

“A Disturbing Lack of Musical and Stylistic Continuity”? Elliott Carter, Charles Ives, and Musical Borrowing

David Thurmaier

Elliott Carter and Charles Ives shared a complex personal and professional relationship. Ives supported Carter’s musical pursuits as a young man and remained a guiding influence throughout his career. As Jan Swafford writes, however, “Carter, whose mature music would owe a great deal to Ives . . . would pay back his mentor with a baffling mixture of admiration, advocacy, and cold repudiation” (Swafford 1998: 334). Although he eventually softened his early criticism of Ives and acknowledged his musical debts, Carter was consistently puzzled by the stress in Ives’s music on musical borrowing—i.e., the procedures by which a composer includes material from or refers to pre-existing musical pieces in the context of an original work.¹ As Carter put it, Ives’s reliance on quotations accounted for “a disturbing lack of musical and stylistic continuity” (Perlis 1974: 145). On another occasion, Carter described Ives’s inclusion of popular songs and hymns as “constantly perplexing” (Edwards 1971: 63).²

In view of these and numerous other statements, it is equally perplexing that Carter borrows from Ives’s music on several occasions, most overtly in his 2001 *Figment No. 2 (Remembering Mr. Ives)* for solo cello. This composition contains literal snippets and gestures from, as well as stylistic allusions to, two Ives pieces: the *Concord Sonata* and *Hallowe’en*. In what follows, I explore the ways in which Carter borrows from Ives both literally and figuratively; how he incorporates those quotations into his music; and how he evokes Ives’s memory and musical style in several works. Along the way, I illuminate some contradictions of Carter’s aesthetic stance and connect them to broader problematics in late twentieth-century modernism.

The Quotation Problem

In nearly all of his writings on Ives, Carter acknowledges and admires Ives’s musical innovations, particularly those in rhythm and temporality. For example, in a 1973 letter to John Kirkpatrick, Carter observes: “What is interesting about Ives, today, are the many different procedures he thought up, so it seems, to produce his polyrhythmic and dissonant textures” (quoted in Meyer and Shreffler 2008: 210). Several scholars have previously investigated

Carter's interest in Ives's abstract compositional techniques. Felix Meyer and Anne Shreffler explain that "Carter the composer continued to find solutions for the same musical problems that Ives had posed: the combination of different groups of instruments moving at different speeds, new formal concepts, new ways to control the flow of time, and ways of orchestrating so that complex polyphonic textures could be clearly heard" (6). David Schiff also notes that "textures reminiscent of Ives's music can be heard throughout Carter's mature works, in abstract form" (Schiff 1983: 35).

Considering his admiration for such compositional procedures in Ives's music, it is peculiar that Carter seldom comments on the large body of music Ives composed without any trace of musical borrowing. Many of these pieces such as the piano studies were intended as compositional experiments and show Ives's imagination at its most fertile. In them, he creates and solves particular musical problems of rhythm, pitch, and temporality in smaller settings.³ In fact, a majority of these works would have interested Carter in light of their compositional rigor, but he chose not to comment on them, highlighting instead his disagreements with Ives's music that contains quotations.

To take an example of his problematic stance toward quotation in Ives's music, consider what Carter wrote in an essay from 1974:

As for myself, I have always been fascinated by the polyrhythmic aspect of Ives's music, as well as its multiple layering, but perplexed at times by the disturbing lack of musical and stylistic continuity, caused largely by the constant use of musical quotations in many works. To me a composer develops his own personal language, suitable to express his field of experience and thought. When he borrows music from another style and thought from his own, he is admitting that he did not really experience what he is presenting but has to borrow from someone else who did . . . It is, to me, disappointing that Ives too frequently was unable or unwilling to invent musical material that expressed his own vision authentically, instead of relying on the material of others. (Quoted in Perlis 1974: 145)

In Carter's view, Ives's use of quotations demonstrates a lack of originality and creativity and leads to a sense of discontinuity in the music. Though Carter was initially interested in Ives's music as a young man, as he developed as a composer he harbored a "mounting sense of frustration . . . because much of it [Ives's music] then seemed so disordered and even disorganized . . . [and] it was nearly impossible to understand how or why much of it was put together as it was" (quoted in Perlis 1974: 139). For a composer like Carter who valued qualities such as cohesion and stylistic continuity, this reaction may have been expected. As he put it, "I am always interested in a composer's phrases and their shape and content, the way they are joined,

the type of articulation used, as well as the general drift or continuity of a large section, and the construction of a whole work” (Carter 1997: 217). In another essay Carter explained that, “like him [Ives], I enjoy writing music of constant variety and change, but within a more highly focused and coherent sound–character and musical style than interested him” (Carter 1997: 256).

Carter’s conflicted opinions about Ives’s music first appeared publicly in his infamous review of the *Concord Sonata* from 1939 entitled “The Case of Mr. Ives” in the journal *Modern Music*. In the review, Carter fires numerous shots at Ives and the *Concord*, asserting that the piece is “formally weak,” suffers from a “lack of logic,” and is hampered by “helter–skelter harmonies.” He also comments on the use of quotations: “The piece’s aesthetic was too naïve to express serious thoughts, frequently depending on quotation of well–known American tunes, with little comment, possibly charming, but certainly trivial” (Carter 1997: 88–89). Carter later noted that his problems with Ives’s music (including the *Concord Sonata* specifically) around the time of the review arose out of its lack of clear and systematic temporal organization: “There seemed to be very large amounts of undifferentiated confusion . . . during which many conflicting things happen at once without concern either for the total effect or for the distinguishability of various levels” (Carter 1997: 222). Carter’s review greatly hurt Ives; after its publication, Carter never saw Ives in person again, thus effectively ending their friendship.⁴

I wish to suggest a few reasons for why Carter would want to distance himself from Ives’s use of musical borrowing. First, Carter’s ambivalence may have grown out of his own background and training, which differed significantly from Ives’s. Carter began his studies at Harvard as an English major, where in addition to being exposed to philosophers like Alfred North Whitehead, he read numerous works of modernist literature by authors such as Eliot, Cummings, Joyce, and Stein. After switching to study music and receiving his master’s degree, he went to France to study with Nadia Boulanger. These experiences must have strongly shaped his cosmopolitan literary and musical tastes.⁵ Although Ives was a strong formative influence on Carter, his most memorable youthful musical experiences developed from encounters with music by “progressive” European composers like Stravinsky and the Second Viennese School. As a result, Carter came to favor a more abstract conception of music, looking with suspicion at Ives’s use of more familiar models and styles. By contrast, Ives’s most salient early musical experiences were driven by his father and by his work as a church organist. During his undergraduate years at Yale (1894–98), Ives also studied with Horatio Parker, who advocated a conservative approach to composition strongly influenced by the Austro–Germanic composers of the early to mid–nineteenth century. Though by the time Carter met him

in 1924 Ives was established in the hustle and bustle of New York City, the older composer's heart was always firmly invested in the hymns and popular songs associated with the rural environment of Danbury, Connecticut, his beloved hometown. As such, Carter's more cultivated and urban upbringing in New York City likely made it difficult to comprehend why Ives felt so strongly about the music he used.

Carter's rejection could have simply resulted from his efforts to distance himself from his mentor. Given that innovation and originality were prized modernist musical traits, it would follow that a student at this time would try to differentiate his or her music from that of a mentor. Ives, for instance, fused borrowed material with more traditional forms and standard compositional techniques in ways that often obscured the musical texture, creating a different sense of how music flowed temporally. Whereas, as stated earlier, Carter dealt with some of the same temporal and textural issues, he advocated a decidedly more rigorous and systematic compositional method that produced new conceptions of time and structure. Part of this detachment is a matter of chronology: Ives composed the bulk of his music before compositional methods such as serialism were widely known in America. By contrast, Carter not only interacted with composers who employed these approaches, such as Stravinsky and Roger Sessions, but he also embraced these progressive compositional developments as catalysts for his own music.

Carter's ambivalence toward Ives also reflects the much-discussed paradox of twentieth-century composers engaging with music of the past while at the same time trying to disavow its influence. This problematic relationship to the music of the past reached its zenith during the height of modernism, precisely at the time when Carter began his compositional career. As Robin Holloway puts it, "the only permissible past is an invented trajectory of perpetual progress, arrogantly prescribing that every work must be a completely new start" (Holloway 2001: 97). To take an example of this mindset, consider Joseph Straus's description of Arnold Schoenberg, which provides a portrait of a composer conflicted about the musical past:

What history requires, for Schoenberg, is progress. Music is in a continuous process of evolution. It is the composer's task to comprehend the historical trend and to keep it going in the proper direction. The musical works of the past are tyrannous; one can only choose to obey. (Straus 1990: 7)⁶

Carter, like Schoenberg, was preoccupied with "progress," personal language, unity, and stylistic consistency, and was acutely aware of his music's relation to the past. For example, instead of trying to recreate the past musically or suggesting a nostalgic reading of it as Ives often did, Carter

expressly wrote his music for the present day: “I try to find continuities that gain meaning, change, and operate in time on a level that is parallel to our present experience of living” (quoted in Meyer and Shreffler 2008: 216). In another contrast, whereas Carter’s music exemplifies the modernist penchant for creating pieces “associated with scrupulous choice of artistic materials, and with hard work in arranging them,” Ives’s music has often been viewed as lacking unity and consistency (Albright 1999: 31).⁷

These qualities of unity and coherence were embedded early in Carter’s aesthetic as a young student at Harvard, where he gleaned ideas from the philosopher and professor Alfred North Whitehead, “whose philosophy of organicism and progression made a deep impression [on Carter]” (Schiff 1998: 11). Whitehead’s “philosophy of organism,” explained best by Carter in his 1960 essay on the music of Goffredo Petrassi, defines an event (in this case, musical) as a “unit of action in a total sequence in which the event contains within itself not only its own history but as well its prefiguration of possible futures and its own individualized character” (Carter 1997: 187). This produces a unique approach to musical continuity where a gesture is heard as an individual entity, yet it contains—and requires—elements that connect to what comes before and after it. This strategy of temporal organization differs markedly from what happens in many pieces by Ives, where his use of musical borrowing creates a more stylistically heterogeneous and variable aural experience.

Carter’s views about quotation are particularly puzzling because he used the technique several times in his own music. J. Peter Burkholder argues that Carter’s beliefs showed a lack of understanding of how Ives “conveys his experiences of music through the ways he reworks [borrowed materials] and the forms he uses” (Burkholder 1995: 469, n. 69). I propose instead that Carter probably did understand the musical techniques associated with borrowing and reworking in Ives’s music, but that he chose to de-emphasize their importance in favor of compositional features that appealed more closely to his own aesthetic preferences.

Thus while Carter clearly admired Ives’s music, its heterogeneous mix of late-nineteenth century American and European musical gestures and styles must have seemed to him rather dated. Moreover, Ives’s use of borrowing seems to have represented these antiquated styles with special prominence. And yet, as did every conflicted modernist, Carter quoted and emulated music by Ives and others. However, because of his predilection for formal clarity and compositional coherence, Carter’s purpose for using quotation differed greatly from Ives’s.

Solution 1: Stylistic Borrowing—"View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress"

Carter borrows Ivesian musical mannerisms in his own compositions in two prominent recurring ways: stylistically and motivically. Stylistic borrowings suggest Ives's general musical characteristics but do not include exact material. More specifically, stylistic borrowing reveals common compositional traits between Carter's music and Ives's—or at least how Carter interprets Ives's music. This process evokes the musical sound of Ives and can be achieved in several ways: by emulating Ives's use of idiosyncratic instrumental combinations; by incorporating Ivesian rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic constructions; or through the inclusion of text or narratives that model existing pieces by Ives.

These characteristics are particularly prominent whenever Carter tries to evoke American elements in his compositions. In a 2002 interview with Alan Baker, Carter again reiterated his gripes with the use of quotation in Ives's music, but he also presented his own alternative:

The thing that bothers me all the time about Ives is, as far as I'm concerned . . . I don't like his quotations from other kinds of music because from my point of view if you want to express, let's say something about America, you don't do it by quoting "Yankee Doodle." You do it by writing what you feel about it. You don't take somebody else's music and stick it in there. (Quoted in Baker 2002)⁸

Here Carter criticizes Ives's procedures of direct borrowing yet still professes his own interest in borrowing, though by using a different method. In the above statement (and elsewhere), Carter states his belief that quoting a tune directly (e.g., "Yankee Doodle") to comment on or suggest the idea of America would be too obvious and unoriginal; instead, a composer should sonically capture a nationalist "feeling" through compositional techniques and characteristics that evoke what may be perceived as an American "sound." One rebuttal to Carter's point is that it oversimplifies how Ives incorporates quotation, as he does not simply "quote 'Yankee Doodle'" in any of his pieces without some other reason behind it. A patriotic tune in Ives's music, for example, can suggest and comment on many things: the chaos or excitement of a parade, nationalism, the sadness marking a soldier's death, nostalgia for an earlier time, and so on. Furthermore, there may be intertextual references between the borrowed tune and Ives's original music that suggest even more meanings behind a given tune's appearance. Carter's interpretation also ignores the possibility that by using direct quotation that Ives *was* writing what he felt about America. Even with this apparent

disagreement, both composers did engage in stylistic borrowing to create the essence of an “American” sound in several key pieces.

To take an example, Carter’s song “View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress,” from his 1975 cycle *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*, channels his perspectives on America through means closely resembling those of Ives. The original poem of the same title by Elizabeth Bishop contains lots of musical imagery: it describes an Air Force Band, brass instruments, and music played “hard and loud” (Bishop 1969: 78). Carter’s musical setting depicts these textual ideas with techniques reminiscent of Ives. Particularly evident is Carter’s reliance on Ives’s ability to recreate aurally a sense of chaos and frenzy through the use of multiple temporal layers.⁹

This technique is suggested by Bishop’s poem, which presents a frustrated narrator unable to perceive the music of the band clearly: “The Air Force Band in the uniforms of Air Force blue is playing hard and loud, but—queer—the music doesn’t quite come through.” The musical setting presents two different temporal layers: the narrator expressing her inability to hear the band’s music even though it is audible; and the band itself playing at its own speed and style, oblivious to the narrator. To compound this dual sense of aural confusion, Carter writes disjunct music throughout the movement, which becomes particularly frantic at this point in the text. Example 1 shows an excerpt of the music (mm. 28–29) between the lines “playing hard and loud” and “but—queer—the music doesn’t quite come through.” The chattering woodwinds and piano evoke a sense of scurrying activity under the narrator’s utterances, thus illustrating the perception of non-clarity.

A parallel to this dual disorientation can be found in Ives’s orchestral work “Putnam’s Camp, Redding, Connecticut” from *Three Places in New England*—a composition that may have inspired Carter in “View of the Capitol.” Carter was familiar with the piece, referring to it first in his 1955 article, “The Rhythmic Basis of American Music,” where he comments on how Ives presents two different, unrelated “rhythmic planes” for programmatic reasons, and then later citing it in what became a controversial passage about the nature of Ives’s revision process (Carter 1997: 57–62).¹⁰ The program note for “Putnam’s Camp” describes how a child attends a Fourth of July picnic and experiences an aural “queerness” similar to that in Bishop’s poem after wandering away from the festivities and falling asleep. Ives’s response to this story was to create a sonic landscape that weaves disjointed snatches of quotations in and out of the texture to express the child’s dream state in which he sees soldiers marching at different speeds. In “View of the Capitol,” Carter references Ives’s method of writing superimposed temporal levels to achieve this sense of distortion musically.

28

Sop. — and loud, but queer the

Picc.

Ob.

E♭ Cl.

Sn. Dr.

Perc. B. Dr.

Piano

(una corda sempre)

Vln. quasi da lontano pizz. 3 3

Vla. mp - pp 5 mf

Vcl. quasi da lontano pizz. 3 3 arco 3

Cb. 3 3 3 3

Example 1: Carter, “View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress,” mm. 28–29.

The two texts (Bishop’s poem and Ives’s program) share subtler details as well, which is reflected in both Ives’s and Carter’s musical settings. The child in “Putnam’s Camp” and the narrator in Bishop’s poem “explore spaces, distances, perspectives, and contrasts” that are not always clearly perceived or expected (Shreffler 1993: 3). For example, hoping to “catch a glimpse of

some of the old soldiers,” the child in “Putnam’s Camp” falls asleep while escaping from the picnic and ends up dreaming of something else: the “Goddess of Liberty” who pleads “with the soldiers not to forget their ‘cause’ and the great sacrifices they have made for it” (Ives 1935: 20). After the child sees the goddess and emerges out of his sleepy haze, the soldiers “march out of camp with fife and drum to a popular tune of the day,” and the fog lifts. Similarly, Bishop’s narrator can hear the band but cannot process it coherently: the music “comes in snatches, dim then keen, then mute.” This inability to make out clearly what one expects to hear or see, whether band music or old soldiers, is analogous in both pieces.

But the subject of the two texts and their general stylistic depiction through music are as far as the similarity between the two composers’ compositional approaches goes: the musical execution in “View from the Capitol” contains numerous elements associated exclusively with Carter’s individual style. As Shreffler’s analysis shows, Carter devised a highly organized rhythmic and metrical plan, in addition to highlighting certain instruments in the texture associated with bands like the piccolo and snare drum, to produce a distorted, frantic effect. By contrast, Ives approached the inclusion of multiple bands as a concrete musical effect used to depict events in his programs, and compositionally there is a lack of systemization compared to Carter’s more rigorous methods.¹¹ This section of “View from the Capitol” only sounds somewhat like Ives, or even a marching band. Instead, Carter merely suggests the *style* of a band and its wild sound, and reshapes it into his own aesthetic, borrowing the general approach and inspiration from Ives.

Solution 2: Motivic Borrowing—First String Quartet

Motivic borrowing occurs when Carter appropriates pre-existing musical elements from Ives’s compositions—intervals, scalar fragments, or short segments that are recognizable as melodic ideas. These are exact quotations from pieces by Ives, though they are obscure enough to contrast with Ives’s more prominent borrowings from familiar sources, marking a distinction in how each composer uses extant material.

An example of motivic borrowing appears in mm. 27–30 of the first movement of Carter’s First String Quartet, where he inserts a short passage from Ives’s First Violin Sonata as a key melodic theme. Carter was intimately familiar with the sonata since he owned a score of this particular piece as a young man (Shreffler 1994: 53). He even discussed it in a letter to Ives from 1928, extolling its “quiet emotionality which is the real inspiration of music” (Ives 2007: 151). Carter acknowledged his indebtedness to Ives when

he called his use of the quotation in his First String Quartet a “tribute” and “homage” to the older composer in some of his essays discussed below. In addition to saluting Ives (the first of several such tributes, as we shall see), Richard Taruskin has suggested that the use of the quotation may have been “an act of atonement for the slight delivered in 1939 [the ‘Concord Sonata’ review]” (Taruskin 2010: 284).

Carter’s later comments about borrowing in some of his essays reveal some confusion about his own use of the technique in the First String Quartet. For example, when writing in 1974 about his Brass Quintet, Carter states:

I have avoided conscious quotation of other music except for the one case in my *First String Quartet* of 1951, in which I quoted the opening theme of Ives’s *First Violin Sonata* as a tribute to the composer whose works had suggested some of the general ideas of my music. (Carter 1997: 257)¹²

Here he acknowledges using the Ives melody but does not mention that he also borrows “certain elements of metric–rhythmic organization” from Conlon Nancarrow’s *Rhythm Study No. 1* in the same quartet (Stojanović–Novičić 2011: 70). The statement that he “avoided conscious quotation of other music except for the one case in my *First String Quartet* of 1951” seems misleading, or at the very least misremembered, because he explicitly admitted borrowing from Nancarrow in an earlier essay about the First String Quartet from 1970 (Carter 1997: 233).

Carter argues, moreover, that he employs quotation for different reasons than Ives. In the Brass Quintet essay he writes, “unlike [Ives], I have been concerned with finding idioms that would help express the special vision behind any particular work, that would give it its own identity and differentiate it from others” (Carter 1997: 257). This approach to borrowing seems consistent throughout his career, as we saw earlier with his remark disparaging Ives’s direct use of the technique to express feelings about America. Carter seems to suggest that if one excerpts from other music, the individual and original qualities of the work in which that quote appears become somehow violated. The modernist preoccupation with originality, progress, and personal style comes to the forefront in statements such as these, which highlight again Carter’s complicated relationship to past music. In an attempt to contrast his technique of borrowing with Ives’s method, Carter explains that the use of Ives and Nancarrow excerpts in his quartet is part of a formalistic desire to parallel “many characteristic devices found in Joyce and others,” including “the controlled ‘stream of consciousness,’ the ‘epiphany,’ the many uses of punctuation, of grammatical ambiguities, including the use of quotation” (Carter 1997: 233). For Carter, then,

quotation in the First String Quartet is used both as an homage to Ives and as an important expressive technique employed to serve his conceptual plan in the movement.

Carter expressed his dislike for the familiar origin of many borrowings in Ives's music (e.g., hymn tunes, popular tunes), and this short segment in the First String Quartet does not *sound* like a borrowed tune in the way we normally think of quotation in Ives's works. In other words, the melody has no "extramusical" association, as a hymn or patriotic tune might, but rather it contains a recognizable interval that can be exploited to contrast with other themes, and it is integrated into the first movement because of its developmental possibilities. The passage thus serves a dual function: it is a self-described "homage" as well as an integral structural theme of the quartet's first movement. As such, Carter was attracted to its motivic properties, which fit into the quartet's melodic design.

What appears most striking is that, despite his attempts to distance himself from Ivesian borrowing, Carter actually treats this quotation in a similar manner to Ives's treatment in his violin sonata (Schiff 1998: 60).¹³ Carter's manipulation of material in the first movement of the quartet through transposition, augmentation, diminution, and inversion resembles how Ives treats the same segment in the sonata. Example 2 shows mm. 1–4 of the First Violin Sonata by Ives; Example 3 shows mm. 27–30 from the first movement of the First String Quartet by Carter. The borrowed segment is marked in both excerpts.

In the Ives sonata, the six-note melodic pattern in m. 1 is used as a recurring motive throughout the movement. Ives subjects the pattern to various melodic and contrapuntal transformations, including transposition, inversion, fragmentation, diminution, and sequence, thus marking it as a primary melodic idea. Example 4 contains the segment in a modified form that appears frequently throughout the first part of the Sonata. In this excerpt, at m. 11 Ives transposes the music up a half step from the quasi-F-minor piano introduction and alters the rhythm through diminution by adding a neighbor tone in the right hand of the piano. Additionally, the passage is heard at key formal points in the movement, appearing down a half- or whole-step each time (e.g., at m. 30 it is transposed to begin on E; at m. 134, it is presented on D at the return of the A section).

Ives also writes the six-note pattern to function on two different simultaneous temporal levels. In Example 2, the first level appears in the tenor line as quarter notes, while in the bass line the identical pattern is presented in augmentation (mm. 1–2). Ives remains consistent with each restatement of the pattern, keeping the fast and slow presentations sounding on two different time levels throughout the movement. As a result, the tune is used both melodically and harmonically.

Musical score for Violin and Piano, Example 2. The score is in 2/4 time and marked *Andante*. The Violin part is on a single staff. The Piano part is on two staves (treble and bass clef). The tempo is *Andante*. The piano part starts with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The score shows the first four measures. Two arrows point to the main melody in the violin and its augmentation in the bass of the piano part.

Example 2: Ives, First Violin Sonata, I, mm. 1–4. Arrows highlight the main melody and its augmentation in the bass.

Musical score for First String Quartet, Example 3. The score is in 2/4 time and marked *Andante*. It features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The tempo is *Andante*. The score shows measures 27–32. The Cello part includes a dynamic marking of *mf* and the instruction *in fuori*. The Viola part includes a dynamic marking of *meno f*. The Cello part includes a dynamic marking of *f* and the instruction *sost. e cant.*. The score shows the first four measures of this section. An arrow points to the Ives quotation in the cello part from mm. 27–30.

Example 3: Carter, First String Quartet, I, mm. 27–32 (arrow denotes Ives quotation in cello from mm. 27–30).

Example 4: Ives, First Violin Sonata, I, mm. 11–12.

Both the motivic development of the theme and its multiple temporalities must have strongly appealed to Carter, and in his own piece he subjects the theme to similar compositional procedures. For example, he combines and expands the theme with his favored pitch material in the movement (and in his early works): one of the two all-interval tetrachords, [0146]. Unlike much of Carter's later music, which is unified by intervallic relationships (e.g., each instrument in the Second String Quartet is "assigned" specific intervals), this quartet uses the pitch-class set much more freely and contrapuntally. As David Schiff writes, "this chord [0146] occurs in various spacings, inversions and transpositions throughout the piece, more as a primal sonority like the 'Elektra Chord' than as the systematic fusion of intervallic harmonies that Carter would use it in later works" (Schiff 1998: 60). As it turns out, a trichordal subset [014] of the 4-Z15 [0146] collection also appears in the Ives sonata theme (notes 3, 4, and 6) and happens to fit with the surrounding pitch material in the first movement. This makes appropriation of the Ives theme even smoother and directly related.

In addition to finding similarities in pitch content, Carter and Ives both emphasize the P5 interval formed by the first two notes of the melody. Example 5 shows the original Ives collection, followed by six extracted statements from Carter's quartet.¹⁴ This collection, a 6-Z10 hexachord [013457], is subjected to transposition, and in the final two excerpts, Carter presents a descending P5 instead of an ascending P5. Carter marks each statement of the Ives fragment by emphasizing the opening P5 interval with dynamics and textural changes, as in the initial presentation in the cello (refer back to Example 3). Here (mm. 27–30) he writes *in fuori* above the cello, which is marked at the loudest dynamic of the passage, and he drags the notes over each bar line creating a displacement effect across the ensemble.

Current Musicology

Ives, First Violin Sonata, I, m. 1



Carter, First String Quartet, I, collection used in the cello, mm. 27-30



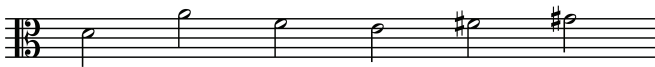
Carter, First String Quartet, I, collection used in the cello, mm. 108-116



Carter, First String Quartet, I, collection used in the cello, mm. 119-128



Carter, First String Quartet, I, collection used in the viola, mm. 282-296



Carter, First String Quartet, I, collection used in the cello, mm. 296-301



Carter, First String Quartet, I, collection used in the cello, mm. 332-338

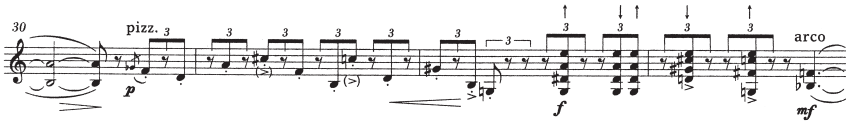


Example 5: The “Ives” segment and prominent statements of it in Carter’s First String Quartet, I.

As this analysis shows, Carter did more than borrow a short segment from Ives in his “tribute.” He used the melody in similar ways to Ives, marking it as a key motivic idea, writing it to function both melodically and within a consistent harmonic framework, and emphasizing its intervallic properties. The use of borrowing in such a structural and sophisticated way demonstrates that Carter knew Ives’s compositional techniques thoroughly, including his methods of employing quotation.

Channeling the Influence of Charles Ives Through Quotation:
Figment No. 2, (Remembering Mr. Ives)

Carter included motivic and stylistic borrowing in works written in the 1990s for other late seminal musical figures in his life such as Roger Sessions and Aaron Copland. For example, *Statement—Remembering Aaron* from 1999 draws motivically from Copland’s *Ukulele Serenade* and *Statements* and borrows key elements of Copland’s musical style: quartal and quintal sonorities, consonances, and, in Carter’s words, Copland’s “warmth and generosity and nobility” (Carter 2001a). To get a sense of his concept of borrowing, Example 6 shows mm. 30–33 from *Statement* (the title itself is a borrowing from Copland, who wrote a piece with the same name) that feature music inspired by the *pizzicato* section of the violin part in the *Ukulele Serenade*. Here Carter borrows a snippet of the *Ukulele Serenade*—just enough to be recognizable.



Example 6: Carter, *Statement—Remembering Aaron* for solo violin, mm. 30–33.

Carter composed five pieces from 1994–2009 called “Figments” for string instruments (nos. 1–4) and marimba (5), the second of which is dedicated to Ives and shares some similarities with the Copland tribute in its evocation of Ives’s music and style. In *Figment No. 2*, fragments of imagination, memory, and remembrance fuse together in revealing ways that paint a picture of Carter’s cumulative (and perhaps final) thoughts about Ives and his music over eighty years of acquaintance with it.

This piece contains both stylistic and motivic borrowing, and clearly attempts to capture the music and personality of Ives.¹⁵ In his brief program note, Carter states that the piece “recalls fragmentarily bits of the Thoreau movement of the *Concord Sonata* and *Hallowe’en* by my late friend Charles Ives, whose music I have known since 1924 and have loved these works in particular” (Carter 2001a). Carter’s comment that he “loved” the *Concord Sonata* seems particularly ironic in light of his harsh and critical review cited earlier. Yet Carter acknowledged the influence of the *Concord Sonata* on his own compositional development many times; for instance, in his interview with Allen Edwards, Carter notes that the *Concord Sonata* was one of several pieces that initially led him to decide on a career in composition (Edwards 1971: 45). His fondness for the *Concord Sonata* makes its way into *Figment No. 2* several times: Carter not only includes a key motive from its fourth

movement, but he also borrows stylistically from “The Alcotts,” the sonata’s third movement. Though he does not mention borrowing specifically from “The Alcotts,” the allusions to its hymn-like qualities in *Figment No. 2* seem unmistakable.¹⁶

In addition to quotation and stylistic mannerisms, Carter channels the spirit of Ives in other ways in *Figment No. 2*. In a fascinating exchange from the documentary *Elliott Carter: A Labyrinth of Time*, Carter and the cellist Fred Sherry (for whom the piece was written) discuss certain sections of the piece, its inspiration, and how it should be performed (Carter 2006). In one clip, Carter plays a short passage from the hymn section of “The Alcotts” on the piano and shares some thoughts on what makes the piece suggestive of Ives, mentioning the prominent use of thirds that appear in *Figment No. 2*. He also explains that in the middle section he planned to use the Italian term for “like a hymn” as a tempo marking. But Sherry counters, arguing that he should use the English equivalent to capture the essence of Ives the American. With an impish grin, Carter agrees and says doing so will make the piece more “Ivesian.” The whole piece thus becomes “Ivesian” with its musical and extramusical allusions.

Figment No. 2 consists of four short continuous sections, three of which refer to Ives directly through motivic and stylistic borrowing. Although the first part of the piece (“Majestic,” mm. 1–22) suggests Carter’s own music more than Ives’s, the opening fanfare-like gestures recall the general dynamic and pitch sweeps common in Ives’s works with cello such as the Piano Trio. This section also introduces the salient pitch material found throughout the piece, as well as certain key unifying intervals. John Roeder has shown that the pitch material here (and in most of the piece) is organized through the use of a recurrent pitch-class set that appears in most of Carter’s late music—the all-interval hexachord [012478] (2007). Carter cycles two prominent intervals arising out of that hexachord that emerge frequently throughout the piece: the major third and perfect fifth, along with their inversions, minor sixths and perfect fourths. The focus on these particular intervals allows Carter to achieve a more consonant sound overall.

In the second section, marked “Hymnic,” (mm. 23–32, shown in Example 7), Carter alludes to Ives’s fondness for hymns, particularly the tune in “The Alcotts” that he discussed in the video mentioned earlier. Example 8 shows an excerpt from Ives’s composed hymn tune from “The Alcotts.” Ives marks the music “slower and quietly,” sets it in the key of E-flat major, and writes two lyrical phrases supported by a simple harmonic progression.

Hymnic

23 *mp tranquillo* *poco* *pp*

27 *p* *mp*

30 *p* *mf* *f* *p sub.*

Example 7: Carter, *Figment No. 2*, mm. 23–32.

The musical score for Example 8 is presented in two staves: a treble clef staff for the violin and a bass clef staff for the piano. The key signature is two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo and dynamics markings are 'Slower and quietly', 'p', 'ten.', and 'pp'. The score consists of four measures. The first measure is in 4/4 time, the second is in 6/8 time, and the third and fourth are back in 4/4 time. The violin part begins with a melodic phrase in the first measure, followed by a more rhythmic pattern in the second measure, and then a sustained note in the third measure. The piano accompaniment provides a steady rhythmic and harmonic foundation throughout.

Example 8: Ives, original “hymn” tune in “The Alcotts,” *Concord Sonata*, mvt. III.

In “The Alcotts,” Ives’s diatonic harmonic setting of this tune, along with its melody-and-accompaniment texture, contrasts from the highly chromatic and more agitated music that surrounds it. A similar scenario occurs in Carter’s rendition of his own “hymn.” The “Hymnic” section provides a strong contrast to the more angular and disjunct melodies of the opening section by featuring consonances (thirds and fifths, and their inversions), paralleling how Ives harmonized his hymn melody in “The Alcotts.” Even though there are differences in musical materials and presentation, in this section Carter comes closest to a realization of Ives’s “hymnic” style.

The third section of *Figment No. 2* suggests the playful and humorous side of Ives’s music and personality (mm. 33–42, shown in Example 9). Although thirds and fifths continue to be stressed melodically, the music also emphasizes virtuosity over lyricism. For example, the cello plays in a very high tessitura, with glissandos, harmonics, and tremolos that create a light and playful texture. Moreover, Carter enhances his portrayal of Ivesian humor and allusion by including literal and stylistic references to Ives’s *Hallowe’en* (the beginning of which is also shown in Examples 8 and 9).

Carter’s love of abstract musical structures as well as his rigorous compositional planning may explain his attraction to *Hallowe’en*, an Ives composition for string quartet, piano, and (optional) bass drum, written in 1907 and revised in 1911. In his *Memos*, Ives explains the intricate canonic structure of the piece, “not only in tones, but in phrases, accents, and durations or spaces” (Ives 1972: 91). Peter Burkholder states that the entire piece is based on this type of “contrapuntal accumulation,” a common Ives technique where “the definitive statement of the entire contrapuntal complex appears only at the end, after a gradual accumulation of elements” (Burkholder 1995: 228). Carter’s own music often works in a similar fashion to *Hallowe’en*: it features a prominent use of counterpoint and is crafted from pre-compositional schemata, yet it frequently displays a sense of humor.

33
leggero
gliss.
5
poco

35
mf
p

38
gliss.
5
p
pp

40
p
gliss.
loco
pp
10
p

Example 9: Carter, *Figment No. 2*, mm. 33–42.

The image shows a musical score for the first four measures of Ives' *Hallowe'en*. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Piano. The tempo is marked "Allegretto to Presto". The second system continues the string parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello) and the Piano part. The music is characterized by jagged, irregular melodic lines in the strings and complex, shifting harmonic textures in the piano.

Example 10: Ives, *Hallowe'en*, mm. 1–4.

Carter emulates Ives in this third section of *Figment No. 2*, but he imbues this music with his own individual style. The allusions to *Hallowe'en* are subtle. For example, the jagged melodies and improvisational character in this section evoke the irregular entries and metric instability associated with the strings in *Hallowe'en*. Moreover, the harmonic glissandos found in mm. 33, 38, and 41 constitute an instance of stylistic borrowing since, as Carter has confirmed, they are a direct reference to *Hallowe'en*.¹⁷ Carter also recalls motivically the cello part in *Hallowe'en*, written in D major throughout while the other string parts and piano play either in different keys or no key at all. As if a figment of his imagination in a distant memory, Carter writes several parts of this third section to outline gestures that suggest a tonal center of D or even of D major. For instance, the glissando in m. 33 begins

with a D–major quintuplet, ascending to an A (with chromatic alterations of C–natural and G–sharp suggesting a Lydian–Mixolydian scale), and other passages hint at A major (the dominant of D) such as the tremolo in m. 37 and the glissando in m. 41.

The exact motivic quotation from *Hallowe'en* is extremely short. In m. 38, following the sixteenth–note rest, the cello plays the first five notes of a descending D–major scale, the only place in this section that contains a literal fragment of a major scale. In comparison, each scale in *Hallowe'en* played by the string instruments is grouped irregularly and jumps up and down at uneven points; in m. 4, the cello plays the five notes found in *Figment No. 2*, on beats three and four (see Example 10). Carter quickly departs from the Ives reference after this, but the pitch, grouping, and stylistic connections to *Hallowe'en* seem clear. By inserting the fragment into this section, which sounds like the majority of Carter's other music, past and present are fused once more.

Two additional important Ivesian references occur in the final section of the piece. The first concerns form; here Carter crystallizes the preceding music together as a quasi–cumulative form that contains and synthesizes elements from the other sections.¹⁸ Carter presents a culmination of musical and gestural figures from the previous three parts (mm. 43–57, following the glissando to the high E in m. 42): the use of analogous intervals to the first section (thirds, fifths), the lyrical character of the second section, and the halting stops and playfulness of the third section. As is well known, Ives also adopted cumulative form for many of his pieces in which he presents thematic fragments gradually throughout a piece that then culminate in a full statement of the main theme toward the conclusion of the work. In a variation on this technique, Carter writes contrasting music in each of the first three sections and then suggests each of them in the final part, acting as a summation of the entire piece. In this way, the formal structure can be read as an allusion to Ives, melded and shaped by Carter's own compositional techniques.

The second, more direct reference to Ives in this final section is Carter's quotation from the "Thoreau" movement of the *Concord Sonata*, a piece about which he especially noted its "lovely beginning and its beautiful 'walking theme,'" which I will abbreviate as WT (Carter 1997: 89). Example 11 shows the final two measures of "Thoreau"; Example 12 displays the final section of *Figment No. 2* (arrows denote the A–C–G "Walking Theme" and its quotation, respectively). The theme is omnipresent throughout Ives's "Thoreau," functioning as an ostinato over which the sonata's main themes (particularly a pair of hymn tunes) are stated; it is especially prominent at the end of the movement, as the sonata concludes quietly with the WT

43 *ppp sub.* *f* *molto espr.* *p*

47 *mf* *cresc.* *mf mp > p* *f* *mf*

51 *f* *p*

54 *p mf* *ppp* *tranquillo*

Example 12: Carter, *Figment No. 2*, mm. 43–56.

trailing off into silence. Carter models Ives's emphasis on the theme at the end of the movement by quoting it in the last measures of *Figment No. 2*: it receives a partial statement at mm. 49–50 and then is quoted literally at m. 56. This short, three-note theme—A, C, G—is significant for both composers.

A closer examination of the context of these two moments reveals again Carter's incorporation of quotations within his own melodic conception—in other words, it demonstrates that Carter's motivic borrowing is always coupled with stylistic borrowing. In m. 49 of *Figment No. 2*, Carter writes the first two notes of the WT (A, C) at a *mezzo-forte* dynamic as the second and third notes of a triplet. But he quickly modifies the melodic line, avoiding the jump to the G, and instead writes a quintal trichord (A-flat, E-flat, B-flat). It is worth pointing out that these two notes—A and C—and the next four—A-flat, E-flat, B-flat, E—once again spell an all-interval hexachord [012478], the piece's unifying pitch-class set. When Carter writes the final two measures of the piece (mm. 56–57) with the complete WT, it is also combined with the final three notes to form an all-interval hexachord and thereby sum up the pitch organization of the entire piece. By placing Ives's WT within all-interval hexachords, Carter further combines past and present; the Ives borrowing and the concluding interval of a major third recall Ives and "The Alcotts," and the pitch-class set to which they belong was Carter's favored collection in his late music.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis attempts to illuminate the complexity of the motivations behind Carter's musical borrowing. As has been noted, Carter's public statements on this topic are all over the map; most of his comments suggest that he was against borrowing because he thought it diluted a composer's "true ideas" and was a crutch for a lack of original material. But at the same time, Carter borrowed freely from a variety of composers and sources throughout his career. It is clear that these statements merely represent the two most extreme positions that informed Carter's approach to the music of Charles Ives.

Another aspect of Carter's problematic and complex attitude towards musical borrowing arises from his claims that appropriating pre-existing music creates a "lack of musical and stylistic continuity" in Ives's music. It might seem that this claim exposes a fundamental difference between the two composers, but Ives often created stylistic continuity through borrowed music to suit a programmatic function or theme (e.g., a song like Ives's "He is There!" is laden with patriotic quotations). The difference is that the quotations Carter uses are brief and lack the overt familiarity and associa-

tions found in Ives (i.e., he avoids familiar tunes), and thus he can integrate them into his music in a formalistic manner that impacts compositional coherence. Even in a piece such as *Figment No. 2*, designed to be an homage to Ives, Carter skillfully blends into his own music the borrowed segments, which function on two levels: as quoted passages, and as the basis for what develop into original ideas.

I have also argued for another look at Carter's musical relationship with Ives. Carter's use of borrowing is far more complicated than just taking tunes from the music of Ives; there is a union of motivic and stylistic references that reveal an intimate familiarity and connection with Ives's music. Moreover, in addition to whatever materials are literally used, Carter consciously or unconsciously appropriates compositional techniques from Ives into his own music. Though in his writings and music Carter asserted his preferences for originality, progress, and, above all, consistency of musical language in keeping with modernist traits, he could not help being haunted in his compositional choices by his personal connection to Ives and his highly unique and idiosyncratic music. This complex problematic of reconciling the past with the present and future looms large in Carter's music, as evidenced by the pieces discussed here. In his 1974 essay about Ives, Carter writes the following about his early mentor: "He was a complicated, quick, intelligent man with obviously an enormous love and wide knowledge of music, and with a determination to follow his own direction, believing in it deeply" (Perlis 1974: 145). It seems appropriate that the same description also could be applied to Carter himself, which shows that he and Ives borrowed and shared more than he would admit.

Notes

1. The literature on borrowing in Ives's music is vast. Some of the seminal texts include: Ballantine 1979; Burkholder 1995; Henderson 2008; Sinclair 1999; Starr 1992; and essays in Block and Burkholder 1996, and Burkholder 1996.
2. In the same answer, Carter expresses similar reservations about Gustav Mahler, explaining that "some of his works remind one of those old 'patriotic symphonies' that were simply potpourris of national and religious anthems" (Edwards 1971: 63).
3. Philip Lambert describes these works as "systematic" compositions (1997: 4).
4. In subsequent years, Carter's public opinion of Ives's music became more favorable, as evidenced by several essays and gestures that support Ives's position and legacy in twentieth-century music. For example, he cofounded the Charles Ives Society in 1944 and assisted with the preparation of the *Concord Sonata* and other works for publication. In addition, he cited Ives as a seminal compositional influence many times and frequently discussed Ives's influence on him in interviews.

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5. As Anne Shreffler puts it, “Carter’s ambivalence [toward borrowing] is not surprising, given his training . . . it could simply not be evaluated in terms of anything Carter had learned at Harvard or in France” (1994: 52–53).
6. I am borrowing the definitions of progressive music laid out in Burkholder 1983.
7. Some writings that discuss the lack of unity in Ives’s music include Whitesell 1994, Thomson 1984, and Ives 1972, especially 196–7.
8. In the same interview, Carter states that he does not believe in a unique “American” musical sound but notes that “my music doesn’t sound like anybody else’s music that I’m aware of. I guess that’s American.”
9. For an interesting discussion of this work, see Shreffler 1994: 55.
10. The famous quotation from Carter about observing Ives “jack[ing] up the dissonance” in *Three Places in New England* is in Perlis 1974: 138.
11. Ives’s experience of hearing multiple bands playing different parts of a piece around the town square appears in the “Conductor’s Note” in the score of the second movement of the Fourth Symphony (Ives 1965). An example of Carter’s pre-compositional workings for “View from the Capitol” can be found in Facsimile 2 in Shreffler’s (1993) article.
12. Also see the essay, “String Quartets Nos. 1, 1951, and 2, 1959,” in Carter 1997: 231–35.
13. Schiff notes eight separate themes in the first movement of the quartet; the Ives quotation is theme four.
14. Schiff asserts that Carter includes the Ives segment in large swaths of music (e.g., mm. 73–133), but the examples I have cited here are explicit usages, not merely suggested by related intervals or contour. See Schiff 1998: 60.
15. Alan Thiesen notes that Carter wrote his Ives tribute long after saluting many other composers musically and suspects it may represent Carter’s anxiety about Ives’s influence on him (Thiesen 2010: 17).
16. Whereas in the 1939 review of the *Concord Sonata* he pays a lukewarm compliment to “The Alcotts,” pointing out that “though less characteristic of Ives’s best, ‘The Alcotts’ maintains a consistent level,” Carter tempered his views about the movement in subsequent years as seen in the 2006 Frank Scheffer film.
17. Fred Sherry, e-mail message to the author, August 23, 2011.
18. There are other opinions concerning the form of the piece. John Link argues for an ABA form that contains two “stately outer sections . . . while the middle section is a playful scherzando of harmonics based on Ives’s playful miniature Halloween.” Strangely, Link’s formal analysis lacks any mention of the prominent section marked “Hymnic” where the musical material changes significantly (2008: 9).

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