is also a relation of these images to discourse; he suggests that they employ the same method of description as the folk tale, and thus, the composite heads participate in the fairy tale. He notes that, of the allegorical personages in the paintings, one with mushrooms for lips, a lemon as a pendant, and another with a squash for a nose, what is behind this image is *language*:

What circles vaguely behind the image, like a memory, the insistence of a model, is a fantastic tale ... The parts of speech are transmuted into objects; in the same way, Arcimboldo paints not so much things but rather the description a teller of fantastic tales might give of them: he illustrates what is already the linguistic copy of an amazing story.⁵⁴

⁵³ Barthes 1985: 131

⁵⁴ Barthes 1985: 134

I would argue, however, that these parts of speech that are transmuted into the objects in the paintings are not designed to tell a story, but to provoke a different kind of response from the viewer, as connected with the grotesque distortion of the figure. Rather than revealing the ‘fantastic tale’ that circles vaguely behind the image, Arcimboldo is commenting on the nature of representation in the traditional forms of the figural portrait and the still life. What is interesting in this painting is not the oscillating metaphor, captured by the rotational optical illusion, but the allegory where the dish becomes the *image* of what it *is*. Mahler’s music becomes allegory when it objectifies musical material, as Arcimboldo’s dish in *The Cook* does with the purely visual material. Adorno takes the idea of *allegory* in Mahler, rather than metaphor, from the concept of the image (*ein Bild*), which is discussed at length in Walter Benjamin’s *The Origin of German Tragic Drama (Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels)*. Benjamin writes that:

The allegorical physiognomy of the nature-history, which is put on stage in the *Trauerspiel*, is present in reality in the form of the ruin. In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things.⁵⁵

Benjamin’s suggestion that history can take on a physical meaning is reminiscent of Adorno’s description of Mahler’s music as having a physiognomy, and having the effect of projecting the image of a face that distorts to express.⁵⁶ The content that refuses to be dissolved in form is the decayed element in Mahler – the ruin of the past forms shamelessly flaunted – ‘scraps of melody from great music, shallow popular

⁵⁵ Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. London: NLB, 1977. 177-178

⁵⁶ John Shearman makes reference to physiognomy when he writes of the gestures of another sixteenth century Italian mannerist painter – Parmigianino. See Shearman 1967: 185; I will explore the mannerism in the work of this artist in the next chapter. This observation of ‘physiognomy’ in the works of the sixteenth century Italian painters and also in the work of Mahler begins to make a case for mannerism as a style, which distorts as a means of expression, through a presentation of the fracture that is created by the refusal of synthesis between the subject and the object.

songs, street ballads, hits.⁵⁷ Adorno's suggestion that Mahler's music 'embodies a content that refuses to be dissolved in form'⁵⁸ is recognisable in Arcimboldo. The dish in *The Cook* embodies because the meaning is conveyed directly to the viewer, unlike in *Autumn*, where the viewer requires knowledge of the linguistic device that Arcimboldo uses to superimpose this extra connection between the anatomic fruit and the word for 'eyeball'. Although, the prune is easily recognised as evocative of the ripening fruits at the harvest time in autumn, which is what the painting is representing, and also of an eyeball in the anatomy of the figure in the painting. The dish in *The Cook* is representing a dish *itself*, upon which the dinner in the painting is to be served, and while it is also representing a helmet as part of a domestic still-life which comes to life as it forms a face, there is no arbitrary linguistic sign to elaborate on the etymology. Whereas, in *Autumn*, the prune is not representing a prune itself, but it is through the linguistic element – the word as sign – on which Barthes's theory of Arcimboldo as a rhetorician is predicated.

The dish in this painting shows us how Arcimboldo's meaning is communicated to the viewer through the purely visual residue without the necessity for any metalinguistic device. In a similar sense, Mahler's music communicates via the purely musical residue that Adorno writes of. In the chapter entitled 'Characters', he argues that, in Mahler's music, the elaborations are apparent; interruptions occur with abruptness; if the music opens up, one hears *colons* (*Durchbruch*); if it is 'fulfilled' (*Erfüllung*), the line exceeds the preceding level of intensity; *Marcato* underlines the essential, announces 'Here I am'; a following passage is demonstrated by fragments of earlier motives, picked up by harmonic continuation (*Suspension*), etc. He writes that 'The actual energy of the characters can never be less than the

⁵⁷ Adorno 1992: 35

⁵⁸ Adorno 1992: 23

potential energy of the tension: the music says, in a sense, *voilà*.⁵⁹ Adorno suggests that this happens because Mahler could no longer rely simply on tonality, but that fulfillments (*Erfüllung*) became for him a task purely of musical form. He argues that Schoenberg inherits this, and that '[h]is idea of the resolution of tension through the dynamic essence of form is the self-consciousness of a Mahlerian need.'⁶⁰ This is the way in which Mahler's music is language-like without it partaking of anything that is literally linguistic; the discrete moments in the music, such as *Durchbruch*, behave as colons would in a sentence, which Adorno suggests is a technique for producing exactly the effect intended. He argues that Mahler also influenced the New Music, particularly Berg, who copied him in his means of expressing exactly the effect intended.⁶¹ In a similar way, the viewer can see the effect intended in Arcimboldo's composite heads, where each object is distinct from the others. This is brought about in both Arcimboldo and Mahler by an exposure of 'the means', to come back to Dahlhaus's point in the previous chapter, which are not fully subsumed in the 'result'; the nuts and bolts of the product are not concealed, but the *gap* is presented for all to hear, or see. Barthes points out that Arcimboldo, as a final subtlety, keeps the two terms of identification, helmet and dish, in the painting entitled *The Cook*, separate; 'on one side I read a head, on the other the contents of a dish; the identity of the two objects does not depend on simultaneity of perception but on rotation of the image, presented as reversible.'⁶² There still exists a *gap* between the object, and what it embodies, a lack of synthesis between the object and the subject, which is a trait of mannerism that is identifiable in both Arcimboldo and Mahler. In the overt lack of

⁵⁹ Adorno 1992: 43; In chapter four I will investigate Adorno's equation of Mahler's music to the literary form – the novel, whereby he suggests that Mahler's music unfolds as though the characters of the novel emerge as a graphic reality over the space of time in a novel.

⁶⁰ Adorno, *ibid.*

⁶¹ See Adorno 1992: 47

⁶² Barthes 1985: 131

synthesis between the object and the subject, he forces us to look at the *gap* created by the objects in the paintings, and what they symbolise, or embody, which appears fractured and harsh to the eyes that were used to more conventional forms at the time. His work is a representation of the mannerism of Italian painters of the late sixteenth century – a style within which it had become popular to challenge the traditional forms, and parody them in a grotesque way.

This argument is not designed to draw a moot comparison between the fundamental nature of the two particular art forms – painting and music. The connection of the stylistic traits of mannerism between Arcimboldo and Mahler supports Adorno's theory that '[t]he arts converge only where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.'⁶³ I have come to this conclusion because the linguistic component of Arcimboldo's paintings is redundant in this connection, just as there is nothing inherently linguistic about Adorno's suggestion that Mahler's music mimes the gesture of speech. I have looked at the way that Mahler's music can be language-like without partaking of anything literally linguistic. However, language-character was not the focal point of comparison between Arcimboldo and Mahler. In this respect I do not totally support Adorno's hypothesis for this case, because the convergence of the various media does not become evident through the emergence of their character as language.⁶⁴ However, a counterargument to Adorno's theory that the arts converge only where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way might be provided by the musical elements in Arcimboldo's paintings. In his essay, Barthes also refers to the fact that Arcimboldo, himself, proposed a colourimetric method of musical transcription, 'by which "a melody could be

⁶³ Adorno 1995: 67

⁶⁴ See Adorno 1995: 71

represented by miniscule patches of color on a paper”...⁶⁵ American musicologist Caswell presents a detailed study of the ‘Pythagorean based colour harpsichord’ in Arcimboldo’s paintings, entitled ‘The Pythagoreanism of Arcimboldo’ (1980), originally revealed by Don Gregorio Comanini in his 1591 text.⁶⁶ He insists that Arcimboldo’s experiment of colourimetric musical transcription is not aimed at a system of colour notation, or a ‘colour harpsichord’, but rather, it is ‘a thoroughly scientific excursion into the twin realms of sight and sound conducted for the purpose of accurate mathematical measurements of the intervals found in both sensory domains by means of the Pythagorean ratios derived from music.’⁶⁷ Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, in his account of the development of European aesthetics from the time of the ancient Greeks to the 1700s: *History of Aesthetics* (2005), points out that:

[Arcimboldo] was convinced that there exists a parallelism between colours and sounds (*concordanza musicale nei colori*, as Comanini expressed it); and ... he attempted to do something which today would be called “colourometric musical transcription”. He endeavoured to represent melodies played on a keyboard by means of coloured stains on paper.⁶⁸

While this is interesting, however, it does not offer any insight into the music created at the time that Arcimboldo was painting, nor does it render the objects in the paintings musical, because it is merely an intellectual decoration, as is the pictorial representation of musicians, or musical notes in a painting by another artist. In the same way, music that ‘paints’ is not useful in a discussion of the convergence of the arts. Adorno writes that:

⁶⁵ Barthes 1985: 129

⁶⁶ Caswell 1980; based on the ideas in Comanini. *The Figino, Or, On the Purpose of Painting: Art Theory in the Late Renaissance*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.; Canon Comanini, Arcimboldo’s friend and admirer, saw Arcimboldo’s composite heads as an emblematic writing between two levels of the Arcimbollesque language (that of the face and that of the signifying features which compose it). Giancarlo Maiorino writes that, just as much art thrived on ambivalence within the professional praxis of mannerism, Comanini made ambiguity central to his own madrigal: written about Arcimboldo’s painting: *Flora*. See Maiorino 1991: 69; Maiorino also writes that mannerism has many ‘contradictory faces.’ This is an interesting image in the context of this study. See Maiorino 1991: 8

⁶⁷ Caswell 1980: 156

⁶⁸ Tatarkiewicz. *History of Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005. 255

Music that “paints,” which nearly always suffers a loss of temporal organization, lets go of the synthesizing principle through which, alone, it assumes a form approaching space; and painting that behaves dynamically, as if it were capturing temporal events, as the futurist desired and many abstract painters attempt to do with circling figures, exhausts itself, at best, in the illusion of time, while the latter is incomparably more present in a picture where it has disappeared among the relationships on the surface of the expression of what has been painted.⁶⁹

Arcimboldo’s colourimetric method of musical transcription is therefore not useful, according to Adorno’s hypothesis, in a comparison between the expression in the artworks of Arcimboldo and Mahler.

The connection between Arcimboldo and Mahler exists on a different level in the aesthetic of mannerism, displayed by characteristics, such as the fact that both artists use objects that are not always connected to the meaning of that which they embody, and they display this conceit between subject and object without smoothing over the cracks. To an audience this is grotesque in the sense that it is not fluid, and also contradicts the styles of the times in which the artworks were created. This characteristic conceit that is audaciously flaunted in the style of mannerism is as radical for Arcimboldo as it is for Mahler; the type of distortion that these artworks produce can appear artificial, and the lack of reconciliation could be misconstrued as bad workmanship, because the viewer, or the listener, can identify this *gap* between the object and subject. Adorno sees this as truthful; to come back to Witkin’s perception of Adorno, I would agree that it is the refusal of synthesis between subject and object that produces mannerism in this case.⁷⁰ The intention by Arcimboldo and Mahler, however, is not artificiality; according to the findings that I have made in this chapter, neither artist makes an attempt to gloss over the ruptures made by a lack of synthesis between subject and object; these ruptures are instead an important part of the works. The dish in Arcimboldo’s *The Cook* is not *like* a dish, it *is* a dish, just as

⁶⁹ Adorno 1995: 67

⁷⁰ See Witkin 1998: 116

the objective façade of Mahler's music does not disguise itself, but reveals clearly that it is formed from old clichéd material. This is not an artifice because it does not disguise what it is, but it says 'here I am'⁷¹, as Adorno puts it, both refusing to masquerade as the moment they are not,⁷² in a grotesque bluntness. In this sense it is the opposite of artificiality and conceit, although both artists play on the façade of physiognomy, and the distortion of it in an overt, exaggerated manner, which is what Shearman identifies in mannerism as the 'stylish style' (see Chapter 1). The mannerist style is a grotesque dialect, referring to the treatment of a musical or painterly language insofar as to denote the historical material that it utilises, to return to Adorno's idea that Mahler 'sabotages the established language of music with dialect.'⁷³ This dialect that is common to these artworks is language-like in gesture because of the way it punctuates the forms, like full stops and commas, as Adorno suggests is the case with *Durchbruch*. In both Arcimboldo and Mahler these ruptures are like punctuation – the gestures in speech; however, there is nothing tangibly linguistic about them. The dialect is not a branch of a literal musical or painterly language, because it is created purely through the musical and painterly elements. The tangibly linguistic elements in Arcimboldo are therefore not a part of this mannerist dialect, or style. The study of the converging points in both artworks offered most insight into the similarities between the two artists in the exploration of how they partake of allegorical meaning in an attempt to embody, where each art form pursues its immanent principle in a pure way, rather than through a metaphorical form of expression in the language-like elements. This makes a strong case for Mahler's music as a manifestation of mannerism. The mannerist dialect, characterised by the brokenness, and the exaggerated features, in a blatant attempt to embody what it

⁷¹ See Adorno 1992

⁷² See Adorno 1992: 73

⁷³ Adorno 1992: 23

represents, reveals 'frozen moments' in the form of the artworks. I will look at these gestures in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The mannerism of nature caught in a glass
And there become a spirit's mannerism,
A glass aswarm with things going as far as they can.¹

In this chapter I consider the mannerist paintings of Girolamo Parmigianino, a marginally earlier sixteenth century Italian mannerist painter working at the same time as Arcimboldo. I examine Parmigianino's painting entitled *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (c. 1524) and John Ashbery's 'ekphrastic' poem (1975), which is based on the painting, and shares the same title (see Appendices 1 and 2 for the painting and the text). In order to develop the argument that Mahler's music is a manifestation of mannerism, I investigate how Ashbery's poem provides a means of looking at the convergence between the type of mannerism in Parmigianino's painting, and the type of mannerism that Adorno perceives in Mahler's music. In this way I draw attention to a common characteristic between Parmigianino's paintings and Mahler's music – 'frozen gesture'.

In his poem about Parmigianino's painting, Ashbery writes of 'frozen gesture'², and he also makes a reference to Mahler's Ninth Symphony in the highly metaphorical text, expressing aspects of Parmigianino's painting that overlap with Adorno's cryptic account of Mahler's music. In his painting entitled *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, Parmigianino paints a distorted reflection of himself on a wooden half-sphere, creating the illusion of his own upper body and head looking into a convex mirror. It is the first mirror portrait to have been painted, and it is starkly grotesque compared with the traditional figurative painting of the time.

¹ Stevens, Wallace. 'Looking Across the Fields and Watching the Birds fly'. In *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, 517-518. New York: Alfred A. Knopf; Knopf publishing group, 1954. 517-518

² Ashbery 1977: 82; see line 520 of the poem.

Parmigianino's work is characteristically mannerist because of the type of spatial effects that he plays with, elongating limbs. These effects are developed by twentieth century artists, such as the illusionist M. C. Escher (1898-1972) who experiments with convex and spherical effects similar to those created by Parmigianino's painting, and also other techniques to create more complex structures. *Self-Portrait* depicts the young, effeminate face in a spiralling room of rounded objects, commanded by the huge, elongated right hand that dominates; the theatre of Renaissance perspective space is replaced here by an aberrant, unstable microcosm of 'mannerist cinema'. Parmigianino has distorted his own form and that of the room in his skilful attention to the convex mirror in which he is looking.

The choice to paint his own reflection as distorted is not an admission of personal insecurity, but a vision which makes a radical statement about what art is and what it can do. Without a doubt, this revolutionary distortion influenced Arcimboldo's grotesque composite heads, which appeared only a few years after. This type of distortion is a development of the mannerist style, and it has been taken up by many artists since, thus becoming a characteristic of the style. In the sixteenth century paintings the grotesque was achieved by the representation of decay, and also by the distortion of faces and limbs. Parmigianino's painting entitled *Madonna of the Long Neck* (Uffizi, Florence, c. 1535) is characterised by the lengthened, distorted hands. The distortion proves to be quite elegant in this painting, combining the quintessential sophistication of the so-called 'Mannerist' style of the sixteenth century, together with the elongated, stretched distortion of the figures typical of Parmigianino's work (see Appendix 3 for this artwork). However, in his book *The Story of Art* (1950), Ernst Gombrich explains that this oeuvre of painting could be considered offensive in the

sixteenth century, embodying nothing of the ease and simplicity of the ancient legacy of Raphael. He writes of the *Madonna with the Long Neck* that:

He has stretched and lengthened the proportions of the human body in a strangely capricious way. The hand of the Virgin with its long delicate fingers, the long leg of the angel in the foreground, the lean, haggard prophet with a scroll of parchment - we see them all as through a distorting mirror.³

In his book *Mannerism*, John Shearman makes reference to physiognomy in this painting; he writes that ‘Parmigianino’s gestures and physiognomic expression ... may have come near to describing ecstasy but they seem equally redolent of affectation, and surely it was the formal rather than the emotional grace in which he was primarily interested.’⁴

In his ekphrastic poem about the painting, also entitled *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, Ashbery repeatedly refers to the face in Parmigianino’s self-portrait, and to gesture and distortion. James Heffernan writes in his article ‘Ekphrasis and Representation’ (1991) that: ‘Ashbery questions the ideas of stability, self-sufficiency, and authentic self-representation that Parmigianino’s work ostensibly tries to convey.’⁵ The poem contains some irrefutable similarities to Adorno’s phraseology and concepts; Ashbery’s imagery grows in references to the surface, to gesture, to

³ Gombrich. *The Story of Art*. London; Phaidon, 1950. 268

⁴ Shearman 1967: 185

⁵ Heffernan 1991: 299; Heffernan suggests that, if ekphrasis is to be defined as a mode, the definition must be sharp enough to identify a certain kind of literature and yet also elastic enough to reach from classicism to postmodernism, from Homer to Ashbery. He comments – ‘What I propose is a definition simple in form but complex in its implications: ‘*ekphrasis is the verbal representation of graphic representation.*’; Heffernan, *ibid.* Heffernan’s argument is that when we understand that ekphrasis uses one medium of representation to represent another, we can see what makes ekphrasis a distinguishable mode, and what binds together all literature from classicism to postmodernism. His loose definition of ekphrasis rebels against recent critics, who tend to see only difference between the two; while classic ekphrasis salutes the skill of the artist and the miraculous verisimilitude of the forms created, they insist that postmodern ekphrasis undermines the concept of verisimilitude itself. Thus, Ashbery’s *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* has been accused by Richard Stamelman of being: ‘a radical criticism of the illusions and deceptions inherent in forms of traditional representation that insist on the ideal, essential, and totalized nature of the copied images they portray.’; Stamelman, Richard. ‘Critical Reflections: Poetry and Art Criticism in Ashbery’s ‘Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror,’” *New Literary History*, 15 (1984): 607-30. 602; in Heffernan 1991: 301

subjectivity, and to distortion. Lines 327-329 of the poem are uncannily reminiscent of Adorno's ideas about Mahler:

What is beautiful seems so only in relation to a specific
Life, experienced or not, channelled into some form
Steeped in the nostalgia of a collective past.⁶

This quotation is reminiscent of Adorno's ideas in the chapter entitled 'Tone' of his Mahler monograph, for example:

In Mahler there resounds something collective, the movement of the masses, just as for seconds, in even the most trivial film, the force of the millions who identify themselves with it can be heard. Awesomely, Mahler's music makes itself the theatre of collective energies.⁷

Mahler's collective past, according to Adorno, is, of course, the fragments of old styles and forms that are presented together in the pastiche of *his* form.

The dalliance with the word 'surface' in Ashbery's poem also converges with Adorno's theories on Mahler, and the dead, objective surface of the music, constructed out of old material. See, for example, lines 80-82:

But your eyes proclaim
That everything is surface. The surface is what's there
And nothing can exist except what's there.⁸

As I have demonstrated, in Adorno's Mahler monograph he delivers to us the image of Mahler's music as constructed of a distinct object and subject; the objective layer of the music is fragmented because 'he does not construct new forms, but sets neglected, despised, rejected ones in motion, those that did not come under the official ontology of forms, which the composing subject is neither able to fill on his own account, not recognizes.'⁹ This objective surface layer of Mahler's music could be

⁶ Ashbery 1977: 77

⁷ Adorno 1992: 33

⁸ Ashbery 1977: 70

⁹ Adorno 1992: 62

perceived as irony and novelty and nothing more, due to the material that he uses, which is an idea that Ashbery plays with in relation to Parmigianino's painting, when he writes above that 'your eyes proclaim that everything is surface'. A precarious balance between intensity and superficiality is created by the grotesque lack of synthesis between the subject and object in these mannerist works. For Mahler, Adorno writes that '[w]hat in the potpourri was the necessity of indiscriminately assembling hackneyed melodies becomes in him the virtue of a structure that sensitively thaws the frozen groupings of accepted formal types.'¹⁰ He interprets the distortive technique, arguing that Mahler 'does not organise his work through harmony in detail, but uses harmony to create light and shadow in the whole, effects of foreground and depth, perspective.'¹¹ The refusal of synthesis in the 'frozen grouping' – the non-integration that creates the distortion in Mahler's music – is common to Arcimboldo's paintings, discussed above. I argue that it is also to be seen in Parmigianino's works, most visibly in the 'frozen gesture' that Ashbery writes of in his poem about the painting. I argue that this strengthens the claim for mannerism to be seen as a more timeless style that is manifest in sixteenth-century artworks as much as it is in the twentieth century.

Near the end of the poem, in lines 495-522, Ashbery expresses the distortion that is delivered to us in the reflected face of Parmigianino's painting:

This past
 Is now here: the painter's
 Reflected face, in which we linger, receiving
 Dreams and inspirations on an unassigned
 Frequency, but the hues have turned metallic,
 The curves and edges are not so rich. Each person
 Has one big theory to explain the universe
 But it doesn't tell the whole story
 And in the end it is what is outside him

¹⁰ Adorno 1992: 35

¹¹ Adorno 1992: 27

That matters, to him and especially to us
 Who have been given no help whatever
 In decoding our own man-size quotient and must rely
 On second-hand knowledge. Yet I know
 That no one else's taste is going to be
 Any help, and might as well be ignored.
 Once it seemed so perfect--gloss on the fine
 Freckled skin, lips moistened as though about to part
 Releasing speech, and the familiar look
 Of clothes and furniture that one forgets.
 This could have been our paradise: exotic
 Refuge within an exhausted world, but that wasn't
 In the cards, because it couldn't have been
 The point. Aping naturalness may be the first step
 Toward achieving an inner calm
 But it is the first step only, and often
 Remains a frozen gesture of welcome etched
 On the air materializing behind it,
 A convention.¹²

In this part of the poem, Ashbery portrays the gestures that he perceives to be suggested by the face in the painting: 'lips moistened as though about to part releasing speech'. He writes of a sort of creative potential here, as in the part where he exclaims that 'Aping naturalness may be the first step toward achieving an inner calm', a *first* step which 'Remains a frozen gesture'. This is an interesting observation about Parmigianino's painting, and about mannerism, and it resonates with the idea of the grotesque as manifest in the refusal to gloss over the fractures in the form, resulting in brokenness. Ashbery says it himself in lines 510-11 above – 'Once it seemed so perfect--gloss on the fine freckled skin...' This refusal to *unnaturally* forge a whole from the parts produces an artwork that remains in a more lucid, preliminary state, the fragments remaining 'frozen gestures' because, as Adorno says of Mahler, 'it is not to masquerade as the moment it is not.'¹³ Ashbery suggests in the extract of the poem above, that imitating 'naturalness' is this initial step that often remains a 'frozen gesture ... etched on the air materializing behind it, a convention.'

¹² Ashbery 1977: 82

¹³ Adorno 1992: 73

This talk of 'naturalness' with reference to convention shares similarities with Adorno's conception of Mahler's 'nature passages', which he defines as 'exacerbated deviations from high musical language...'¹⁴ In this section of the monograph Adorno goes on to write that:

Elements of nature scattered in his art always have an unnatural effect: only by the exaggeration it undergoes everywhere in Mahler's compositions can the compositional tone repel the convention that the formal language of Western music had become in Mahler's age, while still feeling at home in that convention.¹⁵

The convention in Parmigianino's age was also repelled by his distortion; as Ashbery writes in the above passage, '[t]his could have been our paradise: exotic refuge within an exhausted world, but that wasn't in the cards...'. The idea of convention as something that is exhausted is rather similar to Adorno's conception of mannerism as 'the scar left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression.'¹⁶ The distortion in Parmigianino's painting – the first mirror portrait to have been painted – goes against conventional portraiture and the idealised self-image, because the artist paints exactly what he sees in the mirror, refusing to make smooth the strange, curved edges, or to make smaller and more elegant the peculiar distortion of the elongated hand. In comparison with Italian art of the fifteenth century, which is possessed by logical, coherent space, the distorted image in Parmigianino's painting finds truth; he brings out a reality which cannot be achieved by the one-point perspective used to make objects or figures appear three-dimensional. This type of distortion becomes a predominant feature of sixteenth century fine art in Italy after Parmigianino; the figures grow ever longer and their heads become ever smaller during this period. They adopt postures in which they appear as twisted as a corkscrew. Paul Ernest points out in *Mathematics, Education and Philosophy: An*

¹⁴ Adorno, *ibid* (1992) 16

¹⁵ Adorno, *ibid*.

¹⁶ Adorno 1992: 22

International Perspective that, astonishingly, this style is by no means an impediment to mathematics; on the contrary, mathematics proved invaluable in contributing to the extravagances of the period. Ernest adds that Parmigianino's painting *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1523) employs mathematics and optics to produce distortion.¹⁷

Ashbery plays with the idea of reality in this distortion in lines 187-191 of the poem:

Sydney Freedberg in his
Parmigianino says of it: "Realism in this portrait
No longer produces and objective truth, but a bizzarria
However its distortion does not create
A feeling of disharmony"¹⁸

He refers to the scholar of the Italian Renaissance Sydney J. Freedberg, and his book *Parmigianino: His Works in Painting* (1950).¹⁹ As Mahler does, Parmigianino naturalises distortion, making it a part of reality, as Ashbery writes above, that the notion that 'distortion' does not create a 'feeling of disharmony'. The idea of this distortion and 'bizzarria' in Parmigianino's *Self-Portrait*, as a step toward achieving an inner calm, but remaining 'a frozen gesture of welcome etched on the air materializing behind it', as Ashbery writes above, can be compared with observations that Adorno makes of Mahler.

In the chapter entitled 'Novel' in his Mahler monograph, Adorno points out that Mahler does not – as Beethoven does – shun lengthened measures, or moments in which, relative to musical gesture, nothing happens, and the music becomes a 'state'.

He focuses in on the first movement of the Ninth Symphony, immediately after the

¹⁷ Ernest writes that: 'Mannerist taste 'overapplied' perspective to the human figure opening up thereby a new and rich visual field.'; Ernest 1994: 172. Painting had moved from mechanical, precise depiction in the fifteenth century to a more natural observation of the figure, and of light and perspective. The 'Mannerist period' is marked by a new emotional content, introducing personal elements of subjectivity, which would eventually resurface in Expressionism in the nineteenth century. After the 'Mannerist period', art movements variegated and separated in the sixteenth century. See Hauser. *Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance & the Origin of Modern Art*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf; Knopf publishing group, 1965. 96

¹⁸ Ashbery 1977: 73

¹⁹ Freedberg, Sydney Joseph. *Parmigianino: His Works in Painting*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1950.

end of the exposition, where there is a full bar in which the timpani roll of the preceding chord dies away. Yet, the harmonic shift resulting from the addition of G-flat to the B-flat claims a further bar, still without motivic content, while the latter, the harp motive from the introduction, appears only in the third bar in the timpani. He argues that a composer who feared delay would have made its introduction coincide with that of the G-flat. This particular musical example is depicted below in Figure 3, showing bars 105-109 of the first movement of the Ninth Symphony:

Figure 3 –

The image displays a page of a musical score for the first movement of the Ninth Symphony, specifically bars 105 through 109. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves for each instrument. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Eb, Clarinet in A/Bass Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Contrabassoon, Horn in F (two staves), Trumpet in F (two staves), Trombone (two staves), Tuba, Timpani, Cymbals, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings like 'pp' (pianissimo). The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and the overall structure is organized into systems.

This full bar, in which the timpani roll of the preceding chord is markedly allowed to die away, is an example of a 'frozen gesture' in the music. Adorno notes here that a similar technique is employed in the first movement of Mahler's Fourth Symphony:

With artful nonchalance, in a field in the middle of the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, Mahler allows the movement to die, only to resume vigorously. Instead of the outward flow being busily spurred on at the expense of the thematic figure's need of repose, Mahler relies on the inward flow; only the greatest composers can slacken the reins in this way without the whole slipping from their grasp.²⁰

Here Mahler departs from the classical ideal of music, disregarding the 'whole', and allowing the music to be broken. In his 1997 book *Mahler Studies*, Stephen E. Hefling writes that Mahler achieves the suspension of time and motion in the lyric-dramatic situation: 'We are left suspended on and over the dominant, another "still," frozen, cinematic like, in its frame, fading, along with the sentry, into some other world on the threshold of which we are left standing.'²¹ He refers us specifically to the end of Mahler's 'Der Schildwache Nachtlied' ('Sentinel's Night Song'), the first song from *Lieder aus Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Youth's Magic Horn*; 1887-1901), the settings to a collection of German folk poems collected by Archim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano and published in Germany between 1805 and 1808. For the lyrics to this song see Appendix 4; this particular song is described as having a gloomy despair. See Figure 4 below for the end of the song:

²⁰ Adorno 1992: 68

²¹ Hefling, Stephen E. *Mahler Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 115

Figure 4 –

The image shows a page of a musical score for the third movement of Mahler's Third Symphony. The score is written for a full orchestra and a vocal soloist. The tempo is marked "molto rit." (very slow). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The score includes the following parts and markings:

- Voice:** Lyrics: "Mit-ter-nacht! Feld - - - - - wacht!"
- Flute (Fl.):** *ppp* bis zur gänzlichen Unhörbarkeit
- Oboe (Ob.):** *ppp* fino che si spegni del tutto
- Clarinet (Cl.):** *ppp* bis zur gänzlichen Unhörbarkeit
- Cor Anglais (Cor. Angl.):** *ppp* fino che si spegni del tutto
- Trumpet (Cor.):** *ppp* bis zur gänzlichen Unhörbarkeit
- Timpani (Timp.):** *ppp*
- Piano (App.):** *ppp*
- Violin I (VI.I):** *p* Solo
- Violin II (VI.II):** *p* Solo
- Violin I (VI.I):** *pp* *ppp*
- Violin II (VI.II):** *pizz.* *mf*
- Viola (Vla.):** *s* *mf* Solo
- Violoncello (Vlc.):** *ppp* *pizz.* arco Solo
- Double Bass (Cb.):** *pp* Solo arco

In his essay 'Mahler' (1961), Adorno also writes of the third movement of the Third Symphony, that 'Mahler renounces the traditional idea of the symphonic goal and

waits, without intervening, for the din to exhaust itself. . . . the barren passage of time shows through, much like the canvas in early modern paintings.'²²

Brian Ferneyhough explores the notion of 'frozen gesture' in music, in conjunction with the concept of the 'figure', in his essay entitled 'Il Tempo della Figura' (1984). Ferneyhough investigates musical gesture, re-examining some of the ideas put forward by Adorno. The language and concepts in this essay are remarkably similar to that of Adorno's, although one must consider the fact that Ferneyhough develops his theories from a viewpoint some twenty years after Adorno's Mahler monograph. Ferneyhough writes of the 'musical object', which resists distortion by the forces directed at it; he suggests that its 'expressive history' consists of its damaged, violated integrity, which signals to use the measure of the forces deployed. He writes: 'Just as some musical objects are comparatively more resilient, so the nature and power of the forces to which they are exposed need to be calculated with a view to gradual 'weathering', erosion, or their sudden omnidirectional, 'dematerialization'.²³ Ferneyhough relates his ideas in this essay to Ashbery's *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, opening with a quotation from the poem that provides much insight into the meaning of the composer's essay, referring, here, particularly to the above extract on the erosion and the dematerialisation of the musical object. This passage of Ashbery's poem is from lines 198-201, as follows:

They seemed strange because we couldn't actually see them.
And we realize this only at a point where they lapse
Like a wave breaking on a rock, giving up
Its shape in a gesture which expresses that shape.²⁴

²² Adorno. 'Mahler'. In *Quasi una fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, 81-110. London: Verso; 1998. 90

²³ Ferneyhough. 'Il Tempo Della Figura'. In *Collected Writings*, ed. James Boros and Richard Topp, 33-41. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995. 35

²⁴ Ashbery 1977: 73

Ferneyhough returns to this passage later in his essay; he suggests that two main ideas are inextricably entwined in these few lines. Firstly, the view that the present constitutes itself only as *sensed absence*, and secondly, that our 'life-line' to reality might be interpreted as a special form of *motion*.²⁵ He refers to 'expression' as a passage from one state to another, in which, neither the presumptive beginning and end points are primary, but rather the 'no longer' and 'not yet' whose *impressum* they bear. In this context, the image of the wave refers both to some natural, unformed undertow of 'creative potential', shaping events according to whatever form of dynamic law, 'and to the fleeting insubstantial moment of perception, born along the crest of the wave as an unrepeatably trace of being.'²⁶ Here I want to remind the reader of Ashbery's exclamation in his poem of such 'creative potential' in Parmigianino's self-portrait, 'lips moistened as though about to part releasing speech'²⁷. Ferneyhough writes that the energy trapped in the wave, which *is*, in a sense, the wave, being ejected into concrete form by the unyielding resistance of the rock, is instrumental in effecting the transition from the 'physical' to the 'configurational'; thereby, as action, it becomes invested with symbolic stature. He is arguing that 'force', as the liberation of entrapped energy, finds its counterpart in an energy which is definable as the application of force to a resistant object.

Ferneyhough applies this idea to musical discourse, suggesting that the intersection of these trajectories is the locus of the *present*, weighted by a unique balance of tensions, which he refers to as the unique 'fingerprint'; 'Thus: musical force and musical energy are not identical. Energy is invested in concrete musical objects to the extent that they are capable of rendering forces acting upon them

²⁵ See Ferneyhough 1995: 35

²⁶ Ferneyhough, *ibid.*

²⁷ Ashbery 1977, 82

visible.²⁸ He argues that lines of force arise in the space – the interstices – between objects, the connective impetus established in the moving from one discrete musical event to the other.²⁹ This idea brings us back to the gaps that Adorno writes of – the ruptures in the form he identifies in Mahler, created by the lack of synthesis between subject and object, as a result of the scars left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression, which is how Adorno describes mannerism.³⁰ Similarly to Ferneyhough, Adorno had also written of an ‘objective force’ in the chapter entitled ‘Decay and Affirmation’ in his Mahler monograph: ‘Mahler’s metaphysical intention is realized in that he is drawn along by the objective forces inherent in his work as if he were his own detached spectator.’³¹ Ferneyhough has evidently developed his notion of musical force through Adorno, and also through his use of the physical image of the wave, captured by Ashbery in his poem. Ferneyhough writes that:

At such moments it is the line of force itself which, like a wave, assumes momentary physical shape as a spectral foreground projected onto the cloud of energized articles seeking opportunity to congeal into a further, gesturally coherent (delimited) object. The gesture is ‘frozen force’ to the extent that it stands for expressive sentiment, for an absent exchange of expressive energies.³²

Ferneyhough develops Adorno’s ‘objective force’ into the visual line of force, and a ‘frozen force’, manifest in the brokenness – the ‘frozen gestures’ – the disregard for ‘the whole’ in Mahler’s music, which I have demonstrated in the abstract examples in this chapter. Adorno argues that ‘an identity between the subjective driving force and the objective law of motion is not attained, the lines are extended beyond what they and their implied harmonies can yield by nature.’³³

²⁸ Ferneyhough 1995: 35

²⁹ See Ferneyhough, *ibid.*

³⁰ See Adorno 1992: 22

³¹ Adorno 1992: 133

³² Ferneyhough 1995: 36

³³ Adorno 1992: 130

The gesture of ‘frozen force’ is a point of comparison between Parmigianino’s painting, as identified by Ashbery in his poem, and Mahler’s music, as identified by Adorno. In Mahler, as well as in Arcimboldo and Parmigianino, the line of force that Ferneyhough writes of assumes the spectral physical shape of the face, and also other parts of the body for Parmigianino, which endure in their distorted form. The line of force is drawing towards a completeness – a whole face – a final polished stage, which would gloss over the fractures in the form. However in the works of these artists, the gesture remains a ‘frozen force’ because of the refusal of synthesis between subject and object that I have already identified as a common characteristic of the style of mannerism in the works of these artists. The object is more apparent as it is never fully integrated into the form, and the resulting distortion of the form is to the audience more compellingly grotesque because they can personally relate to the human figure. Adorno makes the observation of physiognomy in Mahler, suggesting that he expresses in the way that facial features reveal character; however, the *face* is distorted beyond recognition; he argues that ‘something objective is enacted, the identifiable face of which has been obliterated.’³⁴ This is identifiable in moments such as the ‘terrifying collapse’ at the end of the development in the first movement of the Ninth Symphony³⁵; Adorno writes of this moment that ‘Mahler’s material formal categories become especially clear physiognomically when the music falls inwards as in a kaleidoscope.’³⁶

Adorno’s equation of Mahler’s music to a distorted face makes the comparison to Parmigianino’s *Self-Portrait*, and also to Arcimboldo’s composite heads, easier to visualise. The aging of the vegetables and the leaves in Arcimboldo’s

³⁴ Adorno 1992: 25

³⁵ See Erwin Ratz, ‘Zum Formproblem bei Gustav Mahler. Eine Analyse des ersten Satzes der Neunten Symphonie’. *Die Musikforschung* 8 (1955): 176; in Adorno 1992: 45

³⁶ Adorno, *ibid.*

painting entitled *Autumn*, discussed in chapter 2, embodies the withering season – the rotting organisms revealing flaws, imperfections, fractures. In the next painting in his season series entitled *Winter* (1573), Arcimboldo paints a frail character, formed of decomposing natural materials, in a later stage of decay; the bare trees show empty spaces, and are angular and shrivelled, rather than round or full (for an image of this painting, see Appendix 5). Adorno writes of the fractures in Mahler using similar language that I have used to describe *Autumn* and *Winter*, when he writes of this kind of grotesque decay. In the final chapter of the Mahler monograph, entitled ‘The Long Gaze’, Adorno points us to the lengthy sixth and final movement of Mahler’s last song cycle – *Das Lied von der Erde* (1907), entitled ‘Der Abschied’. He observes a ‘vertical dissociation: the chords decay into parts.’³⁷ He remarks that ‘[f]requently the music grows tired of itself and gapes open: then the inner flow carries the movement over the exhaustion of the outward one; emptiness itself becomes music.’³⁸ This is another example of ‘frozen gesture’ in the music (for this particular passage of the song, see Appendix 6). Adorno argues that it is only very late that the ‘New Music’ composes silence in this way again.³⁹ Adorno’s description of Mahler’s material as decayed and exhausted reaffirms his suggestion that ‘Mannerism is the scar left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression.’⁴⁰ To continue with the theme of decay and exhaustion, I will return to Ashbery’s poem, to the point where he actually makes a brief reference to Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, in lines 317-321, which is a significant moment in the comparison between Parmigianino and Mahler:

As Berg said of a phrase in Mahler’s Ninth;

³⁷ Adorno 1992: 154

³⁸ Adorno, *ibid.*

³⁹ See Adorno, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Adorno 1992: 22

Or, to quote Imogen in *Cymbeline*, “There cannot
Be a pinch in death more sharp than this,” for,
Though only exercise or tactic, it carries
The momentum of a conviction that has been
building.⁴¹

This comment that Alban Berg makes about the phrase in the first movement of Mahler’s Ninth was written in a letter to his wife; see below for this passage:

The first movement is the most heavenly thing Mahler ever wrote; it is the expression of an exceptional fondness for this earth, the longing to live in peace on it, to enjoy nature in its depths – before death comes. For he comes irresistibly. The entire movement is permeated by premonitions of death . . . most potently, of course, in the colossal passage [bar 308] where this premonition becomes certainty, where in the midst of greatest strength, of almost painful joy of life, Death itself is announced with greatest force.⁴²

A few bars later in the Ninth Symphony, after the section that Berg refers to in the above extract, [b.327] Mahler gives the instruction: ‘Wie ein schwerer Kondukt’ (like a grim funeral procession). Adorno actually refers to the objective material that Mahler uses as ‘dead matter’; in the chapter of the Mahler monograph entitled ‘Decay and Affirmation’ he writes that:

At Mahler’s time overtaxed tonality and popular melody both needed stimulants. Mahler had to have complete command of the derivative materials in order to set the petrified, dead matter in motion. The secondary, broken themes with which he operates no longer have the primary impulse that may once have given them a life of their own.⁴³

The themes of death and decay continue in the investigation of distortion and ‘frozen gesture’ in mannerism; Adorno’s idea that the music grows tired and gapes open is one explanation for the frozen gestures in the form of Mahler’s music.⁴⁴ The ‘broken themes’, as he writes in the extract of the Mahler monograph above, are a result of the tendency of mannerism as a style to patch together a whole from ‘various bits of reality’⁴⁵, and ‘of mingling classical forms with others’⁴⁶ as Hans Sedlmayr writes in

⁴¹ Ashbery 1977: 76-77

⁴² Berg, Alban. *Letters to His Wife*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1971. 147

⁴³ Adorno 1992: 130

⁴⁴ See Adorno 1992: 154

⁴⁵ See Sedlmayr 2006: 190

his definition of mannerism. (See chapter 1). I will continue briefly to look at musical examples of this decay, and the ‘frozen gestures’ in Mahler’s music.

Bertold Hoeckner in *Programming the Absolute* (2002) cites Adorno as he describes the second song from the *Kindertotenlieder* (1905)⁴⁷ entitled *Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen*, as an allegory of that ‘*Augenblick*: the suspension of the dialectic between shiver and shudder.’⁴⁸ He writes that, although the fleeting appearance of the supertonic could never belong to the *Ursatz*; the ‘D’ at ‘Leuchten’ may still connect to the melodic descent of the *Urlinie*. Hoeckner writes that:

It is a structural moment and not. Mahler’s shudder shatters Schenker’s ekphrastic hope of fitting this crucial moment into the tonality of the piece and that of tonal music. This is how, perhaps, the structural moment at “radiance” radiated beyond the moment of structure.⁴⁹

For the depiction of this musical moment at bars 33-42 of the second song of the *Kindertotenlieder*, see Figure 5 below (and see Appendix 7 for the words to the song, written by Friedrich Rückert).

⁴⁶ See Sedlmayr, *ibid*.

⁴⁷ The *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the death of children) is a song cycle for voice and orchestra, inspired by the 425 poems of Friedrich Rückert, written between 1833-34. Mahler selects five of these poems to set as Lieder in the *Kindertotenlieder*, composed between 1901 and 1904. The poems were written in the aftermath of grief after the death of two of Rückert’s children; Mahler had not yet suffered the loss of his daughter at this point in time. Mahler also wrote the *Rückert-Lieder*, which are five other songs for voice and orchestra (or piano), four of which were premiered with the *Kindertotenlieder* in Vienna in January 1905. For more information, see Sadie and Latham, *The Cambridge Music Guide*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 394

⁴⁸ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 124 (80); cited in Hoeckner, Berthold. *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the hermeneutics of the moment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. 263; According to Hoeckner, this song is an allegory of Benjamin’s constellation. Hoeckner refers here to Benjamin’s constellation of allegorical criticism; language is at the forefront of Benjamin’s thinking. His concept of ‘pure language’ consists of notions of allegory, translation, truth, and the ‘critical gaze’, proposing that ‘pure language’ can be found after the ‘Fall’, buried in works of art and poetry, and that it is a remnant of the language of Adam and Eve in paradise. ‘Pure language’ has a non-communicative nature; like fiction, it primarily communicates only itself; Benjamin argues that it is the task of allegorical criticism, and of translation, to mortify the works of art, so that the pure language can be freed. See Benjamin’s essay entitled ‘The Task of the Translator’ In *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, ed. by Rainer Schulte, John Biguenet, 71-82. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

The *Augenblick* in Benjamin’s theses on history operates as the interruption of the ‘looking eye’, and this looking that interrupts in the moment of its glance steps into the place of what Benjamin defines as the ‘technical condition’ (*die technische Beschaffenheit*) of photography. See [Andrew] Benjamin. *Walter Benjamin and History*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005.

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⁴⁹ Hoeckner 2002: 263

dominant and tonic minor, the most expressive moments of the song are in the major mode. He writes that ‘The minor thus forms the frame that contains, but does not control, the major.’⁵⁰ This frame is modally static, and, according to Agawu, Mahler is therefore able to retain two levels of affective ‘signification’. One is represented by the referential background minor mode, which he suggests is representative of the emotional condition of a bereaved father, and the other represented by the dynamic major mode, ‘which forms a correlative to those illusive moments of optimism.’⁵¹ The two levels of affective signification that Agawu comments on are the major and minor modes in which Adorno detects the refusal of synthesis – the non-integration – in Mahler’s music. These levels are the intensity and superficiality, according to Maniates’s definition of mannerism.⁵²

The structure of Mahler’s music is controlled by the major-minor modes, as we have seen, and also by the discrete moments in the form that Adorno describes as ‘colons’ and ‘question marks’, which are these moments of breakthrough (*Durchbruch*). According to a Schenkerian analysis, these gestures would not conform to a ‘well-established’ musical language, because Mahler rejects the fundamental importance of tonality. Instead, these are devices which conform to a rhetoric not constructed out of words, but out of a purely musical form. Mahler’s mannerism is like that of the sixteenth-century painters because of the manneristic treatment of the distortive technique. Parmigianino takes an old and familiar form – the self-portrait – but he doesn’t add a convex mirror to his self-portrait; instead, he

⁵⁰ Agawu, V. Kofi. ‘The Musical Language of Kindertotenlieder no. 2’. *Journal of Musicology*, 2, No. 1 (Winter 1983): 81-93. 84

⁵¹ Agawu 1983: 81-93; Agawu writes that the background articulating sonority of the song is a ‘consonant triad’, and therefore ambiguities in tonal orientation are inevitable. The song is therefore ‘monotonal’ – using Schoenberg’s term – and so he analyses them in terms of one principal key, and various ‘regions’ within the key. See Schoenberg, Arnold. *Structural Functions of Harmony*. New York: W & W. Norton and Company, 1969.; See also: Agawu 1983: 89

⁵² See Maniates 1979: 4

copies the image directly from the reflection in the mirror, as it is, distorted and not smooth. Similarly, as Adorno notices, Mahler does not create a new form and fit the old material into the form; he abstracts the material – the old forms and styles – and he leaves them as they are, broken with ruptures, rather than smoothing over the cracks. These cracks, or interstices, as Ferneyhough would call them, form the ‘frozen gestures’ in the forms, which I have explored in Ashbery’s poetic interpretation of Parmigianino’s *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, and also in Adorno’s interpretation of Mahler’s music. I believe this treatment of form to be the style of a mannerism that is transferable across the arts.

In the next chapter I investigate the notion of mannerism as a style that is manifest in literature also, exploring a novel by Virginia Woolf that I think exhibits the characteristics of the style that I have observed in the sixteenth-century paintings and also in Mahler’s music. The notion of ‘frozen gesture’ in this chapter is a further example of the type of distortion in mannerism, created by the evident fractures in the form in the artworks I have explored. The argument for other artworks as manifestations of mannerism strengthens the proposal of mannerism as a style, rather than a condition or a period.

Chapter 4

Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Then at the wall; and ask how's this wall, the great wall, which we call, perhaps miscall, civilization, to be built by (here the mirrors flicked and flashed) ors, scraps and fragments like ourselves?¹

In this chapter I will compare the mannerism of Mahler's music with the last novel of Virginia Woolf – *Between the Acts* (1941) – in order to strengthen the case for mannerism as a distinct style that is not limited to particular media or historical periods. I will also explore aspects of the novel that are similar to characteristics in the paintings by Arcimboldo and Parmigianino in order to build a case for the presence of the mannerist style in Woolf's novel. It provides further evidence of the manifestation of mannerism in different media and different historical times, supporting the theory that mannerism is a style which is not limited to the sixteenth century or relegated to the definition of a state or condition such as 'lateness'.

I will begin by investigating Adorno's equation of Mahler's music to forms in literature, such as the novel form, to continue to follow up Adorno's hypothesis that '[t]he arts converge only where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.'² I will do this by looking at Adorno's likening of Mahlerian form to that of the nineteenth-century large-scale novel, for example, when he writes: 'From the timelessness of the unchanging Mahler releases historical time. He thereby takes up the anti-mythological tendency proper originally to the epic and later, especially to the novel.'³ His hypothesis supports the position that mannerism can be identified as manifesting itself in different mediums, without the necessity to scrutinise the fundamental connection between music, painting and literary forms. This is the case insofar that it validates the comparison of stylistic features between fundamentally

¹ Woolf. *Between the Acts*. London: Vintage, 2000. 116

² Adorno 1995: 67

³ Adorno 1992: 77

different mediums, even though they do partake of one another to a certain extent, without implying that Mahler's musical form *is* the novel form, or that it *becomes* a narrative, for example.

Adorno's theory of how Mahler's musical form is similar to the novel form serves to highlight the characteristics of the style of mannerism in the greater scheme of my argument, because it provides points of comparison between music and literature that will enable me to discuss Woolf's narrative style in her novel. A significant proportion of Adorno's Mahler monograph is organised around the idea that the complexity of Mahler's music reveals itself through this physiognomical face, as though the characters of the novel emerge as a graphic reality over the space of time in a novel. In the fourth chapter of the monograph, entitled 'Novel', Adorno writes that: 'Marches and *Ländler* in his work correspond to the heritage of adventure stories and penny dreadfuls in the bourgeois novel.'⁴ I looked at musical examples of the waltz and the *Ländler* in Mahler's Ninth Symphony in Chapter 2, observing the lack of synthesis between the subject and object, due to the fragmentation of melody, and the presentation of the *Ländler* as a grim parody, deliberately clumsy and rough. Adorno describes Mahler's symphonies as 'novel-symphonies' (*Romansymphonik*),⁵ in contrast to the 'drama-symphonies' of Viennese classicism, manifest in the symphonies of Beethoven, for example. In his book entitled *Adorno on Music*, Robert Witkin points out the contrast between the two categories is in the development of musical material, whereby the Beethovenian symphony partakes of the organic style of 'developing variation', which 'resists the introduction of new material that has not been prepared for or is not logically to be deduced from what has preceded it.'⁶ Mahler, in this sense, is inorganic, forging an internal logic within the 'non-

⁴ Adorno 1992: 62

⁵ See Adorno 1992: 72

⁶ Witkin 1998: 119

development', or 'non-synthesis' of the objective layer of his music, most manifest in his later works. Adorno saw it as characteristic of the novel, and, thereby, the 'novel-symphony' that new characters could emerge at any time, and the novel was simply born along from the force of the movement of its particulars and whatever came into it.⁷ I agree with Witkin when he argues that:

Mahler's symphonies are full of these surprising elements, brought in without warning or without being capable of being simply deduced in the manner of a Beethoven symphony, whose entire construction can sometimes be seen as an elaboration of its opening measures.⁸

Adorno writes of *Das Lied von der Erde* in the chapter of the Mahler monograph entitled 'decay and affirmation':

The voices interrupt each other, as if they wanted to drown each other out; hence the insatiable expression and the speech-like quality of the piece, of the absolute novel-symphony. The themes are neither active, precisely set in place, nor do they occur passively, but issue forth as if the music only while speaking received the impulse to speak on.⁹

In his essay: 'Narrative archetypes and Mahler's Ninth Symphony' (1992), Anthony Newcomb recalls Adorno's account of Mahler's music in the chapter of the Mahler monograph entitled 'Novel', where he argues that it is not that music wants to recount something specific, but that the composer wants to make something in the same way that one tells a story. Adorno writes of Mahler's songs that: 'They do not sing of themselves, but narrate, being epic lyrics like the children's songs from whose practice at least Mahler's earlier songs derive in their broken recurrence of melodies of dance and play. Their flow is a kind of storytelling, and their expression a commentary on the story.'¹⁰ Newcomb writes that 'at the basis of what he calls the musical novel lies a certain kind of formal freedom – freedom of the succession of events in a functional sense. He speaks of "an idiosyncrasy that must have been felt

⁷ See Witkin, *ibid.*

⁸ Witkin, *ibid.*

⁹ Adorno 1992: 157

¹⁰ Adorno 1992: 75

long before Mahler, who was, however, the first not to suppress it...”¹¹ However, it is unclear as to whether the ‘storytelling’ flow of the songs is directly due to the involvement of the text. At this point in the Mahler monograph, Adorno alludes to Mahler’s last song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde*, arguing that it is not until this point that Mahler espouses the idea of the subjective lyric. Adorno writes that Mahler puts these songs into the mouth of someone other than the music’s subject, and they narrate rather than sing of themselves. With this ‘storytelling’ kind of flow – the expression as the commentary on the story – he refers to the expositions in Mahler’s late works, which do not hold a substantial weight anymore. He writes that they ‘become expositions in the modest sense of presentations of the dramatis personae, whose musical story is then told.’¹² He remarks that, in the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, the contrasting ideas become a ‘ramifying unity’ in the development, in order to develop ‘the components of the exposition in an explicating way: with it the movement truly begins as a story.’¹³ The sonata principle, on the other hand, is abandoned in the Ninth Symphony, possibly as a result of his experiences with *Das Lied von der Erde*. Incidentally, *Between the Acts* was also one of Woolf’s late works – in fact her last.

In his Mahler monograph, Adorno writes that it is not only that Mahler’s music sounds as if it were trying to tell something that calls to mind the great novel; he argues that the ‘curve it describes is novelistic, rising to great situations, collapsing into itself. Gestures are enacted like that of Natasha in *The Idiot*, throwing bank notes into fire...’¹⁴ This moment in Dostoevsky’s novel *The Idiot* (*Идиот*; 1868) is in Part I, Chapter XVI, where the main character – Nastasya Philopovna – is throwing money

¹¹ Newcomb. ‘Narrative archetypes and Mahler’s Ninth Symphony’. In *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*, ed. Steven Paul Scher, 118–136. Cambridge University Press, 2006. 118

¹² Adorno 1992: 95

¹³ Adorno 1992: 96

¹⁴ Adorno 1992: 69

into the fire.¹⁵ At this point in the Mahler monograph, Adorno gives the musical example of the second movement of the Fifth Symphony, at around figure [11]. The gestures that he compares with the novel form are those of the music collapsing into itself, and also the points where the thematic material is disguised and reintroduced as appearing *new*. In his essay 'Mahler', Adorno points out that Mahler was a passionate reader of Dostoevsky.¹⁶ This novelistic curve in Mahler – gestures which rise to great situations, and the collapsing into itself – provides an example of how the whole has primacy over the parts in the 'novel-symphonies', and new characters can emerge at any time. Mahler's symphonies share characteristics with the literary technique emerging simultaneously in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; the 'stream-of-consciousness' style is employed in novels by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. This technique is characterised by indirect and interior monologue, leaps in syntax and punctuation, and the use of free association, which follow a character's fragmentary thoughts and sensory feelings.¹⁷ These characteristics are comparable to Mahler's 'novel-symphonies', which are full of these surprising elements, brought in without warning, as Witkin puts it.¹⁸ In this sense, the music is just like a 'stream-of-consciousness'. The idea of musical *force* returns to the concepts of 'frozen gesture' and 'frozen force', identified by Ferneyhough when he refers to Ashbery's poem, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The connection Adorno makes between Mahler's music and the novel serves as a platform for the comparison between the music and Woolf's novel. An example of this is the 'storytelling' kind of flow in Mahler's music that Adorno writes of, which can be compared to the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique in literary forms

¹⁵ See Dostoevsky. *The Idiot*. New York: Spark Educational Publishing, 2004. 158-159

¹⁶ Adorno 1998: 86

¹⁷ See Wallace and Gruber. *Creative People at Work: Twelve Cognitive Case Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. 148

¹⁸ See Witkin 1998: 119

structured pieces of music. That is, readers should use the musical analogy to the extent to which it really applies to literature, which is in its results only.²⁰

Barndollar's essay proceeds on the premise that patterns and forms may be applied in distinct ways in the two media, but their general effects may be usefully compared and contrasted, in part to determine specifically how language and music differ. The title of T. S. Eliot's set of poems invites the comparison, as does Adorno's suggestion that Mahler's symphonies are 'novel-symphonies', however I do not intend to treat works of literature *as* music, or conversely, Mahler's music as a novel. Here I am reminded again of Adorno's hypothesis, that it is more insightful to consider the convergence of artworks that use different media where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.²¹

Woolf and mannerism

In his book *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (1986) Alex Zwerdling labels the alternation of viewpoints and syntax in Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927) as a 'mannerism of style'.²² He refers to the narrative ambivalence of political and social alliances in Woolf's work. On the other hand, in her study of Virginia Woolf's lifelong preoccupation with silence and the barrier between the sayable and the unsayable entitled *The Reading of Silence: Virginia Woolf in the English Tradition* (1991), Patricia Odek Laurence disagrees with the label mannerism. She suggests that:

if we locate, as Toril Moi urges, "the politics of Woolf's writing precisely in her textual practice", we perceive that alternation not as a "mannerism," not as "narrative ambivalence" as Elizabeth Abel claims, but as the essence and embodiment of Woolf's vision of life.²³

²⁰ Barndollar 2000: 179-180

²¹ See Adorno 1995: 67

²² Zwerdling. *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986. 205

²³ Laurence, Patricia Odek. *The Reading of Silence: Virginia Woolf in the English Tradition*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991. 95; she cites Moi. *Sexual/ Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. New York: Methuen, 1985. 16

However, I would argue that Laurence is not referring to mannerism as a *style* in this passage, but rather, as a gesticulation. I will come back to her thesis about silence in Woolf's work later in this chapter. First, I will explore the aspects of the novel that are comparable with other works I have discussed in previous chapters, in order to demonstrate how Woolf's novel entitled *Between the Acts* is a manifestation of mannerism. I will investigate similar characteristics, such as the lack of synthesis between the subject and the object, and 'frozen gesture' in the novel, to reveal how it is formally mannerist. The novel was modified and published just after the author's suicide by drowning, describing life in a small English village in 1939, on the brink of the Second World War, which, in reality, had already commenced. In the work, there is mention of someone who drowns herself, and also, of Isa – one of the main characters – wishing to drown herself. This subject matter – death and decay – is a thematic similarity to the other works I have analysed.

In his text *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians* (2007), Steve Ellis describes Woolf's position as a writer whose 'modern and innovatory practice coexists with a powerful nostalgia for various elements of Victorian culture...'²⁴ The element of nostalgia, of turning toward the past, is significant in the manifestation of the style of mannerism, which I will demonstrate. Woolf felt hurt at being critically underrated in favour of younger literary idols; she was berated by some critics for her Victorian nostalgia and her formal mannerism in an era that was so demonstrative of its modernity. Lisa Jardine, in her literary introduction (2000) to Woolf's *Between the Acts*, points us to a critic who produced a bad review of Woolf's novels, in suggesting that she is not historically aware. Jardine writes:

In November 1919, the New Zealand-born writer Katherine Mansfield, wrote a negative review of Woolf's *Night and Day* in the *Athenaeum*, in which she

²⁴ Ellis, *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 1

specifically attacked the way Woolf focused on the minutiae of English daily life, as if World War One had never happened.²⁵

Mansfield accuses Woolf of lacking a modernist language to cope with the enormity of what Europe had just gone through when she writes: ‘We had thought that this world had vanished forever, that it was impossible to find on the great ocean of literature a ship that was unaware of what had been happening.’²⁶ Mansfield’s husband had delivered Virginia Woolf’s response back to the critic, which was that ‘she said she thought your novel reviews showed that you were not interested in novels.’²⁷ The comments that Mansfield made about her novels were shown to have a serious impact on Woolf, combined with her depression and the anxieties of the war.

Woolf’s novel is indeed characterised by trivia, but this is interwoven with under-the-surface speech; this is a point of comparison with the other mannerist works I have looked at. Here I will return to the part of Ashbery’s poem that I discussed in Chapter 3 – lines 80-82:

But your eyes proclaim
That everything is surface. The surface is what’s
there
And nothing can exist except what’s there.²⁸

In Chapter 3 I compared these lines to Mahler’s music, with Adorno’s theory in mind, that he does not construct new forms, but sets neglected, despised, rejected ones in motion.²⁹ These old forms, like scars left behind by expression in a language no longer capable of expression,³⁰ are like the trivia in Woolf. The surface of the music, as does the surface of the text in Woolf, appears trivial, because it exhibits objects

²⁵ Jardine. ‘Lisa Jardine on *Between the Acts*’. In *Between the Acts* by Virginia Woolf, ed. Jeanette Winterson and Margaret Reynolds, xvii-xxv. London: Vintage, 2000. xx

²⁶ Mansfield, Review of *Night and Day* by Virginia Woolf, quoted in Lee. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1996. 386

²⁷ Lee 1996: 395-396

²⁸ Ashbery 1977: 70

²⁹ See Adorno 1992: 62

³⁰ See Adorno 1992: 22

from the past, like old gossip that is no longer interesting. The surface stands out at the listener, as it does to the reader of Woolf, because of the lack of the manneristic synthesis between the subject and object. This is the same for Parmigianino, as Ashbery suggests in the extract above, and yet, his was the first mirror self-portrait recorded in history, and the choice to paint his own reflection as distorted makes a radical statement about what art is in 1524, and what it can do. The surface also appears as prominent in Arcimboldo's paintings, whereby the viewer sees the objects such as the fruit and vegetables as a clever arrangement into the composite heads. And yet, there are depths that go unnoticed, such as the colourimetric method of musical transcription, and the linguistic devices, hidden below the surface. This is a characteristic of the style of mannerism, which is manifest in these artworks. In the penultimate chapter of Adorno's Mahler monograph, he sums up the relationship of the artworks to 'trivia' when he suggests that 'Music becomes a blotting paper, an everyday thing that becomes saturated with significance, allows it to appear without being subject to it. This redeployment of the trivial as of the abstract through experience was always Mahler's concern...'³¹

Woolf's novel spans one day, in which an annual village pageant is due to occur, wherein there is to be the performance of a play about the history of England. The drama goes between scenes about England in the Elizabethan Age, the Age of Reason, the Victorian Age, the present day in 1939, and intermission between the acts. Although the novel is set in just one day, in an historic year, it encompasses a vast amount of English history. These events are a façade, masking the subject of the novel that bursts through in climactic, frozen moments, like Adorno's mask made out of old forms – history, trivia, and Arcimboldo's mannerist heads, with the detached

³¹ Adorno 1992: 147

abstract masks made of the objects such as the fruit and the vegetables. This image is useful in the comparison between different manifestations of mannerism. The editor John Lehmann's first response to the manuscript for Woolf's *Between the Acts* was that he was deeply moved by the text, and he felt an 'unparalleled imaginative power.'³² He was a literary editor and managing director of Hogarth Press between 1938 and 1946, which was also run by Virginia Woolf and her husband Leonard Woolf. In his book entitled *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers: The Hogarth Press, 1917-41* (1992), John H. Wills comments on Lehmann's response:

His vote was for publication, which he sent in "an urgent message" to Rodmell the next morning, probably Saturday, March 22. Virginia's response (enclosed in a cover letter from Leonard, dated Thursday, March 27, and explaining her desperate condition) argued that she couldn't publish the novel, in spite of Lehmann's vote, because it was "too silly and trivial".³³

In her book *Reading Virginia Woolf* (2006), on the subject of the novel *Between the Acts*, Julia Briggs cites Virginia Woolf's diary entry when she writes that:

Woolf herself recognised during the crisis of 1938 that the thought of war was so overwhelming that one could only deal with it by averting one's eyes, by concentrating on the local and trivial: 'One ceases to think about it – that's all. Goes on discussing the new room, new chair, new books. What else can a gnat on a blade of grass do?'³⁴

In her extended essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf urges her female contemporaries to write about everything: 'Therefore I would ask you to write all kinds of books, hesitating at no subject however trivial or however vast.'³⁵ However, *Between the Acts* is categorically *not* trivial in its subject; the novel is shot through with reminders of war, and the vulnerability to invasion and bombardment by this

³² Lehmann. *Thrown to the Woolfs*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979. 73; cited in: Wills. *Leonard and Virginia Woolf as Publishers: The Hogarth Press, 1917-41*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1992. 357

³³ Wills 1992: 357; Wills cites Virginia's Letter, in Woolf. *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*. Volume 6 of 6 vols. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975-80. 486; Rodmell is the village in East Sussex where Virginia and Leonard Woolf lived, in Monk's House.

³⁴ Briggs. *Reading Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. 201; Briggs cites here Woolf and Bell. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume Five*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985. 162

³⁵ Woolf. *A Room of One's Own*. New York and Burlingame: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957. 113

deceptively tranquil corner of England. The most vivid of these reminders is the climactic interruption of the twelve planes overhead during Reverend Streatfield's eloquent speech at the end of the novel. There are subtle references to war throughout, both of the historical and the political climate at the time in 1939, as the community at Pointz Hall wait helplessly and unknowingly for the arrival of the enemy.

Woolf's mannerism is most apparent in the formal features of the novel, as indicated by the title – *Between the Acts*, because it is between the acts of the play staged by the character Miss La Trobe, and enacted by the characters in the novel, on the successive stages of English history, that we see the real subject of the book come through, like Adorno's category of 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*) in Mahler's music. He describes these fractures in Mahler's form as the 'scriptures of truth.'³⁶ Between the objects, or between the acts, it is the brokenness of the surface that is worthy of our attention in these artworks, because to see the subject between the cracks is our clue to understanding the true meaning intended by the artists. To come back to the passage of Mahler's monograph in the chapter entitled 'Tone', Adorno's sums up the quality of the form in Mahler's music that is of interest in this discussion:

The genius of Mahler's sense of form is manifested when, in the midst of the ravaged total situation, he places an inordinately long and intense, unbroken upper-voice melody, as if that state needed the other extreme, a self-contained part that makes itself independent of the whole, and which begins to glow in its surroundings, which cannot contain it.³⁷

I shall now consider the moments in Woolf's novel which make themselves independent from 'the whole', and which break through the surface in a gesture similar to Adorno's 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*). I will also investigate the notion of 'frozen gesture' in the novel in greater depth.

³⁶ Adorno 1992: 166

³⁷ Adorno 1992: 52

In her literary introduction (2000) to Woolf's *Between the Acts*, Scottish poet and novelist Jackie Kay comments that this novel is the land of the in-between. Kay argues that *Between the Acts* is an ode to unity and disunity; she writes that:

It all happens in the margins, the borders, between the acts. She creates tension by forcing us to imagine what it is like to be both visible and invisible, inside and outside, real and unreal, actor and audience, beast and woman, silence and noise, drowning and floating, public and private, high culture and jolly human heart. What it is like to be the acted part and the unacted part, to be grown and ungrown, to feel love and hate, to be on the threshold between peace and war. 'But what could she know about ourselves.' To see real swallows. To see unreal swallows. To be conventional and outrageous. To be in and out of society. To be the past and the present.³⁸

The experiment in the novel of exploring what it is like to be the acted part and the unacted part, as Kay identifies above, is facilitated by Woolf's use of the play within the novel; she employs a literary device here. The 'story within a story' itself is not an innovative device³⁹, however, Woolf develops this literary device in a manner similar to the 'mise en abîme'. It is interesting that Adorno writes early in the Mahler monograph that:

The subject immanent in music, which informs the gesture of performance, reveals itself in the same way as the literary form of the story within a story. The enemy of all illusion, Mahler's music stresses its inauthenticity, underlines the fiction inherent in it, in order to be cured of the actual falsehood that art is starting to be. What is perceived as an ironic character in Mahler springs from a force field located in form.⁴⁰

The term 'mise en abîme' is a type of 'frame story', a device in which the main narrative can be used to encapsulate some aspect of the framing story. 'Mise en abîme' is associated with the deconstructive literary criticism of the second half of the twentieth century as a paradigm of the intertextual nature of language, of the way that language never quite reaches the foundation of reality because it refers, in a frame-within-a-frame way, to other language, which refers to other language, etcetera. In her

³⁸ Kay in Woolf 2000: xii-xiii

³⁹ This device dates back to the ancient Sanskrit literature of the early middle ages; for an example within Sanskrit literature, see Benton. *God Of Desire: Tales Of Kamadeva In Sanskrit Story Literature*. New York: State of New York Press, 2005. 57

⁴⁰ Adorno 1992: 30

book *Reading La Regenta: Duplicitous Discourse and the Entropy of Structure* (1990), Stephanie Sieburth writes that:

The *mise en abyme*, as the theorists tell us, destroys the unity of the text; the presence of a condensed version which parallels the whole disrupts the text's temporal scheme, causing the work to return upon itself. The reflecting segment "revolts," as Ricardou puts it, against its place in the text, pops out of sequence to reveal itself as *another* story, as a *double* of the frame story.⁴¹

Both Mahler and Woolf use this device, which destroys unity, allowing the surface of the artworks to be broken. I would argue that Arcimboldo also uses this device, with the hidden signification of the objects in his paintings. I will investigate how Woolf successfully achieves this effect of brokenness in her novel, without destroying 'the whole', and how her mannerism is similar to that of Mahler's and that of the sixteenth-century painters as a result.

It is in the references to war that the subjectivity comes through in the novel, and we see the example of 'frozen gesture'. In a scene where the characters are admiring the view of the village and of Bolney Minster, the old man, Mr. Oliver's son – Giles – is angered by 'old fogies' in the previous war, who sat and watched the views over coffee and cream, 'when the whole of Europe—over there—was bristling like. . . . He had no command of metaphor. Only the ineffective word "hedgehog" illustrated his vision of Europe, bristling with guns, poised with planes.'⁴² Woolf then writes that, at any moment, guns would rake that land into furrows, and planes would splinter Bolney Minster into smithereens. Woolf's silence is a laconic and significant moment; cut short; a 'frozen gesture' embodied. 'He had no command of metaphor' is a puissant point to make about how it is impossible to express the horrors of war through such triviality as afternoon tea, and village pageants. Woolf uses the triviality

⁴¹ Sieburth. *Reading La Regenta: Duplicitous Discourse and the Entropy of Structure*. Indiana: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1990. 95; see also Hobson. *Jacques Derrida: Opening Lines*. New York: Routledge, 1998. 75

⁴² Woolf 2000: 32-33

in the novel, building it up and then cutting it down abruptly, rupturing the text, so it is broken and fractured. Giles is cut short by language, unable to express the horror of the carnage. This gesture is reminiscent of moments in the final movement of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* 'Der Abschied'. In Chapter 3 I explored Adorno's analysis of this movement, where he expressed the idea of the music growing tired of itself and gaping open.⁴³ The composition of silence, the decay of expression into the 'frozen gesture' exposes cracks in the form, exhibiting the inner workings of the raw materials of the music in an attempt to embody, rather than to create an illusion to fool the listener. It does not hide under any gloss, content to reveal the state of brokenness, as I have observed in the paintings of Arcimboldo and Parmigianino.

The climax of Woolf's novel contains similar ruptures, most manifestly at the climactic point, in the minister's speech after the play. Reverend Streatfield is struggling to sum up the message of the play, and as treasurer of the fund for the play, he makes a plea to the audience to donate money. His message is that we are each part of a whole and that we should unite: 'We act different parts; but are the same.'⁴⁴ At this point, he pauses, thinking he hears some distant music, and then he continues:

"But there is still a deficit" (he consulted his paper) "of one hundred and seventy-five pounds odd. So that each of us who has enjoyed this pageant has still an opp . . ." The word was cut in two. A zoom severed it. Twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck came overhead. *That* was the music. The audience gaped; the audience gazed. Then zoom became drone. The planes had passed.⁴⁵

The interruption by the 'zoom' of the war planes severs open the words of the clergyman, with the 'frozen gesture' and the words of the author – '*That* was the music' – that was the truth, the reality, brought to the homefront. The fact that Woolf actually mentions music in *Between the Acts* becomes irrelevant to this discussion; in

⁴³ See Adorno 1992: 154

⁴⁴ Woolf 2000: 119

⁴⁵ Woolf 2000: 119-120

the passage above, where the planes interrupt the clergyman's speech, and she writes – '*That was the music*', and the real subjectivity comes bursting through to the surface of the text, as opposed to remaining in metaphorical and metonymical vehicle of speaking through the characters, the author speaks. This is analogous with the moment in Adorno's Mahler monograph when he writes that: 'Mahler's music has so completely mimed the gesture of speech it sounds as if it were speaking literally...'⁴⁶ As Adorno writes in the same passage: 'Mahler's deviations are closely related to the gestures of language...';⁴⁷ it is not the language element of speech that is interesting here, it is the gesture of the communication of the author. To come back to Adorno's essay 'On Some Relationships between Music and Painting' that 'The arts converge only where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.'⁴⁸ In the same way, the moment in Woolf's novel as the twelve aeroplanes sever the words of the clergyman in two, and Woolf writes: '*That was the music*'⁴⁹, she does not mean that language becomes music; these profound words, in 1939, are explicating the subject of the entire novel – war, and humanity. Woolf sheds light on this concept in *Moments of Being* (1972), a collection of five autobiographical pieces written by Woolf, published posthumously; she writes that:

It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern that we - I mean all human beings - are connected with; the whole world is a work of art, we are parts of that work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words, we are the music, we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Adorno 1992: 22

⁴⁷ Adorno, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Adorno 1995: 67

⁴⁹ Woolf, *ibid* (2000) 120

⁵⁰ Woolf. *Moments of Being*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1985. 72

In this climactic moment in the novel, Woolf ruptures the fluidity of the dialogue, leaving fissures in the surface of the narrative. These are the moments that Ferneyhough describes, the lines of force that arise in the space – the interstices – between objects, the connective impetus established in the moving from one discrete musical event to the other.⁵¹ This image is useful in the analysis of Woolf's novel, because she uses silence in an unconventional way, experimenting with the gaps.

Laurence explains how this treatment of silence is innovatory:

For at least a century, the literary avant-garde – from Mallarmé to Joyce and Artaud – has presented the multiplicity in language and self through such silences: ruptures, holes, and spaces in the text. Mallarmé calls this “the music in letters.” It is important to note that the concern is not new, for even St. Augustine acknowledges the “spaces” in writing and recommends listening for silence between syllables in his *De Musica* (Mazzeo, p. 189). What is new is the self-consciousness, frequency of appearance, and labeling of narrative spaces and blanks reflecting a change in consciousness. It is what Elaine Showalter and *l'écriture féminine* school label “the holes in discourse, the blanks and gaps and silences . . . the blinds of a ‘prison-house’ language’ . . . and it is what this book, encouraging new reading, labels a discourse of silence.”⁵²

The silence and ruptures in the novel are a part of Woolf's innovation, which, together with Joyce, are a facet of her invention of the modernist novel.

At the end of the play within the novel, before the clergyman's speech, Woolf turns a mirror onto the audience inside the novel; characters who span a broad variety of societal ‘types’, emerge from the bushes in the outdoor auditorium holding reflective surfaces – cheval glasses, tin cans, pieces of mirrors – cracked surfaces, anything bright enough to reflect *ourselves*. The play ends unconventionally, forcing the audience, and also the reader, to reflect upon themselves in the fragments of mirrors; they think that it has finished, and then an anonymous voice bellows over the loud speaker:

Before we part, ladies and gentlemen, before we go... (Those who had risen sat down)... let's talk in words of one syllable, without larding, stuffing or cant. Let's break the rhythm and forget the rhyme. And calmly consider ourselves.

⁵¹ See Ferneyhough 1995: 35

⁵² Laurence 1991: 9; she cites Showalter. *The New Feminist Criticism: essays on women, literature, and theory*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 255

Ourselves. Some bony. Some fat. (The glasses confirm this.) Liars most of us. Thieves too... The poor are as bad as the rich are. ... Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Then at the wall; and ask how's this wall, the great wall, which we call, perhaps miscall, civilisation, to be built by (here the mirrors flicked and flashed) orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves.⁵³

The mirrors are turned on the audience, and the audience becomes the performance, as in Woolf's autobiographical essay, where she writes that: we are the music, we are the thing itself.⁵⁴ The play becomes reality to the characters, and the novel becomes reality to the reader, as real events of history come into play, symbolised by the rising curtain at the very close of the novel; Woolf attempts to reveal to the reader that they are living in a broken and disjointed society, and that they should unite. Adorno's description of Mahler's musical material is reminiscent of the 'orts, scraps and fragments' that Woolf uses describes humanity, which she reflects in the form of her novel'; Adorno writes that 'After the destruction of a musical culture debased to ideology, a second whole is shored up from the fragments and scraps of memory.'⁵⁵

Here I will return to Sedlmayr's definition of mannerism from Chapter 1:

Mannerism has the habit of patching a picture together out of various bits of reality and out of figures of different sizes, and of mingling classical forms with others, such as Gothic. Its feeling for antiquity is the feeling a man has for something dead, a world of shreds and fragments. It produced the patchwork picture and has a number of other affinities to modern art.⁵⁶

Woolf's novel conforms to this definition of mannerism because it is a mosaic of play, prose, and dialogue, combining reality and fiction. She refers to the history of England in the play within the pageant, which is a medieval tradition itself; these fragments of history are juxtaposed with the real events in the world, subtly throughout the novel, between the superficial events, such as the pageant and the play. It is a mosaic, like Mahler's music, and also, rather reminiscent, visually, of Arcimboldo's composite heads. This mosaic is described by Woolf herself at the

⁵³ Woolf 2000: 115-116

⁵⁴ Woolf 1985: 72

⁵⁵ Adorno 1992: 39

⁵⁶ Sedlmayr 2006: 190

climax of the novel, when she exclaims that the people are ‘orts, scraps and fragments’.

Laurence writes that the ‘orts, scraps and fragments’ of sound and words in the environment become part of the totality – ‘complete with missing parts’. Here, she points to the conundrum put forward by Samuel Beckett in his set of interviews ‘Three dialogues with Georges Duthuit’ (1949); Beckett said of the French expressionist painter Pierre Tal-Coat (1905-1985), one of the leading figures in the post-war School of Paris: ‘Total object, complete with missing parts, instead of partial object.’⁵⁷ The problem put forward by Beckett in this statement is: how is the void, part and parcel of what he refers to as ‘nature’, to be apprehended by the artist without his objectifying it and thereby rendering it null and void? Paddison applies this to Adorno, who praised Beckett’s work, arguing that the fragmentation of Adorno’s writings: ‘needs to be understood against a sense of a missing totality, their negativity against an absent utopian affirmation.’⁵⁸ Beckett’s observation is also applicable to Mahler in a similar way to Woolf; as Adorno writes, ‘Objectively Mahler’s music knows, and expresses the knowledge, that unity is attained not in spite of disjunction, but only through it.’⁵⁹ Mahler’s ruptures, like Woolf’s, disrupt the ‘whole’, and the self-contained part, which makes itself independent of the whole in an avoidance of rounded completeness. This self-contained part, as Adorno writes, begins to ‘glow’ in its surroundings which cannot contain it.⁶⁰ Adorno’s Mahler reflects the irreconcilability of subject and object, in accordance with Leibniz’s theory (see Chapter 1) that the universe is contained in the windowless monad, and the artwork is likened by Adorno to a monad. This is an explanation for how Mahler’s music is a

⁵⁷ Beckett. ‘Three dialogues with Georges Duthuit’. In *Proust and Three dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. London: John Calder, 1965. 101; quoted by Laurence 1991: 207

⁵⁸ Paddison 1993: 14

⁵⁹ Adorno 1992: 33

⁶⁰ See Adorno 1992: 52

‘Total object, complete with missing parts, instead of partial object.’⁶¹ It is in the manneristic refusal of synthesis and the lack of reconciliation between subject and object, conspicuous in the trivia and the gaps in the form, that Woolf’s novel is similar to Mahler’s music. This lack of synthesis may appear as grotesque to the reader, in terms of the holes punched in the fluidity of the form. However, in the amalgamation and juxtaposition of poetry and prose within the fluid structure of a work of literature, which, from the outside, seems outwardly plotless, Woolf redefines the novel.

If you apply this thinking to Woolf’s novel, the function of the ‘minutiae of English daily life’, as Mansfield accuses the author of portraying, as if World War One had never happened,⁶² becomes clear, and you can see the sedimented subject material that Woolf covers with the trivial façade. It is in the moments of breakthrough, of *Durchbruch*, which release the subject, and the manneristic style of the novel characteristically exposes these ruptures and does not attempt to gloss over them, leaving the form to appear as broken. As is the case with Mahler, I would argue that Woolf’s fragmentation and lack of synthesis between subject and object is not a symptom of senescence, or the mark of the end of a period, but a result of the fragmentation and privatisation of modern literature into distinct styles and mannerisms.⁶³ In this chapter I have demonstrated the manifestation of mannerism in Woolf’s novel *Between the Acts*, comparing it to the characteristics of mannerism that I have found in the paintings of artists such as Arcimboldo and Parmigianino, and the music of composers such as Schoenberg and Mahler. In this way I have strengthened the case for mannerism as a distinct style that is not limited to particular media or time periods.

⁶¹ Beckett 1965 101; quoted by Laurence 1991: 207

⁶² See Jardine 2000: xx

⁶³ See Cazeaux. *The continental Aesthetics Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2000. 284

Conclusion

Free as only one can be who has not himself been entirely swallowed by culture, in his musical vagrancy he picks up the broken glass by the roadside and holds it up to the sun so that all the colors are refracted.¹

The aim of this thesis has been to argue that it is plausible to view Mahler's music as a manifestation of mannerism, as a means to understanding it, and also to make a strong case for mannerism as a distinct style that is not limited to fixed periods, conditions in art, or media. Through a close reading of Adorno's cryptic monograph on the composer, I have examined his Adorno's claim that Mahler is a mannerist composer, focussing on the gestures such as the lack of synthesis between subject and object, evident in the duality between major and minor sections, for example, the treatment of which 'earned Mahler the charge of mannerism.'²

I have compared and contrasted the characteristics of Mahler's mannerism, with those of the alleged 'Mannerist' paintings of the sixteenth century, supporting Shearman's definition of mannerism, not as a break within the classical style, but as an eruption within it.³ Using this definition, I have projected Shearman's ideas on sixteenth-century mannerism onto a broader art history, arguing that mannerism is a valid style that is not limited to the deterioration of an artistic genre or method. It is a style in art, rather than a condition of 'lateness', which manipulates an established 'language' in an extraordinary approach, gesticulating in a bizarre and grotesque way. Adorno writes of Mahler's music that 'Mahler heats it up from within, from an expressive need, to the point that it again becomes incandescent, speaks, as if it were immediate. Exploding, it accomplishes what was later taken over by the emancipated

¹ Adorno 1992: 36

² Adorno 1992: 21

³ See Shearman 1967; referred to in Palisca 1994: 283

dissonance of Expressionism.’⁴ Adorno’s idea suggests that Mahler’s mannerism does not mark the end of an era in music, but the beginning of the achievement of the ‘New Music’ of the twentieth century. In concurrence with Shearman’s theory, this idea suggests that Mahler’s music does not mark an end of a genre, or a beginning, but is, instead, an eruption within one.

As Hohendahl recognises in his book *Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno* (1995), the inner form of Adorno’s writings makes it difficult, if not impossible, to offer a conclusion that summarises his ideas. Hohendahl writes, however, that ‘[s]ince the mid-1980s Adorno’s status within the discourse of philosophy has changed; he has turned, it seems, into a classic.’⁵ He argues that Adorno’s work is distant enough now for competing approaches that strive to connect his negative dialectics with contemporary theoretical positions. However, this study is not a neo-Adornian attempt at fending off the later theoretical developments within critical theory, and post-structuralism. I have used Adorno’s ideas as a pivot for my own, together with the work of other scholars, centring on his theory that Mahler abstracts and reifies the material of the romantic Austro-German music tradition, a language considered to be exhausted, and he makes it speak again for a second time. I have applied this theory to the analysis of other mannerist artworks, identifying the scars in the material that Mahler uses, for example, but also arguing that mannerism is a style in its own right. Firstly I placed the discussion of mannerism in context by considering various definitions and interpretations from art history and musicology, after the climax of the debate about *maniera* in the 1960s and 1970s. I have drawn on Palisca’s argument that ‘mannerism’ in the sense of a multifaceted style or wavering stylishness, can

⁴ Adorno 1992: 20

⁵ Hohendahl. *Reappraisals: Shifting Alignments in Postwar Critical Theory*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1991. 243

occur at any time in history, today as well as the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.’⁶ In this way, I have clearly distinguished my theory of mannerism as a distinct style, rather than as a ‘wavering stylishness’.

Secondly, I looked at Arcimboldo’s paintings, comparing them to Mahler’s music, through notions of physiognomy and linguistic devices. Here I dealt with Adorno’s concept that Mahler’s music mimes the gesture of speech, when he writes that ‘Mahler heats it up from within, from an expressive need, to the point that it again becomes incandescent, speaks, as if it were immediate.’⁷ I have addressed issues concerning the relationship between the arts, questioning Adorno’s hypothesis that ‘The convergence of the various media becomes evident through the emergence of their character as language.’⁸ I have concluded that it is conceivable to compare artworks that use different media, without implying that one becomes, or is another. Therefore, the style of mannerism can be reliably identified as manifesting itself in different mediums, without the obligation to scrutinise the fundamental connection between music, painting and literary forms.

This study has revealed how the lack of synthesis between subject and object is not a mark of inadequacy on the artist’s part, but embodies a content that refuses to be dissolved in form.⁹ This lack of synthesis is created by the conceit, whereby both artists utilise objects that are not connected to the meaning that they embody; this conceit is also apparent in Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*. The deliberate lack of synthesis between subject and object, resulting in ‘brokenness’, is an attempt to embody, rather than to create an illusion, or to gloss over the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the form. The subject bursts through, a gesture I have identified in Adorno’s writings as

⁶ Palisca 1994: 313

⁷ Adorno 1992: 20

⁸ Adorno 1995: 71

⁹ See Adorno 1992: 23



the 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*). The refusal to gloss over fractures in the form is a distinct characteristic in the style of mannerism, and is evident also in the 'frozen gestures' of the artworks. I have examined the notion of 'frozen gesture' in the third chapter in Mahler, and in the painting by Parmigianino entitled *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*. The sources have given the evidence of this characteristic in both Mahler and Parmigianino. Adorno's writings, and the development of the concept of 'objective force' into 'frozen force' and 'frozen gesture' by Ferneyhough are complimented by Ashbery's poem about Parmigianino's painting that shares its title. Ashbery's reference to Mahler's Ninth Symphony in the poem is only the catalyst for the analysis of these gestures in the Ninth Symphony and other late works, which reveal a strong formal link between the music and the mannerist paintings of both Parmigianino and Arcimboldo.

Finally, I compared the mannerism of Mahler, and also of Parmigianino and Arcimboldo, to the manifestation of the style in Woolf's last novel *Between the Acts*. I addressed Adorno's equation of Mahler's musical form to that of the novel, dealing with the question of whether this allusion is useful in the comparison between the mannerism of Mahler and Woolf. Here I followed up Adorno's hypothesis, that the convergence of different media becomes evident through the emergence of their character as language.¹⁰ I concluded that it is not really useful to compare Mahler's music to the literary form itself, but again, that it is more insightful to consider the convergence of different media where each pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.¹¹ Subsequently, the study of the brokenness of Woolf's form, and her deliberate decision to create silences, and expose the gaps – the lines of force that arise in the

¹⁰ Adorno 1995: 71

¹¹ See Adorno 1995: 67

space – the interstices – between objects,¹² rather than to gloss over the fractures, penetrates the surface of the novel, in terms of meaning, and is most insightful in revealing the formal intentions. Woolf is consciously manneristic in this novel, using the style as a device to support her façade, consisting of the trivial ‘minutiae of English daily life’. As she explains in her diary, she recognised that the thought of war in 1938 was so overwhelming that one could only deal with it by ‘averting one’s eyes’, by ‘concentrating on the local and trivial’. She writes that ‘One ceases to think about it – that’s all. Goes on discussing the new room, new chair, new books. What else can a gnat on a blade of grass do?’¹³ However, she conceals the subject of war in the novel beneath the objective façade, poignantly disguising the fear of war that everyone else was feeling at the time, and expressing it in the moments of ‘breakthrough’ (*Durchbruch*), and in the silences – the ‘frozen gestures’. The study of Woolf’s novel provides further evidence of the manifestation of mannerism in different media and times, because the gestures are so clearly relatable to those of Arcimboldo and Parmigianino’s paintings, and Mahler’s music. This conclusion supports the theory that mannerism is a style which is not limited to the sixteenth century or relegated to the definition of a state or condition such as ‘lateness’, but is a distinct style that is valid and accessible to other artists and critics, and can be identified as manifesting itself in different media, without the necessity to scrutinise the fundamental connection between music, painting and literary forms.

¹² See Ferneyhough 1995: 35

¹³ Woolf and Bell 1995: 162; cited in Briggs 2006: 201

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Appendices for Chapter 1

Appendix 1 –



Giuseppe Arcimboldo. *Vertumnus*. 1590-1591. Oil on wood. Skoklosters Slott, Balsta, Sweden.

Found at:

http://www.infovis.net/imagenes/T1_N121_A4_VertumnusArcimboldo.bmp

Appendix 2 –



The Persistence of Memory by Salvador Dalí; 1931; oil on canvas,
24 × 33 cm, 9.4 × 13 inches, in the *Museum of Modern Art*, New York City.
Found at: <http://dl.nlb.gov.sg/digitalk/dig/31PersistenceOfMemory.jpg>

Appendix 3 –

Fl. I
Fl. II
Cl. in B \flat
Bsn.
H. I
H. II
H. III
H. IV
Vl. I
Vl. II
Vla.
Vcl.
Cb.

Bars 71-82 of Mahler's Ninth
Symphony, Movement I.

At Bar 80, there is an example
of this *Durchbruch*
as the Second subject erupts in
a burst of passion.

Fl. I
Fl. II
Cl. in B \flat
Bsn.
H. I
H. II
H. III
H. IV
Vl. I
Vl. II
Vla.
Vcl.
Cb.

Stark frischen
Etwas frischer

See below for the following bars – i.e. bars 83-87 of the movement:

This page of a musical score contains the following parts and markings:

- 1. Fl.** (First Flute)
- 2. Fl.** (Second Flute)
- Engl. Fl.** (English Flute)
- Klar. in E.** (Clarinet in E)
- 1. Klar. in A.** (First Clarinet in A)
- 2. Klar. in B.** (Second Clarinet in B)
- 1. u. 2. Fag.** (First and Second Bassoons)
- K. Fag.** (Contrabassoon)
- 1. S.** (First Saxophone)
- 2. S.** (Second Saxophone)
- 1. u. 2. Trp. in B.** (First and Second Trumpets in B)
- 3. u. 4. Horn.** (Third and Fourth Horns)
- 1. u. 2. Vi.** (First and Second Violins)
- Vi.** (Viola)
- Vi.** (Violoncello)
- Vi.** (Double Bass)

Dynamic markings include *Flügend* (flourishing), *cresc.* (crescendo), *pp* (pianissimo), *f* (forte), and *ppp* (pianississimo).

Appendix 4 –**18. Der Mondfleck**

Einen weißen Fleck des hellen Mondes
 Auf dem Rücken seines schwarzen
 Rockes,
 So spaziert Pierrot im lauen Abend,
 Aufzusuchen Glück und Abenteuer.

Plötzlich stört ihn was an seinem Anzug,
 Er beschaut sich rings und findet richtig -
 Einen weißen Fleck des hellen Mondes
 Auf dem Rücken seines schwarzen
 Rockes.

Warte! denkt er: das ist so ein Gipsleck!
 Wischt und wischt, doch - bringt ihn
 nicht herunter!

Und so geht er, giftgeschwollen, weiter,
 Reibt und reibt bis an den frühen Morgen
 -

Einen weißen Fleck des hellen Mondes.

18. The Moonspot

One white spot from the bright moon
 On the back of his black coat,
 So Pierrot walks in mild evening
 Searching for luck and adventure.

Instantly he's troubled by something on his suit,
 He looks himself over and finds sure enough--
 One white spot from the bright moon
 On the back of his black coat.

Wait! he thinks: that's a spot of plaster!
 Wipes and wipes, but-can't get it out!

So on he goes, swollen with fury, farther,
 Rubs and rubs until early morning--

One white spot from the bright moon.

Appendices for Chapter 2

Appendix 1 –



Autumn. 1573; by Arcimboldo.

Oil on canvas. Louvre, Paris, France.

Found at:

<http://www.abcgallery.com/A/arcimboldo/arcimboldo3.html>

Appendix 2 –



The Jurist 1566; by Arcimboldo. Oil on canvas. Nationalmuseum; Statens Konstsamlingar, Gripsholm Slott, Stockholm, Sweden. The painting is known as *The Lawyer* (Ulrich Zasius), as it is listed in the catalogue of the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, and it is also known as *Calvin*, because it is a caricature of the French Protestant theologian during the Protestant Reformation: John Calvin, born Jean Cauvin (1509-1564). See: Kriegeskorte Publishes 2000 Taschen, 36
Image found at: <http://www.abcgallery.com/A/arcimboldo/arcimboldo10.html>

Appendix 3 –

DONNE, John., “To Sir *Edward Herbert*, at Julyers” (In *The satires, epigrams and verse letters* pp. 80-81 edited by Wesley Milgate; Oxford University Press: 1967)

To Sir Edward Herbert, at Julyers

Man is a lumpe, where all beasts kneaded bee,
 Wisdome makes him an Arke where all agree;
 The foole, in whom these beasts do live at jarre,
 Is sport to others, and a Theater;
 Nor scapes hee so, but is himselfe their prey:
 All which was man in him, is eate away,
 And now his beasts on one another feed,
 Yet couple’ in anger, and new monsters breed.
 How happy’ is hee, which hath due place assign’d

To his beasts, and disaforested his minde! 10
 Empail'd himselfe to keepe them out, not in;
 Can sow, and dares trust come, where they have bin;
 Can use his horse, goate, wolfe, and every beast,
 And is not Asse himselfe to all the rest.
 Else, man not onely is the heard of swine, 15
 But he's those devills too, which did inclune
 Them to a headlong rage, and made them worse:
 For man can adde weight to heavens heaviest curse.
 As Soules (they say) by our first touch, take in
 The poisonous tincture of Originall sinne, 20
 So, to the punishments which God doth fling,
 Our apprehension contributes the sting.
 To us, as to his chickens, he doth cast
 Hemlocke, and wee as men, his hemlocke taste;
 We do infuse to what he meant for meat, 25
 Corrosivenesse, or intense cold or heat.
 For, God no such specifique poison hath
 As kills we know not how; his fiercest wrath
 Hath no antipathy, but may be good
 At lest for physicke, if not for our food. 30
 Thus man, that might be his pleasure, is his rod,
 And is his devill, that might be his God.
 Since then our businesse is, to rectifie
 Nature, to what she was, wee are led awry
 By them, who man to us in little show; 35
 Greater then due, no forme we can bestow
 On him; for Man into himselfe can draw
 All; All his faith can swallow, or reason chaw.
 All that is fill'd, and all that which doth fill,
 All the round world, to man is but a pill; 40
 In all it workes not, but it is in all
 Poisonous, or purgative, or cordiall,
 For, knowledge kindles Calentures in some,
 And is to others icy *Opium*.
 As brave as true, is that profession than 45
 Which you doe use to make; that you know man.
 This makes it credible; you have dwelt upon
 All worthy bookes, and now are such a one.
 Actions are authors, and of those in you
 Your friends finde every day a mart of new. 50

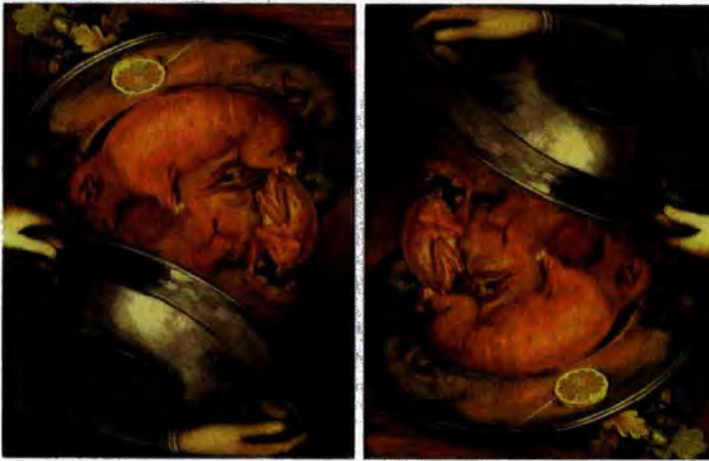
Appendix 4 –



The Cook; c.1570; by Arcimboldo.
Oil on canvas.
Private collection; Stockholm, Sweden.
The painting is sometimes referred to as
The Roast.

Found at:
www.abcgallery.com/A/arcimboldo/arcimboldo11.html

This painting is a visual pun which can be turned upside-down; see below for an illustration of the rotation of the image by 180°:



Appendices for Chapter 3

Appendix 1 –



Parmigianino: *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, c. 1524
Oil on wooden half-sphere, diameter 9.625" (24.7 cm). Oil on wood, diameter 24,4cm
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Image courtesy of ArtOnline: <http://people.virginia.edu/~djr4r/parmigianino.html>

Appendix 2 –

Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror

As Parmigianino did it, the right hand
 Bigger than the head, thrust at the viewer
 And swerving easily away, as though to protect
 What it advertises. A few leaded panes, old beams,
 Fur, pleated muslin, a coral ring run together
 In a movement supporting the face, which swims
 Toward and away like the hand
 Except that it is in repose. It is what is
 Sequestered. Vasari says, "Francesco one day set himself
 To take his own portrait, looking at himself from that purpose
 In a convex mirror, such as is used by barbers . . .
 He accordingly caused a ball of wood to be made
 By a turner, and having divided it in half and
 Brought it to the size of the mirror, he set himself
 With great art to copy all that he saw in the glass,"
 Chiefly his reflection, of which the portrait
 Is the reflection, of which the portrait
 Is the reflection once removed.
 The glass chose to reflect only what he saw
 Which was enough for his purpose: his image
 Glazed, embalmed, projected at a 180-degree angle.
 The time of day or the density of the light
 Adhering to the face keeps it
 Lively and intact in a recurring wave
 Of arrival. The soul establishes itself.
 But how far can it swim out through the eyes
 And still return safely to its nest? The surface
 Of the mirror being convex, the distance increases
 Significantly; that is, enough to make the point
 That the soul is a captive, treated humanely, kept
 In suspension, unable to advance much farther
 Than your look as it intercepts the picture.
 Pope Clement and his court were "stupefied"
 By it, according to Vasari, and promised a commission
 That never materialized. The soul has to stay where it is,
 Even though restless, hearing raindrops at the pane,
 The sighing of autumn leaves thrashed by the wind,
 Longing to be free, outside, but it must stay
 Posing in this place. It must move
 As little as possible. This is what the portrait says.
 But there is in that gaze a combination
 Of tenderness, amusement and regret, so powerful
 In its restraint that one cannot look for long.
 The secret is too plain. The pity of it smarts,
 Makes hot tears spurt: that the soul is not a soul,
 Has no secret, is small, and it fits

Its hollow perfectly: its room, our moment of attention.
 That is the tune but there are no words.
 The words are only speculation
 (From the Latin speculum, mirror):
 They seek and cannot find the meaning of the music.
 We see only postures of the dream,
 Riders of the motion that swings the face
 Into view under evening skies, with no
 False disarray as proof of authenticity.
 But it is life englobed.
 One would like to stick one's hand
 Out of the globe, but its dimension,
 What carries it, will not allow it.
 No doubt it is this, not the reflex
 To hide something, which makes the hand loom large
 As it retreats slightly. There is no way
 To build it flat like a section of wall:
 It must join the segment of a circle,
 Roving back to the body of which it seems
 So unlikely a part, to fence in and shore up the face
 On which the effort of this condition reads
 Like a pinpoint of a smile, a spark
 Or star one is not sure of having seen
 As darkness resumes. A perverse light whose
 Imperative of subtlety dooms in advance its
 Conceit to light up: unimportant but meant.
 Francesco, your hand is big enough
 To wreck the sphere, and too big,
 One would think, to weave delicate meshes
 That only argue its further detention.
 (Big, but not coarse, merely on another scale,
 Like a dozing whale on the sea bottom
 In relation to the tiny, self-important ship
 On the surface.) But your eyes proclaim
 That everything is surface. The surface is what's there
 And nothing can exist except what's there.
 There are no recesses in the room, only alcoves,
 And the window doesn't matter much, or that
 Sliver of window or mirror on the right, even
 As a gauge of the weather, which in French is
 Le temps, the word for time, and which
 Follows a course wherein changes are merely
 Features of the whole. The whole is stable within
 Instability, a globe like ours, resting
 On a pedestal of vacuum, a ping-pong ball
 Secure on its jet of water.
 And just as there are no words for the surface, that is,
 No words to say what it really is, that it is not
 Superficial but a visible core, then there is
 No way out of the problem of pathos vs. experience.

You will stay on, restive, serene in
 Your gesture which is neither embrace nor warning
 But which holds something of both in pure
 Affirmation that doesn't affirm anything.

The balloon pops, the attention
 Turns dully away. Clouds
 In the puddle stir up into sawtoothed fragments.
 I think of the friends
 Who came to see me, of what yesterday
 Was like. A peculiar slant
 Of memory that intrudes on the dreaming model
 In the silence of the studio as he considers
 Lifting the pencil to the self-portrait.
 How many people came and stayed a certain time,
 Uttered light or dark speech that became part of you
 Like light behind windblown fog and sand,
 Filtered and influenced by it, until no part
 Remains that is surely you. Those voices in the dusk
 Have told you all and still the tale goes on
 In the form of memories deposited in irregular
 Clumps of crystals. Whose curved hand controls,
 Francesco, the turning seasons and the thoughts
 That peel off and fly away at breathless speeds
 Like the last stubborn leaves ripped
 From wet branches? I see in this only the chaos
 Of your round mirror which organizes everything
 Around the polestar of your eyes which are empty,
 Know nothing, dream but reveal nothing.
 I feel the carousel starting slowly
 And going faster and faster: desk, papers, books,
 Photographs of friends, the window and the trees
 Merging in one neutral band that surrounds
 Me on all sides, everywhere I look.
 And I cannot explain the action of leveling,
 Why it should all boil down to one
 Uniform substance, a magma of interiors.
 My guide in these matters is your self,
 Firm, oblique, accepting everything with the same
 Wraith of a smile, and as time speeds up so that it is soon
 Much later, I can know only the straight way out,
 The distance between us. Long ago
 The strewn evidence meant something,
 The small accidents and pleasures
 Of the day as it moved gracelessly on,
 A housewife doing chores. Impossible now
 To restore those properties in the silver blur that is
 The record of what you accomplished by sitting down
 "With great art to copy all that you saw in the glass"
 So as to perfect and rule out the extraneous

Forever. In the circle of your intentions certain spars
 Remain that perpetuate the enchantment of self with self:
 Eyebeams, muslin, coral. It doesn't matter
 Because these are things as they are today
 Before one's shadow ever grew
 Out of the field into thoughts of tomorrow.

Tomorrow is easy, but today is uncharted,
 Desolate, reluctant as any landscape
 To yield what are laws of perspective
 After all only to the painter's deep
 Mistrust, a weak instrument though
 Necessary. Of course some things
 Are possible, it knows, but it doesn't know
 Which ones. Some day we will try
 To do as many things as are possible
 And perhaps we shall succeed at a handful
 Of them, but this will not have anything
 To do with what is promised today, our
 Landscape sweeping out from us to disappear
 On the horizon. Today enough of a cover burnishes
 To keep the supposition of promises together
 In one piece of surface, letting one ramble
 Back home from them so that these
 Even stronger possibilities can remain
 Whole without being tested. Actually
 The skin of the bubble-chamber's as tough as
 Reptile eggs; everything gets "programmed" there
 In due course: more keeps getting included
 Without adding to the sum, and just as one
 Gets accustomed to a noise that
 Kept one awake but now no longer does,
 So the room contains this flow like an hourglass
 Without varying in climate or quality
 (Except perhaps to brighten bleakly and almost
 Invisibly, in a focus sharpening toward death--more
 Of this later). What should be the vacuum of a dream
 Becomes continually replete as the source of dreams
 Is being tapped so that this one dream
 May wax, flourish like a cabbage rose,
 Defying sumptuary laws, leaving us
 To awake and try to begin living in what
 Has now become a slum. Sydney Freedberg in his
 Parmigianino says of it: "Realism in this portrait
 No longer produces and objective truth, but a bizzaria
 However its distortion does not create
 A feeling of disharmony The forms retain
 A strong measure of ideal beauty," because
 Fed by our dreams, so inconsequential until one day
 We notice the hole they left. Now their importance

If not their meaning is plain. They were to nourish
 A dream which includes them all, as they are
 Finally reversed in the accumulating mirror.
 They seemed strange because we couldn't actually see them.
 And we realize this only at a point where they lapse
 Like a wave breaking on a rock, giving up
 Its shape in a gesture which expresses that shape.
 The forms retain a strong measure of ideal beauty
 As they forage in secret on our idea of distortion.
 Why be unhappy with this arrangement, since
 Dreams prolong us as they are absorbed?
 Something like living occurs, a movement
 Out of the dream into its codification.

As I start to forget it
 It presents its stereotype again
 But it is an unfamiliar stereotype, the face
 Riding at anchor, issued from hazards, soon
 To accost others, "rather angel than man" (Vasari).
 Perhaps an angel looks like everything
 We have forgotten, I mean forgotten
 Things that don't seem familiar when
 We meet them again, lost beyond telling,
 Which were ours once. This would be the point
 Of invading the privacy of this man who
 "Dabbled in alchemy, but whose wish
 Here was not to examine the subtleties of art
 In a detached, scientific spirit: he wished through them
 To impart the sense of novelty and amazement to the spectator"
 (Freedberg). Later portraits such as the Uffizi
 "Gentleman," the Borghese "Young Prelate" and
 The Naples "Antea" issue from Mannerist
 Tensions, but here, as Freedberg points out,
 The surprise, the tension are in the concept
 Rather than its realization.
 The consonance of the High Renaissance
 Is present, though distorted by the mirror.
 What is novel is the extreme care in rendering
 The velleities of the rounded reflecting surface
 (It is the first mirror portrait),
 So that you could be fooled for a moment
 Before you realize the reflection
 Isn't yours. You feel then like one of those
 Hoffmann characters who have been deprived
 Of a reflection, except that the whole of me
 Is seen to be supplanted by the strict
 Otherness of the painter in his
 Other room. We have surprised him
 At work, but no, he has surprised us
 As he works. The picture is almost finished,

The surprise almost over, as when one looks out,
 Startled by a snowfall which even now is
 Ending in specks and sparkles of snow.
 It happened while you were inside, asleep,
 And there is no reason why you should have
 Been awake for it, except that the day
 Is ending and it will be hard for you
 To get to sleep tonight, at least until late.

The shadow of the city injects its own
 Urgency: Rome where Francesco
 Was at work during the Sack: his inventions
 Amazed the soldiers who burst in on him;
 They decided to spare his life, but he left soon after;
 Vienna where the painting is today, where
 I saw it with Pierre in the summer of 1959; New York
 Where I am now, which is a logarithm
 Of other cities. Our landscape
 Is alive with filiations, shuttlings;
 Business is carried on by look, gesture,
 Hearsay. It is another life to the city,
 The backing of the looking glass of the
 Unidentified but precisely sketched studio. It wants
 To siphon off the life of the studio, deflate
 Its mapped space to enactments, island it.
 That operation has been temporarily stalled
 But something new is on the way, a new preciousity
 In the wind. Can you stand it,
 Francesco? Are you strong enough for it?
 This wind brings what it knows not, is
 Self--propelled, blind, has no notion
 Of itself. It is inertia that once
 Acknowledged saps all activity, secret or public:
 Whispers of the word that can't be understood
 But can be felt, a chill, a blight
 Moving outward along the capes and peninsulas
 Of your nervures and so to the archipelagoes
 And to the bathed, aired secrecy of the open sea.
 This is its negative side. Its positive side is
 Making you notice life and the stresses
 That only seemed to go away, but now,
 As this new mode questions, are seen to be
 Hastening out of style. If they are to become classics
 They must decide which side they are on.
 Their reticence has undermined
 The urban scenery, made its ambiguities
 Look willful and tired, the games of an old man.
 What we need now is this unlikely
 Challenger pounding on the gates of an amazed
 Castle. Your argument, Francesco,

Had begun to grow stale as no answer
 Or answers were forthcoming. If it dissolves now
 Into dust, that only means its time had come
 Some time ago, but look now, and listen:
 It may be that another life is stocked there
 In recesses no one knew of; that it,
 Not we, are the change; that we are in fact it
 If we could get back to it, relive some of the way
 It looked, turn our faces to the globe as it sets
 And still be coming out all right:
 Nerves normal, breath normal. Since it is a metaphor
 Made to include us, we are a part of it and
 Can live in it as in fact we have done,
 Only leaving our minds bare for questioning
 We now see will not take place at random
 But in an orderly way that means to menace
 Nobody--the normal way things are done,
 Like the concentric growing up of days
 Around a life: correctly, if you think about it.

A breeze like the turning of a page
 Brings back your face: the moment
 Takes such a big bite out of the haze
 Of pleasant intuition it comes after.
 The locking into place is "death itself,"
 As Berg said of a phrase in Mahler's Ninth;
 Or, to quote Imogen in Cymbeline, "There cannot
 Be a pinch in death more sharp than this," for,
 Though only exercise or tactic, it carries
 The momentum of a conviction that had been building.
 Mere forgetfulness cannot remove it
 Nor wishing bring it back, as long as it remains
 The white precipitate of its dream
 In the climate of sighs flung across our world,
 A cloth over a birdcage. But it is certain that
 What is beautiful seems so only in relation to a specific
 Life, experienced or not, channeled into some form
 Steeped in the nostalgia of a collective past.
 The light sinks today with an enthusiasm
 I have known elsewhere, and known why
 It seemed meaningful, that others felt this way
 Years ago. I go on consulting
 This mirror that is no longer mine
 For as much brisk vacancy as is to be
 My portion this time. And the vase is always full
 Because there is only just so much room
 And it accommodates everything. The sample
 One sees is not to be taken as
 Merely that, but as everything as it
 May be imagined outside time--not as a gesture

But as all, in the refined, assimilable state.
 But what is this universe the porch of
 As it veers in and out, back and forth,
 Refusing to surround us and still the only
 Thing we can see? Love once
 Tipped the scales but now is shadowed, invisible,
 Though mysteriously present, around somewhere.
 But we know it cannot be sandwiched
 Between two adjacent moments, that its windings
 Lead nowhere except to further tributaries
 And that these empty themselves into a vague
 Sense of something that can never be known
 Even though it seems likely that each of us
 Knows what it is and is capable of
 Communicating it to the other. But the look
 Some wear as a sign makes one want to
 Push forward ignoring the apparent
 Naïveté of the attempt, not caring
 That no one is listening, since the light
 Has been lit once and for all in their eyes
 And is present, unimpaired, a permanent anomaly,
 Awake and silent. On the surface of it
 There seems no special reason why that light
 Should be focused by love, or why
 The city falling with its beautiful suburbs
 Into space always less clear, less defined,
 Should read as the support of its progress,
 The easel upon which the drama unfolded
 To its own satisfaction and to the end
 Of our dreaming, as we had never imagined
 It would end, in worn daylight with the painted
 Promise showing through as a gage, a bond.
 This nondescript, never-to-be defined daytime is
 The secret of where it takes place
 And we can no longer return to the various
 Conflicting statements gathered, lapses of memory
 Of the principal witnesses. All we know
 Is that we are a little early, that
 Today has that special, lapidary
 Todayness that the sunlight reproduces
 Faithfully in casting twig-shadows on blithe
 Sidewalks. No previous day would have been like this.
 I used to think they were all alike,
 That the present always looked the same to everybody
 But this confusion drains away as one
 Is always cresting into one's present.
 Yet the "poetic," straw-colored space
 Of the long corridor that leads back to the painting,
 Its darkening opposite--is this
 Some figment of "art," not to be imagined

As real, let alone special? Hasn't it too its lair
 In the present we are always escaping from
 And falling back into, as the waterwheel of days
 Pursues its uneventful, even serene course?
 I think it is trying to say it is today
 And we must get out of it even as the public
 Is pushing through the museum now so as to
 Be out by closing time. You can't live there.
 The gray glaze of the past attacks all know-how:
 Secrets of wash and finish that took a lifetime
 To learn and are reduced to the status of
 Black-and-white illustrations in a book where colorplates
 Are rare. That is, all time
 Reduces to no special time. No one
 Alludes to the change; to do so might
 Involve calling attention to oneself
 Which would augment the dread of not getting out
 Before having seen the whole collection
 (Except for the sculptures in the basement:
 They are where they belong).
 Our time gets to be veiled, compromised
 By the portrait's will to endure. It hints at
 Our own, which we were hoping to keep hidden.
 We don't need paintings or
 Doggerel written by mature poets when
 The explosion is so precise, so fine.
 Is there any point even in acknowledging
 The existence of all that? Does it
 Exist? Certainly the leisure to
 Indulge stately pastimes doesn't,
 Any more. Today has no margins, the event arrives
 Flush with its edges, is of the same substance,
 Indistinguishable. "Play" is something else;
 It exists, in a society specifically
 Organized as a demonstration of itself.
 There is no other way, and those assholes
 Who would confuse everything with their mirror games
 Which seem to multiply stakes and possibilities, or
 At least confuse issues by means of an investing
 Aura that would corrode the architecture
 Of the whole in a haze of suppressed mockery,
 Are beside the point. They are out of the game,
 Which doesn't exist until they are out of it.
 It seems like a very hostile universe
 But as the principle of each individual thing is
 Hostile to, exists at the expense of all the others
 As philosophers have often pointed out, at least
 This thing, the mute, undivided present,
 Has the justification of logic, which
 In this instance isn't a bad thing

Or wouldn't be, if the way of telling
 Didn't somehow intrude, twisting the end result
 Into a caricature of itself. This always
 Happens, as in the game where
 A whispered phrase passed around the room
 Ends up as something completely different.
 It is the principle that makes works of art so unlike
 What the artist intended. Often he finds
 He has omitted the thing he started out to say
 In the first place. Seduced by flowers,
 Explicit pleasures, he blames himself (though
 Secretly satisfied with the result), imagining
 He had a say in the matter and exercised
 An option of which he was hardly conscious,
 Unaware that necessity circumvents such resolutions.
 So as to create something new
 For itself, that there is no other way,
 That the history of creation proceeds according to
 Stringent laws, and that things
 Do get done in this way, but never the things
 We set out to accomplish and wanted so desperately
 To see come into being. Parmigianino
 Must have realized this as he worked at his
 Life-obstructing task. One is forced to read
 The perfectly plausible accomplishment of a purpose
 Into the smooth, perhaps even bland (but so
 Enigmatic) finish. Is there anything
 To be serious about beyond this otherness
 That gets included in the most ordinary
 Forms of daily activity, changing everything
 Slightly and profoundly, and tearing the matter
 Of creation, any creation, not just artistic creation
 Out of our hands, to install it on some monstrous, near
 Peak, too close to ignore, too far
 For one to intervene? This otherness, this
 "Not-being-us" is all there is to look at
 In the mirror, though no one can say
 How it came to be this way. A ship
 Flying unknown colors has entered the harbor.
 You are allowing extraneous matters
 To break up your day, cloud the focus
 Of the crystal ball. Its scene drifts away
 Like vapor scattered on the wind. The fertile
 Thought-associations that until now came
 So easily, appear no more, or rarely. Their
 Colorings are less intense, washed out
 By autumn rains and winds, spoiled, muddied,
 Given back to you because they are worthless.
 Yet we are such creatures of habit that their
 Implications are still around en permanence, confusing

Issues. To be serious only about sex
 Is perhaps one way, but the sands are hissing
 As they approach the beginning of the big slide
 Into what happened. This past
 Is now here: the painter's
 Reflected face, in which we linger, receiving
 Dreams and inspirations on an unassigned
 Frequency, but the hues have turned metallic,
 The curves and edges are not so rich. Each person
 Has one big theory to explain the universe
 But it doesn't tell the whole story
 And in the end it is what is outside him
 That matters, to him and especially to us
 Who have been given no help whatever
 In decoding our own man-size quotient and must rely
 On second-hand knowledge. Yet I know
 That no one else's taste is going to be
 Any help, and might as well be ignored.
 Once it seemed so perfect--gloss on the fine
 Freckled skin, lips moistened as though about to part
 Releasing speech, and the familiar look
 Of clothes and furniture that one forgets.
 This could have been our paradise: exotic
 Refuge within an exhausted world, but that wasn't
 In the cards, because it couldn't have been
 The point. Aping naturalness may be the first step
 Toward achieving an inner calm
 But it is the first step only, and often
 Remains a frozen gesture of welcome etched
 On the air materializing behind it,
 A convention. And we have really
 No time for these, except to use them
 For kindling. The sooner they are burnt up
 The better for the roles we have to play.
 Therefore I beseech you, withdraw that hand,
 Offer it no longer as shield or greeting,
 The shield of a greeting, Francesco:
 There is room for one bullet in the chamber:
 Our looking through the wrong end
 Of the telescope as you fall back at a speed
 Faster than that of light to flatten ultimately
 Among the features of the room, an invitation
 Never mailed, the "it was all a dream"
 Syndrome, though the "all" tells tersely
 Enough how it wasn't. Its existence
 Was real, though troubled, and the ache
 Of this waking dream can never drown out
 The diagram still sketched on the wind,
 Chosen, meant for me and materialized
 In the disguising radiance of my room.

We have seen the city; it is the gibbous
 Mirrored eye of an insect. All things happen
 On its balcony and are resumed within,
 But the action is the cold, syrupy flow
 Of a pageant. One feels too confined,
 Sifting the April sunlight for clues,
 In the mere stillness of the ease of its
 Parameter. The hand holds no chalk
 And each part of the whole falls off
 And cannot know it knew, except
 Here and there, in cold pockets
 Of remembrance, whispers out of time.

John Ashbery

Appendix 3 –



Madonna of the Long Neck

1534

Oil on wood

219 x 135 cm

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence

Found at: http://www.artchive.com/artchive/p/parmigianino/long_neck.jpg

Appendix 4 –

Lyrics to “Der Schildwache Nachtlied” – the first song from Mahler’s *Lieder aus Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth’s Magic Horn; 1887-1901); the poem that the music is set to is by Archim von Arcim and Clemens Brentano and published in Germany between 1805 and 1808. See the score: Mahler, *Lieder aus Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, Minneola, N. Y.: Dover Publications (1999)

1. Ich kann und mag nicht fröhlich
seyn,
Wenn alle Leute schlafen,
So muß ich wachen,
Muß traurig seyn.

2. Ach Knabe du sollst nicht traurig
seyn,
Will deiner warten,
Im Rosengarten,
Im grünen Klee.

3. Zum grünen Klee, da komm ich
nicht,
Zum Waffengarten
Voll Helleparten
Bin ich gestellt.

4. Stehst du im Feld, so helf dir Gott,
An Gottes Segen
Ist alles gelegen,
Wers glauben thut.

5. Wers glauben thut, ist weit davon,
Er ist ein König,
Er ist ein Kaiser,
Er führt den Krieg.

6. Halt! Wer da? Rund! Wer sang zur
Stund?
Verlohrne Feldwacht
Sang es um Mitternacht:
Bleib mir vom Leib!



Giuseppe Arcimboldo

Winter (1573)

Oil on canvas, 76 x 63,5 cm

Currently at Musée du Louvre, Paris

Found at: <http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/a/arcimbol/index.html>

The text of the final movement of *Das Lied von der Erde*: "Der Abschied" was adapted from three old-style Chinese poems: one by Mong Kao-Jen (Meng Hao-Ran) and two by Wang Wei in the Tang Dynasty.

Der Abschied

Die Sonne scheidet hinter dem Gebirge.
In alle Täler steigt der Abend nieder
Mit seinen Schatten, die voll Kühlung sind.
O sieh! Wie eine Silberbarke schwebt
Der Mond am blauen Himmelssee herauf,
Ich spüre eines feinen Windes
Hinter den dunklen Fichten!
Der Bach singt voller Wohllaut durch das Dunkel.
Die Blumen blassen im Dämmerchein.
Die Erde atmet voll von Rüh und Schlaf.
Alle Sehnsucht will nun träumen,
Die müden Menschen gehn heimwärts,
Um im Schlaf vergeßnes Glück
Und Jugend neu zu lernen!
Die Vögel hocken still in ihren Zweigen.
Die Welt schläft ein!

Es wehet kühl im Schatten meiner Fichten.
hier und harre meines Freundes;
Ich harre sein zum letzten Lebewohl.
Ich sehne mich, o Freund, an deiner Seite
Die Schönheit dieses Abends zu genießen.
laßt mich lang allein! Where do you linger?
Ich wandle auf und nieder mit meiner Laute
Auf Wegen, die von weichem Grase schwellen.
O Schönheit! O ewigen Liebens- Lebenstrunkne Welt!

Er stieg vom Pferd und reichte ihm den Trunk
Des Abschieds dar. Er fragte ihn, wohin
Er führe und auch warum es müßte sein.
Er sprach, und seine Stimme war umflort:
"Du mein Freund,
Mir war auf dieser Welt das Glück nicht hold!
Wohin ich geh? Ich geh, ich wandre in die Berge.
Ich suche Ruhe für mein einsam Herz.
Ich wandle nach der Heimat, meiner Stätte.
Ich wrede niemals in die Ferne schweifen.
Still ist mein Herz und harret seiner Stunde!

Die liebe Erde allüberall
Blüht auf im Lenz und grünt
Auf's neu! Allüberall und ewig
Blauen licht die Fernen!
Ewig... ewig..."

The Farewell

The sun goes down behind the mountain,
Into all the valleys the evening descends
And brings cooling shades.
O see! Like a silver bark
The moon floats up the blue lake of heaven.
Wehn I feel a gentle breeze stirring
Behind the dark spruce.
The brook sings melodiously through the darkness.
The flowers grow pale in the gloaming.
The earth is breathing, full of peace and sleep.
All longing now turns in dreams,
Tired men make for home,
In sleep to recapture forgotten happiness
And youth!
The birds cower silently in the branches.
The world is falling asleep.

A cool wind blows in the shadow of my spruce. Ich stehe
I stand here waiting for my friend;
I wait to bid him a last farewell.
I long, my friend, at your side
To enjoy the beauty of this evening. Wo bleihst du? Du
You have left me alone so long!
I wander up and down with my lute
On paths soft with swelling grass.
O beauty! O eternal love- and life-drunk world!

He dismounted and proffered him the drink
Of farewell. He asked where
He was going and why it had to be.
He said, and his voice trembled:
"O my friend,
In this world fortune did not smile on me.
Where I am going? I go, I wander into the mountains.
I seek peace for my lonely heart.
I am making for home, for my resting place.
I will never roam into strange lands.
My heart is still and bides its time.

The dear earth everywhere
Blossoms in spring and grows green
Anew! Everywhere, for ever,
Blue lights the horizon!
Ever... ever..."

Appendix 7 –

The libretto for the second song of Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the death of children; 1905): II. Nun she ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen. The words are from the poem by Friedrich Rückert (Translation: Sony Classical GmbH, in the score of *Kindertotenlieder*, with a foreword by Hans F. Redlich, published by Eulenberg; 1961; p. 44) –

II. Now I see clearly why you sometimes

Now I see clearly why you sometimes
 Flashed fiery looks at me,
 O eyes!
 As if, in a single glance,
 You wished to concentrate all your power.
 But I could not suspect, lost as I was in
 The mists of deluding fate,
 That your light was already homeward bound,
 Returning to the source of all light.
 Your eyes wished to tell me with their shining:
 We would gladly remain near you!
 But that is denied to us by Fate.
 Look at us well, for soon we will be far away!
 What now are beloved eyes to you,
 Will be only stars in nights to come.

II. Nun she ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen

Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen
 Ihr sprühtet mir in manchem Augenblicke.
 O Augen!
 Gleichsam, um voll in einem Blicke
 Zu drängen eure ganze Macht zusammen.
 Dort ahnt ich nicht, weil Nebel mich umschwam-
 Gewoben von verblendendem Geschicke, İmen,
 Daß sich der Strahl bereits zur Heimkehr schicke,
 Dorthin, von eannen alle Strahlen stamen.
 Ihr wolltet mir mit eurem Leuchten sagen:
 Wir möchten nah dir bleiben gerne,
 Doch ist uns das vom Schicksal abgeschlagen.
 Sieh uns nur an, denn bald sind wir dir ferne!
 Was dir nur Auen sind in diesen Tagen:
 In künft'gen Nächten sind es dir nur Sterne.

