

The “Goldberg Variations” and Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*:

A study of interdisciplinary analogies

Master’s Thesis by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the musical influence on Ian McEwan's fiction, in particular that of the Goldberg Variations' influence on his novel *Saturday*. This involves an interdisciplinary analysis that compares the two arts, and sheds light on both possibilities and difficulties with regards to which musical features are likely to occur in literature or not. The analysis is founded on previous interdisciplinary studies of music and literature in general, studies of representations of the Goldberg Variations in literary fiction, previous McEwan criticism, and the musicality of his novel *Amsterdam*. The analysis compares specific sections and topics in the novel to selected features from the musical composition. Several corresponding similarities are discovered through the course of this examination, as well as considerable differences. The results indicate that there is considerable reason to believe that the Goldberg Variations has indeed figured as a work of influence in the creation of *Saturday*.

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1. Introduction

[F]iction is too humanly flawed, too sprawling and hit-and-miss to inspire uncomplicated wonder at the magnificence of human ingenuity, of the impossible dazzlingly achieved. Perhaps only music has such purity.

(McEwan 2006:68)

The highly prolific and acclaimed British writer Ian McEwan has, in several of his works, displayed a thorough knowledge and admiration of music. Through his protagonist in *Saturday*, Henry Perowne, he even suggests music's superiority within the arts. This study concerns the relationship between Johann Sebastian Bach's clavier music and McEwan's fictional work.¹ It is concerned with the similarities and differences between the two arts, and what possibilities there are for musical influence on literary fiction. This study will in particular explore the possible musical influence of the 'Goldberg Variations' on McEwan's novel *Saturday*.

In *Saturday* (2006), McEwan depicts a protagonist with a profound admiration of Johann Sebastian Bach's compositions, and in particular his 'Goldberg Variations'.² Several scholars (among others Green 2010; Ziolkowski 2010; and Root 2011) have briefly addressed this connection. However, what no one, to the best of my knowledge, has yet done is systematically pursue this connection in order to reveal a deeper analogy between the musical piece and the literary work. In this study, I will explore this possibility, and it is my belief that the Goldberg Variations has had an impact on McEwan's novel, not only as a tool to characterise the protagonist's preferences, but also on a structural level.

1.1 Previous McEwan Criticism

McEwan is one of those rare writers whose works have received both popular and critical acclaim.

(Head 2007:2)

The broad appeal of McEwan's writing has made him "one of the most significant British writers since the 1970s" (Head 2007:1). Four decades of publications from a prolific author

¹ Clavier music will, slightly inaccurately, be referred to as piano music, because piano is the contemporary instrument on which these pieces are generally performed.

² The original name of the piece is, in English translation, "Keyboard Practice, consisting of an Aria with diverse variations for the harpsichord with 2 manuals" (Williams, 2001:3). I will refer to it as the Goldberg Variations, as this is the name used by McEwan, Ziolkowski and other authors of the literature I refer to.

have resulted in an extensive bibliography, which can be divided into three main periods, as suggested by Malcolm (2002). His earliest period, the 1970s, was characterised by grotesque and morbid themes such as murder, rape and incest. His first novel, *The Cement Garden*, tells the story of how four siblings hide the corpse of their mother in the cellar (Head 2007:47). Several critics (including Schemberg 2004; Ellam 2009; and Groes 2013) emphasise that these themes earned him the nick name 'Ian Macabre'. Despite this nickname, "McEwan has always been taken seriously by critics and scholars, although they have not always liked his books" (Malcolm 2002:4).

Through the 1980s, McEwan gradually moved away from the 'Macabre', and became more preoccupied with politics and how historical events had an impact on lives on a personal level. This is evident in the novel *Black Dogs* in which the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall are central (Malcolm 2002:131-132). This period was the transition into the latest period in which he "has outgrown the tragic and wrenching narratives of his "Ian Macabre" phase and embraced the overlapping of private life with political and social issues" (Henry 2008:77).

The latest period represents "a return to the hectic, closed-in, psychologically disturbed world of the early fiction" (Malcolm 2002:6). This might be true of *Enduring Love*, and possibly *Amsterdam*, but "McEwan's more recent work implicitly identifies the origin of environmental crisis in the interaction of contingent historical circumstances and the universal (to some extent sex-differentiated) psychological tendencies known, for convenience, as "human nature" " (Garrard 2009:707). Human nature, and its vulnerability, is an important topic within recent McEwan criticism, especially in relation to binary issues such as: public versus private sphere, science versus arts, literature versus music, female versus male, and the (Western) world versus terrorists.

According to Malcolm, "[t]here are four [...] issues that any critic of McEwan's work must focus on. These are his presentation of women, and the role of feminist concerns in his fiction; his concern with rationalism and science; the moral perspective of his texts; and the fragmentariness of his novels" (2002:12). Evidently, structural concerns other than the fragmentariness in McEwan's work are not emphasised to any particular degree. Structural criticism of McEwan's work is indeed rare, but when it occurs, it tends to focus on intertextuality. *Saturday* is notably one of McEwan's novels in which structural concerns have previously been addressed: "a contemporary novel that [...] both resonates with and instructively diverges from *Mrs. Dalloway*" (Thraikill 2011:174). The short story-like time

span of a single day, and the significant presence of a city strongly resemble both Joyce's *Ulysses* and the mentioned *Mrs. Dalloway*. These influences are both confirmed by, among others, Root (2011:67). Furthermore, the ending in *Saturday* clearly echoes Joyce's *The Dead*: "And at last, faintly, falling: this day's over" (McEwan 2006:279). In the studies of McEwan there seems to be if not neglect, then at least lack of interest in structural concerns beyond the intertextual relation to other literary works. This study is based on the hypothesis that music could be equally influent on *Saturday*, especially in terms of structure. The difference, however, is that such a comparison involves an interdisciplinary analysis between two kinds of art: music and literature.

1.2 Connections between Music and Literature

In his thorough and pioneering work, *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts*, Calvin S. Brown (1963) pinpoints intrinsic similarities and differences between these art forms. His findings have strongly contributed to my approach to the comparison of the arts made in this study.

Brown emphasises that both arts are auditory and "intended to be heard" (1963:8). In the case of music this is the general comprehension, as we tend to regard written, or scored, music as "symbols which tell a performer what sounds he is to produce, and the *sounds themselves* are the music" (Brown 1963:8, emphasis added). This is comparable to recipes in which one would never mistake the instructing document for the actual food. Literature, however, is often read in silence, but it is also considered auditory because "[w]e are so accustomed to translating printed words into sounds effortlessly and without having physically to produce those sounds that we sometimes tend to forget their existence" (Brown 1963:8). Brown provides the rhyming example of 'queue' and 'you' to illustrate that we actually read phonetically: we hear the words when we read them. In comparison, relatively few people are able to "stare at a musical score with anything but discomfort" (Brown, M. 1992:75). It is, however, possible. For example, trained musicians, such as conductors, are often able to read musical scores 'phonetically' and imagine a general impression of a piece. Nevertheless, both literature and music are considered to be auditory arts, which differentiate them from visual arts such as painting and sculpture.

One of the most distinct differences between auditory and visual art is their temporal and spatial characteristics. The auditory arts are considered to be temporal which implies that

they have “their development in time, and hence [require] a good memory for their comprehension” (Brown 1963:11). The shared auditory and temporal aspects point not only to the similarities between music and literature, but also to their difference from the visual arts. Thus, it seems more reasonable to compare music and literature as opposed to, for instance, literature and painting.³

Despite the similarities, there are considerable differences between music and literature that ought to be addressed: “music is an art of sound in and for itself [...] [i]ts tones have intricate relationships among themselves, but no relationship to anything outside the musical composition. [...] Literature, on the other hand, is an art employing *sounds to which external significance has been arbitrarily attached*” (Brown 1963:11). This difference might explain why it is more common to read literature than music. The relationship between tones relies on pitch, and unless one has perfect pitch,⁴ it is almost impossible to fully comprehend this relationship through reading only. In contrast, literature does not require a specific pitch, and the sound is often subordinate to the external meaning it produces. This suggests a difference in the arts’ relationship to content and form. As stated, musical content only relates to itself, and “music has traditionally been regarded as the art wherein form and matter, theme and expression, are most thoroughly enmeshed” (Smyth 2008:42). In the following it is argued that musical content is, as Smyth states above, dependent on its form, but the musical form does not necessarily depend on the content. One should note that the term musical content in this study do not relate to lyrics of any kind, but only tones.

Consider the possibility of representing the iconic opening bars of Beethoven’s fifth symphony in literature, without using words and phrases that contain external meaning which refers to the piece, such as Beethoven’s fifth or the faith motif. One could use onomatopoeic representations like ba ba ba baaaaa, but even such phrases would not ensure that the reader actually recognised it as the famous tune. If the realisation of this phrase differs from the intended internal relationship of pitch, this phrase could just as easily have been recognised as the opening of the equally famous Wedding March by Mendelssohn. Thus, depiction of musical content in literature depends on a representation in which the words used carry external meaning that directly refers to the music.

Musical form, however, does not rely on such a specific meaning, and is therefore far more likely to be represented independently of its content in, for instance, literary works. An

³ Although there is a critical tradition for this latter comparison as well.

⁴ Perfect pitch is the ability to hear or produce a certain tone without any aids.

example is the ABA form,⁵ which is considered to be “the fundamental musical form”, consisting of “a first section, a contrasting middle section, and a return to the first section for the conclusion” (Brown 1963:135). Structurally, this can be transferred to a narrative in which there is a movement from one place to another, and then a return to the initial place for a conclusion. This roughly describes the common structure of a vast number of literary works, and it is not my intention to claim that all literary works carrying this structure are influenced by musical form. “After all, the homecoming of the protagonist is one of the oldest motifs in literature” (Grimm 1999:240).⁶ This is rather emphasised to exemplify how structural elements could more easily be transferred from music, and incorporated into literature, than musical content.

In sum we see that a comparison of music and literature is justified, as they share the properties of auditory arts. An analysis based on the similarities and differences between music and literature as described above, should expect to discover influence in form rather than content, because of the form’s independence from the content.

1.3 The Role of Music in McEwan’s Fiction

1.3.1 Amsterdam

In a study exploring musical influence on his work, a natural choice of text seems to be *Amsterdam* (2005), which tells the story of a professional musician. In a study exploring musical influence on *Saturday*, *Amsterdam* provides a strong argument for the fact that musical references in, and influence on, McEwan’s work have proved to be far from coincidental. This study does not rely on known authorial intention, and the musical contents of *Amsterdam* are therefore regarded as an important contribution to the analysis of the possibly intended musical influence on McEwan’s work.

Amsterdam portrays the composer Clive Linley as he is about to finish his latest work, a millennial symphony, which he is convinced will make him and his music as famous as Beethoven and his ninth symphony. He has particularly high expectations for the last melody, where he predicts that “this irresistible melody would remain as the dead century’s elegy” (McEwan 2005:20). The protagonist reunites with an old friend, the editor Vernon Halliday, at the funeral of their former lover, Molly Lane. Both men strive for success and

⁵ Not to be mistaken for poetic rhyme scheme.

⁶ See Grimm 1999 for a further critical discussion of sonata form’s influence on literature.

acknowledgement; Linley through his compositions, and Halliday through the circulation numbers of his newspaper, *The Judge*. They both lose sense of reality in the process. Halliday is fired because of his decision to publish controversial pictures of the Foreign Secretary, despite Linley's disapproval of the publishing. Linley himself experiences considerable issues with the composing of the last melody. He travels to the Lake District where he eventually finds the melodic inspiration he needs before he can return to London and finish his symphony. The premiere of his symphony is however cancelled because it plagiarises Beethoven's Ode to Joy. In the end the men commit mutual murder by exploiting the euthanasia practice in Amsterdam.

The narrative is saturated by various references to music and musical history, especially related to the protagonist, Linley. McEwan displays considerable knowledge of musical history, for example through the extensive mentioning of various composers and artists such as: Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Igor Stravinsky, Henry Purcell, Benjamin Britten, John Lennon, Yoko Ono and Bob Dylan. All of the composers and musicians mentioned in *Amsterdam* are important contributors to the Western canon of music from the 17th century onwards, and they are all, arguably with the exception of Yoko Ono, regarded as musical geniuses. Linley identifies with these musicians, and it is evident that he has very high expectations for his upcoming symphony – a work he relates to the specific melodies 'Nessun dorma' from Puccini's opera *Tourandot*, and 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's ninth symphony. Both of these melodies are iconic and are used as points of comparison for Linley's hopes for his own symphony as "an elegy for the maligned and departed century that could be incorporated into the official proceedings, much as 'Nessun dorma' had been into a football tournament" (McEwan 2005:21). The close comparison to especially Ode to Joy is particularly interesting, because it turns out that Linley copied the famous melody "give or take a note or two" (McEwan 2005:176).

Linley's obsession with Ode to Joy seems to be a part of his mission to become the musical genius of his time. "[T]he model, surely, was Beethoven's Ode to Joy. Consider the first line – a few steps up, a few steps down. [...] Such was the exalted nature of his mission, and of his ambition. Beethoven" (McEwan 2005:76). In addition to how Linley identifies himself with Beethoven, there are other resemblances worth noting for present purposes. The ninth symphony was the last symphony Beethoven composed, and at that time, his ability to hear was considerably limited (Ealy 1994:263). Similarly, the millennial symphony becomes Linley's last composition, and his plagiarism of Ode to Joy might suggest that his ability to

hear his own music is impaired. Throughout the narrative, Ode to Joy is used to illustrate the uniqueness of the melody he wants to compose himself, which makes it all the more difficult to comprehend how a professional composer can unknowingly plagiarise one of the most famous tunes in history.

Descriptions of hearing, creating and composing music make up a considerable part of *Amsterdam*. Through his protagonist, McEwan demonstrates a musical knowledge that moves beyond the brief, cultural references to musical history, and into the professional field of composing. The following quotation exemplifies the density of musical terms (emphasised) in the descriptions of Linley's composition:

his new *melody*, darkly *scored* in its first lonely manifestation for a *muted trombone*, had gathered around itself rich *orchestral* textures of sinuous *harmony*, then *dissonance* and whirling *variations* [...] then the *muted trombone* again, and then, with a hushed *crescendo*, like a giant drawing breath, the final and colossal restatement of the *melody* [...] which gathered pace, and erupted into a wave, a racing tsunami of sound reaching an impossible velocity, then rearing up, higher, [...] and at last toppling, breaking and crashing vertiginously down to shatter on the hard safe ground of the *home key of C minor*. What remained were the *pedal notes* promising resolution and peace in infinite space. Then a *diminuendo* spanning forty-five seconds, dissolving into four *bars* of *scored* silence. The end.

(McEwan, 2005:135-136, emphasis added)

Smyth asks “[t]o what extent does a reader’s knowledge of a musical text (or overture, or figure, or event) bear upon their engagement with and understanding of developments within the fictional narrative?” (2008:5). In the quotation from *Amsterdam* above, considerable theoretical knowledge of scored music is *advantageous* in order to fully comprehend such descriptions, and it is *necessary* in order to write it. To a reader of less musical knowledge, this section can simply be read as ‘descriptions of music’. To a more musically qualified person it could be read as a musical experience rather than a pure description, and it is likely that a composer of orchestral music would in such an experience imagine the actual music. These are pure speculations, but they exemplify that the reader’s knowledge of music can have considerable impact upon their reading of a musically saturated narrative.

Linley is devoted to the creation of an epic melody, but not necessarily at the expense of other musical issues. In his conversation with the conductor of his symphony, after the first rehearsal, Linley asks him only one question: if he thinks “the whole piece is hanging together well? Structurally, I mean” (McEwan 2005:161). A further pursuit of structural issues in *Amsterdam* might suggest that McEwan has found influence in one of the most frequent musical forms in Beethoven’s work, the sonata form. Smyth argues, that “[the] basic

plot structure rehearses the ternary/binary configuration of sonata form [...] Linley's movements (from and back to London) recall the ABA structure of exposition, development and recapitulation" (2008:131). It should be taken into consideration that Smyth does not address the issue of authorial intention when he makes this assumption. Nevertheless, the influence he suggests is not unlikely. McEwan's novel concerns the profession of conducting, and it depicts a composer who is obsessed with, and closely connected to, Beethoven throughout the narrative. McEwan demonstrates a thorough and professional knowledge of music in this novel, and it is tempting to assume that he must have been conscious about the possible connection between the sonata form and Linley's travels.

1.3.2 Saturday

Amsterdam is not McEwan's only musical novel. Music features at an arguably less obvious, but nonetheless similarly important, level in his later novel *Saturday*. The novel follows a neatly planned day in the life of neurosurgeon Henry Perowne as he runs his errands around London, and prepares for a family reunion in the evening. In the early morning of this Saturday, Perowne, driven out of bed by insomnia, notices a burning plane heading for Heathrow. He continues his day as planned, but because Tottenham Court Road is closed due to a protest march against the war in Iraq, he drives "across a road officially closed to all traffic, and set in train a sequence of events" (McEwan 2006:278). He then encounters three gangster-like men in a minor traffic accident that rapidly develops into a very tense conflict. Their leader, Baxter, punches Perowne, and Perowne calculates his way out of the situation by diagnosing Baxter with Huntington's disease. This encounter leads to Baxter appearing at Perowne's home later in the evening, where he holds Perowne's wife, Rosalind, at knifepoint. Like *Amsterdam*, this novel frequently refers to music in several ways. In the following, I will emphasise the density of musical terms, the role music plays in interpersonal relationships and the specific mentioning of pieces in *Saturday*, before the connection to the Goldberg Variations will be addressed.

Like *Amsterdam*, *Saturday* frequently includes musical terms. Perowne's observations are compared and explained through musical terms, for example when he describes the sound of high heels crossing the square as an "awkward counterpoint", or his wife Rosalind's work as "a series of slow crescendos" (McEwan 2006:12,23). Even his encounter with Baxter is described in musical terms: "[a]ll day long, the encounter on University Street has been in his

thoughts, like a sustained piano note” (McEwan 2006:207). This is remarkable considering the fact that the protagonist, whose thoughts are often shown through the use of free indirect discourse, is not a professional musician such as Linley, but rather a neurosurgeon. In the following description of Perowne’s son Theo playing blues, the narrator displays a musical knowledge, although of another genre, still comparable to that shown in *Amsterdam*: “A little *syncopated* stab on the *turnaround*, the sudden chop of an *augmented chord*, a note held against the tide of *harmony*, a judiciously *flattened fifth*, a *seventh bent* in sensuous *microtones*” (McEwan 2006:28, emphasis added).

At another level, music is used as a point of reference for the interpersonal relationships in the novel. This corresponds with how Smyth emphasises that music can be “a guide to the moral standing of each character in terms of how they regard each other, how the narrator regards them, and, therefore, how the reader is invited to regard them” (2008:63). Perowne and Theo have considerably differing lifestyles, which are described through, among other things, music. On one hand, Perowne prefers classical music, and “[a]bove all others he admires Bach” (McEwan 2006:68). Classical music is planned and predictable. It is written down, and follows special patterns and rules. Improvisation does not occur within classical music. This is comparable with Perowne who lives his life according to schedules and plans. He has even ‘composed’ this Saturday, which is his day off, into a series of things he has to do – in a specific order. Theo, on the other hand, is a professional blues guitarist. Blues, in contrast to classical music, is rarely written down, and an intrinsic element is improvisation. When the two men meet in the kitchen in the morning, one of them has woken up early, whereas the other is going to bed. It is not clearly stated that Perowne does not approve of Theo’s lifestyle or preferred music, but it is suggested. In contrast to Perowne, Theo will sleep for several hours after his father has begun his day. He will then probably occupy the kitchen and messily make something to eat. To Perowne, Theo’s lifestyle seems “to be at odds with the blues” (McEwan 2006:65).

A character likely to be more similar to Perowne is his colleague Jay Strauss, but their differing musical preferences contribute to the illumination of their differences. Strauss shares the surname of the famous (classical) composers Richard and Johann Strauss. It is not particularly necessary to identify which of the famous Strauss’ Jay might represent, as they both, in comparison to Bach, remains subordinate: “[p]osterity has raised Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) to the pinnacle of composers of all time” (Burkholder et al. 2010:439). Strauss calls Perowne to perform the surgery on Baxter, which implies superiority on

Perowne's behalf. This is emphasised by the music in the operating theatre. Perowne chooses exclusively classical music, but when he returns to the room after the surgery, "there's a different atmosphere in the theatre. Country and Western music – Jay's taste – has replaced Samuel Barber. Emmylou Harris is singing 'Boulder to Birmingham'. Emily and Joan are discussing a friend's wedding [...] The two anaesthetists and Rodney Browne are talking about offset mortgages" (McEwan 2006:257). Both the change of music and the shift in the conversations, from strictly professional to private matters, suggest that country music represents something more common, or perhaps less professional, than classical music. The genre is also traditionally associated with the USA, which might emphasise the fact that Strauss is American.

The mentioning of various iconic pieces of western music found in *Amsterdam*, is further developed in *Saturday*. The novel addresses, among others, Barber's 'Adagio for Strings', Bach's 'Well-tempered Clavier', the wartime tune 'We'll meet again' and the blues standard 'Sweet Home Chicago'. In addition, the line stating that Theo can "play the guitar like an angel ringing a bell" (McEwan 2006:30) strongly alludes to the phrase "play the guitar just like a ringing a bell" from Chuck Berry's 'Johnny B. Goode'. The piece most frequently and in most detail referred to, however, is one of Perowne's favourites: "he likes music in the theatre when he's working, mostly piano works by Bach – the 'Goldberg' Variations" (McEwan 2006:22). Perowne is familiar with not only the piece, but also various recordings of it. For his surgery on Baxter "[h]e decides on the 'Goldberg' Variations. He has four recordings here, and selects not the showy unorthodoxies of Glenn Gould, but Angela Hewitt's wise and silky playing which includes all the repeats" (McEwan 2006:250). The piece accompanies the surgery from the opening of Baxter's brain and the beginning of the "tender, wistful Aria", to its return in which it is "floating in from a distance, as though from another world" (McEwan 2006:250-254). The novel's preoccupation with Bach's piece is one of the initial reasons for a pursuit of the possible connection between the piano piece and the novel. What no one, to the best of my knowledge, has looked at yet is the possible structural influence the Goldberg Variations has had on *Saturday*.

1.4 Representations of the Goldberg Variations in Literature

Literary scholars have tended to address only the strictly literary intertextuality in *Saturday*, despite the claim that "[a]mong the musicians whose lives and works have inspired writers

none can match Johann Sebastian Bach” (Ziolkowski 2010:626). In ‘Literary Variations on Bach’s Goldberg’, Ziolkowski has analysed “four novels of the 1980s by an international coterie of contemporary writers who have used the *Goldberg Variations* to lend a literary-musical structure to their works” (Ziolkowski 2010:629). Through his work, Ziolkowski provides an outline of what might be regarded as a contemporary literary tradition for novels inspired by the Goldberg Variations, and it is exemplified through: *Les Variations Goldberg* by Nancy Huston, *Der Untergeher* by Thomas Bernhard, *The Gold Bug Variations* by Richard Powers and *Goldberg: Variations* by Gabriel Josipovici. The following briefly outlines Ziolkowski’s findings of reference to and performance of the Goldberg Variations, the reference to Glenn Gould’s recording of the piece, and reference to this insomnia anecdote:

Allegedly, Bach was ordered by Count Keyserlingk (Graf Kaiserling) to compose a piece for his musician Goldberg to play as an accompaniment to the Count’s sleepless nights, in which he would say: “Dear Goldberg, play me one of my variations” (Forkel 2008:64, translation mine). This does, however, remain unverified and anecdotal because “no dedication to the Count is documented on the title page or any known copy” (Williams 2001:5). It did nevertheless provide the piece with its popular name ‘Goldberg Variations’.

Like *Saturday*, all the four novels in question directly address the variations. *Der Untergeher*, which does not mention the piece in its title, tells a story in which Glenn Gould and his performance of the variations is crucial (Ziolkowski 2010:631). Glenn Gould recorded the Goldberg Variations in 1955, and it seems to have made a considerable impact on various writers. In *Les Variations Goldberg*, the protagonist who performs the Variations is praised for her choice of tempo, because it is slower than other interpretations, such as Gould’s. One part is even considered to be too slow, but it is still considered better than Gould’s “frenzied charge” of an interpretation, which sounds like “galloping horses being whipped by a sadistic driver” (Huston 1981:85, translated in Ziolkowski 2010:630). Similarly, in *Saturday*, Perowne “selects not the showy unorthodoxies of Glenn Gould” (McEwan 2006:250). Both *Les Variations Goldberg* and *Der Untergeher* refer to the variations being performed, and in Huston’s novel the performance takes place in the protagonist’s bedroom – a room that will become significant in the analysis of *Saturday*.

Ziolkowski does not overlook *Saturday*, but he only comments on the fact that Perowne selects the piece when he performs surgery. The absence of interdisciplinary focus in critical works concerning *Saturday* might provide a reason for this relatively superficial

treatment of the possible influence of the variations. For the purpose of this study, it is interesting to see that musicians might provide a different, and perhaps more nuanced, reading of Bach's influence on McEwan's novel. The American pianist Simone Dinnerstein, who released her own recording of the Goldberg Variations in 2007 (simonedinnerstein.com), stated in a recent interview that *Saturday* is "[a]n exquisitely crafted book that I feel convinced is based on the structure of the Goldberg Variations. McEwan mentions Angela Hewitt's record of it early on. The whole book takes place in one day, and there's a circularity to it" (Hoffmann 2014). Where literary critics have been preoccupied with the influence from *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, Dinnerstein suggests that the temporality and circularity stems from music: literature's auditory relative.

The differing emphasis of scholars such as Ziolkowski, and musicians such as Dinnerstein, implies that the analytic point of departure has a considerable impact on the analysis: "it may well be that music can do things for literature which only the musically trained *litterateur* is capable of envisaging" (Burgess 1983:97).

1.5 Analytical Procedure

Conducting an analysis of the musical influence on a literary work, require a level of similarity beyond the literal level. This involves a directed creative and more speculative reading that aims at discovering the less explicitly formulated connection between the works of art.

The analytical approach in this study is based on "three levels at which music may influence the creation of a work of literature: the inspirational, the metaphorical, and the formal" (Grimm 1999:237). Consistent with previous analyses of the Goldberg Variations' influence on fiction, the structural framework of the musical piece has been used as a point of departure for the comparison, which will mainly concern the metaphorical and formal levels of influence. In terms of literary criticism, the validity of the inspirational level as a separate level is debated (Grimm 1999; Smyth 2008). Consequently, this level is largely omitted in the analysis. This choice runs the risk of an incomplete analysis, but it will certainly contribute to a less subjective analysis within a field already dominated by subjectivity.

The analysis is based on three major components of the composition: the Aria and the Aria da Capo, the variations, and the bass line. The Aria and the Aria da Capo are chosen because of their distinct formal parameters: they constitute the beginning and the end of the piece, and they origin from the same sheet music. The bass line is the continuous element the

different parts varies upon, which makes it essential to the form of the piece. The composition is a variation form, and consequently, the variations themselves ought to be emphasised. The variations have previously mostly been addressed in literary works either through direct referencing or because they constitute the foundation of the structure of works. This analysis does not expect to find a similar connection between the variations and the narrative. Consistent with the differences between music and literature, as outlined by Brown (1963), it is predicted that the influence of the variations will, at best, be a general resemblance.

The musical headlines indicate that the terms set forward by the musical element in question have been used as a points of departure – consistent with Grimm’s findings: “In order to evaluate the literary use of [for example] sonata form it will first be necessary to explain exactly what constitutes sonata form in its original musical context” (Grimm 1999:238). Each section will therefore begin with an explanation of the musical element in question, and then apply these terms to the relevant sections of the novel, in order to detect resemblances that could indicate musical influence. This study has relied heavily on Peter Williams’ (2001) thorough guide to, and analysis of, the Goldberg Variations, in order to confirm musical issues beyond what could be explained through the score.

In the process of determining whether a literary element is indeed the result of musical influence or not, this study will depend on complementary similarity at general and detailed level. This means that a similarity at sentence level can only be valid if it is a part of a more general similarity to the same musical element, and vice versa. The determination of influence does however remain problematic due to the question of authorial intention. This is not an issue that will be addressed in the course of the analysis, as it can neither be confirmed nor rejected through a study of the works of art. Authorial awareness, however, will be possible to discover through direct referencing to musical works, as have been done in section 1.3. This is therefore an important part of the analysis as a means of validating the connection between the musical piece and the work of fiction.

2. Analysis

2.1 Basso Continuo

The bass line of the Goldberg Variations is written in the style of basso continuo. This is a style of composing in which the bass line figures as the repeated, continuous and harmonically dominating element of the composition. During the 17th century, Bach's golden era, this was a common way of composing. In the Goldberg Variations, the bass line is carried out through a set of 32 variations.⁷ Variation as a form of composing stems from the 16th century, and is characterised by the combination of “change with repetition, taking a given theme [...] and presenting an uninterrupted series of variants on that theme” (Burkholder et al. 2010:274). One should note that “[e]ach variation, of course, departs from the original theme in some specific and consistent way, so that it forms an intelligible unit in itself” (Brown 1963:128). A more contemporary, and for *Saturday* highly relevant, example of a variation form is blues.⁸ This study has previously stated that blues differs considerably from classical music, but the basic principles of the relationship between the bass line and the melody are strikingly similar. Blues often consists of a bass line that is repeated, usually over eight or twelve bars. The melody is mostly improvised, which creates different variations over the repeating bass line.

In Bach's previous variation works, the themes of the variations were often the first melody, which in the Goldberg Variations would have been the melody of the Aria. In this composition, however, “it is the harmonies underlying the Aria that serve as the basis for the variations”, which makes it “variations or varied treatments not of a melody but of a series of chords”, namely the bass line (Williams 2001:35). This bass line is based on a chord progression of 32 bars that is repeated throughout the piece. In its simplest form, this progression consists of 32 tones – one in each bar, but none of the variations maintains this simplicity, as the progression “is always ‘coloured’ more or less” (Williams 2001:36). Despite this ‘colouring’ of the bass line, “[a]ll thirty variations preserve the bass and harmonic structure” (Burkholder et al. 2010:446). In order to preserve this structure, and create harmony, the melodies must be composed according to the bass line. One should note

⁷ The discussion of whether the Aria and the Aria da Capo e Fine are considered to be variations or not, will be addressed in section 2.2.

⁸ Blues is strictly speaking not variation form, because it, unlike classical music, contains improvisation. The relationship between the bass and the melody is however similar to the classical form, and it is therefore provided as an example for present purposes.

that the term harmony in this study will be used in its musical sense, meaning “pitch-relationships of simultaneously produced tones” (Brown 1963:39), and must not be mistaken for colloquial interpretations of the term. The harmonic structure implies that the bass line limits the possible tones in the melody, consequently making the melody subordinate to the bass line. The significance of the bass line in the Goldberg Variations is therefore not only interesting in terms of repetition and continuity, but also highly relevant as the dominating element of the harmonies. This further suggests that any analysis concerning the structural resemblance of the Goldberg Variations should include the bass line, because it would be problematic to identify other elements of the composition without being able to relate them to a representation of the bass line.

In *Saturday*, there are arguably several elements that could serve the purpose of a dominating continuous line in the narrative. The time span of one day is one possibility, because it is a central element of the novel’s structure. As the title indicates, the entire novel takes place within the frame of a Saturday; from “[s]ome hours before dawn” till “this day’s over” (McEwan 2006:3,279). This limited temporality corresponds to the temporality of music with its clear beginning and ending. As the dominating element of possible ‘harmonies’ however, the role of the Saturday as a basso continuo becomes highly questionable. The time span of a day does not necessarily offer repetition upon which the narrative can vary, and the only element that seems directly connected to that particular Saturday, is the protest march (BBC 2003). A better alternative for the bass line seems to be the setting in, and strong presence of London. The events could perhaps have taken place on another day, but not in another place. Throughout the day, London creates the backdrop for various events such as the view from Perowne’s window, and the protest march that led to considerable, and to Perowne crucial, redirections of traffic. Several streets and buildings are directly referred to, and if London is to be considered the bass line, then these references could represent the ‘colourings’ of the Goldberg Variations.

This is however McEwan’s first post-9/11 novel, first published in 2005, and the threat of terrorist attacks linger throughout the narrative. At the end of the day, terrorism, violence and fear seem to be more important than time span and location because “[t]his Russian plane flew right into his insomnia, and he’s been only too happy to let the story and every little nervous shift of the daily news process colour his emotional state” (McEwan 2006:180). The plane motif first occurs at the beginning of Perowne’s day, as he discovers a burning plane on its supposedly disastrous way into Heathrow. At the end of the day, a

similar occurrence of the motif is depicted as two regular planes head into Heathrow in the early hours of the following Sunday. This suggests a repetition with variation where the latter representation of the motif is a 'coloured' version of the former, similar to how Williams describes the development of the basso continuo.

The continuity of this motif is evident in its recurrence through the entire day. Throughout this Saturday, Perowne returns to the news at several occasions to follow the development of the story about the burning plane: "[h]e's feeling the pull, like gravity, of the approaching TV news. It's a condition of the times, this compulsion to hear how it stands with the world, and be joined to the generality, to a community of anxiety [...] [t]he possibility of their recurrence is one thread that binds the days" (McEwan 2006:176). On the nine o'clock news "[t]he airplane, Henry's airplane, is now second item" (McEwan 2006:70), which implies that there is a falling interest for the story. Nevertheless, Perowne is still preoccupied with it in the evening when he is preparing the family dinner, and he listens to the news because he "needs to hear about the pilots in custody" (McEwan 2006:176). Perowne does not choose to engage in this news story, which suggests that it is somewhat dominating. When he randomly catches a glimpse of a TV screen during a break in the squash game with Strauss, he is irritated by, rather than interested in, the development: "[i]sn't it possible to enjoy an hour's recreation without this invasion, this infection from the public domain?" (McEwan 2006:108).

Based on these arguments it is possible to identify the story of the plane as the repeated and continuous line upon which the narrative harmonises. Similar to the bass line in the Goldberg Variations, this line is not identical throughout the narrative. The plane could be regarded as an equivalent to the bass line in its simplest form; it is present throughout Perowne's Saturday, but always 'coloured' with connotations. The plane is never just a plain plane. It clearly represents a threat to Perowne, and notion of threat is evident in several other categories more or less related to the plane. This study regards these categories as possible 'colourings' similar to the development of the bass line. To clarify, these 'colourings' have been divided into two subcategories: terrorism and violence, and physical and psychological decline.

2.1.1 Terrorism and Violence

The notion of threat is established when Perowne realises that what he believed to be a spectacular meteor is in fact a burning airplane, introducing post 9/11 connotations into the

narrative: “[e]veryone agrees, airliners look different in the sky these days, predatory or doomed” (McEwan 2006:16). In comparison, the Luftwaffe is mentioned in a far less threatening setting: “[t]hat particular façade is a reconstruction [...] wartime Fitzrovia took *some hits* from the Luftwaffe” (McEwan 2006:4 emphasis added). The description, of the destructions by the German air raids during World War 2 as ‘some hits’, emphasises architectural consequences rather than the human sufferings they caused. This priority contributes to the assumption that threats are immediate, and are often lost or forgotten if the situation in which they occur is distanced, either in time or place. Similarly, the Post Office Tower is said to be “a valiant memorial to more optimistic days” (McEwan 2006:4). This characteristic overlooks the tower’s resemblance to the World Trade Center – not only in terms of its visual contribution to the city’s skyline, but also through its vulnerability for terrorist attacks, such as the bomb in 1971 (BBC 1971). Even though Perowne lives in an area bombed by both terrorists and wartime enemies, these events are not threatening to him due to the distance in time. They rather become examples of previous wars and conflicts, and an explanation of the view from his window. He does not fear anything in this view until he “hears a low rumbling sound, gentle thunder gathering in volume” (McEwan 2006:14). This is especially interesting in the comparison to Bach’s piece, as the protagonist in McEwan’s novel discovers the suggested representation of the bass line by hearing a low, bass like sound.

“The September attacks were Theo’s induction into international affairs, the moment he accepted that events beyond friends, home and the music scene had bearing on his existence” (McEwan 2006:31). The 9/11 attacks themselves belong to a continuous line of international conflicts, and in *Saturday* such conflicts become a point of reference for people experiencing them, as is evident above. There is a difference, however, in the perception of these events. Perowne was “too young for the Cuban missiles [...] [but] remembers being tearful over Aberfan” (McEwan 2006:31). This suggests that the impact these events have on the characters is closely related to their perceived feeling of threat. To Theo, none of the previous conflicts pose a threat, and as a result they do not have a bearing on his existence. The 9/11 attacks becomes the relevant international conflict in this narrative, because it is the present and pressing threat at the time. It simultaneously alludes to past and future conflicts, such as the alarmingly accurate prediction of the imminent 2005 terror attacks in London: “Perhaps a bomb in the cause of jihad [...] London, his small part of it, lies wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb [...] an attack’s inevitable” (McEwan 2006:276).

The connection is further strengthened because “most major world events suggested the same [...] [i]nternational terror, security cordons, preparations for war – these represent the steady state, the weather” (McEwan 2006:32). This is a solid argument for relating international war and terror to the possible representation of basso continuo. They both represent the ‘steady state’ – a state that the 9/11 attacks will eventually become a part of:

There are always crises, and Islamic terrorism will settle into place, alongside recent wars, climate change, the politics of international trade, land and fresh water shortages, hunger, poverty and the rest.

(McEwan 2006:77)

The metaphorical use of weather strengthens the resemblance to the bass line. Weather has a similar function to the basso continuo because both can be seen as continuous lines upon which it is common to act accordingly. The weather is always present, and we are subordinate to it. If one chooses not to dress according to the weather, then one should expect some kind of discomfort, or, in musical terms, disharmony. Similarly, when terrorism and war are compared to the weather, it suggests that people are subordinate and must act according to it.

When Perowne discusses the plane with his son, Theo adds a religious and possibly Islamophobic aspect to the situation when he asks his father “[y]ou think it’s jihadists...?” (McEwan 2006:33), consequently strengthening the 9/11 associations. Shortly after, the news reveal that it was a Russian “cargo plane [...] [and] [n]either of the two-man crew is hurt” (McEwan 2006:35). The 9/11 associations become considerably weakened and the threat is removed from the burning plane. In other words it was “not an attack on our whole way of life” (McEwan 2006:35). In the news, the 9/11 associations are transferred from the burning plane to the mentioning of Hans Blix and the anti-war demonstrations in London later that day. This transition turns the line of threat into an international matter. It is not only Perowne and Theo who might fear attacks, but now also the population of Iraq, through the War on Terror.

The protest march described in *Saturday* refers to the anti-war demonstrations that took place in several cities on 15th February 2003 (BBC 2003). It is clearly related to the threat of terrorism and war, but it is questionable whether it constitutes a threat in the narrative or not. The march may not at first resemble a threat with its “air of innocence and English dottiness” and “children [...] and babies in pushchairs” (McEwan 2006:62,72), but to Perowne it becomes a reminder of the fear-based regime in Iraq. “[I]t is in fact the state of the world that troubles him most, and the marchers are there to remind him of it” (McEwan 2006:80). In addition to reminding Perowne of the state of the world, it is possible that the

march becomes a physical connection between international terrorism and Perowne's encounter with Baxter, due to its impact on the London traffic that particular day. Hence, the march contributes to the continuity in the line of threat. The intertwining of these events has tremendous consequences for Perowne on this particular day, as they lead to his encounters with Baxter. This resembles the bass line, especially if one can regard the protest march and its impact on Perowne's day as a 'coloured' variation related to the plane.

In terms of violence, the introduction of Baxter urgently brings violence from a more distanced and international level, into Perowne's private sphere. The possible threat of violence within the private sphere is, however, not introduced by this encounter, as it is already present through the description of the Perownes' front doors:

three stout Banham locks, two black iron bolts as old as the house, two tempered steel security chains, a spyhole with a brass cover, the box of electronics that works the Entryphone system, the red panic button, the alarm pad.

(McEwan, 2006:36-37)

The safety measures by the Perownes' front door are not intended for protection against international terrorists and burning planes, but rather to protect the home from people like Baxter: "the city's poor, the drug-addicted, the downright bad [...]" (McEwan 2006:37). Fear is regardless of these measures, and it is precisely fear, realised in Rosalind who is held at knifepoint, that ultimately opens the door for Baxter. This provides yet another example of how the characters act according to violent threat.

The suggested bass line in *Saturday* contains various relations to sound – several which are associated to low pitched, bass-like sounds. The plane has its low rumbling sound, and trombones and large lambeg drums accompany the protest march. The drums are even referred to by means of an onomatopoeic phrase, "[t]umty tumty tum" (McEwan 2006:71-72). These sounds are generally associated with low pitch, but it is not until Perowne visits Theo's rehearsal that an actual bass line is introduced. Perowne "feels the bassline thump into his sternum and puts his hand to the sore spot there" (McEwan 2006:170). It is common to feel the beat of an electronically amplified bass line in one's chest, but to Perowne, the bruising left by Baxter considerably increases the discomfort of this feeling. The bass line in the blues, which in many aspects is very closely related to basso continuo, thus directly addresses Perowne's encounter with Baxter. This not only connects Baxter, the ultimately most pressing threat, directly to an actual bass line, but it also sheds light on the similar effect of Baxter and a musical bass line in the narrative.

2.1.2 Physical and Psychological Decline

Whereas terrorism and violence are avoidable to a certain extent, the decline of the human body is inevitable. This is certainly a threat to Perowne, who ultimately fears “the long process by which you become your children’s child” (McEwan 2006:31). The narrative is saturated with references to his own health, and in them the threat of the inevitable decline of his body: “Perowne has always had physical ambitions and he’s reluctant to let them go” (McEwan 2006:20). He measures himself by what he can *still* do, such as run half-marathons and beat “some of the younger medics at squash” (McEwan 2006:21). This provides an explanation as to why the squash game with Strauss is of such importance to him. They are both “halfway decent club players, both approaching fifty”, and by winning the game Perowne “believes he’s proved to himself something essential in his own nature” (McEwan 2006:104,115). It seems as though Perowne considers physical strength as a part of his character, and as he begins to lose points to Strauss it is evident that “[t]he game becomes an extended metaphor of character defect” (McEwan 2006:106).

Similar to how the squash game emphasises the importance of physical strength to Perowne, his mother becomes the symbol of what he ultimately fears psychologically: “He’ll be ruthless with himself [...] to avoid his mother’s fate. Mental death” (McEwan 2006:165). Lily Perowne has already become her son’s child when “his immediate concern is to prevent her eating a teabag” (McEwan 2006:164). Perowne is young and vigorous compared to his mother, but this is highly relative, and reversed when he learns of his daughter Daisy’s pregnancy: “Henry contends with fatherly thoughts [...] at this unknown Italian’s assault on the family’s peace and cohesion” (McEwan 2006:240). Perowne is no longer the primary caretaker of his daughter, which implies that the process of him becoming her child has already begun – regardless of who he might outplay in squash.

Perowne’s mother has suffered both a physical and a psychological decline, whereas Baxter has combined psychological decline with physical strength – an imbalance that makes him unpredictable and possibly dangerous. It is reasonable to assume that his fear, as well as the symptoms, of Huntington’s disease has contributed to his threatening behaviour.⁹ This implies that it is the threat of human decline that causes Baxter’s intimidating behaviour towards his surroundings. As seen above, the fear of human decline continually controls the

⁹ Huntington’s disease is “an inherited disease of the brain. [...] Early symptoms can include personality changes, mood swings and unusual behaviour” (NHS 2012).

characters' choice of lifestyle and actions. It is therefore reasonable to include this aspect in the possible resemblance to the basso continuo in the Goldberg Variations.

The most solid arguments for this resemblance are the foundation this line creates and, as we will see, how the various events of the day are shaped according to it. From anonymous citizen, via neurosurgeon to a private family man, threats pervade every sphere of Perowne's life, and become one of the features in which McEwan enmesh private and public spheres. The threat of international terrorism is arguably the most frequently mentioned threat in the narrative, especially due to the burning plane that flew into Perowne's Saturday.

2.2 Aria and Aria da Capo e Fine

[T]hen, the Aria returns, identical on the page, but changed by all the variations that have come before.

(McEwan 2006:254)

The original name of the Goldberg Variations, “Keyboard Practice, consisting of an Aria with diverse variations for the harpsichord with 2 manuals”, indicates that the Aria is distinct from the other variations in the piece. One possible explanation for this is the tradition of calling the theme of a variation for ‘aria’ or ‘air’. In those cases, “both its melody and harmony [could be] glimpsed from time to time” in the following variations (Williams 2001:35). The melody of the Aria in the Goldberg Variations however, is not heard until it is repeated at the end in the Aria da Capo e Fine.¹⁰ As mentioned, the variations in this piece are variations of a bass line rather than of a melody, which makes the Aria “not the theme but itself a variation” (Williams 2001:54). There are nevertheless two things in particular that divides the Aria from the other variations. Firstly, it is the beginning of the piece, and the first impression of the bass line (in musical terms called the first exposition). Consequently it becomes a point of departure and reference for the entire piece. Secondly, the Aria returns after the other thirty variations, in the da Capo, which means that it becomes the beginning and ending of the piece.

The name, ‘Aria with diverse variations’ does not address the da Capo in particular, which raises the question if it is an individual part of the piece or not. The musical expression da Capo e Fine means ‘from the beginning’ to the place marked Fine, which slightly differs from ‘repetition’. The narrator in *Saturday* recognise the uniqueness of the da Capo despite the score it shares with the Aria. This change is addressed by, among others, Peter Williams, who describes the difference as impossible to avoid: “[i]n music, no such return can have a neutral Affekt. Its melody is made to stand out by what has gone on in the last five variations” (Williams 2001:92). Glenn Gould’s famous recording of the variations from 1955 contributes to the claim that the da Capo is more than a repetition. All the variations consist of two different parts, which creates the musical form AB. In every variation, both parts are marked with a repetition sign, which in reality creates the form AABB.¹¹ Gould does not play the repetitions in his recording, and he therefore omits almost half the piece (Gould 1955). He does, however, include the da Capo, a choice implying that the da Capo is more than a mere

¹⁰ Hereafter, the Aria and the Aria da Capo e Fine will mostly be referred to as Aria and the da Capo.

¹¹ See Appendix I.

repetition. I have chosen to treat the Aria and the da Capo as two separate variations, similar to how Gould treats them, and to how Williams and the narrator describe them in *Saturday*.

The Aria and the da Capo are arguably present in the narrative, not only by being directly addressed, but also on a structural level in the bedroom scenes that begin and end Perowne's *Saturday*. They appear identical, but the latter is changed by all the events that have come before. Firstly, the scenes begin and end the narrative, similar to how the Aria and the da Capo begin and end the piano piece. Secondly, Perowne's thoughts and actions are subordinate to various threats, much in the same way as how the melodies are subordinate to the chords of the basso continuo. Thirdly, the similarity is strengthened by the fact that the two scenes are close to identical when compared to other scenes in the narrative. The bedroom scenes are 'identical on the page' in the sense that Henry is awake in the early morning hours, and is standing by his bedroom window. He looks out on the square, and pictures what it would look like during daytime. Lastly, the last bedroom scene reveals a change in Perowne similar to the description of the da Capo above. In addition to these similarities, the location, namely the protagonist's bedroom, relates *Saturday* to aforementioned *Les Variations Goldberg*, and is therefore connected not only to the musical piece, but also to the literary tradition influenced by it.

Similar to how the Aria is the first exposition of the basso continuo, the first bedroom scene introduces the line of threat. Perowne's actions and thoughts in this scene are, especially after his discovery of the plane, results of his fear. When he discovers what he believes to be a meteor "too extraordinary not to share", he wants to wake his wife, but as the threat of a terrorist attack is brought up, "he no longer thinks of waking Rosalind. Why wake her into this nightmare?" (McEwan 2006:14-15). At the end of the day, in the last scene, "he hears a distant rumble of an airplane, the first of the morning rush hour into Heathrow" (McEwan 2006:271). This time, the airplane clearly does not pose a threat to him and, in comparison with the first airplane he notices that day, it is described more similar to the Luftwaffe. His change of actions is directly connected to the possibility of, or lack of, a threat, which is a relationship comparable to that of the melody and the bass line in the Goldberg Variations. Perowne's thoughts and actions can be regarded as representations of melodies because they are subordinate to the underlying and dominating line. The scenes, in this case the bedroom scenes, are the place in which actions and thoughts become subordinate to the line of threat, and they could therefore be said to resemble the variations in the piano piece. This will be further discussed in section 2.3.

Similar to the rest of the novel, these scenes are focalised mainly through Perowne, who is the “central intelligence” of the novel (Knapp 2007:124). The use of free indirect discourse enables the reader to foremost detect Perowne’s subordinate relationship to elements like terrorism, violence and human decline, and it similarly denies the reader access to equal information about the remaining characters. This is visible in, for example, the extensive digression on Perowne’s profession as a neurosurgeon. Through the detailed description of Perowne’s professional daily life it becomes clear that he is an experienced and renowned surgeon who is “something of a master in the art” (McEwan 2006:8). After the introduction of the major threat of the plane, however, the rather pessimistic element of threat is introduced in his, otherwise successful, professional life, as attention is drawn towards his hands:

Most people [...] take a look at the surgeon’s hands in the hope of reassurance. [...] These hands are steady enough, but they are large. [...] [Y]ou might not want such hands, even gloved, tinkering with your brain.

(McEwan, 2006:19-20)

Despite being a talented surgeon, it is evident that Perowne still worries that he poses a threat to his patients. This change of thought takes place after he has discovered the airplane, which might be coincidental, but it might also be said to harmonise with the dominating line that has now entered the narrative, thus making it resemble the relationship between the bass line and the melody in the Aria.

In written form, the Aria and the da Capo are not merely ‘identical on the page’, but identical in the sense that they are performed from the same piece of sheet music: written once and played twice.¹² There is no instruction in the novel to read the same passage one more time, because “the formal repetition of specific parts of the work at predetermined points is [...] no part of the plan of such works as the drama, the epic, and the novel” (Brown 1963:110). This exemplifies one of the structural differences between literature and music, namely that “music tolerates and even requires far more repetition than does literature” (Brown 1963:111). According to this, the structural influence of the Aria and the da Capo is likely to occur as considerable similarity rather than duplication.

As expected, the words are not identical on the page like the sheet music, but there are similarities that provide a structural resemblance. The setting, for instance, contains several similarities: Perowne is the only person awake “[s]ome hours before dawn” (McEwan 2006:3) in the room. He is standing by his bedroom window and looking out on the square. He observes nurses walking across the square, and he can see airplanes fly towards Heathrow.

¹² See Appendix I.

During the time he spends by the window in the first and last scene, he thinks about international terrorism in past, present, and future, his professional life and his family. Throughout the initially neatly planned day, Perowne has moved around different locations in his house as well as London in general. He drives past the march on Tottenham Court Road, which leads to the first encounter with Baxter on University Street, before he meets Strauss at the squash court. After the game he buys the ingredients for the family dinner, returns home, goes to visit his mother at Suffolk Place, drops by Theo's rehearsal, and returns home. At home he stays in the kitchen, the living room, and his office before he leaves for the hospital to perform surgery on Baxter. Finally, he returns to his bedroom. The kitchen and the bedroom are two of the few locations he returns to. The kitchen becomes the setting for his first encounter with Theo as they watch the news about the Russian airplane, and later for his heated discussion with Daisy regarding the War on Terror. Finally, the kitchen is where the family gathers to eat dinner after the intrusion. Compared to these scenes, the two bedroom scenes become strikingly similar.

In *Saturday*, the da Capo is recognised as a changed version of the Aria. What exactly does this change consist of? Smyth asks: “[c]an anything (an idea, sound, event or image) ever be repeated, or does every attempt at repetition create – perhaps unwillingly, perhaps only marginally – something new?” (2008:50). The Aria and the da Capo are the same piece of sheet music, played at two different times. The differences must therefore be based on the performance and perception of the piece. One could measure it by length and find that in the recording of Angela Hewitt, which Perowne selects for his surgery on Baxter, the Aria is 1,5 minutes longer than the da Capo, which suggests that there are differences between the two (Hewitt 1999: track 1 and 32).

A notable difference between the Aria and the da Capo is that the latter is a repetition of the Aria – it has already been heard. Consequently, the da Capo paradoxically differs from all the other variations, including the Aria, as familiarity provides a second chance of interpretation in which it is close to impossible to remain unchanged. A similar change, caused by literature, is depicted when Daisy reads the poem ‘Dover Beach’. On her first reading, Perowne “sees Daisy on a terrace overlooking a beach” (McEwan 2006:220). When Baxter, like the statement at the end of Variation 30, tells her to “[r]ead it again”, Perowne realises that he “missed first time the mention of the cliffs of England [...] [n]ow it appears there's no terrace, but an open window” (McEwan 2006:221).

Similarly, Perowne is changed when he returns to his bedroom window and the dawn of day. Situated at the exact same place, looking at the same square, Perowne's experience seems thoroughly changed by the course of the day. The imaginary Edwardian gentleman illustrates Perowne's own state of mind at the beginning of the narrative. He did not predict the events of his neatly planned day anymore than the Edwardian could have predicted the great wars of the 20th century. Where the Luftwaffe previously served as a brief and arguably innocent explanation of Perowne's view, it has now become a part of "the hell that lay ahead" of the imaginary Edwardian (McEwan 2006:276). Perowne is still preoccupied with international conflicts in past, present and future, but his main concern is now the various threats his family might face, their future, and the most explicit threat of the day: Baxter. The threat has become personal. This interaction, or rather transition, between private and public spheres is, according to Henry (2008), typical of McEwan. Perowne is not only certain that the war is going to happen, but he also predicts the future of his family: "there are things he can see that he knows must happen. Soon it will be his mother's time [...] and then it will be the turn of John Grammaticus" (McEwan 2006:273-275). Theo and Daisy will grow up, and Perowne will face the day when he cannot maintain his present lifestyle.

Both the return of the Aria and Perowne's return to the bedroom window provide an element of circularity: "[Perowne] feels himself turning on a giant wheel, like the Eye [...] or [...] the eastward turn of the earth" (McEwan 2006:272). The changes in him caused by the events of the day, have their parallel in the da Capo. As pointed out during the surgery, the previous variations make it impossible for the return of the Aria, and in the novel the bedroom scene, to remain unchanged. One should note that the change in the last scene does not imply a decline in the threat of international terrorism, but rather an increased concern for threats of violence and decline on a more personal level. This shift can be explained by the events of the day, in which the most pressing threats have become increasingly personal. Similarly, Williams (2001) argue that the changes in the da Capo are caused by the variations that precede it.

A significant difference remains between the musical piece and the novel. The Aria and the da Capo derive from the same piece of sheet music, whereas the two bedroom scenes are two different scenes that, strictly speaking, are far from 'identical on the page'. As previously addressed, the difference between the Aria and the da Capo depends on performance and perception. There clearly is a difference in Perowne's perception of the world in the two scenes, and it is possible to trace a structural influence from the Aria and the

da Capo in the two bedroom scenes. One should however note that the fictional scenes cannot possess more than a structural *resemblance* to the piano piece.

2.3 Variations

Like the *Goldberg Variations* that Henry listens to during surgeries and the series of chords Theo's band endlessly riffs in, the novel *Saturday* offers variations on themes. (Root 2011:67-68)

The significant change in the da Capo is created through the thirty Variations in-between the two Arias.¹³ This chapter will concern these thirty Variations, and their possible impact on *Saturday*. As previously mentioned, the Variations have the form AB, or AABB if the repeats are included. They share a harmonic point of departure, but are at the same time thirty "distinct essays" (Williams 2001:35):

Aria

Variato 1	Variato 16 Overture
Variato 2	Variato 17
Variato 3 Canone all' Unisono	Variato 18 Canone alla Sesta
Variato 4	Variato 19
Variato 5	Variato 20
Variato 6 Canone alla Seconda	Variato 21 Canone alla Settina
Variato 7	Variato 22
Variato 8	Variato 23
Variato 9 Canone alla Terza	Variato 24 Canone all' Ottava
Variato 10 Fughetta	Variato 25
Variato 11	Variato 26
Variato 12 Canone alla Quarta	Variato 27 Canone alla Nona
Variato 13	Variato 28
Variato 14	Variato 29
Variato 15 Canone alla Quinta	Variato 30 Quodlibet
	Aria da Capo e Fine ¹⁴

As this structure shows, every third Variation is structured as a canon, which means that the different parts take up the same melody after each other, which may sound as though the different parts begin to perform the same piece at different times.¹⁵ In the third Variation, this is realised with the first part beginning to play the melody in the first bar, and the second part

¹³ I have chosen to capitalise Variation(s) in this section when it refers to the musical sections between the Aria and the da Capo.

¹⁴ All titles from Bach 1968:61-106.

¹⁵ Here, 'parts' refer to the different parts of a musical composition, such as the part of the first violin or the cello.

begins the same melody in the second bar (Bach 1968:64). It thus sounds as though the second part is one bar behind the first part. The Variations share several similarities such as form and harmonic point of departure. The differences must therefore be present in elements such as key, either major or minor, tempi, rhythm, and dynamics, as well as performance.¹⁶ One should note that the Variations require both a sufficient amount of difference and similarity in order to be actual *variations* on a *theme*.

Variation on a theme has “never been an independent literary form except under the direct influence of music” (Brown 1963:129). This suggests that a literary equivalent to the Goldberg Variations seems unlikely unless there is a, more or less, direct influence from the actual piece. This is the case in Nancy Huston’s *Les Variations Goldberg*, in which the narrative describes the protagonist as she plays the Goldberg Variations: “The narrative consists of thirty ironic ‘variations’, each introduced by a keyword characterizing the thoughts of individual members of the audience [...] and so on for thirty variations [...] with only occasional references to the variation actually being played at the moment” (Ziolkowski 2010: 629-630). Another example of the influence of the Variations, is to use the form, as is done in *The Gold Bug Variations* (Powers 1991). Powers uses the names of the 32 Variations (including the Aria and the da Capo) as headlines for the novel’s 32 chapters. I do not expect to find the repeated structure of the canons in *Saturday*, or the thirty Variations as presented in Powers or Huston’s novels. The musical influence in *Saturday* does not consist of a systematic imitation of the Goldberg Variations, and if there is any resemblance to the Variations in the novel, one is more likely to discover elements from the Variations rather than complete equivalents. This potentially raises several issues, most importantly the issue of which and how many elements of the Variations that must be present, in order to identify resemblance to them. I would argue that the foremost important features of the Variations are their subordinately harmonic relationship to the bass line, and their different approach to this relationship.

The harmonic relationship to the bass line is the unifying factor that enables the thirty different pieces to be regarded as a coherent whole, as opposed to a compilation of various tunes. In order for the Variations to vary these harmonic realisations, however, it is essential that they present differences. Brown uses Robert Browning’s *The Ring and the Book* as an example of literary variation: “The average poetic variation says the same thing again in different words, but each of Browning’s says something different within the same framework

¹⁶ Tempi is a musical term referring to the plural of tempo.

of events” (1963:134). Difference within the same framework becomes the most characteristic type of variation as a structural device. In the following quotation from *Saturday*, the occurrence of literary theme and variations is acknowledged:

[I]s there a lifetime’s satisfaction in twelve bars of three obvious chords? Perhaps it’s one of those cases of a microcosm giving you the whole world [...] like a Jane Austen novel. When player and listener together know the route so well, the pleasure lies in the deviation, the unexpected turn against the grain. [...] So it is, Perowne tries to convince himself, with clipping an aneurysm: absorbing variation on an unchanging theme.

(McEwan 2006:27)

This is interesting, not as an identification of a possible Variation, but because the narrator reveals consciousness of the occurrence of variations, not only in music, such as the blues, but also within literature and medicine. A possible representation of such variations in *Saturday* may be the recurring detailed descriptions of mental processes: “[p]art of the rhythm of the novel inheres in its repetition of mental movements with variation (like the Goldberg Variations Perowne admires) [...] Such repetitions (and there are many in *Saturday*) contribute to the novel’s sense of density, compression, and formal coherence” (Knapp 2007:129). These descriptions are often the result of the narrator’s over-specified explanation of what Perowne, the professional neurosurgeon, experiences. When he sees the girl in the square, who is scratching her back, he regards it as “[a]mphetamine-driven fornication [...] [o]r an exogenous opioid-induced histamine reaction, common among new users” (McEwan 2006:60). Similarly, he regards his own thoughts at times to be “more as a mental shrug followed by an interrogative pulse. This is the pre-verbal language that linguists call *mentalese*” (McEwan 2006:81). Such descriptions of various phenomena occur throughout the narrative, and it is possible to argue that these descriptions allude to the Variations. This would be a very interesting idea to pursue in a medical reading of McEwan’s novel.

This study does, however, argue that the different characters’ ways of thinking and acting represent something roughly similar to the harmonic relationship between the melodies and the bass line in the Goldberg Variations. The plane, and various elements connected to it, create a continuous line of possible threat throughout the narrative. Considering that the bass has been identified as a line of feelings, it would therefore be reasonable to consider the possible melodic equivalents as human, because human beings are able to act according to feelings.

As we have already seen in the representation of the Aria, Perowne’s actions change according to the present threat. Other examples suggesting the same behaviour are the protest

march and Baxter's behaviour. The march is subordinate to the on-going conflicts between the Western and the Arabic world, and the choice to protest is a direct consequence of the threat of war. On a more personal level, Baxter has his reasons for behaving violently. Perowne's first assumption is that Baxter, only "five foot five or six", is "compensating for his height" (McEwan 2006:84,88). Later he understands "that honour is to be satisfied by a thorough beating" (McEwan 2006:93). Another possibility, and unquestionably explanation of, Baxter's behaviour is his medical condition – "his secret shame" (McEwan 2006:94). An act that supports this is his change in action, from aggressive to defensive, when Perowne addresses his disease in the first encounter, and how that leads to an even more hostile situation later. The fear of the disease, and the faint hope of medical treatment, might drive Baxter to seek out Perowne's home later that day, in addition to the issue of reinstating his status among his friends. One should note that these remain pure assumptions, as the narrator does not provide the reader with sufficient access to Baxter's thoughts. The narratological choice of using Perowne as the central intelligence with a frequent use of free indirect discourse severely limits the possibility of determining whether the other characters act according to the line of threat or not. Consequently, it is problematic to find sufficient complementary similarity, on both general and detailed level, to claim a certain representation of the Variations.

2.3.1 Variation No. 30

One of the few sections in the story that might provide enough access to characters other than Perowne, is the scene where Baxter and one of his friends, Nigel, enter the Perownes' home. In the following I would like to argue that the scene in *Saturday* where Baxter and Nigel enter the Perownes' home and threatens the family,¹⁷ bears structural resemblance to Variation no. 30 in *The Goldberg Variations*. This is foremost evident in the placing in the work of art, namely prior to the da Capo, and most importantly, in the structure of harmony in which the melodies act according to the bass line.

Variation 30 is also called Quodlibet. 'Quodlibet' means "what you please" and "alludes to a long tradition [...] [of] making music by singing successively or simultaneously various tunes" (Williams 2001:89). This is evident in this Variation through one of its most distinctive features, namely the combination of several independent melodies in a counterpoint. In classical music, a counterpoint is "the art of adding one or more melodies as

¹⁷ Hereafter referred to as the intrusion.

accompaniment to a given melody or ‘plain-song’ according to certain fixed rules; the style of composition in which melodies are thus combined” (Oxford English Dictionary online). The combined melodies might differ in terms of character and rhythm, but they become harmonically dependent when they meet in counterpoint. The different melodies used in this Variation “have not all been conclusively identified by current researchers” because they are incomplete, and are brief sketches or parts of the melodies (Williams 2001:89). This might suggest that one does not necessarily have to identify all the melodies in order to identify the counterpoint. In the same way as Williams treats the Variation, this study will not aim at a complete identification of the contents of a possible counterpoint, but rather aim to detect resemblance.

The Quodlibet is the last Variation before the da Capo and is “clearly conceived as a grand finale to the set of canons” (Williams 2001:47). The intrusion could resemble what Williams calls a ‘grand finale’ to Perowne’s encounters with Baxter, both actual and imaginative, as it is the dramatic climax of the narrative. As already seen, the Goldberg Variations have a set of canons appearing in every third variation, thus grouping the variations in groups of three. The character of Baxter does not resemble this organisation precisely, but he reappears throughout the narrative, both as a character and in Perowne’s thoughts.

The intrusion ends when Perowne and Theo throw Baxter down the stairs, but the remains of the day are naturally coloured by this incident. The police and paramedics arrive, and later that evening, Perowne is asked to perform surgery on Baxter. When he returns home, Perowne feels the need to “wash away the sweat of concentration and all traces of the hospital – he imagines fine bone dust from Baxter’s skull lodged in the pores of his forehead – and soaps himself vigorously” (McEwan 2006:263). He considers examining his bruise, the last physical trace of Baxter’s presence, but instead “he goes into the bedroom [...] and switches off the lamp” (McEwan 2006:264). Here it is evident that the intrusion and its aftermath are directly followed by the possible representation of the da Capo, with the transitional point of turning off a lamp. Both the order of, and transition between, these episodes resemble the Variations. By itself, this does not reveal a resemblance to the Quodlibet, but it is a strengthening argument in combination with an analysis of the resemblance in content – similar to how the bedroom scenes are situated at the beginning and end of the narrative.

The most distinct feature of the Quodlibet is the counterpoint in which different melodies meet and harmonise. This should therefore be the main point of reference for a possible resemblance of the musical elements in the literature. The representation of contrapuntal art in literature is particularly interesting because it is “practically impossible” (Brown 1963:39-40). In a strict musical sense, a counterpoint is not only the ‘meeting’ of different melodies, but also the result of “simultaneously produced tones” (Brown, 1963:39), which makes sense because the different melodies are played at once. A literary *resemblance* to this ‘meeting’ could be the description of actions happening at the same time, but the *equivalent* to simultaneous tones in literature must be simultaneous speech – a phenomenon most unusual, compared to its musical parallel. This might be explained by the fact that (written representations of) literature is read horizontally, whereas music simultaneously can be read horizontally and vertically. The sheet music of the Quodlibet (appendix II) exemplifies how music can be read. It consists of two lines containing two parts each, and these are to be read at the same time. Simultaneously produced tones are necessary to create musical harmony, whereas simultaneous speech is often considered chaotic, and even rude. In musical terms, simultaneous speech is therefore more closely related to disharmony than harmonic counterpoint, which would contribute to the explanation of the claimed “impossibility” of contrapuntal literature. Another possible, and more probable, reason is the aforementioned internal dependence of musical content. If musical content were only capable of existing in relation to itself, then one would assume that a literary representation would be impossible.

Nevertheless, the literary representation of counterpoint has been explored in interarts studies of music and literature: “writers [...] have seen from the beginning the impossibility of an exact literary parallel, and consequently have sought some device that might be a *rough sort* of equivalent” (Brown 1963:40, emphasis added). One could discuss whether any kind of a literary representation of a musical work can move beyond the point of a rough sort of equivalent or not. In the case of contrapuntal resemblance, it is evident that it only becomes possible through a rough comparison to the musical term.

For present purposes, it is useful to include the events preceding the intrusion, when the family members, one by one, enter the house. The Quodlibet belongs to a tradition of making music by performing various tunes simultaneously or successively. This study has previously suggested a melodic resemblance in the characters. The combination of them here, where they successively enter the house through the same door, all of them contributing to a development of the situation through their different characteristics, has a certain similarity to

the musical term medley: “A piece [...] containing well-known tunes; a group or collection of songs, instrumental pieces, or musical extracts performed together as a continuous whole, and freq. arranged so that the end of one piece merges into the beginning of the next” (Oxford English Dictionary online). This could be a possible rough sort of equivalent to the Quodlibet, where the resemblance is evident in the shared tradition of successively and simultaneously performed tunes. There are, however, considerable differences between a medley of successively played tunes and a musical counterpoint, and Variation 30 in the Goldberg Variations is an example of the latter. To find structural resemblance of a medley of successively played tunes in *Saturday*, and use it to prove resemblance to the Variation in question would not only be a considerably ‘rough equivalence’, but also a “desperate attempt to force the musical analogy” (Brown 1963:42). The presence of these four characters does, however, provide the possibility for polyphony that could be realised in a counterpoint. The Quodlibet is described as “a chorale at the end [...] in which all the performers would join” (Williams 2001:89). In *Saturday*, a similar description is offered as it seems that Perowne’s entire day has caught up with him: “Nearly all the elements of his day are assembled; it only needs his mother, and Jay Strauss to appear with his squash racket” (McEwan 2006:206-207).

When Perowne, Daisy, Grammaticus (Perowne’s father-in-law), and Theo are gathered in the house, there are four relatively distinct ‘melodies’ in the scene. Daisy and Grammaticus are not yet reconciled, and Perowne and Theo act as mediators between the two. For these reasons it is interesting to see how they unite when Rosalind enters the house: “her family is calling her name and beginning to go towards her” (McEwan 2006:206). This could arguably resemble a counterpoint, because the different ‘melodies’ meet in the act of calling Rosalind’s name and moving towards her. When Baxter has entered the room, and the intrusion is an established fact, there are two distinct groups in the room: the offenders and the offended. Broadly speaking, these two groups find themselves in the same situation, within the same framework of events (to use Brown’s words), but with vastly different points of view. This situation could clearly resemble a counterpoint. The offenders and the offended fulfil the artistic demand of being “separate—almost independent—and yet related” (Brown 1963:40), because both the difference and presence of both parts are required to cause this situation. Furthermore, both parts act according to the present threat, which connects them to the representation of basso continuo. The Perowne family are faced with violent threats, and again, Baxter faces his own situation by posing a threat to others. What here becomes problematic in relation to a contrapuntal resemblance is the difference between the situation

and the narrative. Brown emphasises that “in the case of any literary treatment of two more or less distinct plots or viewpoints, both are simultaneously present in the reader’s mind, even though they must necessarily be presented separately” (1963:41). When Baxter has entered the living room, Rosalind says that he has a knife (McEwan 2006:206). The plot then allows for a change of perspective into Baxter’s point of view, as imagined by Perowne, before it returns to Perowne’s reaction to the knowledge of the knife: “Perowne [...] sees his family through Baxter: the girl and the old fellow won’t be a problem; the boy is strong but doesn’t look handy. As for the lanky doctor, that’s why he’s here [...] When Rosalind warned of the knife, he froze mid-step” (McEwan 2006:207). Such narrative techniques can, as Brown suggests, create a certain feeling of simultaneity, and it is possible to argue that this situation can create a contrapuntal feeling in the reader.

In sum, this shows several possible attempts at a resemblance to the Variations in the Goldberg Variations. The characters, and especially Perowne, tend to act subordinately to the various threats they encounter, and the intrusion includes both polyphony and a uniting of different melodies. The difference between an actual counterpoint and a possible ‘contrapuntal feeling’ is, however, significant to such a degree that I will not try to force this musical analogy further.

3. Conclusion

Ian McEwan invites any reader of *Amsterdam* or *Saturday* to think about the world of music in his fiction. The different levels on which he directly or more abstractly refers to music, enable both non-musicologists, as well as professional musicians, to engage in the musicality of the novels. This study has seen that there are differing views on the significance of music in *Saturday*, and it sides with Dinnerstein's view in suggesting that there is a deeper analogy between narrative and musical structure in the novel than what has previously been suggested.

The Goldberg Variations unquestionably constitute an important component in *Saturday*. Both the narrator and the protagonist display considerable knowledge about music, and Perowne's profound admiration of the Goldberg Variations does not appear coincidental. In addition to playing an important part of Perowne's professional life, the piece possibly figures on several levels, beyond the literal, in the novel – especially on what Grimm (1999) refers to as formal level.

There is a strong analogy between the basso continuo of the Goldberg Variations and the plane motif in *Saturday*. Formally, they share continuity throughout the piece and the narrative respectively. Similar to the basso continuo, the plane motif is a repeated element in the work of art, and it is never identical to previous expositions of the motif. Harmonically, the plane motif with its various 'colourings', alludes to the basso continuo as a dominating element that sets the premises for the characters' actions and Perowne's thoughts.

The plane motif affects Perowne's entire day, which results in a protagonist with a thoroughly changed perception of the view from his bedroom window at the end of the day. This strongly echoes the change, yet circularity between the Aria and the da Capo on a metaphorical level, and it is my belief that this is the similarity Dinnerstein had in mind when making her comment about the relationship between the two works of art. In addition, the bedroom scenes have considerable formal similarities to the two Arias in terms of placing within the work and the similarity of the scenes. The Aria and the da Capo are addressed more metaphorically when Daisy reads 'Dover Beach' and Baxter, like the instructions at the end of Variation 30, tells her to read it again. Perowne's differing perceptions of the poem equals the perceived change in the Aria when its score is repeated in the da Capo. The analogy between the Arias and the bedroom scenes additionally contributes to the connection between the basso continuo and the plane motif, as they display the harmonic relationship between the

dominating line of threat and the subordinate Perowne. There are, however, problematic aspects in such an analysis as well. It is questionable whether the last bedroom scene could represent the da Capo or not, as it is not a strict repetition. It is, however, possible to make this claim due to the different degrees of tolerated repetition of extensive parts in literature and music.

What become considerably problematic in this study are analogies involving musical content. In general, whenever the resemblance or influence relies more on musical content than form, it is far less probable to be realised as anything other than a considerably rough comparison. This is evident in the attempt to identify a possible counterpoint in the intrusion, in which there are several aspects that could only resemble a brief sketch of an idea of equivalence. The contrapuntal form further sheds light on a considerable difference between literature and music, namely that the former is generally read horizontally, whereas the latter could simultaneously be read both horizontally and vertically. The vertical aspect is crucial in order to create simultaneously produced tones, and consequently it is difficult, if not impossible, to incorporate into literary works. This confirms Brown's findings with regards to the intrinsic differences in meaning in literature and music, as well as the issues raised regarding counterpoint. It also confirms the hypothesis that musical form is more easily transferable between the arts than is content.

A concern that this study has more or less avoided is the question of authorial intention. To argue with certainty that a fictional work is influenced by a specific work would equal the attempt to pose as an agent of the authorial intention, which again is knowledge beyond the reach of anyone but the author himself. When conducting such an analysis, one should always be aware of the possibility of developing blindness similar to that of *Amsterdam's* protagonist, Linley, in the pursuit of a connection. The musical analogy can easily be pushed too far in the attempt to detect a pattern of authorial intention. The question of this intention becomes especially intricate in a possibly interdisciplinary influence, as it requires considerable knowledge of both fields of expertise in question. Dinnerstein's belief in the Goldberg Variations' structural influence on *Saturday*, as opposed to *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, emphasises the crucial fact that one can only recognise what one knows. This again implies that while anyone can perceive Perowne's admiration of Bach's composition, only professional musicians or those with equal knowledge of the field can comprehend the Goldberg Variations' possibly extensive impact on the narrative.

McEwan has throughout his authorship demonstrated a thorough understanding of the knowledge domains he, and his fictional characters, engage in. It would be an underestimation of one of the most significant British writers since the 1970s to write the Goldberg Variations off as a random choice of music in Perowne's operating theatre. Compared to works like Powers (1991), deficiency of direct incorporation of the Goldberg Variations' structure could be one of the reasons for scholars' usually brief comments on the relationship between the piece and McEwan's work. With this being said, this study has shown analogous connections between the Goldberg Variations and *Saturday* that exceeds what scholars have previously suggested, and the Goldberg Variations does indeed linger throughout the narrative 'like a sustained piano note'.

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APPENDIX I

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ARIA.

The sheet music of Aria from the Goldberg Variations (Bach 1968:61). The repetition sign looks like this : || – and is situated at the end of bar 16, the beginning of bar 17, and at the end of bar 32.

APPENDIX II

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Variatio 30. Quodlibet. a 4 Clav.

Aria da Capo e Fine.

The sheet music of Variation 30, the Quodlibet, with the instruction to continue to play “Aria da Capo e Fine” after the Quodlibet (Bach 1968:106).