UNIVERSIDAD DE MURCIA

ESCUELA INTERNACIONAL DE DOCTORADO

TESIS DOCTORAL

Musical Understanding from a Wittgensteinian Perspective: the Case of Popular Music

Comprensión Musical desde una Perspectiva Wittgensteiniana: el Caso de la Música Popular

D. Darío Hernán Loja Illescas

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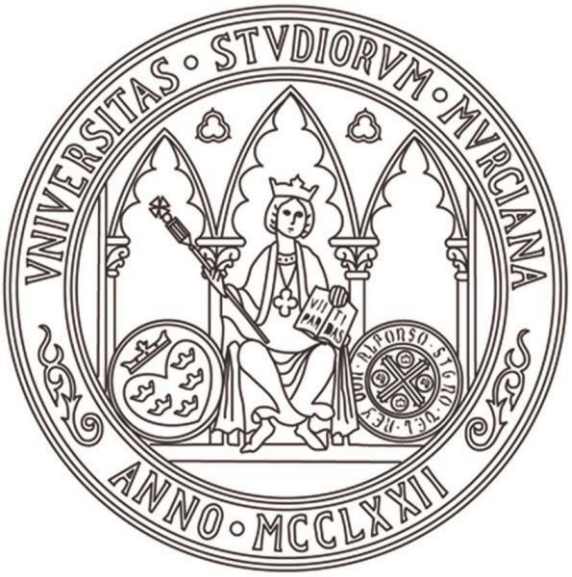

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UNIVERSIDAD DE MURCIA

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Resumen detallado

Esta tesis doctoral aborda el problema del significado musical a la luz de las nociones de experiencia musical y comprensión musical entendidas desde una perspectiva wittgensteiniana. En este sentido sigue la línea desarrollada por algunos autores claves de la filosofía analítica contemporánea de la música. Aunque esta afinidad con el pensamiento filosófico del segundo Wittgenstein podría invitar a pensar que hay consenso sobre qué aspectos constituyen comprender musicalmente una obra, lo cierto es que hay divergencias notables en cómo se aborda esta cuestión. Mientras que algunos autores, como Roger Scruton o Hanne Appelqvist, adoptan una concepción estrecha en la que la noción de escucha acusmática determina el rango de las experiencias propiamente musicales, otros, como Andy Hamilton, Garry Hagberg o Theodore Gracyk, adoptan una postura más flexible incluyendo como relevante para la comprensión casi todo aquello que pertenece al modo en el que la música es producida y apreciada. Estas divergencias revelan hasta qué punto lo que unos y otros autores entienden por gramática musical difiere, cuando apelan a esta noción para señalar los aspectos que forman parten de la comprensión musical y en qué sentido captarlos constituye una experiencia correcta de la música. Mientras que, para Scruton, solo aquellos aspectos de la música que desempeñan un papel tonal, armónico o rítmico pueden considerarse significativos desde un punto de vista musical en sentido estricto (desempeñando el tipo de rol estructural u organizacional necesario para que una secuencia sonora pueda ser experimentada musicalmente), para los autores que abrazan una concepción más flexible de la comprensión musical tanto los aspectos tonales como los que carecen de este rol pueden considerarse relevantes para la comprensión musical.

La propuesta que aquí se presenta trata de ofrecer una opción diferente a estos dos modos alternativos de caracterizar la comprensión musical. Con ese fin, se procurará demostrar la viabilidad de sostener una concepción de la comprensión y el significado musicales que atribuya un papel fundamental a ciertos aspectos que aspiran a contribuir al significado musical, apartándonos de la noción defendida por Scruton, de que dicho papel debe entenderse exclusivamente en términos tonales.

En este sentido, con Scruton, se defiende que solo aquellos aspectos que desempeñen un papel organizacional en la experiencia musical serán musicalmente relevantes, pero, frente a Scruton, se defiende que ese papel no es exclusivo de los aspectos que podemos reconocer como tonales, sino que puede, gracias a la propia

evolución de una práctica musical concreta, ser desempeñado por aspectos no-tonales y visuales de la composición musical.

La articulación y defensa de esta idea se realizará, no como resultado de la mera reflexión filosófica, sino como respuesta a las críticas que autores, como el propio Scruton, han vertido sobre el valor musical de la música popular. Es en este contexto donde se propone la idea de reconocer un papel organizacional a los aspectos no tonales presentes en las obras musicales de dicha tradición. Esta idea se articulará en tándem con la articulación de una defensa de esta música y del valor de su experiencia como experiencia propiamente musical.

Para poder abordar adecuadamente esta problemática, seguiré el siguiente orden. En el Capítulo 1, introduciré tanto la noción del comprensión y significado que se encuentra articulada en las *Investigaciones Filosóficas* del llamado "segundo periodo" de Wittgenstein (sección 1), como la influencia que esta concepción ha tenido en la articulación del problema del significado y la comprensión musicales (sección 2). Adoptar una visión wittgensteiniana con respecto a estas cuestiones implica defender la idea de que el significado de una expresión lingüística viene determinado por su uso en un contexto determinado. Así, comprender una palabra o frase es usarla correctamente o actuar adecuadamente en aquellos contextos en los que se emplea. La actuación adecuada evidencia el dominio de las reglas de un sistema lingüístico, entendiendo por dichas reglas no solo las reglas gramaticales que se recogen en los tratados, como aquellas que de manera implícita gobiernan los usos correctos de una expresión. La fuerza normativa de dicho conjunto de reglas proviene de su inserción en el conjunto de prácticas de una tradición determinada. La comprensión es, pues, más una habilidad que un estado mental y su atribución dependerá de criterios públicos y susceptibles de cambio conforme la práctica evoluciona históricamente. Esta estrategia que Wittgenstein propone, pasa por adentrarse además en lo que llama una forma de vida. Por lo que comprender un lenguaje implica estar inmerso en la forma de vida en la que dicho lenguaje opera.

En la sección 2.1 del Capítulo I, se muestra la influencia del pensamiento wittgensteiniano en algunos autores claves de la filosofía de la música contemporánea. Esta influencia se deja ver en ciertas críticas a concepciones de la experiencia musical, como la emotivista, o a cierta concepción intencionalista del significado de corte internista. También es manifiesta la influencia del anti-esencialismo wittgensteiniano con respecto a la idea de que hablar de significado musical conlleve necesariamente explicitar dicho significado en términos de relaciones de referencia.

Esta tradición filosófica resulta de sumo interés para la presente tesis en tanto se centra en todo aquello que hace el oyente y puede ser evidencia de su comprensión musical. Esto incluye, por ejemplo, acciones del tipo, cómo describe la música, qué movimientos acompañan su escucha, a qué dirige su escucha, etc. En definitiva, todas aquellas actividades que expresan su dominio de las reglas particulares de una tradición musical. En dichas actividades podemos encontrar qué elementos de la experiencia son relevantes musicalmente a la hora de dar cuenta de la comprensión propiamente musical.

En la sección 2.2 de este capítulo, comento una serie de diferencias en el modo en el que diversos autores de esta tradición han desarrollado dicha perspectiva wittgensteiniana y que me parecen de vital importancia para el resto de la tesis. Así, propongo una distinción entre concepciones "estrechas" y "amplias" de la comprensión musical. Estas últimas, como puede ser el caso de Garry Hagberg, se muestran bastante abiertas a la posibilidad de que el propio desarrollo de una forma de vida pueda tematizar distintos aspectos haciendo que lleguen a formar parte de la experiencia musical. De este modo, encontramos entre estos autores una disposición a explorar, por ejemplo, el posible estatus musical de las llamadas artes sonoras.

En cambio, las visiones estrechas se preocupan por distinguir, dentro de la experiencia musical, lo que es propiamente musical y lo que es extramusical. Para estos autores, mientras que lo extramusical simplemente acompaña a la música (como lo hace, por ejemplo, el conocimiento biográfico del músico o compositor), lo propiamente musical vendría determinado por aquellos aspectos de nuestra experiencia que, en términos wittgensteinianos, tienen relevancia gramatical. Estos aspectos de nuestra experiencia son los que estarían conectados con la experiencia particular que nos ofrece la música y que la hacen específica. En otras palabras, cuando comprendemos en música, experimentamos el sonido de cierta manera. Esto es: organizado según las reglas del sistema tonal.

Esta sección es vital para el resto de la tesis porque aquí estableceré el esquema general de comprensión musical que adopto. Teniendo en cuenta la visión wittgensteiniana de comprensión musical, comenzaré introduciendo la idea de "fenómeno musical". Con este término me refiero al complejo de actividades, acciones y elementos que surgen en torno a la música. Entre estos elementos estarían, por ejemplo, aprender a transcribir piezas a una partitura, aprender a tocar un instrumento, distinguir las distintas progresiones harmónicas de una pieza, usar términos emotivos para enseñar los distintos modos a un alumno, bailar en un concierto, coleccionar discos, escribir reseñas musicales

en la prensa, samplear una canción antigua y editarla en casa, dibujar el logo apropiado para una banda de música o escuchar música mientras veo su videoclip, entre otros.

Ahora, de todos estos elementos que pertenecen al fenómeno musical, hay algunos que, podríamos decir, pertenecen a lo propiamente musical, mientras que otros, aunque tengan importancia, son secundarios o extramusicales. Lo propiamente musical se referiría a aquello que contribuye a la adecuada organización musical de la experiencia musical, mientras que lo extramusical se refiere a aquello que acompaña a la música pero que no tiene ese poder organizativo.

Pienso que este esquema es capaz de capturar el espíritu wittgensteiniano según el cual comprender es dominar las reglas de un sistema. Este dominio, en el esquema propuesto, tendría que ver con organizar adecuadamente la experiencia según principios musicales. Y la problemática que se quiere proponer es preguntarnos qué elementos del fenómeno musical forman parte de la experiencia propiamente musical cuando comprendemos y dominamos una cierta tradición musical.

Para explorar una propuesta en este sentido, en el capítulo II se presenta el concepto de comprensión musical de Scruton, que es además mi principal foco de estudio a lo largo de la tesis.

Este capítulo comienza analizando las nociones que propone Scruton de escucha y de sonido. Su caracterización de ambas nociones determinará la posición de Scruton respecto a la escucha musical. También serán, como veremos, cruciales para su crítica a la música popular. A la exposición de estas nociones dedico la sección 1 del capítulo II. Scruton distingue distintos modos de escucha o atención al sonido y sostiene que cada uno de ellos constituye contenidos experienciales diferentes, lo cual requiere en cada caso un conjunto distinto de habilidades y conocimientos. En el caso de la escucha ordinaria analizada en la sección 1.2, veremos como esta se caracteriza por identificar sonidos en tanto se relacionan a una causa material. Esto es, dado nuestro interés por informarnos acerca de los eventos que ocurren en el mundo, las causas del sonido y distinta información acerca de cómo se producen estos, forman parte del contenido experiencial de escucha en nuestras experiencias ordinarias.

En la sección 1.3 distinguiré, dentro de este análisis de la escucha ordinaria, una capacidad que es indispensable para la escucha musical: la escucha acusmática. A su vez, señalo dos posibles sentidos de esta noción. Por un lado, hablamos de un modo de escucha acusmática cuando atendemos al sonido de acuerdo con la capacidad de "escuchar sin ver". Por otro, una escucha acusmática es aquella forma de escucha que es capaz de

organizar las cualidades sonoras con respecto a un cierto espectro y no con relación a las causas del sonido. Es decir, cuando organiza el sonido según parámetros puramente sonoros y, por tanto, de manera autónoma. Esta última capacidad está relacionada, por ejemplo, con la experiencia habitual de distinguir alturas sonoras. Así, al escuchar nuestra voz y la de otra persona, decimos que una es más "alta" que la otra. Aquí lo que hacemos es captar una cierta cualidad sonora, en este caso un cierto tono de voz, que es más alto respecto a otro en un espectro de tonos. Esto es, nuestra experiencia de esos sonidos no está guiada por consideraciones acerca de las causas del sonido, sino por las cualidades mismas de este. Esta independencia de la experiencia de los sonidos con respecto a sus causas es clave para entender la noción de acusmático en Scruton. Además, esta noción es central para dar cuenta de nuestra capacidad para escuchar sonidos cómo música.

En la sección 2 del capítulo II, se introducen el resto de los conceptos que permiten caracterizar la concepción de la experiencia musical de Scruton. Para Scruton, la escucha musical, además de acusmática, es contemplativa, se sirve de metáforas espaciales y es una habilidad que implica el concurso de la imaginación, como se ve en las secciones 2.1 a 2.3.

Estas secciones nos sirven para caracterizar qué es un sistema musical para Scruton. Así, en la sección 2.4 veremos cómo el sistema tonal representa el paradigma de organización musical según Scruton. La experiencia tonal asume todas las características de experiencia musical antes expuestas, y es bajo este sistema que podemos hablar de comprensión musical. Así, para Scruton, un oyente musicalmente competente es aquel capaz de dominar las reglas del orden tonal y de experimentar los sonidos según formas tonales.

Finalmente, la sección 2.5, presenta la crítica de Scruton a la música popular. Según Scruton, esta tradición se ha centrado en aspectos que no contribuyen a la organización del sonido basada en los principios de melodía, armonía y ritmo de nuestro sistema tonal. Estos aspectos incluyen la idolatría de la imagen del músico, la organización de los sonidos respecto a ritmos ajenos a la música (como cuando una canción se hace con la clara intención de ser bailada o que acompañe los momentos destacados de una película), el carácter masificado de su distribución (que por ejemplo está detrás de la imaginería alrededor de la música), o el interés por experimentar con aspectos secundarios de la experiencia musical (como el timbre de los instrumentos o la edición sonora en general). Todos estos aspectos, no solo son ajenos a nuestra capacidad para organizar los sonidos tonalmente, sino que ponen en peligro nuestra propia capacidad

musical. Claro que no toda esta tradición peca del mismo error, y en la sección 2.6, presento ejemplos de lo que, bajo la visión de Scruton, se podrían considerar incorporaciones apropiadas al sistema tonal de novedades características de este tipo de música.

Para evaluar adecuadamente esta crítica, el capítulo III se dedicará a exponer la llamada música popular. Los apartados 1 a 5 se centrarán en contextualizar adecuadamente algunos de los rasgos característicos de esta tradición. Si bien estas características no son exhaustivas, nos bastan para para enfrentar la crítica de Scruton y el problema de la comprensión musical. Finalmente, en la sección 6 presentaré, de un modo más exhaustivo del que lo hace Scruton, la manera en que la música popular introduce ciertas innovaciones, tanto sonoras como visuales, y que los músicos consideran indispensables para la comprensión musical. Mi interés aquí es recoger cómo, por parte de la prensa musical, de los aficionados y de los propios músicos, elementos como las posturas en el escenario, cierta iconografía, el aspecto de los músicos, su forma de tocar y producir sonidos, su interés por las cuestiones de ingeniería de sonido y su capacidad para editar timbres, añadir ruido o modificar el sonido global de una pieza se consideran elementos compositivos que tienen que ver con la capacidad musical de estos artistas.

Esta última idea se examinará en el capítulo IV. Aquí, en la sección 1, expondré la problemática a la que esta tesis ha llegado. Esto es: si los aspectos que estos artistas proponen forman parte de lo propiamente musical, deberían, siguiendo lo visto en el capítulo II, tener un rol organizacional similar al que tiene el orden tonal en nuestra experiencia. Sin embargo, es claro que tales elementos no cumplen este papel tonal; o bien son sonidos que se resisten a ser escuchados tonalmente (como sucede con la inclusión de ruidos o matices tímbricos), o bien son elementos que ni si quiera tienen un carácter sonoro (como las posturas de los músicos o su particular modo de comportarse en el escenario). La cuestión, entonces, es cómo dar cuenta del papel central que tales aspectos parecen desempeñar en la experiencia musical si atendemos a lo que los participantes en esa tradición tienden a subrayar como relevante.

Establecido el problema, en la sección 2, propondré el primer caso de estudio (el uso de cencerros en la *Sexta Sinfonía* de Mahler) basándome en un ejemplo citado por el propio Scruton. Aquí argumentaré que ciertos sonidos que forman parte indispensable de ciertas piezas tienen un carácter no-tonal. En concreto, examinaré cómo el sonido de unos cencerros se incorpora a la *Sexta Sinfonía* de Mahler sin estar desempeñando un papel

tonal. Si queremos mantener la visión de Scruton, esto nos coloca en el siguiente dilema: para que este aspecto sonoro forme parte de lo propiamente musical debería estar integrado tonalmente en nuestra experiencia de la obra. Sin embargo, el sonido de los cencerros no lo está. Entonces tenemos dos posibilidades: o bien este elemento es parte constitutiva de la experiencia musical de la obra sin desempeñar un papel organizacional en nuestra experiencia, o bien, distanciándonos de Scruton, reconocemos que es una parte indispensable de la experiencia de esta obra y, además, que lo hace desempeñando con un papel organizativo.

Mi idea es explorar esta segunda posibilidad, para lo cual me apoyaré en las secciones 3, 4 y 5 en la idea de "estilización" para referirme al modo en que los músicos modifican, tratan y, en suma, componen con estos sonidos. Así mismo me apoyaré en la aportación de John Dyck, según la que los sonidos naturales pueden formar parte de la apreciación musical de una obra, y en la tesis de la atención doble de Andy Hamilton, según la que la apreciación musical de aspectos no tonales forma parte indispensable de nuestra experiencia musical no solo en los casos más obvios, como el de la *Sexta Sinfonía* de Mahler, sino en general. Así mismo, en la sección 5, considero que se debe reexaminar la concepción de Scruton sobre el sonido y la centralidad de la escucha acusmática para una caracterización adecuada de la comprensión musical. Mi idea es llamar la atención sobre cómo opera, en Scruton, una cierta tendencia a considerar la experiencia musical como una experiencia abstracta: esto es, ajena a cualquier información sobre su modo de producción. Esta tendencia, a mi modo de ver, limitaría la posibilidad de aplicar su noción de comprensión musical a la música popular tal y como la he caracterizado en este trabajo.

Por último, en la sección 6, tomando como punto de partida la forma en que los oyentes de música popular se relacionan con la música, exploraré su interés por aspectos no tonales de la música, y como esto pone de manifiesto el desarrollo de la comprensión musical en este género. Mi idea es mostrar cómo esta comprensión, a diferencia de otras propuestas, no tiene por qué entenderse únicamente como la reivindicación de nuestra atención a elementos no tonales. La música popular no quiere reinventar o desligarse de la tradición al modo del dodecafonismo, el serialismo, o el atonalismo. Rara vez encontramos un abandono de la tonalidad en este tipo de música. Su innovación consistiría, más bien, en proponer la integración de elementos no-tonales en un único discurso musical. Y la experiencia de estos elementos tiene, a su modo de ver, una fuerza organizacional que guía la escucha y determina el grado de comprensión musical de aquel que se introduce en la práctica.

Así, trato de analizar ejemplos en los que se ponen de manifiesto el uso de estos nuevos aspectos en la música popular como el uso del sampleo, la cuidadosa estilización de sonidos, ruidos y atmósferas sonoras que se incorporan a la música, o las actitudes que los músicos tienen en el escenario. Lo interesante de estos elementos es que, pese a la dificultad de establecer reglas claras de su uso, parecen efectivamente poder ser reconocidos como movimientos, o expresiones de comprensión, adecuados o inadecuados dentro del sistema musical de esta tradición. Captar esta adecuación significaría que dichos elementos forman parte del contenido experiencial musical cuando comprendemos la música. Así, esta tesis tiene como objetivo, si bien no establecer criterios rígidos de comprensión para estos aspectos, mostrar cómo los participantes de este sistema, los proponen como incorporaciones a lo propiamente musical.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

This thesis addresses the problem of musical meaning in the light of the notions of musical experience and musical understanding within a Wittgensteinian perspective. In this sense, it follows the line developed by some contemporary key authors in the analytical philosophy of music. Although this affinity with the philosophical thought of the second Wittgenstein might lead one to believe that there is a consensus on what aspects constitute a musical understanding of a work, the truth is that there are notable divergences in how this question is approached. While some authors, such as Roger Scruton or Hanne Appelqvist, take a narrow view in which the notion of acousmatic listening determines the range of properly musical experiences, others, such as Andy Hamilton, Garry Hagberg or Theodore Gracyk, take a more flexible stance, including as relevant to understanding almost anything that has to do with the way music is produced and appreciated. These divergences reveal the extent to which the authors' understanding of musical grammar differs when they appeal to it to indicate which aspects are part of musical understanding, and in what sense grasping them constitutes a correct experience of music. Whereas for Scruton only those aspects of music that play a tonal, harmonic or rhythmic role can be considered significant from a specifically musical point of view –i.e. they play the kind of structural or organisational role that is necessary for a sound sequence to be experienced musically–, for authors who adopt a more flexible conception of musical understanding both tonal and non-tonal aspects can be considered relevant to musical understanding.

The proposal presented here attempts to offer a different option to these two alternative ways of characterising musical understanding. For this purpose, it will seek to demonstrate the feasibility of sustaining a conception of musical understanding and meaning that assigns a fundamental role to certain aspects that seek to contribute to musical meaning, departing from Scruton's notion that such a role is to be understood exclusively in tonal terms.

In this sense, it is argued with Scruton that only those aspects that play an organising role in the musical experience are musically relevant, but, unlike Scruton, it is argued that this role is not exclusive to those aspects that we can recognise as tonal, but can, thanks to the development of a particular musical practice, be played by non-tonal and visual aspects of musical composition.

The articulation and defence of this idea will be made not as a result of mere philosophical reflection, but as a response to the criticisms that authors such as Scruton himself have made of the musical value of popular music. It is in this context that the idea of recognising an organising role for the non-tonal aspects present in the musical works of this tradition is proposed. This idea will be articulated in conjunction with the articulation of a defence of this music and the value of its experience as a proper musical experience.

This issue of the content of our musical experiences have been discussed from multiple positions and with diverse interests throughout history. However, this discussion began to have great philosophical relevance during Romanticism, as the social rise of European musicians allowed music to be conceived as an autonomous art, independent from textual accompaniments and increasingly distanced from the social functions it formerly accompanied –such as, religious, theatrical, festive, military, and other functions. Music's capacity to move the listeners, initially conceived in terms of its connection to the text or programme it accompanied, began to be thought as 'saying something on its own' (Fubini, 1998, pp. 235–237, 258–270), stripped of the linguistic support provided by the text or the figurative content of the operatic performance. As a result, the questions about music alone's proper content became central in the classical tradition.[1]

[1] I adopt Peter Kivy's terminology (1990, pp. 15–16) to refer to the instrumental music of the so-called Common Practice Period –roughly spanning the Baroque to Romanticism in Europe. 'Music alone' refers not only to music without text or programme, but also to music conceived to be listened to for its own sake. In this sense, the emergence of music alone came with a mode of listening that is invited listeners to appreciate music as autonomous aural works of art and that encouraged attending to formal properties of

For example, questions, such as, can music on its own convey or possess the same representational or narrative content as when it is accompanied by a text? And if so, how does it do so? Or, if music cannot represent anything, how to describe the content experienced in listening to it? How should one capture the impression that, as Ludwig Wittgenstein would write, music seems to say 'something' «and it is as though I had to find *what* it says» (Wittgenstein, 1958/1969, p. 166), became central.

The difficulty in characterizing pure instrumental music's content in representational or propositional terms lead to a form of characterizing music's experience that often bifurcated between two positions: on the one hand, some authors captured musical content in terms of expressive content, emphasizing music's capacity to produce or evoke feelings and emotions; on the other, formalist approaches conceived it in terms of grasping formal relations and responding to them in terms of pleasure/displeasure. This shift of focus lead, in turn, to a further exploration of the object and nature of the pleasure-response proper to musical experience. Is it a mere sensory pleasure similar to satisfying one's hunger or enjoying some fresh breeze, or is it like the sort of intellectual pleasure often experienced in the contemplation of certain forms –as in appreciating architecture?

Thus, as Defez (2004) has shown, during this period the answers to the problem of pure music's content were mainly divided between those arguing for the idea that music had intrinsic meaning, expressing nothing more than itself, and those arguing that music's significance was closely tied to human emotional life.[2]

A good example of how this debate evolved in the 19th century can be seen in Eduard Hanslick's major work *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854), where several of the terms that the contemporary debate on musical experience employs were already advanced. We find in his work a strict separation between what belongs to music itself as an autonomous artistic object, and what is external to it. This separation is important to delimit music's proper content from other types of content that music could convey insofar as it is accompanied by something which could provide representational content, like some text or program. This separation was, furthermore, very much connected with Hanslick's critical position concerning the expression of emotions in music.

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the music. Other terms such as pure –instrumental– music (Bertrand, 1923, p. 545) or absolute music (Hanslick, 2018, p. 24) have been also used to convey this idea of musical autonomy.

[2] Other authors such as Schopenhauer offered a third way that I will not explore in this thesis: music as the expression of the essence of the world and of the subject (Peña, 1978).

In Hanslick's terms, the content of musical experience is the musically beautiful; that is, an experience of pleasure in response to forms specific to this art (Hanslick, 2018, p. 2). The proper content of musical experience is sonically moved forms: «meaningful relations among intrinsically appealing sounds [in which one hears] their mutual concord and discord, their fleeing and coalescing, their soaring and subsiding» described by the rules of melody, harmony and rhythm (Hanslick, 2018, pp. 40–41).[3]

Since the beginnings of this debate about the proper characterization of music's proper content and understanding, a plurality of views has been proposed to answer their main questions. There are different perspectives. For example, a perspective such as Lévi-Strauss' encourages to seek the relationships between musical experience and human temporality (Defez, 2004, p. 85). Other visions, such as Susanne Langer's, seek to distinguish musical temporality from other experienced temporalities (Alperson, 1980; Guter & Guter, 2021). A nominalist view, such as that of Nelson Goodman, on the other hand, approaches the question of musical meaning from a theory of symbols (Webster, 1971). There are also phenomenological approaches, such as that of Sergiu Celibidache, which appeals to the study of consciousness and to grounding our musical experience in the way we experience tension and relaxation in sound (Marin, 2015).

Given that this thesis is not only concerned with the question of musical experience per se, but also attempts to offer popular music as a case study, I considered a Wittgensteinian approach appropriate because of its emphasis on delving into the practices of a culture to make explicit the rules that may govern them at particular times. Thus, I will very much focus upon how users of a particular tradition behave and what they take to be relevant criteria of music understanding. In this respect, approaching popular musical from this philosophical perspective also aims at providing a way to understand this practice that differ from, and maybe complements, other approaches that have been already widely explored, such as psychological (North & Hargreaves, 2008), mercantile (Cusic, 1996), sociological (Frith, 2016) o ideological (Cusick, 2016) studies.

I will proceed as follows: in Chapter 1, I will introduce Wittgenstein's notions of meaning and understanding in language as well as their application in musical contemporary aesthetics. For the later Wittgenstein, the meaning of a linguistic

[3] Here I adopt the translation of the expression *tönend bewegte Formen* that Christoph Landerer and Lee Rothfarb propose taking into account that for Hanslick *tönend* refers both to a sound with a function within the tonal system and to the fact that we hear this function in the way sounds move (Hanslick, 2018, pp. xxxix–xliii).

expression has to do with its use in a particular context. Thus, understanding a word or phrase is to be able to use it correctly or to respond to it correctly.

An important insight of this view is that it conceives understanding as the exercise of certain abilities that are acquired and modulated within a community of practice and that allows speakers to respond adequately in those contexts where the expressions are used.

Similarly, a Wittgensteinian approach to music's meaning and understanding focuses on what the listener does –including, for example, how she describes the music, or which movements accompany her listening.

In my approach, I will mostly refer to the music's content of a musical experience –instead of 'meaning'– to refer to what the listener grasps or understands when listening to music. In addition, this approach has the advantage of allowing us to explore how what is involved in musical understanding –that is, which features, or musical aspects are relevant for an experience to be properly musical– is subject to revision considering the historical development of musical practices.

Throughout the section 1 of Chapter I, a brief characterisation of Wittgenstein's notion of meaning and understanding of language will be presented. Then, in section 2, I will briefly review some of the main developments of this notion of understanding in the musical field, trying to see which points do these different developments have in common. In section, 2.1, I will pay attention to some of the differences between these views. I will focus on how each of these explore the line between what is musically significant –and hence part of a proper experience of musical understanding– and what is not. As I will try to show that there are, within the so called Wittgensteinian views of musical understanding, broader and narrower ways to conceive of the criteria for musical understanding; that is, broader and narrower characterizations of which aspects can be thematised musically. While some approaches are quite liberal and consider that everything that forms part of the 'form of life' within which a musical tradition flourishes can become musically significant within that tradition, others consider that only certain aspects of sounds –i.e., tonal relationships– figure relevantly in the listener's experience. My aim is to contribute to this issue by exploring how the discussion around the musical value of popular music reflects some assumptions that can be contested by adopting a Wittgensteinian approach to music understanding.

The general scheme of musical understanding that I will adopt throughout my thesis is presented in section 2.2. In that section, I introduce the notion of the musical

phenomenon. By this I refer to the complex of activities and actions that arise around music. Then, I distinguish within this phenomenon two different sorts of aspects: the first group refers to that which contributes to the musical organisation of the musical experience, while the second group refers to those aspects that accompanies music but do not have this organisational power. While both aspects may be important, only the former determines features in musical understanding proper. However, the lack of agreement on how to trace the boundary between these two aspects has implications to how each view characterizes musical understanding in detail.

Chapter II introduces Scruton's view of musical understanding in terms of the exercise of an acousmatic form of attending to sound. Scruton argues that different modes of listening reflect different experiential contents, each requiring a distinct set of skills and knowledge. Musical listening is characterized in contrast to ordinary listening.

In section 1.3, I introduce Scruton's notion of acousmatic listening. In his view, this is an indispensable ability for musical listening. I will further distinguish two senses of acousmatic listening. The first sense refers to 'listening without seeing'. The second refers to a form of listening that allows us to relate different sounds in terms of qualities, such as height, length, rhythmic pattern, and that sounds possess independently from their causes. This latter notion is indispensable for the experience of sounds as music.

With this framework, in section 2 of chapter II, I will introduce additional concepts that help us to understand Scruton's musical aesthetics. For him, musical listening is also contemplative, makes use of spatial metaphors, and is a skill that derives from our imagination –sections 2.1 to 2.3. In section 2.4, I will introduce Scruton's notion of musical system. Musical understanding only takes place when there is a certain musical system –however minimally conceived. A musical system allows us to recognize certain form of sound organisation as well-formed or correct and others as senseless or meaningless. Scruton identifies this system primarily with the tonal system of the so-called Common Practice Period.

In section 2.5, I will sketch Scruton critical view of popular music. According to Scruton, this tradition has focused on aspects that do not contribute to the organisation of sound based on the principles of the tonal system –that is, principles of melody, harmony, and rhythm. In section 2.6, I will present some instances of what Scruton considers to be appropriate incorporations of popular music into the tonal system.

Chapter III will offer a general characterization of the so-called popular music as well as some of the criticisms that this genre has received. Sections 1 to 5 will focus on

some of the characteristic features of this genre. The list offered will not be exhaustive, as I will consider those aspects of this tradition that are the object of Scruton's criticisms and that are relevant to the problem of musical understanding. Finally, in section 6., I will present the main problem with popular musical in relation to the question of musical understanding. This is that popular music is a tradition that introduces certain innovations, both sonic and visual, which musicians consider to be part of the music and indispensable for its understanding but that, as far as they play no tonal role, they are not acknowledged as playing an organisational role.

However, this criticism does not fit well with the role that this music genre's practitioners attribute to them. Thus, in the music press, by fans and by the musicians themselves, elements such as stage postures, certain iconography, the musicians' appearance, the way they play and produce sounds, their interest in sound engineering and their ability to edit timbres, to add noise or to modify the overall sound of a piece are considered compositional elements that have to do with the actual musical ability of these artists.

In Chapter IV, I will try to argue in favour of the organisational role of these novelties and, hence, of their musical significance. I will do so by paying attention to how the members of the practice learn to recognize these innovations and how they become indispensable for a full characterization of the musical experience that is most characteristic to this type of music. While I agree that many of these innovations do not play a tonal role, there is room for acknowledging the organisational role of certain aspects that, nevertheless, lack tonal significance.

In section 1 of this chapter, I will set out the state of the problem of musical understanding under the assumptions outlined so far. Then, in section 2, I will propose the first case study: the use and musical contribution of cowbells sounds in Mahler's *Sixth Symphony*. I will argue that the sound of cowbells is incorporated into Mahler's work without being tonally integrated. They nevertheless contribute to the music experience precisely by providing a certain erratic or irregular character. They play an organisational role without contributing tonally to the piece.

To expand on the idea that some new elements can play a non-tonal but nevertheless organisational role, I will rely in sections 3, 4 and 5 on the notion of stylisation. An aspect becomes organisationally significant within a musical piece when it is successfully stylised, and both the musicians and the listeners can grasp it as such. I will also refer to John Dyck's contribution to this issue and his explanation of how natural

sounds can be part of the musical appreciation of a work, and to Andy Hamilton's twofold thesis according to which the musical appreciation of non-tonal aspects is an indispensable part of our musical experience. I will also devote section 5.2 to revisiting Scruton's view of acousmatic listening.

Finally, in section 6, taking as a starting point the way in which listeners of popular music relate to music, I will explore how their engagement with non-tonal aspects relates to the way in which they understand music. My aim is to show that this understanding, in contrast to other proposals, does not have to be understood only as supporting a certain vindication of non-tonal aspects. Paying attention to the activities involved in the current practices of producing and appreciating this kind of music reveals that the use popular music typically does of non-tonal aspects can be explored as possessing an organising power. As a result, these non-tonal aspects are an indispensable part of the musical experience and an element that organises and guides listening. While I distance myself from Scruton's criticism of popular music, I also acknowledge the centrality he gives to our experience of tonality in music. However, if we are to preserve a practice-oriented approach to musical understanding and the idea that the normativity of those practices cannot be fully captured despite their historical development, we need to be open to the possibility that novel aspects proposed by different musical practices can be integrated as musically relevant.

CHAPTER I: THE WITTGENSTEINIAN TRADITION

As I pointed out in the Introduction, I will take a Wittgensteinian approach to aesthetics in order to approach the question of music's meaning and understanding. This approach to musical meaning partly relies on Wittgenstein's notion of meaning, articulated in the so-called 'second period'.[4]

In the first part of this chapter, I will present some of the key concepts that articulate this view of meaning. I will do so mainly following his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), a work in which we find his most important ideas concerning language and meaning, such as the notion of language game, grammar, the problem of following a rule and the question of the normativity of our practices within a form of life.[5] In the second part, I will show how these ideas have been transferred to the field of aesthetics and in particular to the question of understanding music. I will present several of its major exponents and their points in common as well as their discrepancies when applying these notions to particular phenomena.

[4] This period has been the predominant one in the Wittgensteinian literature on aesthetics. Despite this, one can also find some studies that draw on his early period, as is the case of Susanne Langer (1948), James Fielding (2014) or Erik Anderson (2020).

[5] The first English edition of the *Investigations* came from Rush Rhees and Elizabeth Anscombe in 1953, however, throughout this section I will refer to the revised version by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte in 2009.

1. Wittgenstein and language

To understand the thought of the second Wittgenstein, it is helpful to examine how he reacted to the ideas he presented in his earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). It is not in my interest to develop all the ideas that shaped Wittgenstein's first period, or all the ideas to which he reacted. It will suffice to name those ideas insofar as their confrontation shapes the central concepts of his later thought.

Wittgenstein's early period is influenced by various figures and issues, among them mainly Bertrand Russell, George Edward Moore and Gottlob Frege. During this period Russell and Moore opposed the so-called British idealism by proposing logic as a tool of philosophical analysis. This theory was called logical atomism and was adopted by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus*. According to this proposal, the new logic could analyse the structure of our language, showing what can and cannot be said. The metaphysical discourse of British idealism, under this logical analysis, was a typical example of a discourse aiming at referring to what cannot be said (Scruton, 1995, p. 268).[6]

Wittgenstein's other great influence is Frege's so-called representationalist theory of language according to which the essence of language is to represent states of affairs in the world. This theory proposes a certain relation between language and the world, expressed in terms of sense and reference. In short, any proposition has two components, the content of the proposition and then the truth or falsity of the proposition. For example, if I say that unicorns fly, I am entertaining a thought, a certain content, but which has no referent. So, since unicorns do not exist, the proposition "unicorns fly" cannot be either true or false. The mere content of the sentence has to do with the sense of the proposition, while being able to give it a truth value –asserting it– has to do with its reference. For Frege, therefore, the assertoric form is fundamental because it is the one that connects us with the world (Williams, 2010, pp. 28–31).

Considering these ideas, Wittgenstein's early period is known for his defence of the picture theory of language. In essence this theory proposes that the essence of language consists in depicting reality through the general form of the proposition. Language can depict the various states of affairs of the world, that is, the ways in which

[6] The idealist position criticised by Russell and Moore would be summed up in the idea that the universe or whatever exists or is known to exist is spiritual or mental. The criticism is aimed at showing that there is no philosophical argumentation possible for such a conclusion since, in their view, the existence of an object is not to be identified with the mental act of perceiving, thinking or experiencing it. The various objections to idealist notions such as those of George Berkeley, Herbert Bradley or J.M. McTaggart use logical analysis not so much to show that their ideas are false but rather meaningless (Guyer & Horstmann, 2023, Chapter 8).

the world can be. And the possibility of this depiction is supported by the use of names, which correspond to objects of the world, in a certain structure under a logical form. Words and the world share a logical form that provides the conditions for meaning. Hence the possibility arises that we have propositions that are meaningful and true as long as they reflect a state of affairs of the world and false if they depict a non-existent combination of states of affairs (Schuster, 2014).

During his second period, Wittgenstein discusses and abandons many of these ideas in favour of new notions of language and a new philosophical methodology. To understand the essential foundations of this shift, I will show how this position is developed in the *Investigations,* mainly focusing in two of its main themes: the discussion of the representationalist theory of meaning and the problem of following a rule. These discussions can be read mainly in the following sections: from paragraph §1 to §64 in which we can found a criticism of the idea that words mean something external to them, thus pointing to representationalist theory. He then examines the possibility of looking for meaning in something internal, i.e., in the rules of logic, but also makes this the subject of his criticism –§§65-242.[7] This is the material I will be discussing in this section.

1.1. The second Wittgenstein and the *Philosophical Investigations*

Wittgenstein presents various ordinary situations in which words play different roles or functions.[8] Unlike his predecessors, Wittgenstein does not think that these ordinary situations and uses of words are presented to be overcome by a logical method that will clarify their meaning. The idea elaborated through these different examples is to identify the meaning of the expressions within their use. The methodological attention to the ordinary use of our words in actual contexts of use results in one of the great characteristics of his philosophy: to consider him a philosopher of ordinary language in line with the tradition of authors such as Gilbert Ryle, John Austin or Peter Strawson. (Kuusela & McGinn, 2011).

[7] Although I will not address them here, it is also worth noting the discussion on private language. This discussion appears in relation to the possibility of pointing to certain objects in the mind that could serve as guarantors of the meaning for our words about sensations –§§243-427–; issues on rule-following also take centre stage in relation to this problem (Stern, 2004, pp. 16–17).

[8] Among the main scenarios presented are: the communication among the builders (§2, 19-22), a situation with colours on a table (§48), the case of the standard meter stick in Paris (§50), the child who learns a sequence of numbers (§143), or the more extraordinary cases of the possibility of having a private diary of sensations (§258), and the problem of the beetle in the box (§293).

This method carries out what is called a ‘grammatical investigation’. The term ‘grammar’ in Wittgenstein has a particular meaning; by ‘grammar’ he means the concrete patterns or structure of use of our linguistic expressions. These patterns or structure of use are revealed in how certain expressions are uttered by speakers in concrete situations. By adopting this view, language is somehow assimilated to a certain kind of action. Thus, Wittgenstein refers to these situations as ‘language games’, conveying the idea that language, as a game, is a practical activity within the everyday life of the participants and the world they inhabit. Thus, the multiple situations that Wittgenstein presents to us in the *Investigations* are meant to illustrate instances of these language games, thus providing the context in which we can properly observe the grammar of our words. Taking these language games seriously leads us to describe the uses of words under their peculiar circumstances and to discover, for example, how certain misunderstandings arise and are resolved within a certain context, how we teach certain meanings to learners, what happens when the same words are uttered in different contexts, and so on. This attention to the ordinary use of language shuns previous attempts to provide a conclusive theory of meaning by seeking its foundations outside ordinary usage (Fennell, 2019, pp. 218–230).[9]

Let us begin by exploring the concept of ‘use’. Wittgenstein’s response to the logician’s method is that meaning is to be found in use. Thus, we can solve the question of meaning by paying attention to language’s practical contexts of use. These contexts, which illustrate various functions that linguistic expression may perform and the practical situations in which they occur, provide the clues to their meaning.

To begin to develop this idea, Wittgenstein presents us in §1 and §2 with a language game that seems to be constructed to favour Frege's view that words refer to objects in the world (Williams, 2010, pp. 33–35). Thus, in paragraph §1 we read:

> «Now think of the following use of language: I send someone shopping. I give him a slip of paper marked “five red apples”. He takes the slip to the shopkeeper, who opens the drawer marked “apples”; then he looks up the word “red” in a chart and finds a colour sample next to it; then he says the series of elementary number-words –I assume that he knows them by heart– up to the word “five”, and for each number-word he takes an apple of the same colour as the sample out of the drawer».

The problem is that this image might lead us to think that the important thing is to form a certain mental state where such correspondences happen, when in fact we are using the words within a practical context that seeks to achieve a certain goal. That is, we are

[9] Is this sense, Wittgenstein’s philosophy has been considered therapeutic: it does not criticise one theory in order to provide another. It serves to prevent us from thinking that we need such a theory instead.

not trying to convey a mental image –to be verified– but rather to cause an external response from our listener. If the shop assistant hearing the order "five red apples" asserts that she simply grasps that image, we could not in this context speak of understanding the meaning. Rather, understanding is evinced when the interlocutor responds appropriately; that is, when he or she performs the right action (Fennell, 2019, p. 232).

Thus, in the case of the fruit shop, the expression "five red apples" uttered by a customer to the shop assistant is part of the context of a purchase request. The shop assistant understands its meaning not because she is capturing the customer's internal mental image, but because she executes the appropriate action. Understanding, meaning and action are thus intimately linked for Wittgenstein.

Understanding meaning in Wittgenstein's view thus has to do with mastering a certain grammar, which involves a complex set of actions determined by the context of use.

Another of the occasions on which Wittgenstein reaffirms this idea is in his response to the possibility of founding meaning by means of ostensive definitions. That is, that the understanding of a word is equivalent to uttering the word and pointing to its corresponding object in the world –as it can be read in §6. The topic of ostensive definition has been widely discussed in the Wittgensteinian literature. However, the important point here is that the suggestion that ostensive definition can ground meaning ignores the fact that it is not an isolated and unambiguous act, but always part of a group of practices. So, for an ostensive gesture to be understandable, it is necessary to attend to the context in which the gesture is used, whether to warn of something, to point out, to define, to compare, etc. This is the Wittgensteinian way of solving the question of meaning and its understanding (Fennell, 2019, p. 238; Stern, 2004, pp. 90–97; Williams, 2010, p. 104).

So, speakers grasp meaning when their use of a language contributes appropriately to the activity in which words are uttered, as meaning implies the context of linguistic and non-linguistic activities of our practical life (Fennell, 2019, p. 233). Therefore, understanding meaning is knowing how to make the right moves within the language game. The view that meaning is fundamentally based on referential relations would have come from thinking that one kind of use of language, that of defining names or relating words to objects by ostension –pointing to the primacy of assertoric form in Frege–, can account for all the uses we make of language.

As Wittgenstein points out in §11, understanding language is tantamount to master the uses of words, just as correctly using a tool has to do with its function in a context of use. The same word, like a tool, can fulfil many different functions depending on the context. Furthermore, we cannot have a theory that determines in advance how many words –or ways of combining them– and functions will they perform, just as we cannot foresee how many new tools and functionalities there will be. We can only discover them by paying attention to the history of a tradition, and to how new tools emerge while others are abandoned.

As the notion of 'use' in Wittgenstein compels us to pay attention to the contexts of use for words; certain elements will be shown to be more or less relevant in a certain context. In this sense, in §21 Wittgenstein wonders what it is that makes us understand the same words "five slabs" differently when they occur in different contexts, such as giving an order or a report. In the first case I understand that I am asked to bring the object, while in the second case I count the materials used in the course of the day. In relation to this question, he raises the following hypothesis: let us suppose that the key to distinguish orders from reports is the tone in which the words are uttered. Wittgenstein thinks that, even if there were a certain regularity in this respect –for example, orders were usually given in a louder and firmer manner–, an analysis of the language game would reveal that this criterion is not definitive.

If we imagine that these words are uttered by the construction manager to the construction worker, then the tone of voice is not as relevant as it is to identify at what point in the construction process, we are, whether it is in the middle of the day, working, or at the end of the day, gathering material. In short, understanding an expression involves referring to the activity in which hearer and speaker are engaged when using that expression, and this complex practise determines what is relevant for the correct understanding (Fennell, 2019, pp. 236–237; Stern, 2004, p. 84). Furthermore, this connects directly to the Wittgensteinian idea that understanding a language is related to engaging with a form of life –a central concept that appears in §19.

A form of life is constituted by a set of different language games understood as a collection of the linguistic and non-linguistic activities that make up a certain community. These games change over time; so, understanding the emergence of meaning in a community requires this sensitivity to a temporal dimension of our communicative practices. Besides, since meaning always emerges within a form of life, understanding meaning implies engaging with it, with its language games. Thus, when a child learns

language, he or she is not only learning word-object correspondences, but also entering into the form of life of his or her community.

This bond between meaning, understanding, and form of life, between language and action, is manifest in the various language games. Wittgenstein lists some of these games in §23: giving orders, expressing hypotheses, acting in a play, singing, guessing riddles, telling jokes, among others. Wittgenstein points out in §66 and §67 that there have been unnecessary attempts to find something common to all games. This remark points to our tendency to think that if we do not find any common denominator, then its meaning is ambiguous and no criteria for the correctness of its use can be established (Lugg, 2000, p. 119). However, we should give up on this idea: games do not need these boundaries to function and to be understood by us.

Consequently, the second Wittgenstein, instead of proposing an alternative foundation for meaning, considers the various uses of language to discern in them the conditions under which we understand each other. Several hypotheses are discarded because they ignore this complex of linguistic and non-linguistic actions that make understanding possible in a particular form of life. Thus, understanding is akin to mastering a game, being immersed in a rule-guided activity, where the learner displays skill through actions, comparisons, definitions, reactions, gestures, etc. If different language games were reducible to one single game, there would be only one set of rules for understanding. But, following Wittgenstein's illustrations, there is, rather, a multiplicity of games within a form of life. They can all be different from each other and yet share certain traits in the same way that members of a family share similarities and yet at the same time they are all different.[10] Therefore, although we know that they are all games, this diversity forces us to immerse ourselves in each of them if we want to investigate the meaning of the words used within the game. It is this immersion, or philosophical investigation, that reveals to us what the player of the game understands and by what criteria does so.

1.2. A brief exposition of Wittgensteinian readings

As we have seen, understanding is similar to follow the rules of a game. The question of what it is to follow a rule is a very discussed theme in the Wittgensteinian

[10] This comparison is introduced in paragraphs 66 and 67 of the *Investigations*.

literature. [11] In this section I want to touch briefly on this topic in order to show, on the one hand, the very notion of rule in Wittgenstein and, secondly, how this topic has given rise to certain interpretative differences. These differences show a richness in Wittgensteinian theory that will not only be seen in the Philosophy of language, but also in its applications in Aesthetics and, in particular, in the problems of musical experience that I will focus later.

One clear way to differentiate a certain group of interpreters is with respect to their view of the nature of the very philosophical investigation that Wittgenstein proposes. While most agree that the focus on ordinary language's situations is intended to show that there is no single essence of language, there is some disagreement about the philosophers' tasks after this acceptance. Two main visions are distinguished here, namely quietist and constructive, following Meredith Williams (2010, p. 1).

The quietist position considers that Wittgenstein's main contribution is to alert us to the fact that there is no essence or foundation to be found when faced with the question of meaning. Although philosophers have tended to fall into fundamentalist positions, the best we can do is paying attention to how meaning emerges in different contexts. Once the philosophical investigation on these contexts is done, philosophers do not have any further task. No positive view on language or meaning is required for communication to take place properly. Other interpreters of Wittgenstein think that the method introduced in the *Investigations* is itself a philosophical take on the fundamentalisms underlying our default views of meaning and, so, it can be considered a conception of language itself (Anat & Matar, 2023; Lugg, 2000, pp. 122–124).

The quietist reading of Wittgenstein has also been called Pyrrhonian –as in (Fogelin, 1994)– when it emphasises the attitude we should take to the problem of scepticism about following a rule. In summary, our practices are regulated, but we struggle to provide a definitive justification for these rules without falling into a circularity. Therefore, we can only state the patterns that govern our understanding.[12] That is to say, the investigation of the rules leaves language as it is and does not propose any theory (Fogelin, 1987, Chapter XV). These authors focus on some texts of the *Investigations* in which the philosophical project's purpose is to dissolve rather than solve

[11] As an overview one can consult two widely influential works by Baker and Hacker (2009) and Saul Kripke (1982).

[12] A hypothesis of how to justify a rule that ends in a regress to infinity appears for example in paragraphs §86 and §143 of the *Investigations* and is discussed at length in Stern (2004, Chapter 6), Cavell (1969, pp. 47–50), Kripke (1982) and McDowell (2009, pp. 367–368).

certain problems. This is further related to their alleged therapeutic character, according to which the criticism of traditional philosophy led us to stop philosophising (M. McGinn, 1997, pp. 22–26; Stern, 2004, p. 36).[13] Saul Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (1982) is understood as adopting this Pyrrhonian reading that other philosophers have followed later, such as Cora Diamond (1991), John McDowell (2009), James Conant (2000) Hilary Putnam (2000) or David Stern (2004), among others.

This position further emphasises an idea that is expressed in §68 of the *Investigations* according to which, although rules determine our practices, they do not usually determine every aspect of them. For example, in tennis there are rules for the serve, but no rules as to how high must the ball be lifted. This space for indeterminacy does not render rules useless neither makes us unable to understand the game of tennis.[14]

As we can see, the gist of this view is to underline the lack of necessity of philosophical theory. For that reason, it is only recognized that one always acts in a determined and resolute way but blindly. We cannot give final reasons for the rules we follow. All I can be sure is that my way of acting is under the constant judgement of my community, which determines the meaning of our words (Stern, 2004, pp. 153–154). Thus, we must not formulate new theories but rather look at the way things are in a certain community.

The appeal to forms of life and to a close observation of our practices free ourselves from the need of theories. It is the assumption that we need these theories that embark us on these problems in the first place. Once we free ourselves from this assumption, we should stop theorising (Fogelin, 1994, p. 220; McDowell, 2009, pp. 369–371; Stern, 2004, pp. 168–169). [15]

On the other hand, the extensive work from 1980 *An Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* by Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker is considered to be one of the paradigmatic examples of the constructive view. Other

[13] This view has also been called 'heterodox' (Anat & Matar, 2023), given that it emerged after the traditional reading of Wittgenstein marked by Baker and Hacker (2005). In line with this therapeutic approach, Stern argues that the dialogical form of the Investigations, in which voices from all positions have a place, reflects a concern not to advance a theory, as this would lead back to the adoption of old dogmatisms (Stern, 2004, pp. 22–23; 170; 186).

[14] In §89 he points to Augustine's question about time, and also notes how we talk about time in our everyday life without needing to have an exact explanation of it, thus, dissolving the problem (Lugg, 2000, pp. 153–154).

[15] As McDowell and Fogelin note, it would be more accurate to say that Wittgenstein recommends abandoning a certain, shall we say, fundamentalist way of doing philosophy, but does not make a statement in the *Investigations* as to whether to deny any kind of philosophy (Fogelin, 1994, p. 205; McDowell, 2009, p. 367).

constructive interpretations of the second Wittgenstein can also be found in authors such as Peter Winch (1958/1990), Renford Bambrough (1961), Colin McGinn (1984), David Pears (1986), Andrew Lugg (2000), Michael Williams (2007), Meredith Williams (2010) or John Fennell (2019) among others. Many of these authors seek behind the diagnosis of the old philosophical method new philosophical proposals regarding the problem of meaning. They consider that the sort of grammatical analysis that is done by presenting the different language games is a positive methodology, a tool of analysis that recognises the importance of the contexts of use. Thus, for example, the Wittgensteinian focus on contexts of use offers us a positive theory capable of reconstructing the normative structure of our language games (Williams, 2010, pp. 9–20).

A constructive view also takes a critical attitude to traditional fundamentalist theories of meaning. Moreover, this view also agrees that what is relevant to understanding and meaning is in plain sight –as we can read in §126–, so that philosophical investigation describes rather than justifies understanding and meaning –following §124. A distinctive aspect of this approach is that they consider Wittgenstein as providing with a certain solution to the traditional philosophical problems. Wittgenstein would offer a theory of meaning or language freed from the vices denounced in other fundamentalist oriented views. This positive proposal would be able to point to certain communal regularities underlying meaning and understanding and to the standards of correctness that support them (Fennell, 2019, pp. 261–262). Thus, for the constructive reading it follows from the *Investigations* that there is a special goal or aim of philosophical discourse.

To illustrate in which sense will this reading of Wittgenstein involve a different take on the problem of meaning and on the task of Philosophy, we can return to the case of §198 and the example of the signpost. A sceptic would say that we can only account for turning right by seeing the sign and any attempt to justify this act by other interpretation would incur further justification.[16] By contrast, those who endorse a constructive understanding of Philosophy's role underlying the *Investigations*, like Fennell, think we cannot really understand what is involved in being part of a practice

[16] Fennell, holding a constructive view, does not give the importance to the sceptical problem that authors like Kripke do. This is because taking the sceptic seriously places us, in his view, in an external position, as if we have to give a justification for following a rule from outside the rule and not from within the practice itself. Fennell thinks that without going inside the practices we do not understand how certain beliefs are bedrock beliefs, that is, how it is necessary to have elements that are justified by default. The problem is not that these beliefs are not justified, it is that without these initial elements we could not establish the conditions of any understanding (Fennell, 2019, p. 274).

and how in these practices a symbol like the signpost can be normatively laden until we engage as part of the public road user community. The importance of this is best reflected when we are initiated into traffic issues. It is then that we see how the practice has evolved historically. The established use has become a socially and historically institutionalised normative standard. And it is within a form of life that we understand that there are right and wrong ways of behaving in front of such a traffic signal. If one thinks, together with the sceptic, that there are indefinite ways of interpreting the sign, it is because one is adopting a view external to the social practice where this road sign gets its normative force. If, on the contrary, one adopts the point of view of an insider in the practice, the indeterminacy of its meaning ceases and one understands the role it plays in a form of life (Fennell, 2019, p. 264).

This view seeks to emphasise that philosophically inquiring into the social nature of meaning is more than merely accepting that certain regularities guide our behaviour. This enquiry leads us to reconstruct and understand in a profound way how collective collaboration builds a normative web. That is, determining what rules the speakers of a community follow, and whether they do so appropriately, pushes one to participate in the language game in which they use those words or signals. Thus, one is required to become a competent user of the game within its form of life by performing activities such as being instructed, discussing with others, being corrected, etc. Now, instructional, evaluative, and corrective scenarios are especially significant to give us an understanding of the patterns of correctness governing these practices. Without this perspective, one cannot speculate on how someone is interpretating the road sign. The answer lies on the reconstruction of the complex practice. That is, in a process of understanding a given form of life. Only then one has the resources to ponder what are the possible interpretative options, and which are right or wrong (Annis, 1978; Fennell, 2019, pp. 265–266; Williams, 2010, pp. 217–218).

The community provides the conditions to have normative standards, but not in terms of sufficient and necessary conditions. Whether one follows a rule in the right way is grounded on the agreement of a community, but this agreement may be distinct from what the community thinks about it (Williams, 2010, p. 219). The community could err in self-ascribing certain normative patterns and, so, be later corrected in their self-descriptions either by a subgroup within the same community, or by the same community years later, or by other community which accurately captures the normative standards

governing the observed community's behaviour. Philosophy may have a role to play here in clarifying where the community fails.

Summary

As we have seen throughout this section, the Wittgensteinian notion of language revolves around several key concepts and different problematics. I have focused on the notion of understanding as it will be the key concept for developing some Wittgensteinian solution to aesthetic problems regarding musical meaning and understanding.

Understanding in Wittgenstein is related to the mastery of the rules, or grammar, of a given language game. Such games are the practical settings in which meaning emerges in a given form of life.

I have then presented two alternative readings of Wittgenstein that revolve around the problems of following a rule and the Wittgensteinian method itself. The interest of these topics for the present dissertation is related to its relevance for musical aesthetics. In particular, to different views on the criteria that determine whether someone follows a rule in contexts of musical understanding. I my view, while the quietist view is useful in highlighting the dangers of fundamentalism in thinking about meaning, a constructive view puts a special emphasis on how positive it is for an understanding of rules to adopt the Wittgensteinian method as a comprehensive immersion in a given form of life.

Both the notion of understanding described above and these two lessons from the various Wittgensteinian readings will be the background from which I will examine the application of the second Wittgenstein to the question of meaning and understanding in musical aesthetics.

2. Wittgenstein and music

We have already seen that Wittgenstein's characteristic approach to philosophical problems focuses on ordinary language, using what Meredith Williams calls the method of description, to dissolve philosophical problems through descriptions using ordinary examples of language use (Williams, 2010, p. 9). In the same way, many authors working in a Wittgensteinian approach to aesthetics confront different philosophical ideas about musical experience by analysing ordinary experiences of music. For example, they have focused on the characteristic use of emotive terms to describe music and on the role that

these terms play in our understanding it or have paid special attention to musical practises to display its grammar (Appelqvist, 2008, Chapter 4; Defez, 2013). Some authors have emphasized the Wittgensteinian idea that we need to take into consideration a form of life for understanding things like the significance of a musical pause for a certain author (Kaduri, 2006), the role of the instructor's indications in teaching a student to grasp a particular aspect of a piece (Arbo, 2012; Rubio, 1995, pp. 63–66), or in what sense movement terms are indispensable and reveal something substantial about musical understanding (Budd, 2003; De Clercq, 2007; Scruton, 2009b, Chapter 4), and so on. In these authors and others, there is a continuing spirit of not starting from theoretical generalities but from concrete situations within musical practices. They recognize that only within contexts of use –or listening– it makes sense to talk about music's meaning.

In this section, I would like to show how his approach to language and meaning and his characteristic method have inspired debates within aesthetics concerning musical experience, understanding and meaning. After that, I would like to provide a notion of musical understanding that encompasses most Wittgensteinian authors. Finally, on this common basis, I would like to present the idea that certain differences within the same school of thought might arise when we consider a particular object of study such as the phenomenon of pop in music or popular music. I will identify within Wittgensteinian aesthetics two alternative views on music understanding which I will refer to as the broad and the narrow views.

2.1. Musical meaning

A good example of the Wittgensteinian method is the work of Harry Hagberg, which I will use as a starting point to outline the Wittgensteinian approach to the aesthetic of music.

As we saw with language, the *Investigations* present multiple situations that are designed to reveal what notion of language and meaning we assume when we think in a certain way about our words. One of the views he critically explores is the consideration of linguistic meaning as systematically grounded in referential relationships. This misleading view partly relies on assuming a kind of dualism –between words, or signs, and their meanings– that further requires an explanation of how signs acquire meaning. In paragraph §6 of the *Investigations* Wittgenstein presents a scenario in which pointing to the object while saying the corresponding word would provide a method of stablishing meaning. This method is called ostensive defining and assumes the dualism

sign/meaning. The Wittgensteinian response in essence is that this method cannot ground our understanding of meaning insofar as it ignores that meaning and the very possibility of ostensive definition only function within a form of life where one knows the function that pointing has in different contexts. Therefore, this view assumes what it wants to explain, that is: linguistic competence (Fennell, 2019, p. 238; Stern, 2004, pp. 90–97; Williams, 2010, p. 104).

Later in the *Investigations*, in §33, Wittgenstein discusses a variation of this idea, where the ostension is not directed at the material object that a word names but at a certain mental entity or state. Following this scenario, private ostensive definitions would consist in providing mental images to determine the meaning of a word. Understanding the meaning of an expression learnt in this way would then consist in an overlap between the mental images of listener and the speaker. This idea is criticised by Wittgenstein as it would not explain how we manage to form the proper required mental image and not just any other (Fennell, 2019, pp. 240–241).

According Hagberg (1995, pp. 40–49), a similar strategy can be deployed in the aesthetic to address some issues concerning meaning in art. Thus, for example, it is possible to articulate a Wittgensteinian criticism against a dualistic understanding of artistic meaning. This dualistic approach tends to separate the art work's meaning –which is understood as a certain mental product located in the mind of the artist- from the work of art -understood as the external manifestation of that mental product or as the physical object upon which the meaning is conveyed. Thus, grasping the meaning of a work of art would involve grasping the mental content the artist had when doing the work.

One version of this dualism is Emotivism. This is the philosophical view that the emotions contained within a piece of music are what we must understand when we seek to fully experience it. Emotivism would be heir to a way of understanding emotions that is transferred to the aesthetic experience and which several authors have criticised from a Wittgensteinian perspective. Authors like Curt John Ducasse (1929) or Susanne Langer (1953) are defenders of an emotivist approach of the kind just referred.[17] For his part, Antoni Defez (2004) criticises this emotivism in Felix Mendelssohn or John Hospers and Hanne Appelqvist finds it in Tolstoy's *What is Art* (1998) and Deryck Cooke's *Language of Music* (1959).

[17] According to criticisms of each of them by Hagberg (1995, p. 55) and Marrades (2000, pp. 6–8) respectively.

An emotivist view would place the work's value in the mental contents of the artist who produces the work recreating the same problem that Wittgenstein criticises when discussing mentalistic conceptions of meaning. It is thus a dualistic view that undervalues the sign and privileges the internal. To illustrate how it replicates the dualism criticised in Wittgenstein and how a Wittgensteinian approach could respond to it, let us examine it in detail.

When theorists, critics, artists and the public assert that the meaning of art lies in the expression of emotions they often reproduce these dualistic assumptions.[18] That is, this way of talking about music often assumes that there is a mental content –certain emotions– that give meaning to the sign or object. This sign or object would be made of sequences of tones in music, but in other arts it would be words, strokes of colour, spatial forms, objects, and so on. Grasping the meaning, that is, understanding a certain piece, would consist of grasping this mental content through the sign. A sign which, on the other hand, is considered as an invented and arbitrary convention produced to transmit some mental content (Appelqvist, 2008, pp. 69–71).

In order to articulate a Wittgensteinian criticism of this dualistic view of musical meaning, Hagberg proposes various scenarios where we ordinarily speak of emotions in artistic contexts. He then tries to show that the dualist schema is not able to explain how the emotions relate to the works of art allegedly produced after them, nor the role of these emotions in our understanding of the corresponding work. Thus, for example, that an emotion is aroused in the listener when listening to a piece of music does not seem to be sufficient to grant that she has thereby grasped the content of that work. She could have displayed understanding even if she did not feel any particular emotion. Similarly, that the composer was under a particular emotional state when composing the piece is inconsequential for the actual expressive content of the work. It could have possessed the same content even if the composer had been in no particular emotional state whatsoever. Accordingly, the emotions the composer could have had are completely irrelevant to determining the expressive content the resulting piece might possess.

A dualistic scheme, in its attempt to explain musical understanding in terms of the emotions that may arise in musical experience, privileges the supposed mental contents of the composer as key for musical content and understanding. However, as the Wittgensteinian analysis reveals, this explanation is unsatisfactory. It requires the

[18] Already in Hanslick we can find a large catalogue of authors who think in these terms in music, from Johann Mattheson to Richard Wagner (Hanslick, 1854/2018, pp. 11–13).

unsustainable presupposition that artist and spectator need to have the same mental contents in order for the listener to understand the work. This problem can be seen also if, instead of emotions, we refer to intentions. That is, the idea that meaning is determined by the artist's intention in creating the work of art where this intention takes the form of a certain content in the artist's mind. More specifically, it is claimed that there is a kind of mental duplicate of the work that pre-exists it and that motivates the work (Hagberg, 1995, p. 75; Rubio, 1995, p. 20).[19]

To understand this idea in a very summarised way, we can start with the observation in paragraph 337 of the *Investigations* where Wittgenstein wonders whether it makes sense to say that I have the whole sentence in my mind before I utter it. Similarly, Hagberg comments on whether this mentalistic conception adequately capture the way in which intentions play a role in art's production and meaning. For example, we usually talk about a musician intending or *wanting* to play a melodic line over a certain accompaniment. A certain melody comes to her mind, and she performs it. That she successfully does so does not depend on the fact that she has or not some mental representation of the melody in her mind but on her satisfaction when she listens to the resulting melody –identifying it as the one she wanted to play. A musician improvising on a changing rhythmic and harmonic base also does this intentionally. But we do not need to assume that doing so involves having all the variants in mind before improvising, or performing a quick mental duplicate later translated into sound.

Hagberg notices the apparent appeal of mentalist views of artistic intention. However, on closer examination they lack explanatory power. When, for example, I remember the first part of a melody, I may have it in a certain sense in my mind as when one signs the melody in one's imagination. But this fact alone will not suffice to show that I remember the melody unless it could be shown, by my playing it on an instrument or sing it aloud, that I know how the melody goes on. What matters is not whether in one's head there is some content corresponding to the melody, but that one is able to play it or sing it correctly. In fact, knowing the melody is more about mastering a certain technique than having a particular mental state with a particular content.

[19] Hagberg considers that this idea lies behind such varied visions as those of Anselm in his Proslogion, Archytas, Vitruvius in his *De Architectura*, Albrecht Dürer, Leonardo da Vinci in his *Treatise on Painting* and André Breton, among others (Hagberg, 1995, pp. 77–78). For their part, Monroe Beardsley and William Kurtz Wimsatt consider authors such as Benedetto Croce, Ivor Armstrong Richards and Allen Tate in this line (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946).

Maintaining a critical attitude with respect to a certain mentalistic conception of intentional states and their roles, leaves plenty of room for acknowledging the role of intentional behaviour in art. Doing so involves focusing on the very configuration of the work as an expression or manifestation of the intentional activity of the artist. Finally, aspects that we consider vital to the understanding of a work, such as its place within a religious, ritual or social imaginary, get also acknowledged its proper significance once they are understood as an integral aspect of the intentional activity of the artist.

Now, while critical of a mentalist notion of intention, Hagberg, does not mean that we should never speak in these terms. In line with Hagberg, Salvador Rubio proposes a sense in which one must always retain a basic sense of intentionality. That is, every work, insofar as it forms part of the history of a practice, is part of an interactivity, of a communication between artist and spectator, so that, at the very least, the artist has the intention of communicating or proposing a work as an object of debate, of intellectual enjoyment, of emotional enjoyment, as a challenge to certain problems within tradition, etc. Rubio acknowledges that, as Ian Ground suggests, it is in this new sense that we can say that the intentional appearance of the object is relevant (Rubio, 1995, pp. 23–25).

The artist may have ideas, methods, goals, problems to be solved, etc, but what makes them to be so is not that she can spot them by looking into her mind. What makes their relevant for our understanding of the work is their presence in the way she produces the work, the decisions she makes, the mode in which she develops some pattern, and so on. Thus, we can acknowledge the artist's intentional activity by seeing how she sings, or performs a role, or manipulates some material, etc., (Hagberg, 1995, p. 85). Furthermore, we can distinguish these elements from those aspects that we perceive as accidental or involuntary, and so be able to assess her originality or vision. Therefore, the problem is not so much the use of terms referring to mental states, but how they are understood under a certain dualistic scheme promoted by philosophically misleading reflection. From this point of view, the idea of intention as determining the meaning of the work, insofar as it mentally contains the work as a whole prior to its materialisation, ends up being dissolved.

Assuming the Wittgensteinian-inspired criticism of psychological accounts of artistic understanding and meaning, I will try exploring some discussions that have focused on the nature of musical experience and understanding.

As we have seen, after extending Wittgenstein's view of understanding language, understanding is an ability to behave properly in a given linguistic situation. Similarly, in understanding music we can say that someone listen to a piece of music with

understanding when she masters the musical grammar the work pertains to; understanding involves having the appropriate experience or experiential content given a particular musical game. Not every experience had on the occasion of a musical piece will amounts to understanding music. The experience must be adequate if it is to be an expression of the listener's understanding. To capture this, instead of talking about the music's sense, or the music's meaning, I will refer to the experiential content of music proper.

In the following, I would like to present the notion of musical understanding that I think defines a typically Wittgensteinian position and that underlies the problematic that I will touch upon in subsequent chapters: that of musical understanding in the context of popular music.

2.2. The problem of musical understanding

Wittgenstein's influence on the reflections of many authors in the field of music can be read in many more issues than those mentioned so far. Thus, we can find debates of all kinds such as, for example, the explanatory power of Psychology in relation to our understanding of music (Guter, 2020, p. 34; Kaduri, 2006; Scruton, 2009a, p. 56). Or to what extent the use of technical descriptions that certain listeners can give thanks to their training in music theory amounts to a more refine understanding (Hagberg, 2017; Kania, 2017; Levinson, 1990). We also find the debate about whether metaphorical descriptions of music are a kind of aspect-perception or if they can be translated into non-metaphorical language (Boghossian, 2002; Zangwill, 2010). Or the discussion over the relevance of the comparison between language and music that is often found in Wittgenstein's writing (Calleja, 2017; Hanfling, 2004; Scruton, 1997, Chapter 7; Worth, 1997).

In this section my interest is to present a Wittgensteinian notion of musical understanding that, in my view, underlies all these discussions. A notion of understanding that I think is the starting point of most authors who have continued the tradition of the second Wittgenstein by applying it to the problem of understanding in music. Once I introduce this notion, I will distinguish between 'narrow' and 'broader' views of musical understanding. The former will be ascribed to a Wittgensteinian-influenced author such as Roger Scruton, as it appears in his criticism of 'pop' culture. The second will be drawn from authors who have rejected part of Scruton's criticism and the notion of musical understanding that underlies it.

In the previous section we have seen how a Wittgensteinian view of aesthetics takes on a Wittgenstein's approach to understanding meaning, his criticism of misleading

views on intentionality and mental states and his focus on ordinary situations of understanding. Both in the case of language and in the case of art, a Wittgensteinian approach involves resisting fundamentalist and essentialist tendencies with respect to meaning. Thus, authors such as Hagberg (2017, p. 61), Appelqvist (2008, p. 41), or Scruton (2004, p. 2) focus on the situations where we speak of understanding or meaning in the musical case, with the aim to show that there is nothing mysterious about it once we adopt a Wittgensteinian perspective.

Analysing ordinary ways of engaging with music involves paying attention to how musical practices are immersed in certain traditions and how these informs and make possible certain musical intentions, reactions, or uses of the musical material. As Hagberg (2017) says, in the case of language, the totality of this network of actions constitutes the conditions under which we can communicate and thus understand each other. Similarly, what we can listen to with understanding in music is conditioned by this network.

This network is, in turn, sustained by the institutions, conventions or inter-subjective agreements of a certain tradition. In language, these conventions are embodied in practical contexts called language games, such as the game of asking, promising, ordering, defining, counting or greeting. The activity of playing, which provides through the notion of language game a way to conceive of language as a kind of rule-guided activity, will also apply to musical understanding and experience.

The term grammar expresses Wittgenstein's system of rules governing language games and musical games. As previously mentioned, it is not a grammar understood as a set of rules established independently of concrete musical practices. If it were a grammar a priori, we could establish definitive rules for any game independently of its context. On the contrary, a grammar must always be understood in relation to its practical setting (Appelqvist, 2018, pp. 220–221; Kaduri, 2006; Levinson, 2003, p. 68; Worth, 1997).

Therefore, one cannot have an external perspective on a particular game to grasp its normative force. One must immerse oneself in a particular musical tradition in order to be able to identify what is normatively relevant or significant. This immersion is not to be identified with the acquaintance someone may have through a mere description of the practice. Rather, a typical situation of being immersed in a practice would be the one of apprentice who learns, by trial and error, to master the implicit grammar of a practice as it has developed through its history. The apprentice exhibits her understanding of a musical work belonging to a particular tradition in the same way she exhibits her

understanding of a game: by being able to apply the rules of the game and to behave appropriately.

Understanding is, thus, a gradual process of mastering and following the rules of a particular language game or, in our context, musical game. The one who understands masters a grammar or, in other words, a musical system. Mastering this system implies, in turn, being immersed in a form of life. This form of life –or interpersonal consensus– determines what counts as following a particular rule (Baker, 1998; Defez, 2013; Hagberg, 2017; Marrades Millet, 2000; Mulhall, 2007; Stern, 2004). But as mentioned above, such rules, while establishing the normative basis from which to speak of understanding or misunderstanding, cannot be fixed and definitive. The historical evolution of musical systems is a fact that determines the flexibility of the normative basis of a particular practice. Therefore, a theory of musical understanding refers to the conditions for understanding the products of a particular musical system, acknowledging that these conditions, although utterly relevant, may change over time (Appelqvist, 2019, p. 17; Hagberg, 2017, p. 67).

I think that this general view of musical understanding –as the mastery of a system of rules that emerge in a form of life– is a view that could be accepted by most Wittgensteinian authors in musical aesthetics. Nevertheless, we can find differences among them once we get into discussing certain particular issues, such as how the musical system is constituted, what are its rules that govern the Western musical tradition or what counts as a criterion for understanding in that tradition. One of these differences become salient when discussing the case study of this paper: the pop and rock phenomenon or popular music.

As we will see in section 2.5 of chapter II, Roger Scruton presents throughout his work several criticisms of this musical tradition. Underlying these criticisms, we can identify a certain view of what constitutes the core practice of musical experience and understanding. His case will be used to present what I will call a ‘narrow’ view of musical understanding, and the responses that have been presented to his view will be considered as illustrating the ‘broad’ view of musical understanding.

I consider a position to be narrow when, in comparison with other views, it acknowledges fewer aspects of the musical phenomenon as grammatically relevant to musical understanding. I use the term ‘musical phenomenon’ to refer to everything that has to do with music; that is, the pieces themselves, the scores, the recordings, the sound engineering, the classifications we make of their styles, periods, or genres, musical

parodies, the social context in which they appear –such as celebrations, tributes, funerals, etc.–, the fact that they accompany theatrical plays, films, television commercials; also that this music is danced to, performed more or less theatrically, listened in silence, it is the object of a contrapuntal analysis by music criticism, the object of commentary in emotive terms, or that they are part of subjective experiences and memories, etc.

Since the musical phenomenon involves so many activities, uses and contexts, a narrow view of musical understanding is one that is committed to differentiating between aspects that are external to the music, and aspects that are properly musical or essential to music *itself*. A narrow view will try to isolate, from the variety of actions involved in musical phenomena, those that are grammatically relevant to musical understanding from those that do not play a constitutive role in musical understanding.[20]

In other words, a narrow view is concerned with delimiting those actions or aspects within the musical phenomenon that are grammatically relevant in order to characterize what is proper to music understanding. This is why this view is very concerned with the distinction between the properly musical and the extra-musical. To see this better, let us look at some concrete examples.

One criterion that determines that a person has mastered the game of chess is to see that she makes the right moves in her turn. We could even say that part of her understanding of the game is knowing how to keep calm and to make her opponent nervous, looking for mistakes. Now, it would be more difficult to affirm that her preference for plastic pieces over wooden ones –the former evoking a certain nostalgia in her as they remind her of her first chessboard– is an indispensable part of her understanding of the rules of chess.

In this case, the preference for certain material is not a criterion to be considered when evaluating the player's understanding of the game of chess in comparison with, for example, the moves she makes. This preference would be part of the chess phenomenon in general, but it would not have any grammatical relevance; that is, it would not be part of those actions that show her mastery and understanding of the game.

Let us return to the case of emotivism in music. For this view, to understand a piece of music was, for example, to consider the emotion that a certain piece evokes in

[20] There are several ways of referring to this distinction and which I will use throughout this dissertation. Expressions such as 'the musical experience itself', 'the musical experience proper' or 'the specifically musical', obey to this need to differentiate between what is internal to –or constitutive of– the musical experience and what is external –or accessory– to it. In other words, this distinction assumes that the musical phenomenon involves many aspects and activities, only a few of which have grammatical relevance.

us. Therefore, one way of showing that someone understands a piece would be for the listener to communicate the emotions he or she feels when listening to a certain piece. We have seen that Wittgensteinian analyses of these positions reject this insofar as they appeal to an internal criterion for understanding that involves a misleading conception of the mental states' roles in understanding and is eventually explanatorily vacuous. Besides, it ignores or underplays the intersubjective context of music, and thus the grammar that underlies its understanding. In the terms introduced here, the emotions felt when listening to pieces of music would be part of the musical phenomenon but would have no grammatical relevance. In this example, those feelings might be personal evocations that have nothing to do with a proper understanding of music. That a piece evokes a certain melancholy in the listener related to her childhood does not have the grammatical weight that skills such as recognising its different parts, noticing how one melody responds to another, or anticipating the moment a harmonic succession is going to be resolved do have.

Scruton will also provide a distinction between relevant and irrelevant criteria of musical understanding in the case of popular music. After presenting his view in the next section, we will see how for this author many of the actions surrounding popular music present themselves as relevant to understanding it when in fact they must be considered extra-musical aspects, alien to our ability to understand the music itself. Thus, for example, he thinks that the disproportionate attention that some fans pay to the personal aura of the pop idol –a novelty exploited by this tradition– is external to what is truly musically relevant: i.e., the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic aspects (Scruton, 1997, 2018a, 2018b).

Responses to this narrow view of musical understanding constitute an alternative, 'broad' view. By contrast to approaches such as Scruton's, I consider a position to be 'broad' when it admits more aspects of the musical phenomenon as relevant for musical understanding and as part of what constitutes its grammar. This broader view, that I will examine in relation to the problem of popular music, also has relevance for a notion of musical understanding in general.

A good example of a broader view can be found in Hagberg, and his considerations about music's immersion within a form of life. For him, it is difficult to delimit the musical content itself and, in each case, we need to pay attention to what might be relevant. Thus, the question of which concrete aspects are part of a musical grammar is an open one and depends largely on the concrete tradition one is dealing with. In his

words, each tradition admits its own meaningful relations that, in turn, determine the musical work's meaning. Thus, a relevant criterion of musical understanding for a certain tradition may not be so for another one (Hagberg, 2017, pp. 75, 82). While Hagberg does not argue against Scruton with respect to popular music, this interest in reconsidering whether a tradition has been able to create new ways of relating to music, which implies new criteria of understanding, can be also found in authors such as Andy Hamilton (2009), Theodore Gracyk (2007) o John Dyck (2016).

An example of a broad analysis might be to reconsider the role of emotions in music. While Hagberg is critical of emotivist-dualist positions, he does not rule out that in our relationship with music, appealing to our emotions might play a role in understanding it. Sometimes emotional descriptions of music might contribute to the understanding of the musical work, insofar as emotional life is somehow embedded in the history of our musical grammar.[21]

As noticed, a narrower position typically differentiates in a stricter way the 'specifically' musical from the extra-musical, while broader ones acknowledge that it is not easy to draw a clear boundary between the properly musical and the form of life in which it emerges.

As I remarked, my interest is in examining the particular experience of the listener of popular music. In this tradition, the importance of scenography, the timbral treatment of recordings, visual stimuli, etc., are of considerable importance. Therefore, we can take a narrow or a broad view on the relevance of these aspects. I think that a broad view of musical understanding is useful in this context insofar as it would acknowledge how these aspects are incorporated into the musical grammar that governs musical understanding of popular music. But I will also take into consideration the arguments that a narrow view may have for considering these aspects as extra-musical and I will try to confront the narrow view defender in its own terms.

Summary

Throughout this section my interest has been to show how the analytic tradition in aesthetics has applied Wittgenstein's view on language and meaning to aesthetic problems; in particular, to the problem of musical experience, meaning and

[21] On the contrary, a narrower view on the role of emotions in music can be seen in Hanna Appelqvist, in her view it is not clear that our knowledge of emotions implied in our use of emotive terms really has decisive relevance for our mastery of musical grammar (Appelqvist, 2008, pp. 91–96).

understanding. The rest of this dissertation, that will focus upon the problem of musical understanding, will use this as its theoretical background.

As mentioned, the Wittgensteinian framework will be applied with some adjustments. Instead of talking about meaning or use, as in language, we will refer to understanding music as a matter of having a particular listening experience –something we will highlight in the next section by presenting Scruton's view. This experience, properly described, provides what we can call musical content. Importantly, not any experience that a listener may have of a musical work displays its proper content. The listener needs to be able to attend to the musical work in the appropriate way to grasp it. The question I want to discuss in the following chapters is what is the proper experiential content that features in a listening experience with understanding. In the debate that I will have later with respect to popular music, what is at stake is whether this tradition includes novelties that contribute to the understanding of properly musical content or whether it is rather a musical game that is traversed by extra-musical experiences. Scruton takes the second approach and believes, in Wittgensteinian terms, that the musical game in this tradition is affected by other non-musical games, such as those of spectacle, idolatry or marketing. I hope to address this discussion but taking on a Wittgensteinian analysis of these practices and see if one can distinguish between those novelties that enrich the musical understanding of those participating in these practices, and those aspects that make them play other games and that have nothing to do with the sophistication of their 'musicality'.

In the following section, while presenting Roger Scruton's proposal, I will develop the question of musical understanding in terms of listening experience, experiential content and criteria of understanding. This exposition, although it will present a narrow view of understanding with respect to popular music, will serve as a basis for my own proposal for musical understanding. This work aims to provide a new interpretation of popular music using Scruton's ideas, while also considering critical readings of his work. This proposal will be further illustrated through concrete case studies, starting from cases in the classical tradition that Scruton himself considers and moving into cases from the popular tradition and that have been discussed in the literature on this subject.

CHAPTER II: ROGER SCRUTON'S MUSICAL AESTHETICS

In the previous chapter I introduced some Wittgensteinian thoughts on language, meaning and understanding and its relevance to certain key issues in Aesthetics, such as artistic meaning and understanding. In this chapter I would like to present one of the most important and discussed views within the analytical approach to the aesthetics of music: Roger Scruton's philosophy of music. This view, besides providing us with a notion of musical understanding and an analysis of popular music, is in line with certain developments in Wittgensteinian aesthetics, whose influence on Scruton is widely traceable and acknowledged (Ahonen, 2005; Arbo, 2009; Calleja, 2017; Denham, 1999; Goehr, 1999; Scruton, 2004, 2011; Shen-yi & Gendler, 2020; Tilghman, 1980; Zangwill, 2010).

My aim in this chapter is to introduce Scruton's notion of musical understanding. To do so we need to start with Scruton's view on listening itself. One of the key aspects of his view is distinction between the experience of sounds and the experience of musical tones. According to Scruton, each of these experiences targets a different object of interest and requires different skills and knowledge. Among the skills required for the experience of musical tones, acousmatic listening plays a central role. Acousmatic listening is a skill that enables us to organise sounds autonomously, distinct from the way we ordinarily organise them when we listen to them with a purely informational interest. For Scruton, our ability to understand music is based on this way to attend to sounds autonomously.

Additionally, understanding musical sound involves experiencing sound as appropriately organised: that is, guided by our musical system. Thus, when someone

listens to sounds as music, she possesses a certain ability to organise sounds according to that system, and that can be expressed in her ability to perform multiple actions, from dancing to writing scores.

Scruton pays particular attention to the role in our musical listening of using terms of movement and space to describe it. Thus, for example, we say that a melody 'rises' or 'falls', that two chords are 'distant', or that a section 'returns' to the beginning. This fact is not accidental for Scruton but reveals something profound about the way we experience music. These terms seem to grasp what it is that the listener experiences when he or she properly grasps a piece of music. Furthermore, according to Scruton we should keep in mind that these terms are not being used literally but metaphorically. While sounds do not literally move anywhere when we experience them as music, experiencing musical movement is central to musical experience. We will see how this idea is connected to the aforementioned acousmatic ability and the work of imagination.

Once Scruton's notion of musical understanding is presented, I will introduce his well-known criticism of pop music, or popular music as I will call it in this work. In this section 2.5 we will see how his criticism is based on the idea that part of the experience of popular music is guided by aspects that fall outside the musical system that governs musical experience proper and musical understanding. I will then analyse how, from a Scrutonian perspective, there might be other cases in popular music where there is an integration of certain sonic aspects into the tonal system. Such integration would have to do with their tonal adequacy in the music, which is why I argue that Scruton endorses what I consider to be a narrow view of musical understanding of popular music.

1. Roger Scruton's analysis of listening

As I mentioned, the first step in developing Scruton's notion of musical understanding is to attend to his distinction between sound listening and musical listening. So, in this section I will briefly summarise his notion of sound as experienced sound. In this sense, his interest is not in a scientific account of sound, but in the different ways sound can be experienced depending on the interest or purpose that guides our listening. The most common of these interests is the ordinary interest in getting information about the world through sound. Under this interest, sounds are listened to in relation to their material causes. In this context, ordinary listening is characterized by its aiming at a successful identification of sounds' causes.

Listening, unlike a sense such as taste or touch, is an ability to detect events at a distance. This particularity implies that sometimes our relationship to the causes of sound is not as immediate as it may appear at first glance. We can, for example, experience a sound characteristic of a glass breaking through a recording or reproduction, without there being any glass breaking in the vicinity. Furthermore, we have the ability to experience sound as organized under forms that are not governed by any possible knowledge about the sounds' causes. Scruton considers these two cases are examples of the so-called acousmatic capacity. This capacity can be exercised in some cases of ordinary listening, as when we say that a breaking glass' sound is 'higher' than a knock on the door's one, but it is exploited to its fullest expression in musical production and experience.

I will therefore begin by outlining this proposal regarding the experience of sounds, which not only underpins Scruton's notion of musical understanding, but already advances some of his reasons why popular music will be seen as involving an extra-musical experience.

1.1. Musical understanding as listening in a particular manner

As we saw when we talked about understanding in cases of linguistic communication, musical understanding can manifest itself in multiple actions. Of these, Scruton emphasises the activity of listening as paradigmatic of our understanding of music (Scruton, 1997, pp. 217–218). Scruton comments in several texts on other kinds of evidence of musical understanding, such as the ability to grasp the expressive content of music (Scruton, 2004); or, for example, dancing as evincing a certain way of engaging with the music (Scruton, 1997, pp. 390–391, 466–467). Now activities such as writing music, dancing, playing in a certain way, learning the right position for singing etc. seem to be transferable and related to the idea of mastering how to listen to music properly.

Scruton's proposal is that one way of approaching musical understanding is to distinguish it from other modes of listening. Scruton pays especial attention to the contrast between an ordinary form of listening to sound guided by an interest in relating it to its material cause and a form of listening to sound as music. This latter form of listening involves a kind of attention to sounds which is governed by structural relationships among them. Further, it operates independently from the sound's cause and fosters what he refers to as acousmatic listening.

Following Scruton, the first mode is literal, sensuous and interested, while the second is imaginative, intellectual and disinterested. I will develop this distinction below,

but, in summary, the first mode, or ordinary listening, is literal in its use of terms of movement and is sensuous and interested because it emerges from our interest in survival; thus, experiencing sounds in this way is a means of capturing information about the world. The second mode, or musical listening, is permeated by the work of the imagination and it is characterized by a metaphorical use of movement terms, a metaphorical use of spatial terms, such as 'high', 'low', 'forward', 'backward', 'centre of gravity', 'closeness', 'remoteness', etc. These are metaphorical terms since sound as such is neither high nor low in a literal sense. In this sense, musical experience is to a certain extent intellectual and involves a disinterested attention to sound. It also typically provides a feeling of pleasure in attending to sound itself and to sounds' forms, thus responding to sound relations that have nothing to do with getting information about the world (Scruton, 1997, pp. 221–235).[22]

While in theory we can more or less distinguish between different modes of listening, we find a great variety of listening experiences in which certain skills required to perform them relate to certain features relevant to them. Let us consider some examples –many drawn from Davies (1994, Chapter 7) and Scruton (1997, p. 426)– illustrating different modes of listening. By distinguishing between them, we can better understand this idea that different sound experiences imply a particular way of guiding listening. With this in mind, we can consider such diverse listening contexts as the following:

1. Hearing a sound and relating it to a cause –e.g., the chirping of a bird, the noise made a door's slapping.
2. Relating sounds to stimuli from other senses; e.g., grouping sounds based on visual information. For example, when watching a film, it seems that the voice comes from the actors and not from the speakers (Chen & Spence, 2017). Also grouping some sounds in pairs when I see that they correspond to human steps; or the famous McGurk effect where what is heard has to do with what is seen.[23]
3. Listening to the sounds of nature –or something pleasing– to recover from stress.
4. Going to a performance of a Chinese opera while being alien to its tradition. Recognising that it is music, but being unable to recognise when a section ends, which part is more important, to respond emotionally in a way that is consistent with the rest of the local audience, etc.

[22] Here I would like to point out that Scruton's sensuous/intellectual contraposition does not mean that music is merely an intellectual experience understood as internal or in mentalistic terms. On the contrary, music has to be listened to and experienced, the key point is that this experience is informed by certain metaphors that organise the object of listening and appeal to the use of our imagination (Scruton, 1997, Chapter 3).

[23] The McGurk's effect was identified after an experiment where a recording of a certain phoneme was listened to while a video of a person articulating a different phoneme was played. The listener tended to hear what he or she saw pronounced rather than what was actually played. The point of the experiment was to demonstrate the influence of the visual information on the content of the sound experience (McGurk & Macdonald, 1976).

5. Proposing hearing a song as expressing the feeling of confinement as the result of using a chord progression that forms the word ‘caged’: C-Am-G-Em-Dm. Or imagine someone saying that they have heard the homage a composer pays to Bach because of the use of the motif that would spell out his name using the notes B flat, A, C and B natural. Compared these cases with the case of someone saying that she has heard the homage a composer pays to Bach because she uses a progression typical of Bach’s style, such as certain ornaments, delays in the resolution of the theme, etc.
6. Going to a concert of your favourite band and listening to their greatest hit; knowing at what point the chorus will come in, dancing to the music, being attentive to variations in the live performance –different intonations, pauses, prolongations, interaction of the musician with the audience, etc.–, and recognising a simple melodic phrase that repeats throughout the song.
7. Listening to the note A and relating it to the E in terms of fifths.
8. Listening to the finale of Mozart's Symphony No. 41, K. 551 as a fugue composed in the context of a sonata and, at the same time, as a sonata in the context of a fugue.

When presenting Scruton's view of musical experience and understanding, we will understand how these cases differ by seeing how each mode of listening requires different knowledge and skills. In other words, each mode of listening has its own particular experience of organisation which, in turn, determines the skills and information that is relevant to characterize the listening experience as one of understanding. By beginning with an analysis of ordinary listening, we can gain both a basis for understanding our musical listening and key distinctions from other types of listening. As we will see, Scruton's critical view of popular music centres around the criteria that define proper musical listening.

1.2. Ordinary listening: causes and sounds.

In this section, I will focus on ordinary listening understood as an activity guided by our interest in informing ourselves about the phenomena underlying or causing sound experience. This is how ordinary listening is understood not only in Scruton's work, but also in other literature on the subject (Chion, 2016, pp. 101–104; Hamilton, 2007, pp. 102–103; Kane, 2014, p. 27; Levinson, 2006, p. 79; Nudds, 2009, p. 74; Scruton, 1997, p. 218; Sparshott, 1987, p. 45). This guiding interest results in a way of organising sound information. One of the key issues here is to understand how in the experience of this organisation, certain information about the cause of the sound figures as part of the experiential content. And one way to explore this aspect of our experience is to analyse how we talk about sounds.

The characterization of sound in relation to the phenomena causing it can be seen in expressions such as the ‘noise’ of an engine, the ‘creak’ of a door, a ‘bang’ on the ceiling, or the ‘murmur’ of the street; i.e., expressions that refer to the material events that cause the sounds. These ordinary expressions correspond to the experience of the sound qualities of timbre, pitch, loudness and location (O’Callaghan, 2010, p. 250). [24]

Insofar as sound is normally produced by a complex event, it is rare that we speak of sound as a single quality, in the way we speak of the pure tone of a tuning fork. Rather, the identity of a sound is captured in terms of the display of various qualities over time. This temporal dimension is vital in the case of sound because, as O'Callaghan comments, we do not speak of perceiving a sound as we do of a colour we see, or of an object we distinguish on a desk, or of the shape of a building in a drawing, etc., but rather as something that has a beginning, a middle and an end in time (O’Callaghan, 2010, pp. 251–252). For this reason, it has rightly been preferred to speak of sounds as events (Levinson, 2006, p. 78; O’Callaghan, 2010, pp. 262–266; Scruton, 2010, p. 271; Van Gerwen, 2012, p. 223).

This term better reflects that listening is the immediate perception of a complex, rather than a static, phenomenon (Chion, 2016, p. 61; O’Callaghan, 2010, p. 269). In other words, we do not hear timbres, pitches or loudness as forming a kind of static ‘picture’, the way we visualise an object. Instead, what we hear meaningfully is the event over time in all its complexity. Thus, understanding our ordinary listening is to explore how we organize sound’s qualities over time.

In ordinary listening, the guiding principle behind the organisation of these audible qualities is to inform us about our environment and about what is happening in our environment (Nudds, 2009, p. 69). Under this interest, this mode of listening unifies, selects or ignores certain information in favour of this goal.

To illustrate this ability, let us imagine an ordinary situation in which while walking along a river, I hear a strong noise that I grasp as the sound of something hitting and displacing a large amount of water. In this example, one can see our ability to recognise in sound the size of the object falling into the water, the approximate amount of water that has been displaced –and in which direction–, and even, by fine-tuning our hearing, the type of material of the object hitting the water.

[24] There is some debate as to how to understand the perception of the location of sound. It seems that the main consensus is in terms of the sound’s cause being close or distant from the listener (Casati et al., 2020). I will assume that we perceive such distance without entering into the debate about where to locate the sound.

Or consider the case of hearing something falling. In the case of a falling tree, there is a sound that starts when the tree begins to fall. We know that this sound evolves in a certain way: for example, the wood slowly cracking. And when it falls, we expect, given its size, a certain amplitude of sound and a rather deep sound. Then, on other occasions, when we hear this kind of sound several times, we will know that several tree-falling events are taking place, since the same tree does not fall several times. By contrast, when a ball falls, we speak of 'bouncing', that is, the emission of the same sound several times while belonging to the same event.

Of course, the science of sound explains the phenomenon of sound differently. A strike, a scrape, pushing, etc., can initiate a sonic event under certain environmental conditions and the result can vary depending on their physical nature. We have laws that describe such phenomena.[25] Now, our analysis focuses upon sound as experienced. Thus, the important thing is to explain how we experience these regularities. We do not talk about –or experience for that matter– vibrations at the microscopic level. Rather we refer to qualities and regularities that we observe. In other words, the content of our ordinary listening is determined by our interest in grouping sound qualities together insofar as they are likely to have been produced by a single cause (Nudds, 2009, p. 74).

Thus, the successful exercise of this mode of listening involves constant training in organising sounds in terms of possible causes, so that information about causes figures prominently as part of the appropriate experiential content. For this reason, how we organise and experience sounds in our ordinary listening requires taking into account how this ecological interest in sounds is part of their experiential content (Hamilton, 2009, p. 159; Nudds, 2009, pp. 69, 75; Van Gerwen, 2012, pp. 224–226; Windsor, 2000, pp. 10–12).[26]

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[25] For example, the size of objects determines the pattern of frequency components and its harmonics and the force of impact determines the amplitude of the vibration. Similarly, it is an established fact that there is a harmonic affinity of sounds emitted by the same cause. That is, since each type of material produces certain fundamental frequency, it will also emit certain harmonics related to that fundamental. So, different objects and materials will produce, let us say, 'dissonant' information. This dissonance could be experienced, in certain contexts, as a sign that there are two sources emitting sounds (Nudds, 2009, pp. 70–73).

[26] An ecological approach, briefly, is one that understands our experience of sound as being based on the relationship between structured information from the environment and an organism that is sensitive to that information as it increases its chances of survival. Since this is the interest that guides our listening, we do not exactly perceive sounds in the abstract but rather as meaningful events –as Van Gerwen would point out-, or 'affordances', as Windsor calls them (Windsor, 2000, p. 11). Emphasising the ecological character of sound experience helps us to clarify the ordinary experience of sound as guided by a particular and contextual interest in sounds.

1.3. Two notions of acousmatic listening

In the previous section we emphasised that ordinary listening is guided by an interest in being informed about the world. Specifically in relating an event in the world to a sound. This interested relation between material qualities and sound qualities determines the resulting experiential content. The typical situation of ordinary listening would be one in which, when observing certain causes, we simultaneously pick up sounds emerging from them. Thereafter we relate one to the other and so end up saying that, for example, a certain timbre is the typical sound of a heavy object falling.

This way of conceiving ordinary listening assumes a multisensory scheme in that it acknowledges the role of other senses in informing sound objects (Van Gerwen, 2012). Thus, we speak of listening qualities in relation to what we see or can touch, for example, when talking about a sound that moves from one place to another or describing it as having a certain texture, density, etc.

Now, trained listening exhibits a special feature; while it initially requires multisensory learning, once we learn to group sounds according to the informational interest referred above, we do not need to bring back all the multisensory information that initially accompanied the sound every time it reappears (Chion, 1982/1999, p. 21; Hamilton, 2009, p. 179). In other words, while the information about the causes of sound figures in our experiential content, the causes need not be present in order to exercise this ordinary mode of listening. Once we have acquired this capacity to listen to sound in terms of its probable cause we can, guided by an ecological interest, meaningfully group sounds without visual or tactile cues.

That we can recognise sound events as belonging to a possible cause regardless of whether the cause is present to us via other senses is a common experience. We hear recordings of familiar objects, voices on the other side of a wall, we recognise a person by hearing her voice on the phone, etc. (Chion, 2016, p. xii). This ability is often called *acousmatic listening* and has historically been defined as a ‘listening without seeing’, as it allows us to attend and individuate the sounds independently of their causes being available to us via other senses (Budd, 2003, p. 211; Kane, 2014, pp. 49–50). This ability of listening without seeing is quite common and basic to our ecological survival. In fact, part of the evolutionary value of our listening depends on identifying events at a certain distance by their mere sound without the need for these causes to be accessible to us via other senses. One of its most common definitions relates it to a story about the Pythagorean school, where it is said that some pupils had to attend to the master's words

while he was covered behind a veil or screen, so that they would not be distracted by his presence and would focus on the words themselves (Chion, 1982/1999, p. 19; Hamilton, 2007, p. 100; Schaeffer, 1966/2017, p. 64; Scruton, 1997, p. 2).[27]

This is a very common notion of acousmatic that I think it is important to differentiate from a second notion that Scruton characterises and that I will introduce later. The key is that this first notion, while granting some autonomy to listening, still organises sound based on information about its cause. Let us look at an example.

I can hear a sound behind a wall and be able to hear it as coming from a particular direction, follow its movement, guess that it may be caused by a small object that seems to be dragging and generating some friction, etc. Although I do not see the object directly, my experience and abilities allow me to exercise this acousmatic ability to identify the sound without the need to see or touch the object causing it. If we lacked this capacity for acousmatic listening –that is, the capacity to identify sounds in terms of their possible causes without having simultaneous access to these causes via other sense modalities– we would be in a situation similar to that of a baby playing a crooked version of the peekaboo game, where she loses eye contact with her caregiver for a long time and might think that he has disappeared even though the baby is still listening to the voice of her caregiver; which can result in a traumatic experience (Chion, 1982/1999, p. 17; Widrich, 2019).

Another way to understand this first notion of acousmatic is when we experience sounds as having certain characteristics of a possible cause. In a famous experiment, Diana Deutsch (1987, pp. 43–44) found that, when we receive sounds of different pitches randomly distributed in the left and right channels of a stereo signal, we tend to organise the high tones as coming from one channel and the low tones from the other. Here the perceived position of the sound does not correspond to its literal position, but to a possible, maybe more ordered, position. In this sense, while ordinary listening can exhibit a certain autonomy, it ultimately constructs its sound object in terms of the qualities of a possible cause.[28]

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[27] According to Kane Brian, this image of Pythagoras is more a myth than a hypothesis supported by ancient sources. In his opinion, it might be an interpretation of some scholars, like, for example, Schaeffer, who would be interested in constructing the historical roots of a listening practice independent of the material causes of sound (Kane, 2014, pp. 52–53; 63–66). Regardless the historical accuracy of this anecdote, I think that this picture does adequately illustrate the mode of listening that we are trying to describe.

[28] That the resulting experience is still expressed in terms of qualities of a cause is what is important. The debate as to why this happens tends to point to the fact that it would give us certain evolutionary advantages (Brännmark, 2017; Vickers, 2009).

A second notion of acousmatic proposed by Scruton concerns the ability of listening to organise its sound object independently of any interest in, or information about, the cause of the sound. As we will see, it is this notion that is the key to musical listening.[29]

Thus, for Scruton there is the possibility of a listening experience whose experiential content is the sound itself and not the sound as it relates to a cause. When this occurs, the resulting sound object can be considered as *audibilia* (Salome, 2019, p. 113). To understand what such an experience would be like, Scruton illustrates the notion with other cases pertaining to other senses, i.e. different *sensibilia*. Thus, we have the case of a visual experience whose experiential content is not explained in relation to its causes, such as rainbows (Scruton, 1997, pp. 3–4, 2009a, pp. 59–60), and at other times we could say the same about smells (Scruton, 2010, pp. 272–273), which are sometimes appreciated by themselves without the need to relate them to any cause.

If we look at the case of rainbows, it seems clear that no literal information about their material cause is necessary to have the proper experience. For example, if someone asks us about the position where a rainbow appears, this experience is not like asking about the position of a tree in front of us. When we ask about the position of the tree, it has clear coordinates in relation to its material cause. The position of the rainbow has more to do with the way we catch the reflected light from a certain position than with the coordinates of its material cause. It would be wrong to invite someone to capture a rainbow by giving the literal coordinates of the particles of water where the light reflects. For Scruton this means that the position of a rainbow is not literal but apparent, that is, it depends on our way of organising the visual information independently of certain characteristics of its cause (Scruton, 2009a, p. 59, 2010, p. 272). In other words, here the experiential content involved in capturing a rainbow is determined not by reference to causes but to our way of organising visual information.

Other phenomena that allow for a similar analysis are shadows. As Ian Phillips (2018) notices, our experience of shadows is best explained solely in visual terms and does not require any reference to its material cause; that is, the cause of the shadow does not seem to be part of the content of our visual experience of a shadow. To see this, consider the following example. Imagine a perfect sphere casting a circular shadow. Now, if the sphere starts to rotate around itself, does the shadow rotate as well? Naturally, we

[29] This idea of whether or not a listening experience contains information about its causes will be a relevant aspect in constructing Scruton's criticism of the popular music experience.

do not perceive the spin. The point is that my experience of the round shadow need not be understood as 'the shadow of a rotating sphere'; suffice it to say that I see a round shadow, or as Scruton says of rainbows: «all that we need to say, is that a rainbow is *visible*» (Scruton, 1997, p. 4). [30]

We could imagine a similar situation with the sense of smell. I am in the middle of the forest, and I notice the pleasant fragrance that surrounds me. This smell could be the combined product of recent rain, the plants that grow at that season, the purity of the air, etc., but none of this is part of the intentional content of my experience when I stop contemplatively to breathe in the middle of the forest –providing I am not doing so to forage for food, look for an animal, or catch my breath when I am tired. The experiential content would only include the scent of the forest. Although I am characterizing this smell as the scent 'of the forest', we could make deodorants, soaps or floor cleaner liquids that recreate this smell, so that the identification and the experience of these aromas does not have a strict relation to a material cause.

For Scruton, listening, like other senses, can provide experiences that are based on its own capacity to organise the sound stimulus and not solely on its interest in relating a sound to a cause. Let us look at cases of such experiences that are relevant to musical experience.

We can identify this second notion of acousmatic listening by focusing on certain characterization of sounds that is common and that when can observe when we say that a certain sound is 'sharper' than another, or that a screech sounds 'higher' than another. In our experience of sound's pitch, this 'height' is not to be taken in a literal sense, but as a quality of sound that has to do with my experience of the sound as 'localised' within a spectrum –in a way similar to when we say that the temperature rises and falls without anything literally moving (Budd, 2003, p. 215; Scruton, 1997, pp. 14–15). Another example of this form of acousmatic listening is when I group sounds in groups of three, hearing a chord-like structure, thus forming patterns that have nothing to do with the number of material sources present. It could also be said that it is acousmatic in this sense to pick up several sounds and distinguish them by their duration, i.e. regardless of whether they are produced by several sources or the same one. What is relevant in this task is to detect whether the next sound is longer or shorter than the previous one.

[30] In this sense, Phillips agrees in understanding shadows as Scruton understands the relation of sounds to their causes. Thus, «even if every sound must have a cause, it does not follow that it must also be *emitted* by its cause, or that it must be understood as the sound *of* that cause» (Scruton, 1997, p. 2).

In experiences of this kind, the experiential content is specified in terms of the relations that certain sound qualities have with respect to a virtual spectrum of heights, distances, positions or durations. Here the relation between a sound quality and its cause becomes irrelevant: to grasp that a sound has a higher pitch than the previous one, it is sufficient to grasp this quality with respect to a certain spectrum that qualifies this pitch. The knowledge of the cause of both sounds does not alter or form part of the adequate identification of the relevant experiential content (Scruton, 2009b, pp. 22, 26).

We also perceive other phenomena in terms of a spectrum, as in the case of colours. In a rainbow we see red ranging across the spectrum from the 'lightest' to the 'darkest' hue, although in this case we do not use spatial terms. However, in the case of the sound pitch spectrum, there is an experience that is of vital importance in the musical realm: the experience of repetition across the spectrum (Scruton, 1997, pp. 15–16). While Scruton consider that the spectrum of colours, they do not repeat, in the spectrum of sound pitches, we perceive that these are repeated along the spectrum. According to some authors, an ordinary case in which we notice this repetition is when we imitate voices of the opposite sex, which we conceive as equivalent, but in different parts of the spectrum. For example, if we were asked to recite the same sentence from a novel as if it were spoken by a man and then by a woman, we would tend to repeat the intonation an octave apart (Hoeschele et al., 2012, p. 1759).[31]

This ability would be exploited in music when, for example, we recognise different melodic lines simultaneously sounding in different octaves and hear them as equivalent. Now, while there is some debate as to whether we are really that good at recognising this equivalence of pitches between octaves (Pedersen, 1975), there is more consensus in recognising a universal ability to distinguish distances in the pitch spectrum and to establish certain relationships between them –even in populations unfamiliar to the Western musical tradition (Jacoby et al., 2019).

As we see, none of these qualities of sound refer to any aspect related to the sound's originating phenomenon and, so, they constitute the characteristic experiential content of acousmatic listening, in the second sense specified above. This form of

[31] There is some debate as to whether the experience of this octave interval in the pitch spectrum, which equals the double of a certain frequency, has natural basis or is culturally influenced by a musical tradition in which pitches are perceived as equivalent as they fulfil similar functions. A summary of the positions can be found in (Demany et al., 2021). Whatever it may be, what is important is that, in our musical tradition, it is vital to have this experience of repetition, as it determines, among other functions, the possibility of establishing complex harmonies and transpositions, it allows the playing of several instruments at the same time and it serves as a reference point for the various scale divisions.

listening involves a new ability to organise sounds, such that we the experience certain qualities of the sound as solely ordered according to a given spectrum. The sensation of ‘going up’ or ‘down’ in the spectrum has to do with our way of experiencing pure sound’s relationships and nothing else.

Having understood this distinction, from now on, when I refer to musical experience, I will always relate it to this second meaning of acousmatic, as an autonomous organisational ability unrelated to the causes of sound.

For Scruton, this sense of the acousmatic is one of the keys to understand the bridge between the ordinary experience of sounds to the musical experience of sounds (Lango, 2012, p. 50; Scruton, 2009b, pp. 30–31). Scruton considers that our ordinary experience of a certain movement between one pitch and another within the spectrum is the ‘raw material’ of musical experience (Scruton, 2009b, p. 15). The ability to grasp such movement would ground our melodic, rhythmic or harmonic experience. That is, what we normally express in terms of the ‘rise and fall of a melody’, the ‘tension-relaxation’, or ‘the progress of a song towards its climax’. This way of speaking manifests a certain acousmatic capacity underlying our musical understanding.

Summary

There are two main points to bear in mind drawn from this analysis of ordinary listening. First, that it is adequate to consider and examine listening itself as a starting point for characterising musical understanding. And second, that by distinguishing between different modes of listening, although they all have a certain ‘family resemblance’, we can learn how each of them determines differently which knowledge and skills are relevant to organising their experiential content.

In proceeding with these distinctions, ordinary listening is presented as guided by an interest in obtaining information about the world. Thus, constant relations are established between material causes and sounds. As a result, information about the cause of sound becomes part of the experiential content of ordinary listening.

However, we have seen that even in ordinary listening, there is a certain sense in which listening does not require the co-presence of the cause. Our ordinary listening, in making relations between cause and sound, gains information about sounds’ causes through various senses, and such learning constructs the future sound objects. However, this multisensory activity involved in the formation of our ordinary listening does not imply that all our listening is always or systematically multisensory. Listening can to

some extent operate without this contact with causes, either because it has acquired and integrated the capacity to identify it without seeing it, or because it is able to organise sound information in terms of its most plausible cause.

But this typical case of acousmatic listening understood as 'listening without seeing' is not the notion of acousmatic that interests us for explaining musical listening. Scruton proposes to look at a second notion that will exploit its full potential in musical experience. To clarify it, we have introduced the notion of *sensibilia,* thanks to which we can observe that it is common for our senses to organise sensory information independently of any information about its cause.

Within these cases of autonomous organisation, the most relevant to our musical experience is the acousmatic capacity to grasp sound qualities organised in relation to a certain spectrum and not in relation to their material causes. This capacity to organise sounds according to relationships that they can exemplify in virtue of possessing certain autonomous sonic aspects would underly our capacity to experience a certain tonal movement or dynamics that is the central experience in musical understanding in Scruton's view.

Following Scruton thus far, we have taken the first steps in a characterisation of musical experience and its criteria of understanding. Fundamentally, we have seen how the causes of sound take second place to other interests that guide our listening when it is musical.[32] In order to understand these properly musical interests that guide our musical understanding, I will now discuss Scruton's use of the notions of imagination, contemplative or disinterested listening, and the role of metaphor in musical experience.

2. Roger Scruton on musical understanding

In the previous section, I have characterized ordinary listening as a mode of listening determined by an informational interest and by some awareness of the sounds' cause or mode of production. It has been argued that, even when we do not have access to the sound's cause, we tend to experience the sound as permeated by a thought concerning its possible cause. I have also pointed out that this listening mode was compatible with an acousmatic ability, which could be understood in two ways. The first sense of acousmatic listening was characterized as 'listening without seeing'; that is,

[32] An issue that will be taken up in his criticism of the experience of popular music

hearing sounds in terms of their causes even though they are not present. The second sense of acousmatic listening identified involves an autonomous experience of the sound organisation, i.e., an experience of sound in which we experience sound's relationships that only sounds possess in virtue of their place relative to a spectrum.

The key to this acousmatic ability is that it allows one to organise sound qualities autonomously with respect to information about the sources of sound. This is an important element for Scruton's view on the fundamentals for musical understanding, but the musical case requires more than autonomy with respect to information about the causes of sound, it also involves a special kind of attention to the sounds themselves. In particular, it involves a contemplative and imaginative attitude. As we shall see in this section, musical experience in Scruton is imaginative, and this notion is understood primarily in terms of two essential experiential features. Firstly, this implies an attention which is independent of information about the causes of the sound, and secondly, it is an attention which focuses on sound relations which can only be described in metaphorical language (Lapintie, 1987, pp. 146–147; Zangwill, 2010, p. 91). In this sense, musical understanding systematically involves metaphorically informed perceptual contents – such as the ones typically characterized in terms of musical movement and the tonal system that guides it.

2.1. Contemplation

At the beginning of this chapter, I listed a number of cases exemplifying modes of listening. One of these modes of listening is contemplative listening to sounds in general. So, for example, we can listen to the waves of the sea focusing on their sonic qualities. One could, in this case, forget about the source of the sound and simply let oneself be carried away by the sonority itself. However, while this form of attention is important in musical experience, it is not sufficient to account for the kind of experiential content that it typically possesses. In this section I will start with a general notion of contemplative listening and focus onto a particular one typically applied to musical experience.

For Scruton, a contemplative interest in sounds is mainly understood as the interest in experiencing sound for its own sake –as opposed to other interests, such as practical, informational or linguistic interests. To illustrate this, Scruton proposes to think about how we ordinarily contemplate sounds. For example, we listen to a curlew (Scruton, 1997, pp. 218–219), at first, we hear it singing and, if we possess the relevant concepts or

discriminatory capacities, we identify the bird. However, we are also able to pause and delight in the very sound of its song, without caring much about which type of bird is producing it or where the sound is coming from. In this case, we could concentrate only on certain qualities of the sound, such as the particular timbre of the bird, the mellowness of the sound, a certain texture, and so on. This is a contemplative mode of listening; that is, a mode of listening where our interest is focused on the sonority of sound itself (O'Callaghan & Nudds, 2009, p. 15).[33] This general mode of contemplation is assumed in other listening activities, some with artistic interests and some without it. Music is not the only experience that requires this attitude, so it is important to differentiate it from other activities to understand what makes it distinctive.

Cases which are not musical, but which appeal to an attention to sound themselves are those in which an interest in sound occurs insofar as they satisfy a sensory pleasure. For example, listening to the texture of the ocean waves' sound because of its sensory pleasure is a contemplative and acousmatic experience but not a musical one. I can, for example, record that peculiar timbre and edit it at home to use it for sleep or meditation. I can also send that recording to a friend who suffers from insomnia but who is totally unaware of the origin of the sound. He can also enjoy the timbral modulations of the sound, the groupings in time of small repetitions, etc. A similar case would be finding pleasure in the sound that a water fountain brings to the overall design of a garden (Sifford, 2014). Or to contemplate certain sounds because they evoke personal associations: say, an amalgam of sounds that pleasantly remind me of my childhood and which I now contemplate for their own sake, yet without pointing to any particular object or situation.

Authors such as Davies or Kivy differentiate these cases from a different form of contemplative activity characteristic of listening to music. In the former, we seek a kind of pleasure that is purely sensorial and independent from the pleasure characteristic of understanding music (Davies, 1994, p. 322; Kivy, 1986, pp. 72–73, 1990, p. 96). So, although the enjoyment of sounds for their own sake and the musical experience are both contemplative activities, it seems that the latter implies a greater cognitive load, a kind of sophisticated mode of perception that involves mastering certain conventions and concepts developed over the history of a certain tradition (Davies, 1994, p. 325; Scruton, 1997, p. 211).

[33] The 'contemplative' listener can be said to experience sound patterns, variations and modulations differently from the 'informational' listener who organises such information in constant relation to the possible causes that unify such qualities.

In a similar way, for Scruton, this form of contemplative listening, although free from an informational interest, is not still fully autonomous because it is connected to the satisfaction of a sensorial desire. So, in the end, this mode of listening is not a mode that attends to the sound for its own sake, but for the sensuous pleasure it affords (Scruton, 1997, p. 226). That musical listening should not be a medium to another end but only involve attention to the autonomous qualities of sounds is connected to Scruton's Kantian roots. That is, the interest we must have in sounds for listening to be properly musical must be aesthetic, that is, 'disinterested', not pragmatic (Salome, 2019, p. 130; Scruton, 1997, p. 226).

On the other hand, we also have artistic activities where sound is the main object of contemplation and which, nevertheless, after analysis, are distinguished from musical experience in that they involve a different kind of acousmatic attention. Thus, we have the case of *musique concrete*. This new form of sound art was initiated by Pierre Schaeffer and continued by sympathisers such as György Ligeti, Pierre Henry or Fred Frith. An early example of this type of composition would be *Étude aux chemins de fer* (1948) by Schaeffer. Works composed in this tradition invite the listener to attend to the sound itself and, to that extent, they invite an experience typical of acousmatic listening.[34] However, this experience is acousmatic in the sense of 'listening without seeing'. In this type of compositions, the attention to the sound itself is guided by the musician's electronic modifications. It often involves the removal of any information about the causes of the sound (Windsor, 2000, pp. 7–9) to promote this kind of attention to the sounds themselves. This process of producing the works facilitates that the listener enjoys an acousmatic or 'abstracted' listening, where no information whatsoever concerning ordinary sound phenomena is present. Besides, given that these works are to be experienced as instances of an art form, their experience requires contemplative attention. Now, according to Windsor, even if this practice promotes an acousmatic attention to sound, the listening of sounds as coming from a cause –or, using his own expressions, as 'informing about events' or as 'the intervention of some action'– always underlies the experience of such pieces (Windsor, 2000, pp. 18, 27). In fact, in his view, the interesting thing about these pieces is that they involve a twofold experience. An experience where,

[34] This tradition has also been called acousmatic music, experimental music or simply electro-acoustic music; this label emerges around 1948 and its realization can be seen in works by Pierre Schaeffer such as *Symphonie pour un homme seul* from 1949-1950 (Chion, 1983, p. 40; Hamilton, 2009, p. 154). An illuminating analysis which I summarise below of the works *Artikulation* (Ligeti, 1988), *Variations pour une porte et un soupir: Comptine* (Henry, 1987) and *Guitar Solos: Alienated Industrial Seagulls* (Frith, 1993) can be found in Windsor (2000, pp. 23–31).

due to the electronic alteration of the sounds by the composer, one hears the sounds as coming from certain unidentifiable causes, thus making the listener experiencing a sort of dissatisfaction in being unable to identify these causes, on the one hand, and, on the other, certain pleasure at the simultaneous exploration of new sound structures that arise as a result from the composer's manipulation.

This shows that certain considerations about the sounds' possible causes are present. And that part of the enjoyment derives from this tension experienced by the listener who tries to engage with the sound as a pure sonic phenomenon while, at the time, her experience is permeated by these thoughts about the possible causes of the sounds (Windsor, 2000, pp. 9, 21–25, 28). Thus, we must consider these practises as contemplative but acousmatic in the sense of 'listening without seeing', not an autonomous acousmatic ability.

Similarly, sound artists such as Francisco López who records ambient sound, both from cities and nature conceives his work as inviting a contemplative attitude to sound.[35] To that extent, his work promotes an experience of attention to the sounds themselves. Furthermore, he has explicitly remarked that his intention is to avoid inviting mental representations connected to visual information or narratives, that is, to avoid making listening a means to evoke images. He aims at promoting an experience in which sound is an end in itself (Bailey, 2012, pp. 244–246; López, 2001, pp. 163–164). The artist has also covered the eyes of his audience to achieve this kind of listening (Bailey, 2012). Moreover, López also seems worried about his recordings being considered 'ambient sound' or used as a means to relaxation –a function he thinks to be alien to this practice (López, 1998).[36]

When investigating these practices, some of them are categorized as sound arts in general, but many artists perceive their work as constituting ambiguous cases between sound art and new proposals of musical experience (Choate, 2020; López, 1998). This is also the case with the *musique concrete* cases referred above, which, while on the one

[35] Extracts of his discography can be heard on his own website: http://www.franciscolopez.net/disc.html

[36] Other similar examples of sound artists include Jana Winderen or Christina Kubisch. They both record sounds from unexplored environments and landscapes, seeking an experience of sound unfamiliarity that facilitates the contemplation of the sound itself. They also promote the free organisation of sounds, listening to them contemplatively through different combinations. The very position of the listener is also often used as part of what triggers the sound. In Kubisch's *Il Respiro del Mare* (1981) or *Cloud* (2011), the emergent sound depends on the position one adopts in relation to a an audio sculpture that emits electromagnetic waves. There is no predetermined 'path', but rather an invitation to contemplate sound in its various interactions. An example of the latter can be heard in: https://christinakubisch.de/installations/cloud-induction.

hand promotes a break with musical tradition, it is also often considered a new way of music-making based on a new system that attends to all sonorous qualities equally (Hamilton, 2007, p. 99; Windsor, 2000, pp. 9–10).

Regardless this debate concerning the musical nature of these works, there seems to be a common idea of what a musical practice is. That is, that in addition to a contemplative attitude, a musical practice entails a proposal of sound organisation. It is the experience of this organisation that certain practices assume or react to. In our tradition this system of organisation is called the tonal system. And our contemplative attitude to sound is guided by this system.

The value of making these distinctions is that, in characterising different modes of listening, we can also identify their different intentional objects or experiential content (Scruton, 1997, p. 214). Different objects or experiential contents require different skills and knowledge. The set of possible experiential contents derivable/affordable/available from listening to sound according to certain skills and knowledge is what, in Wittgensteinian terms, constitute a distinct grammar. As we will see, the disputes as to whether a musical practice involves attending to extra-musical aspects or not has to do directly with this distinction between modes of listening and the criteria we establish to distinguish between them.

By now, we can establish that musical experience requires a contemplative attitude towards sounds and that, in this respect, it is like other forms of sonic art or contemplation. But it also requires the exercise of acousmatic listening, understood as an autonomous skill that organises sound qualities with respect to a spectrum. It is this double condition that allows that our experience of sounds is structured in terms of tonal relations. In the following, I would like to focus upon Scruton's view on tonal experience.

2.2. Musical Movement

Let us recall the example proposed by Scruton. Someone contemplates the sound of a curlew and, if she does not seek any information about its cause, she delights in the sound, adopting a contemplative attitude. Still, she can go beyond the mere contemplation of sound. She can hear a certain sound as a 'note' or a 'special sound', which rises and falls through a certain spectrum that she perceives as a 'scale'. Evidence of this experience of sound organisation could be that she whistles in imitation of the bird and continues in the way a melody develops, following the 'steps' of the scale. This would indicate that she identifies intervals between pitches. Similarly, if a peer hums it and she

then repeats it in a different octave, this will show that she recognises that these two sounds are the same note in different octaves.

This type of listening in addition to being contemplative and acousmatic, obeys a certain organisation. It is a peculiar organisation that seems to be the characteristic of a musical listening mode. This is what, for Scruton, lies at the heart of musical experience. In our tradition, known as the Common Practise Period, such organisation is tonal and lies at the heart of our musical experience.[37]

As I have shown before, unlike other contemplative sound activities, there seems to be a consensus that in music what one experiences is a peculiar organisation (Kania, 2011, p. 11). It is thanks to this organisation that we experience a peculiar 'movement' in sounds. I will focus now on what we call melodic movement and why it is so important for characterizing the basics of musical experience.

Thanks to the ability at the heart of acousmatic listening we can experience the quality of pitch in a peculiar way –as moving within a spectrum. Now, our musical experience is not only limited to experience a continuum: that is, that one pitch follows another, say, from the 'bottom' to the 'top'. This would be a too simple experience of movement, a mere trajectory from one point to another passing through other intermediate points without further consideration, as if none of them were more important or as if it were irrelevant that the movement begins at one point and ends at another.[38]

The relevant point is that we can grasp, in that spectrum, the positions and relationships that play a structural role in our tonal system. Hence, what was once a unidirectional movement is in our tradition a complex movement oriented by its place in the system (Sparshott, 1987, p. 48); the content of experience is transformed by thematizing tonally the experience of those points and intervals.[39]

Musical experience could be minimally characterised as the experience of certain relationships between distances in the pitch continuum. Let us look at some of the ways in which these relationships and distances are thematised. We detect, for example, that

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[37] Of course, there are other musical systems that rely in similar scalar divisions but, as indicated in note 1 of the Introduction, this term usually refers to the period in Europe from the Baroque to the Romantic era, and is useful as Scruton's texts typically focus on this tradition.

[38] This could be the case for our experience of pitch in some language utterances. That we detect how different people say the same sentence with different pitch modulations would not change the linguistic content we grasp. We could even play with increasing the pitch of our voice as we speak, and detecting this 'rise', but it would be no more than a semantically unimportant pitch movement.

[39] Continuing with the comparison with language, we could also find cases where pitch has semantic relevance. In the Chinese language, the same word but pronounced with different pitch modifications has a different meaning. So, also in this case, detecting a certain pitch movement is thematised as having a function in the linguistic system.

after a certain distance the pitches are repeated, establishing what in various practices are called octaves. This distance can in turn be divided to select those points that will be relevant to the movement we experience. Thus, we thematise certain distances that we call fifths, fourths, and so on.[40] In our tradition, each point in the spectrum is related to the rest in a harmonic context, where the triad forms the basic element of the tonal system (Denham, 2009, p. 429; Scruton, 1997, pp. 52, 75). These divisions also have to do with generating scales with their own characteristics, so we say that different scalar divisions sound 'darker', 'tense', 'bright', and even 'calm', 'melancholic' or 'dreamy'. The same is true of the melodies that are generated from each scale. This way of speaking reflects that we experience in music a complex movement, with a peculiar orientation, and with expressive or aesthetic qualities.

Thus, moving from capturing a continuum in the pitch spectrum to capturing a musical movement involves the guidance of a system that thematises and transforms our experience of sounds.[41] It is thanks to this new organisation that we can experience a certain inclination between them, or that they move in search of a certain stability, resolution, etc. Here we have focused on the melodic movement because it is the paradigmatic musical movement, which is why much literature on the subject has paid special attention to it (Budd, 2003; De Clercq, 2007; Kania, 2015). Next, I would like to comment on other characteristics essential to musical experience according to Scruton. That is, in addition to a contemplative attitude that thematises the certain distances that we grasp through our acousmatic capacity, it requires the faculty of imagination and a certain use of metaphorical terms that also transforms our experience.

2.3. Imagination and metaphor in musical experience

Ordinarily, our immersion in our musical tradition is such that it would be impossible to find someone who does not distinguish a musical performance from merely making noise. But if you were to take someone completely ignorant about music, if you took him to a concert, he would see nothing but people making noises in a hall. After a certain amount of teaching, he would pick up certain patterns that we indicate to him, and he would pay attention to certain key points in the performance. He would learn to

[40] Scruton argues that the experience of the octave as equivalent to the fundamental is universal. Moreover, he thinks there would be an almost similar level of consensus regarding the interval of a fifth perceived as a metastable position (Scruton, 2009b, p. 13).

[41] Of course, this move from the acousmatic to the musical is a way of explaining what the musical itself consists of, it is not a statement about how we actually acquire both abilities.

distinguish parts and sections, the harmonic background and the melodic foreground, and so on. For Scruton, this listener would move from the world of sounds to the world of tones and this movement would have to do with acquiring an ability to grasp the sounds through certain metaphors of movement and space and the use of his imagination (Scruton, 1997, p. 220).

The point that makes the appeal to the imagination's role a necessary component of musical experience is that the same sound quality can be captured in different ways, resulting in different experiential contents and therefore different ways of listening. As we have already seen, we can listen to a pitch and identify it in relation to a material event causing it –as when we say that small, sharp object produces a high-pitched sound– thus, exercising a non-musical and non-acousmatic form of attention. Alternatively, we can listen to a pitch and identify it in relation to its position within a continuum that is not a literal one, and which we tend to capture through metaphors such as 'high', 'low', etc., (Scruton, 1997, pp. 20–22, 2009b, pp. 26–27). Thus, the same pitch can be differently organized.

From these ideas, Scruton concludes that one of the main characteristics of musical experience –being contemplative and acousmatic –is its contrast to the 'literalness' of ordinary listening. For Scruton, contemplative and acousmatic listening can be exercised through our imaginative capacity. The movement we capture between sound pitches does not exist literally as the movement of a bird from one branch to another does, but we perceive the sounds as so moving guided by our imagination (Scruton, 2009b, p. 43).

In order to understand this imagined character of the musical experience we need to look at the way in which the terms of space and movement are applied to the experience of pitch. The spatial terms are not merely whimsical descriptions of our experience of sound, rather it is the specific metaphorical use of those terms that allows the experience to occur (Scruton, 1997, p. 90). Those terms do not refer to literal movement. When a rooster crows, the location of the sound changes as he moves around the pen, but the pitch of his crow has certain variations. For Scruton, these variations are experienced as metaphorical 'movements' on a spectrum from 'down' to 'up' and vice versa. That is, the particular experience of a certain movement would not occur if we used other terms or no terms at all. And without this experience of movement in sound we would not be able to hear these sounds as tones; for music exploits this experience by reorganising and imposing certain relations between these pitches.

Scruton here understands metaphorical experience as transferring a term from its customary use to a context in which it cannot be applied literally (Scruton, 1997, p. 91). Thus, it is not an analogy of the type "the waiter slithered through the kitchen *like a snake* so as not to be seen", where some resemblance between the two movements exists. He states flatly that musical space and movement are not even analogous to the space and movement of the physical world (Scruton, 1997, p. 51).[42]

Scruton takes an example from Wittgenstein (2009, pp. 277, § 274) to explain his notion of metaphor. Let us imagine that someone asks us whether Wednesday seems fat and Tuesday thin or the other way round. The question is not to look for some resemblance between terms but to try to make our interlocutor see Wednesdays through the term we propose, so that it changes its appearance thanks to the metaphor (Scruton, 1997, pp. 84–85). Something like putting a very subtle yellow filter on a pair of glasses; it does not make me see things yellow, but it changes the way I see the environment. Maybe now I experience it as 'warmer', 'less intense', 'closer', and so on. The only way I can experience that warmth is by using that filter, but if I see the filter by itself none of that experience would emerge in me. Therefore, both the filter and a scenario on which to apply it are required.

Thus, melodies are cases of 'pure inventions' of the imagination existing in a world of their own. Part of this *sui generis* character has to do with the fact that for Scruton musical perception, although described using some terms applied to material realities, is not about describing sounds in relation to these terms, but rather about using such a spatial term to change the appearance of sound (De Clercq, 2007, p. 157; Scruton, 1997, p. 84). In other words, to change the experiential content of listening.

The first step is to experience each sound as being situated in a position on the pitch continuum. The second one is to impose a certain organisation on the sounds thus experienced. I have focused on melodic movement as paradigmatic of musical movement based on the analysis of our acousmatic listening of sound pitch. In musical experience, the experience of pitch is detached from any relation to its material cause insofar as it uses spatial terms in a metaphorical way.

Thus, for Scruton the minimal enabling conditions of the experience of melody, and by extension of harmony and rhythm, are detached from any attention to their material context, require acousmatic listening a contemplative attitude towards sounds, the

[42] For Scruton, melodies, chord progressions, themes, etc., although imagined in sounds, are not reducible to them: «There is a metaphysical chasm –a 'transition from quantity to quality' as Hegel would put it– which separates musical organisation from sequential sounds» (Scruton, 2009b, p. 6).

metaphorical perception of sound movement, and the tonal organisation of these acousmatic positions by our imagination (Scruton, 2009b, p. 31).

2.4. A musical system

Having characterised the peculiar experience of movement in our musical experience, I would like to focus now on Scruton's view of the tonal system. I want to underline, how this view of what a musical system is has points in common with a Wittgensteinian view of grammar in the linguistic case.

The tonal system is not the result of some kind of natural law, in the way that the Pythagoreans thought that musical laws were derived from mathematical ratios (Ball, 2010, p. 44; Hamilton, 2007, p. 20).[43] Rules of musical organisation are, in a way, artificial or *a posteriori*, the result of a peculiar tradition of musical practise (Scruton, 1997, p. 216; Sparshott, 1987, pp. 46–49). The movement we experience has a certain orientation, directionality, points of reference, centres of gravity, etc., because we experience that organisation as coherent, having a certain appropriateness, a certain sense of correctness, etc., (Arbo, 2013, p. 270; Davies, 1994, p. 325; Scruton, 2018a, pp. 97–98), which derives from our practices and not from *a priori* laws.[44]

Even listening to the simplest of melodies, we experience how one note follows the other in search of completeness. When we have this experience, we experience that the sequence of sounds is appropriate, even if we do not know how to express this in tonal terms. We sense, for example, that a particular note ‘sounds right’ in relation to the previous one. So, it is a constitutive part of our musical experience that certain combinations or sound structures are experienced as pleasing in virtue of the adequacy or coherence we experience in those relations or combinations. I think that this characteristic

[43] In their experiments, a string was made to vibrate, the sound of which is taken as the fundamental. If we divide the string into twelve identical parts and pluck it after halving it, the octave is produced, corresponding to the simplest frequency ratio of 1:2, and thus the most consonant interval. This consonance would also occur at positions nine and eight, corresponding to the next simplest ratios of 3:4 and 2:3 respectively, which we call the fourth and fifth. The harmonic series that follows has strong reminiscences with the major triad in our tradition, so it has been thought that our tonal system would naturally derive from harmonic laws. This idea seems to inspire authors such as Helmholtz (Scruton, 2009b, p. 13).

[44] Under this idea we can understand the criticisms that have been made of serialism as a type of sound organisation that proposes experiences of ‘development’, ‘inversion’, ‘order’, etc., but does not incorporate them in the very listening of these peculiar movements. As can be seen in works such as Arnold Schoenberg’s *Suite for Piano, Op. 25*, Ernst Krenek’s *8 Piano Pieces*, or Anton Webern's *Six Bagatelles for String Quartet, Op. 9*, the expectation of what comes seems to have more to do with the expectations created by being familiar with the serial method of composition –tone rows and their transformations, abandonment of a tonal centre, etc.,– and its tracking in the score rather than in the listening experience as such (Hamilton, 2007, pp. 113–114; Scruton, 1997, pp. 212–216, 2009b, pp. 168–169).

of musical experience can also be traced in its foundations, and so it is a necessary and minimal aspect of musical listening.

When we listen to sound pitches with respect to a spectrum, we have seen that certain distance relationships are thematised as consonants. That is, distances such as the octave or the fifth seem to us to be stable points from which to construct a system of sound relations (Hamilton & Scruton, 1999, p. 13). From this a system is constructed first in practice and then in the form of explicit rules. Now, it is well known that different traditions divide the spectrum and thematise distances in different ways (Nettl, 2005, pp. 326–329). This seems to evince the fact that not only these abilities –a contemplative attention and an acousmatic ability as autonomous– must be present, but also that, in detecting a pitch relationship, one must simultaneously perceive or judge its correctness or incorrectness. Thus, different scalar divisions might be evidence of different normative commitments, of different views concerning what relations between sounds are appropriate, consonant, pleasing, or correct.

These different thematizations, expressed in different rules, are not a set of instructions. They capture the moment of consensus instead. For example, in proposing that a certain pitch distance as a fifth or as a 'perfect', 'consonant' or 'pleasant' interval, a certain culture makes a proposal, makes a judgement about what 'sounds right' and submits it to the judgement of the rest of the participants of a certain culture (Rubio, 1995, pp. 18–23). Thus, when I judge that a transition 'harmonises' or a melodic line is 'incoherent' I am not appealing to universals of beauty or mathematical harmony, but to the consensus in judgements of what is 'correct' or 'adequate' within a system or musical grammar.

That the normative consensus shows a certain aesthetic agreement can be experienced when confronted with other traditions. For example, Arbo (2013, p. 221), shows an experiment in which pupils listened to a Phrygian cadence that was considered 'conclusive'. The pupils, even after learning the theoretical explanation of why the intervals they hear must conclude in this way, cannot hear it as conclusive. Their listening, moulded by a more modern system, lacks familiarity with the form of life in which this grammar emerges and makes sense. Therefore, they cannot hear the need for that sentence to end like that; in other words, the sense in which it is right for it to end like that is not part of their form of life.[45]

[45] This is how I interpret Scruton's observation that in experiencing a tone one does not simply register how one tone precedes the next, but that we grasp the conditions that make it a correct or adequate successor to the previous one (Scruton, 1997, p. 79).

We have said in the case of language that understanding is evinced in the ability to act appropriately in particular cases. Understanding a system or a grammar thus involves a form of knowing how to operate in a particular context within the system (Appelqvist, 2018, pp. 220–221; Kaduri, 2006; Levinson, 2003, p. 68; Worth, 1997). In the terms in which I have discussed music, musical understanding would show itself spontaneously in listening experiences that evince the mastery of rules and certain skills –such as anticipating a certain note, making relations, acting appropriately, etc. It is thanks to these skills that we transform the experience of sound qualities and relations into musical experience within a certain system (Arbo, 2012, p. 118; Lescourret, 2012, pp. 151–154; Levinson, 2003, pp. 65–66). Additionally, we must pay attention to the inter-subjective agreement in which the system emerges and develops or flourishes.

In this characterization an important aspect is that the rules of the system are anchored in a normative solid ground (Appelqvist, 2008, p. 41; Hagberg, 2017, p. 61), given by the institutions in which they are framed and the community that sustains them (Wittgenstein, 1953/2009, para. 242). However, rules are not a fixed sets of instructions or definitions. On the contrary, the Wittgensteinian view of grammar allows for the evolution of rules over time within different practices (Appelqvist, 2019, p. 17; Hagberg, 2017, p. 67). Thus, in Scruton's case, where the tonal system is considered the paradigm of musical organisation and it is sometimes considered to be a strict criterion of musical understanding, there always remains a space open for its evolution.[46]

Thus, the way musical organisation is grasped cannot be separated from a tradition and its particular way to establish what counts as a proper musical relation. This tradition changes over time, leaving certain elements behind, retaking them, and even including ‘discoveries’, such as the well temperament (Ball, 2010, pp. 58–62; Hamilton, 2007, p. 23; Scruton, 2009b, p. 15).

In establishing the minimum conditions for musical experience, therefore, we have to rely not only on certain skills that allow us to contemplatively attend to a specific kind of sound movement, but its experiential content will also be marked by normative attitudes, by judgements about what sounds good, harmonious or coherent. The key in the Scruton’s proposal is that the tonal system provides us with a paradigm of organisation that explains the foundations of the peculiar movement we experience in music under such normative attitudes.

[46] However, the evolution of the system must always be evaluated in the context of the tradition, otherwise elements could be introduced that would lead to the decline of the system, as is the case, in his opinion, with popular music (Scruton, 1997, p. 500).

So far, I have tried to go through different modes of listening, distinguishing them in terms of their respective experiential content. In the case of musical experience, we have seen that it requires both a contemplative attitude and the exercise of acousmatic skills. Now, given that there are several sound arts that meet these conditions, I have tried to look for the distinctive aspect of musical experience. To do so, I have relied on the analysis of the experience of metaphorical movement as paradigmatic of musical experiential content. In turn, I have characterised this movement as tonal. And I have based tonal movement on a specific acousmatic ability as an autonomous form of sound organisation. The particularity of musical experience would, therefore, be the thematization of pitch relations in a tonal system that evolves over time and in different ways in various traditions. These relations would be the particular experiential content of musical experience. Finally, I have added how these thematizations of sound pitches include in their origin a certain judgement about what is appropriate and what is not, which is also particular to each tradition.

With these considerations in mind, I would like to briefly outline Scruton's criticism of popular music, and in what sense it derives from the ideas so far presented. I would like to introduce this criticism as a case study for exploring the general question of what the criteria of musical understanding are and in what sense new additions or innovations in a musical tradition can be considered as a continuation of the tradition or as distortions that erode the tradition.

2.5. Popular music as problem of musical understanding

Scruton's analysis of popular music is not sociological, historical or cultural, but aesthetic. His exposition has to do with the kind of experience that this tradition promotes. In his view, this music represents a calamity and a decline that is eroding the musical experience proper (Hamilton & Scruton, 1999, p. 156; Scruton, 1997, p. 500). A decisive factor for Scruton’s assessment has to do with his claim that popular music promotes attending to the causes of sound rather than a reflective exercise of the sort of autonomous acousmatic listening introduced above. This fact has detrimental consequences for the kind of musical experience and understanding involved in popular music.

The label ‘popular music’, also used by Scruton, corresponds primarily to the musical phenomenon around pop culture. Although, in the next chapter, I will offer a fuller characterisation of this tradition, I will use it now to refer to pop, rock, rap, trap, electronic music, urban music, and other genres typically regarded as commercial music.

All the examples that Scruton considers in his criticism of popular music revolve around these genres. Although it is a notion not strictly defined, it is commonly used.

As seen previously, Scruton's view of the distinction between ordinary listening and acousmatic listening provides a conceptually fine-grained way to capture the transition from mere sound listening to proper musical listening and understanding. In introducing his view, we saw that the tonal system served as a paradigm for characterizing the peculiar experiential content of someone who listens with understanding. That is, in Scruton's view, a competent musical listener is someone that is able to follow the tonal movement of a work. Although Scruton acknowledges that tonality does not exhaust all the properties and aspects that we hear when we listen to sounds as music, tonal experience is a strong criterion to distinguish between those who understand and those who do not understand music (Scruton, 1997, p. 239). Furthermore, as we will see, the centrality of this aspect will be relevant in the case of popular music.[47]

In section 2.2 of Chapter I, I distinguished within the musical phenomenon what we can consider as grammatically relevant to musical understanding proper, on the one hand, and what simply accompanies or forms part of the general context of a musical practice, on the other. This distinction is crucial to capture Scruton's criticism of popular music. Given the importance Scruton attaches to being acquainted with the tonal system, refinement and deep learning of its rules becomes part of the cultivation of the listener's musicality. The tonal system is not only a system of rules governing sound relationships, its use and development is inseparable from a culture, and it is this culture that is put at stake in the face of novelties such as popular music; hence the importance of this analysis (Scruton, 1997, pp. 445–456, 501).

In my view, Scruton's criticism can be summarised as follows: popular music introduces several innovations, many of which involve, in comparison to the classical tradition, significant changes in composing techniques and in the way the listener interacts with the music. Scruton argues that many of these novelties do not enrich our musical culture because they elaborate on extra-musical aspects often involved in music performance and reception, such as, sound editing focused on sound timbre, music directed by external interests such as dancing or following certain images, the focus on the use of noises or sounds that evoke the way they were produced, the attention to the image of the musician, among others. Thus, these novelties do not foster musical

[47] One of Scruton's main concerns, for example, is the role of expressive content as part of the understanding of a work (Scruton, 1997, Chapter 11, 2004).

understanding properly speaking or elaborate on the grammatical core of our musical tradition; they promote non-musical forms of attention and enjoyment instead. Popular music considers as genuinely musical what once was a mere accompaniment. Consequently, many of these novelties divert our attention from what it is musically relevant or even undermine musical proper abilities.

For Scruton a musical culture is one that primordially immerses the listener in an experience involving melodic, harmonic and rhythmic aspects (Scruton, 1997, pp. 501–502). Although popular music affords this kind of experience to a great extent, it also fosters forms of attention and enjoyment that, for Scruton, dangerously emphasize the form of enjoyment characteristic of mere sound experiences. In this sense, popular music departs from a serious endeavour to afford a full-blown tonal experience.

A notable example of this would be how, partly influenced by technological developments, and by the growth of mass entertainment, popular music has constantly played with experimentation in new timbres for instruments, voice modifications, and sound editing techniques. Following Scruton, one would have to conclude that attention to the way timbre produces effects on the listener manifests an interest in satiating a sensitive pleasure rather than an intellectual and properly musical pleasure.

To see why these timbrical thematizations and sound editing innovations involve focusing upon something that is not musically relevant, Scruton proposes the following thought experiment: Let us imagine two people listen to the same piece of music. The first is able to recognise which instruments play, how each sound is produced, what kind of materials are used, and the position the sound comes from. Given these abilities, this listener can capture all the timbral innovations that new sound technologies introduce and thematise in popular music. The second listener, while not being able to determine any of this, is able to perceive the series of sounds in terms of their tonal, rhythmic and melodic qualities, she can recognise melodies, the movement from the tonic to its dominant and its return to the tonic, and so on. According to Scruton, the second listener, although he would miss many aspects of the sonic experience, would at least have a minimal musical experience –a tonal experience–; whereas the first listener, however fine-tuned his ear may be, has no musical experience properly speaking (Scruton, 2009b, pp. 7–8).

As we have seen when introducing the notion of acousmatic listening, for Scruton, grasping melodic movement is the paradigmatic musical experience. Popular music, in so far as it promotes an aesthetic interest in attending to the modification of sound timbre, however, focuses on a sonic aspect that for Scruton is secondary. It is secondary because

the possibility of tonally organising sounds –which constitutes the core of musical experience– has less to do with thematising certain changes in timbre than with changes in sound pitch with respect to a spectrum (Scruton, 1997, p. 77).

This is why, Scruton argues, instrumental variations of a piece do not involve structural changes. A piece played with two different sets of instruments does not constitute two musical works, but two instances or versions of the same work. Since the tonal relations are the same, the basic musical experiential content is the same: the same melody, the same introduction, the same chord progression, etc. By contrast, timbrical changes do not play any organisational role within musical experience.[48]

Since these aspects lacks an organisational role, and so they do not play a constitute role in determining the musical piece structure, they are, according to Scruton, somewhat extra-musical. However, we should add that they are only extra-musical in respect to what is proper musical. In general, as listeners and performers of music, we worry about the material of our instruments, the type of strings we use, the cleanliness of the tubes through which the air passes in wind instruments, we apply resin to the bow hair of the violin to improve friction, and so on. In fact, Scruton has no problem in acknowledging that aspects such as timbre, also contribute to musical experience, but in a broad rather than a specific musical sense (Scruton, 1997, p. 77). In the terms I introduced in section 2.2 of Chapter I, timbrical properties would be part of the musical phenomenon, but not part of the specifically musical.

Furthermore, musical interest in timbre qualifies Scruton's view that imagination and disinterest guide musical experience. The interest in thematising timbrical qualities involves some thoughts about the sounds' possible causes, which, as we have seen when introducing Scruton's view, should not be part of the kind of contemplative experience that lies at the core of musical experience. This is key to understand why for Scruton these properties cannot adopt an organisational role despite being part of the musical phenomenon in general. Musical experience, at its core, is not driven by the need for information, but by another need that we express in our responses when a melody does not seem appropriate or when we notice a change of tempo. We grasp in music a virtual

[48] A similar reasoning could be made with the quality of loudness. Although the sound needs to be at a certain volume for it to be part of a musical experience, the experience of musical order does not include –in our tradition– definite parameters concerning the appropriate volume. One's experience of a melody in G major does not change when the volume varies. At least it does not change in a properly speaking musical sense.

causality –when a tone seems to tend appropriately to a series of tones, and not towards others– that is explained by reference to the tonal system (Scruton, 2009b, pp. 5–8).

There are other cases where music production is not governed by a proper musical interest but by a search for sound effects. For example, music composed to follow a filmic narrative often introduces interruptions, accents or repetitions that are introduced at the mercy of the events we see on the screen, rather than as the tonal development itself would demand (Scruton, 2018a, Chapter 13). A clear example of this form of heteronomous composition is the 1946 animated short *The Cat Concerto*, in which a version of Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2* is played. Certain modifications of the music are due to an attempt to make them match the visual gags; they would not make sense if they were listened independently from them. For example, about halfway through the animated short, Harry Warren's *On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe* (1944) is briefly played. Although the two pieces are linked, the jump is justified by the gag whereby one of the characters decides to change the course of the performance as a form of sabotage. In this case, understanding the humorous character that the music is intended to convey requires attention to the events that the music accompanies to. The humorous atmosphere has more to do with a certain use of the music in conjunction with the images than with the understanding of the music itself.

Besides, this example of music used as an element of cinema is related to the importance that visual elements also have in popular music, be it through music videos, marketing techniques, the special design of the artist's image, the symbolic elements created around a band or music star, the stylized presentation of new albums and recordings, or the theatricalization of live performances. Scruton thus considers that music itself takes a secondary place within popular music, compared to the significance of all these other elements (Scruton, 1997, p. 506). Melodic and rhythmic development becomes integrated with the imagery proposed in a multi-sensory performance; thus fostering a complete opposite ideal to the acousmatic ideal advocated by Scruton (2009b, p. 12).

This attention to something outside the music also undermines the rhythmic sense of popular music listeners. Whereas the percussive section in the classical tradition is attuned to the accents that emerge from the melodic and harmonic development of a piece, many pop and rock pieces overlay a drum kit that floods the piece with a mere pattern of regularity. Thus, Scruton distinguishes between musical rhythm and mere beat (Scruton, 2018a, p. 233). Scruton cites for example 'My Big Mouth' (1997) by Oasis as an example

of this bold use of rhythm pattern. Pieces like ‘Linoleum’ (1994) by NOFX, ‘Riot Fight’ (1994) by the Beastie Boys, ‘Can't Stop It’ (2002) by Bad Religion or the ‘blast-beat’ technique used by bands such as Slayer, Cannibal Corpse o Slipknot are also cases that could be named in this sense. In these cases, Scruton considers that rhythm is replaced by a beat that musically embodies and matches the aggressiveness of the musician's gestures. Thus, it does not play a significant role in structuring the music.[49]

Violent rhythmic sections suffocate musical harmonic and melodic development. This also occurs when in order to sustain attention to the lyrics the music melodic dimension becomes reduced to brief phrases or small patterns. Thus, for Scruton, the lack of melodic development is related to the tendency of popular music to convey messages in a direct and sentimental way. This directness, in turn, encourages listeners to identify with musical idols and to engage with bold messages rather than to become part of a musical culture in a reflective way (Scruton, 1997, p. 506, 2018a, p. 234).

Thus, popular music does not enrich the listeners’ musical skills, but uses musical effects to emphasize the extra-musical content, such as visual components or gestures. As a result, the skills and abilities proper to musical understanding are undermined because they are largely underdeveloped in popular music when not simply replaced by some other forms of attention. Finally, this tradition tries to thematise elements of the musical phenomenon that in Scruton's eyes have played no significant role in our musical culture.

2.6. Cases where the musically irrelevant becomes relevant

Scruton is not totally opposed to musicians experimenting with new timbres, or certain novel elements in their musical performances. However, he is strict about the fact that, if these novelties are part of the musical experiential content, they are so insofar as they become ‘redeemed’ by upgrading from the world of sounds to the world of tones (Scruton, 1997, p. 489).[50]

As an example, Scruton cites the third movement of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*. In this case, an English horn begins to play a melody which is answered by

[49] Interestingly, musicians such as Barney Greenway, lead singer of Napalm Death, also declare their interest in making the rhythm section a violent and explosive experience in contrast to more traditional and structural uses of rhythm (Strub, 2006).

[50] This term used by Scruton and its religious connotation of deliverance from sin is no accident. In several texts he equals intellectual, musical and moral development (Scruton, 1997, pp. 390–391, 2009b, p. 95, 2018a, Chapter 3) and although it may seem a secondary issue, according to some commentators, the moral principles with which Scruton sympathises may be underpinning the philosophical principles of his notion of musical experience (Goehr, 1999; Zangwill, 2010).

an oboe placed offstage. For Scruton we can listen to two distinct kinds of distances: on the one hand, the literal distance between the two instruments on stage and, on the other, the musical distance between the first melody and the second. According to Scruton, the literal distance between the instruments serves to evoke the image of two shepherds talking in the distance, but this has no parallel on the musical distance between the two melodies: «the spatial array of the orchestra induces us into the musical space; but it is not part of it, and gives way to it, just as soon as we are gripped by the musical perception» (Scruton, 1997, pp. 12–13).

Since musical experience is an aesthetic activity, it is precisely this freedom from the literal location of the sounds' production that allows for its experiential content properly speaking. Things like being enraptured by the timbre of an instrument or a voice, being carried away by the virtuosity of the musician's movements, or being impressed by the images that accompany the music will provide a merely sensuous pleasure. They can only become musically significant when they become relevant for "the virtual world of tones".

> Even if we are aware that music is a performance, and that in listening to music we are hearing the real actions of real people, putting themselves into the sounds that they produce, this awareness must be registered in the musical movement if it is to be musically significant. When a violinist strains to produce Bach's great D minor Chaconne, it is not the strain in producing sounds that we appreciate, but the legacy of that strain in the virtual world of tones. (Scruton, 2009b, p. 7).

Nevertheless, there might be cases where some non-musical sounds can become musically relevant. Thus, Matteo Ravasio (2017, p. 190) argues, in line with Scruton, that while musical and non-musical sounds are radically different. the latter can become part of a musical experience if they are able to adopt a musical function in a particular context. In this respect, he offers two examples, the song 'Radioactivity' (1975) by Kraftwerk and 'Money' (1973) by Pink Floyd.

In the first case, an irregularly rhythmic beep sounds throughout the song, evoking the sound of a telegraph playing Morse code. This sound –together with the titles of the rest of the songs on the album, its cover, and the lyrics– would constitute the extra-musical imagery that reinforces the use of the music to reflect on the danger of radiation.

As a bare sound, the beep is heard as an external element to the music. We could play the sound of an emergency siren and suggest the same scenario. But in this case, this beep becomes part of the music because, according to Ravasio, there are moments when the pitch of the beep and the harmony of the composition enters into a musical

relationship, as if a guitar chord were suddenly accompanied by a violin in the same key. In this example, the beep becomes integrated into the rest of the composition; it is not simple heard as a beep but as a very high pitch, adopting a functional role in the musical composition. Thus, the sound imagery of a telegraph sounding disappears and becomes just another group of tones.

The Pink Floyd example is also interesting because it involves rhythm. At the beginning of the song *Money*, we hear sounds that evoke imagery of our relationship with money, such as noises of coins, cash registers, etc. Here we do not pay attention to the pitch but to the rhythmic pattern that is generated. They are not noises that simply occur one after the other, but they set the rhythmic pattern of the song. In this way, the listener abstracts from an interest in the possible information conveyed by these sounds and integrate them in her experience as musical sound (Ravasio, 2017, pp. 190–191).

In these cases, the attention to the sound causes is underplayed and is turned to the qualities of the sound insofar as they play an organisational role. In a sense, what once attracted attention to these sounds is bracketed out, thus promoting a focus on their tonal organisational properties.

There are also other cases where the interest in the sound causes and, in particular, the focus on certain information about how a sound is produced, serves as a point of reference to distinguish a certain tonal organisation. In this regard, Janet Levy (1995) discusses the intentional use of ambiguity in certain musical sections.[51] She explores how certain sections of music can be perceived either as an ending or as a beginning depending on depending on the way the musicians play the instruments. This phenomenon has significant implications for the current discussion because it highlights that a melody's resolution or lack thereof can be affected by attending to the actions embodied in sounds.

Tonal organisation, in this context, is determined by the musician's actions on their instruments. That is, a section becomes ‘introductory’ because we hear the accents on the instrument being played at a certain time and not at another. The tones are the same, but the form of producing them is not. Grasping whether a section begins or ends, whether they are joined together or whether there are new rhythmical accents involves detecting the way sounds are produced (Levy, 1995, p. 154).

While Levy discusses complex works such as Haydn's *Symphony No. 94 in G major*, a very simple example can be similarly illuminating. It is known that the notes that

[51] This author does not introduce this study in the context I discuss here; rather, I use her findings to interpret them within the framework of a Scrutonian view.

make up A minor and C major are identical, so if a person plays a melody using those notes, what key is she in? This is usually solved by looking at, among other things, where she places accents when playing. If she plays with greater intensity each step on the note A, this will make the corresponding experience to be of the melody as being in A minor, since it intensifies its role as tonic.

These cases are interesting because they show that it is vital to pay attention to the way the instruments are played in every performance. However, this is not to say that these aspects are part of the tonal order experienced. Although attending to the way the sound is produced is necessary to properly identify the tonal structure, the musical experiential content is purely tonal. Whether I pluck the strings or use a plectrum to generate emphasis, the resulting musical form is experienced in tonal terms.

Summary

Throughout this section, and after presenting Scruton's analysis of the different modes of listening, I have introduced his view of musical understanding. I have explored what, according to Scruton, could be call the minimum conditions for musical listening. In addition to a contemplative, disinterested and acousmatic attitude towards sounds, it is necessary to postulate a system that guides the concrete sound ordering to distinguish the specific mode of musical listening.

It is thanks to a system that provides a normative basis for recognizing certain sound structure as well-formed ones that we can judge whether a listening is done with understanding or not. Now, for Scruton, this system is embodied in our tradition mainly in the rules of the tonal system. In a Wittgensteinian way, we could say that this grammar, which governs our musical games, is made explicit in the rules that we teach to anyone who wants to enter our musical practices. Understanding our musical tradition means immersing ourselves in these rules and looking at what the participants are interested in and what they do when they follow a piece of music (Scruton, 1997, pp. 16–17). For Scruton, when we adopt this methodology, we find out the internal workings of our tonal system and how learning it is a complex and arduous process due to the very complexity of its history, which reflects a long tradition.

The imaginative character is also, as we have seen, a vital aspect of musical experience for Scruton. It emphasizes the contrast between musical listening an ordinary listening. Whereas ordinary listening is literal, has an informational interest, is generally multisensory and its experiential content always bears some relation to possible causes of

sound, musical listening brackets these aspects of sound experience. As a result, musical experience is an imaginative and disinterested experience. By giving up on any interest in the causes of sound, imagination organises sound qualities freely.

This organisational freedom is evinced in the characteristic use of metaphorical spatial terms. Thus, the terms we use to speak of musical movement are not tied to their ordinary uses, but to new uses, guided by or embedded within the tonal system. Among these metaphorical uses, the terms to describe melodic movement, paradigmatic of musical listening, stand out. Paying attention to the descriptions such as 'return', 'resolution', 'tension', 'repetition', 'parallel', etc., shows how our musical understanding is permeated by a particular imaginatively charged way of organising certain aspects of sound.

In section 2.5 I have explored Scruton's idea that popular music seems to threaten the experience characteristic of this mode of organisation. While popular music does not completely challenge the tonal tradition –as other musical movements such as atonalism or serialism do–, its danger consists in veiling as musical certain attitudes that are in fact external to the musical itself.

Scruton cites certain pieces and practices in popular music that transgress the imaginative principle of musical understanding. That is, he shows how certain aspects that popular music tries to exploit musically refer to aspects that take us back to the causes of sound. Other aspects, such as a strong reliance on visual imagery and sonic effects, transgress the acousmatic principle and make us attend to aspects that are not purely aural. As a result, for Scruton, the spectacularization of popular music has generated and fostered an anomalous relationship with music. Now, instead of enriching the listener's experience of the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic order, one is satisfied with basic musical structures onto which images, discourses, sentimentalisms, idolatries and attitudes are projected, overshadowing the place previously occupied by the musical discourse proper.

However, as I have tried to motivate in the final section of this chapter, one of the main problems for Scruton is to dismiss too quickly this attention to extra-musical elements. After examining certain successful integrations of sound aspects into the properly tonal structure, we can say that, for Scruton, some attention to the causes of sound may have a musical role if they contribute to the experienced tonal content. Still, as noticed, their contribution does not justify a musical interest in these aspects

themselves; once we notice how they modulate one's attention, they disappear to leave us only in the virtual space of musical movement.

Inspired by these examples, we can try to look again to the role that extra-musical elements play in popular music to see if their role is to be understood as being detrimental to the musical experience proper or if they can be acknowledged a more positive role.

In order to be able to confront these ideas properly, I will offer, in the next chapter, a brief but hopefully fair characterisation of popular music. Once its main characteristics are spelled out, I would like to examine some of the main defences that authors discussing Scruton's negative view have provided. Finally, I will try to establish the main points of discussion regarding popular music under the general framework of the problem of musical understanding.

CHAPTER III. POPULAR MUSIC: CHARACTERISTICS AND CRITICISM

In this chapter I will offer, rather than a strict definition of popular music, a series of characteristics that most of the works in this tradition share. Among these characteristics, I will be interested in those that reflect a way of engaging with music that is related to the problem of musical understanding. I will also present a series of criticisms that have been offered regarding the experience promoted by this musical tradition. After establishing these characteristics, I will leave open the question of whether they can contribute to the musical experience by being more than external elements of it. This question will be addressed in the next chapter.

The general agreement is that while there is no strict definition of popular music, this does not prevent the ordinary use of the term among its users (Jones & Rahn, 1977, pp. 79–80). Similarly, for the purpose of this discussion, it is not essential to provide an exhaustive portrayal of this tradition. It suffices to outline some features that broadly characterises the phenomenon and that are relevant to the issue of musical understanding.

1. 'Popular' as consumption

The expression 'popular' in 'popular music' can be understood in two main senses: according to the first, it identifies some cultural product as characteristic of some community of people; according to the second, it characterizes an object as a product for mass consumption.

The first sense is often associated with the Romantic-German idea of folk music. As is well known, the Romantic project sought in popular art and techniques certain artistic characteristics that would construct a national imaginary; by using these characteristics the resulting canon could promote certain national identity (Bonds, 2014, pp. 208–218). Thus, popular music, understood as folk music, has been comprehended as a product emerging from a native community with a certain halo of purity, naturalness, and authenticity (Fisher (2011, pp. 407–409)). This tradition has encountered two main oppositions: on the one hand, folk music is considered as simple contrasting with the kind of complexity shown by the masterpieces of the classical tradition (Adorno, 2002, p. 437). On the other, folk music refers to a phenomenon rooted in some popular tradition, and to that extent distinct from the product of the major record companies consumed by the masses as a (Carroll, 1998). It refers to the music traditions of native peoples throughout the world, such as flamenco, fandango, chaconne, huapango, etc. In this latter sense, folk performance has also been seen as being more natural, especially in contrast with the use of amplification and music production technology, which many critics see as artificial, denaturalising, or even distorting the musical experience itself (Frith, 2016, pp. 78–79).

I will focus not so much on this romantic notion of folk music, but on the notion of popular music as an object of mass consumption.

In this second sense, popular music is conceived with an overtly commercial character. It is thought as a product created to be 'consumed' by the largest possible group of people. That is, the music that dominates the charts, from Elvis Presley to Taylor Swift, or is specifically designed to be liked by as many people as possible, such as those performed at music festivals like Eurovision or the San Remo Festival, or by idols bands around the world.

Partly as an attempt to re-signify this second sense of 'popular music', a new use has emerged to refer to certain music that conceives itself against massification and as an alternative product of an independent market. Many of the artists who self-identify with this form of music production reject mass modes of commercialisation and prefer to create niches, often related to local and small communities or to urban tribes. Some paradigmatic examples of alternative popular music movements linked to a local audience include the beginnings of Reggae in Jamaica, Catalan rumba in Spain, Visual Kei in Japan, and Soviet Rock in Russia, among others.[52] Cases of alternative popular music movements whose

[52] On the other hand, it often happens that these movements with a strong local identity become nevertheless globally famous. This has happened to Mexico's corridos tumbados, the Dominican Republic's merengue, or Korea's K-pop.

evolution is not linked to a specific location include Vaporwave, Post-rock, Dubstep, or Seapunk.

This self-awareness of popular music is reflected, for example, in its obsession with recovering and reinventing its own past (Reynolds, 2011, pp. ix–xxiii) and has important consequences for proposing new ways of engaging with music. As a result, many of its novelties have to do with these self-conscious aspects that become key for a notion of musical understanding.

I will focus upon the second sense of popular music, including both its mass-produced sense and its more reflective kind. While the distinction between these two is blurred, I think it can be useful, firstly, to avoid thinking of all popular music as being absorbed by the logic of the market and consumption; and, secondly, to see that even in its most mass-produced products there is an interest in offering aesthetic novelties. [53]

2. The Anglo-Saxon market and its influence

Although the phenomenon of popular music has reached the entire world, there has been a clear dominance of the Anglo-Saxon market. Thus, most studies focus on the pop and rock phenomena that mainly emerged in the United States and the United Kingdom from the mid-20th century onwards.

Thus, the Anglo-Saxon environment is not only generally regarded as the origin of the movement: its influence marked the development of the various local popular music movements.[54] Anglo-Saxon's influence has been both economic and aesthetic; major record companies have selected and produced what the listener has passively experienced over the years (Garofalo, 1987; Lopes, 1992, p. 56).

For example, one of the aspects that this market has exported to all its manifestations is that the consumption of popular music, although accessible to any audience, seems to be generally understood as oriented towards young audiences, or at least to give a 'youthful' image (Shuker, 2016, p. 5). In this sense, the aesthetic character of this tradition is intimately related to the need to construct social identities. This is very

[53] Shuker in his analysis of the music market shows how the confluence and mutual influence between major and independent labels is so common that it is difficult to conceive of them as two entirely separate phenomena (Shuker, 2016, Chapter 1).

[54] Thus, for example, even a movement with clear African roots such as Reggae, which today is considered part of popular music, owes much of its development to the introduction and influence of American music (Bradley, 2014). Later, this same genre would in turn influence British music (Lydon et al., 2003).

much reflected in the existence of phenomena like online communities, a collecting culture, the fan phenomenon, and other activities common to young people. For this reason, it is common that the practice of music listening is enriched with products such as sporting events, cinema, television, or even political protests.

Some hold a pessimistic view about the almost exclusive Anglo-Saxon influence on youth imagery (Shuker 2016). However, this aspect is somehow regulated by the complex relationships between majors and independent labels, as well as by the evolution of media such as radio, that makes the market to pay special attention to the social contexts in which this music expands. Thus, despite the perception of popular music as a uniform phenomenon, many of its innovations are not mere consequences of standardisation processes, but they also arise from local needs and the creativity expressed in small communities, as well as in online user circles (Shuker, 2016, Chapters 1, 8).[55]

For this reason, when discussing popular music, it is important to consider not only the paradigmatic cases of Anglo-Saxon pop and rock, but also the local developments of this tradition. Consequently, certain aesthetic developments can be seen as the product of a particular culture, rather than a mere standardisation imposed by transnational corporations.

3. Musical performance as the expression of musical genius

For some authors, popular music and the classical musical tradition have quite distinct approaches to musical performance and experience. Musical performance within the classical tradition, requires, among other skills, learning to read and interpret the composer's instructions; in this respect, the relationship with music has been very much mediated by the role of written music learning (Jones & Rahn, 1977). Popular music, on the other hand, has almost give up on this intermediary, promoting the image of the musician who does not follow instructions and plays the piece from memory, emulating the image of the Romantic virtuoso. This has given rise to the idea that the musician has a more direct, aural relationship with the music. The idea that music should be heard

[55] In the case of Spain, for example, the trap scene took advantage of social networks as an almost exclusive method of distributing its music; the total independence and lack of filtering is reflected not only in the musical style, but also in the introduction of novel forms of distribution, such as bands publishing an unusual number of songs to their YouTube channels –uploading three or four songs a week. This rhythm of display of new music was unaffordable for any record company at the time (Castro, 2019, p. 70).

rather than read seems to have influenced many musicians in the popular tradition, who have repeatedly claimed to have no formal musical training and have emphasised that they play or sing 'by ear', as in the case of Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Paul McCarney, Janis Joplin, Madonna, or Eric Clapton (S. A. Hall, 2021). This emphasis on both the visual aspects of the performance and the self-taught musical learning seems to have greatly influenced musicians' performative mannerisms (Jones & Rahn, 1977, pp. 83-84).

This idealisation of spontaneously and genius-like performance manifests in several musical genres within this tradition. Often, these artists oppose what they consider to be an academic ideal of perfection and complexity. They advocate for a certain simplicity and freshness instead, and they associate these features with a more spontaneous and authentic relationship to both live and recorded music. An expression of this new attitude is the disdain for the virtuosity of 60s progressive rock shown by 70s punk rock. Thus, these musicians claimed technical poverty as aesthetically valuable –for example in the Ramones.

Nowadays other aspects, like the current recognition of the aesthetic potential of Auto-Tune as a digital tool for manipulating the voice, have also contributed to the inclusion of techniques that were considered contrary to the ideal of vocal virtuosity of pop stars before the 2000s.[56] Due to the use of Auto-Tune, for example, the voice section has become appreciated in terms that have less to do with vocal mastery than with certain ways of improvising and endowing the vocal section with a certain attitude. Examples of this are artists such as Future in 'Mask Off' (2017), Travis Scott and Young Thug in 'Pick up the Phone' (2016), Rihanna in 'Diamonds' (2012) or Lil Wayne's 'How to Love' (2011).

Another example of the introduction of new techniques in hip-hop and similar genres is the inclusion of vocal elements that are not strictly singing. These elements are essential in assessing the musical fluency of the artist. For example, many musicians include certain 'vocal signatures', known as ad-libs, in their recordings that are typical of live improvisation or even speaking. That is, they include particular words, onomatopoeias, or sounds that try to infuse the song with the artist's own personality and generally reflect their social background, a particular dialect or the urban tribe to which they belong. If successful, these elements will reappear in more songs, and they may even be adopted by other musicians (Coulmier & Sander, 2021; Hand, 2019; High, 2021).

[56] This tool has had its detractors for its use as a vocal pitch corrector, but what is interesting is how it has been widely used for aesthetic purposes since its first commercial use on Cher and her song 'Believe' (1998), where the interesting aspect is how Auto-Tune gives the singer a particular timbre.

Thus, in the context of popular music, this attention to the way musicians performs the music is particularly encouraged. Furthermore, many analyses of this tradition –for example, Cusick (2016) or Walser (2015)– notice that this type of music and performance often serves as an expression of reflection on some identity. In my view, this encourages an analysis of the aesthetic experience proper to this music that pays attention to the way listeners grasp the musician's gestures and interpret certain qualities of the performance. Thus, one of my interests will be exploring novelties related to popular music and to examine the extent to which they become an integral part of musical experience and understanding proper. Aspects, such as, how musicians choose a certain sound quality, the techniques they use in recording, the type of voice and dialect used in singing, and the creation of a personal image will be examined under this light.

4. Genre

The issue of genres and genre-proliferation in popular music is a further aspect of the self-awareness of the tradition mentioned above. Paying attention to the genre fertility characteristic of popular music will allow exploring which forms of life are embodied in different genres or which discontinuities with other movements emerge from them. Furthermore, these relations are typically manifested in compositional elements as well as in a certain imagery around the music.

Although there are musicological studies of popular music's genres –see Middleton (1990)–, these approaches to popular music are a minority compared to the literature that analyses this tradition from a sociological, ideological and historical perspective. Not to mention the literature on its great figures' biographies or on their songs' lyrics. Moreover, the magazines that extensively review and analyse this tradition, such as *Mojo Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, or the *New Musical Express*, rarely provide –except in very specific cases–, detailed analyses of the different pieces, or comments on things such as the key in which they were composed, contrapuntal analysis, or a song's musical modes.[57] These magazines tend to focus, instead, on aspects such as the message

[57] An exception in this respect might be the episode "Lennon / McCarney" that Howard Goodall devoted to The Beatles in his documentary series *20th Century Greats* (Hanly & Jeffcock, 2004), in which he analyses in detail how, for example, The Beatles play with different chord variations to enrich the harmonic movement of their songs. A good example of this can be "I Am the Walrus" (1967) or their use of modulations in songs such as "Penny Lane" (1967).

conveyed by the lyrics, the producers' treatment of the sound or the accompanying imagery.

For example, Mojo Magazine's ranking of the best albums of 2023 includes an identification and characterization of the selected albums' genres, including certain aesthetic features that seem standard for those genres. This characterization is key in guiding listening to and appreciation of an album's qualities. [58] Thus, acid-folk is spectral and uncanny, soul-pop is punchy, experimental-pop is baroque and "channels iridescent psychedelic ideas", and art-pop is ethereal and folk-inflected. Moreover, the relationship between a genre and the typical experience or mood it conveys is inscribed in the history of genre terms. Parallels with bands from the past that generate similar experiences – perhaps because they have experimented with sound in similar way– are often drawn. Reference is made to the instruments that convey a similar mood, or to certain compositional patterns and visual imagery. Thus, a band like Animal Collective resembles the Beach Boys, Susanne Sundfør resembles Rufus Wainwright or Gaz Goombes resembles the Artic Monkeys (Mulvey, 2023).

The notion of genre is also important to Scruton's critical approach to this musical tradition. Scruton objects to the musical value of popular music because he thinks that it encourages an experience where attention to aspects external to the music itself becomes paramount. (Scruton, 1997, pp. 149–150). By using the notion of musical genre, we can highlight the importance of the aspects that artists thematise musically. In popular music, however, these do not always correspond to what a musicological analysis usually emphasises; but since they are part of particular genres of popular music, they partly constitute the 'description under which' the musical experience is organised (Scruton, 1997, pp. 232–234), and hence its relevance to the question of musical understanding.

In this vein, Frith has commented that the notion of genre in popular music is of great importance. Firstly, it has a role in organising listening, and secondly as a guide to the industry in terms of music production and marketing proper to each genre (Frith, 1996, pp. 79–95). Similarly, Lena and Peterson (2008, p. 698) defend that to understand what listeners find distinctive about the musical experience of a particular piece, we need to grasp the system of conventions and expectations embedded in musical genres.

Thus, we will assume that musical experience significantly depends on the musical genre in which it is listened to, not only because certain features become more

[58] Although I will not be discussing this author, one of the great contributions to the idea that our aesthetic judgements are determined by the categories in which we experience them can be found in Kendall Walton and his article "Categories of Art" (1970).

salient, but also because novel features can become thematised –such as the iconography of an artist, the way they play live music, or the marketing around them. Although rock and pop have been the dominant categories in various studies of popular music (Toynbee, 2000, p. xx), they can provide sufficient evidence to extrapolate conclusions to other genres, bearing in mind how different genres elicit different experiences.[59]

5. Simplicity

Perhaps one of the best-known formulations of the criticism based on the simplicity of popular music is Theodor Adorno's (1941). Although his criticism is multifaceted, one of its most interesting aspects is his characterization of popular music as the standardisation of a formula for easy consumption. According to Adorno, this music exploits simple, well-known formulas that never subvert the listeners' expectations, instead of providing a musically challenging experience. This keeps them on familiar ground where the only novelties are due to mere ornamentations within an unchanging formula. As a result, listeners of popular music do not develop their musical listening abilities in interesting or reflective ways. Popular music never demands serious listening, only passive reception.

The assumed simplicity of this tradition has been often considered in terms of the idea that there are two types of listening: one more aesthetically rewarding and artistically interesting, and another providing easy forms of consumption. Each of these types has been related, in turn, to the classical tradition and to popular music respectively. Thus, it has been thought that the classical tradition requires a more demanding, attentive and concentrated form of listening. Also, that it requires a certain isolated attention or at least a form of attention that is not mixed with other activities. Furthermore, this musical mode of listening, as several authors have pointed out (Davies, 1994, p. 332; Gracyk, 2007, pp. 135–138; Scruton, 1997, p. 229), has been conceived as more intellectual, requiring a greater conceptual load than other modes of listening.

These reasons seem to provide substantial support to the criticism of popular music's simplicity. However, although the massification of music's production may play a major role in determining popular music overall character, it is also important to

[59] The multiplicity of genres in popular music is so wide that, to get an idea, within Heavy Metal alone we can distinguish between Alternative Metal, Funk Metal, Nu Metal, Rap Metal, Black Metal, Death Metal, Doom Metal, Folk Metal, etc. And furthermore, within Folk Metal for example, we could differentiate between Celtic Metal, Pirate Metal, Pagan Metal, Oriental Metal, etc.

consider how musicians have artistically adapted to the new market and technological novelties. As a result, they can make aesthetic proposals that are partly resulting from these conditions and that are key for an evaluation of this practice's artistic character.

5.1. The state of rhythm and melody in popular music

As we have already seen in section 2.5 of Chapter II, Scruton made a distinction between beat and rhythm, with the former either reducing rhythm to a mere embodiment of the musician's gestures or being a repetitive accompaniment that is not musically integrated with the harmony and melody. And whilst Scruton sometimes criticises popular music for its simplicity (Scruton, 2018b), in his view, one of the main problems with this tradition is that beat is organised 'from the outside'. The drummer's beats do not aim to draw attention to the melody's accents or significantly related to the harmony. Instead, they create a particular aggressive, relaxing, danceable, etc., atmosphere which is related, in turn, to how the drummer can emulate the gestures or moods he wants to express. Scruton also decries that the musician's production of rhythmic patterns is permeated by this imagery.

Scruton is right in that a characteristic aspect of mainstream popular music is the vindication of rhythmic aspects over melodic complexity. Rhythm plays a crucial role in structuring almost all mainstream genres, such as pop, rock, rap, trap, etc. When examining the history of pop music, for example, it is evident that there has been a shift from a focus on catchy melodies to a focus on rhythmic hooks. This trend is not limited to the instrumental section. It has also dominated the vocal section. As a result, the vocal section no longer provides the diverse melodic range that was previously valued.

Examples of rhythmic instrumental hook are the repetitive bass guitar at the beginning of 'I've Got the Music in Me' (1974) by the Kiki Dee Band as Gary Burns points out (1987), the bass guitar in 'Stray Heart' (2012) by Green Day, or the bass guitar in 'Ice Ice Baby' (1990) by Vanilla Ice. An example of a very common vocal rhythmic hook is the so-called 'Scotch Snap' or 'Lombard rhythm', consisting of an accented sixteenth note followed by a dotted eighth note. Interestingly, this rhythm of speech has a Scottish origin later exported to the United States. In it certain words are pronounced with the stress on the first syllable as in the words "fitting", "rhythm", "pattern" o "coming" (Temperley & Temperley, 2011).[60] By using this way of speaking, elements

[60] For examples of this rhythmic structure and its influence on Scottish music, see Philip Tagg's video essay (2016) on the subject at the following link: https://vimeo.com/175910173

that bring with them a certain community and forms of life become integrated in the music. Songs like ‘I Like It’ (2018) by Cardi B, Bad Bunny and J Balvin, ‘It Don’t Matter’ (2016) by Wifisfuneral, ‘Congratulations’ (2016) by Post Malone, ‘7 Rings’ (2019) by Ariana Grande o ‘Worldstar’ (2013) by Childish Gambino illustrate this.

Scruton does not object to occasionally including and making salient a particular rhythmic pattern in a composition. The problem, as I interpret his criticism, arises when a particular urban tribe uses this speech rhythm as part of their musical imagery, making it relevant to the appreciation of the music. Similar concerns can be voiced against the incorporation of certain ways of dressing or dancing that, according to Scruton, manifest popular music’s obsession with visual elements. As a result, both visual and rhythmic elements are often used to project an attitude that overrules the interest in developing a piece musically. Thus, in a song like Bazzi's ‘Mine’ (2017), this rhythm dominates almost the entire piece, drastically restricting the melodic range that could be explored.[61]

This rhythmic prevalence also develops in tandem with a controversial issue in contemporary popular music: the simplification of melody. Scruton uses Lady Gaga's ‘Poker Face’ (2008) as a paradigmatic example of a lack of melody. He argues that in the post-chorus and parts of the verses, the song maintains a single note where the only hook is the rhythm (Scruton, 2018b). Similarly, some sections of popular songs, such as ‘Mr. Brightside’ (2004) by the Killers or ‘Out of the Woods’ (2014) by Taylor Swift, feature one-note melodies. Other well-known songs, such as ‘Love Yourself’ by Justin Bieber, ‘What Makes You Beautiful’ by One Direction, ‘Closer’ by the Chainsmokers, or ‘Water Under the Bridge’ by Adele, use as few as three notes in their main melodies. Similarly, popular songs like ‘Tik Tok’ by Kesha, ‘Dynamite’ by Taio Cruz, ‘California Gurls’ by Katy Perry, and ‘Girlfriend’ by Avril Lavigne exhibit the same melodic simplicity in pursuit of a catchy rhythm that keeps them going.[62]

However, not all popular music exhibits this simplification. Even among more mainstream examples, one finds a certain level of melodic complexity in songs such as ‘Hey Jude’ (1968) by the Beatles, ‘Girls Just Want to Have Fun’ (1983) by Cyndi Lauper,

[61] Moreover, accepting the hypothesis that this rhythm is better suited to the English vocabulary as Tagg seems to point out (2016), we could explain why Spanish songs that adopt this rhyme scheme have to sacrifice not only the melodic range and rhythm, but also the original accent that certain words have in Spanish, thus reducing their lyrical value. Examples of songs that force some words to fit this rhythmic pattern would be songs such as ‘Toyota’ (2017) by Kinder Malo or ‘Goteo’ (2019) by Duki.

[62] The homogenisation of melody is the subject of empirical studies, with some supporting the idea that it has indeed become simpler over time (Serrà et al., 2012), while others express more cautious views (Clark & Arthur, 2023).

‘Careless Whisper’ (1984) by George Michael, ‘Rolling in the Deep’ (2010) by Adele, ‘Someone You Loved’ (2018) by Lewis Capaldi, or ‘All of Me’ (2013) by John Legend.

Now, even if we must accept to a certain degree that in popular music, at least in its more mainstream manifestations, there is a certain tendency towards melodic and rhythmic simplification, there may be other aspects that are relevant to its musical value. As Gracyk comments, to deem popular music as simple is to assume that melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic elements are the only structurally relevant aspects of musical experience (Gracyk, 2007, pp. 139–140). On the contrary, as previously mentioned when the concept of genre was introduced, it appears that popular music makes appreciatively relevant various other aspects that have their roots in the techniques used at the service of its massification, including its marketing or recording technology. In the following section, I would like to comment on some of these aspects.

6. Non-tonal aspects in popular music

The controversy presented over the properly musical character of popular music invokes the attention given within this tradition to aspects that have not been traditionally considered as significantly related to tonal, harmonic, or melodic organisation. This section will outline some of these aspects before discussing their role within an experience of musical understanding.

As discussed in section 2.2. of Chapter I, the musical phenomenon encompasses the various aspects surrounding music, from choosing a chord or its inversion, to those concerning the artist’s image or the album cover. Scruton’s criticism partly relies on considering that popular music thematises aspects that, while part of the music phenomenon, are not musically relevant in the sense that they do not contribute significantly to what the listener understands musically speaking. Drawing from a Wittgensteinian approach to musical understanding, we can examine which aspects are relevant to the popular musical system, and whether certain aspects that authors, such as Scruton, consider as alien or external to musical experience can become musically relevant in this case. To do so, we need to pay attention to the experiential content of the listener who listens with understanding.

Thus far, the characteristics of popular music presented primarily relate to what listeners of this tradition consider important for understanding a particular genre, musician, or piece. Many of these aspects are, as we have seen, new and derived from the

technical evolution and marketing techniques proper to mass production. As noticed, popular music pays special attention to sound editing during the recording process, often exploring new timbres thanks to the development of electronic amplification of instruments (Shuker, 2016, Chapter 2). To determine their musical or non-musical character we need to pay attention to the use that this tradition makes of these means, and their influence on the act of composition itself.

We can distinguish, among those aspects that seem more alien to musical experience proper, those involving the visual aspects surrounding music –such as the artist's image, stage design, symbols of a particular subculture, or music videos–, and those involving experimentation with sound, sound production, and sound qualities themselves.

In what follows I will focus on some of the aesthetic proposals directly resulting from the use of technology and the development of popular music's market, and I will introduce the question whether these can be considered as properly musical.

6.1. The visual

In general, popular music performances and recordings often incorporate striking visual elements. I will examine some of the roles of these visual aspects using the band KISS as a case study. In bands such as KISS, every visual detail is meticulously planned, from their name –written in typographically striking capital letters– to their comics, toy figures, clothing, music videos, vinyl discs, and so on. When they perform live music, they also produce a complex show made up of lights, pyrotechnics, platforms that rise from the stage, screens with videos, fire, the artificial blood, and their characteristic costumes and make-up.

From all these elements, the band's iconic use of make-up is particularly noteworthy. Distinctive figurative make-up –such as the star surrounding Paul Stanley's right eye, or the bat wins surrounding Gene Simmons' eyes–, allowed each member to adopt a unique stage persona, such as the Star Child, the Demon, the Cat, and the Space Ace. The band's members acknowledge the commercial as well as aesthetic motivation for this decision. For instance, Gene Simmons, the band's bassist, revealed that the decision to display a giant sign with the band's name on stage was inspired by the advertising practices of Las Vegas shows. Some commentators, including Simmons himself, believe that this visual shift was also an expression of the band's desire to pursue a new musical direction. According to Simmons, this image reflects the transition from

glam rock to hard rock, a genre identified with a more aggressive approach to music production and performance (Golsen, 2023; Pervan, 2021; Simmons, 2003, Chapter 5).

Using the distinction proposed above –between musically significant aspects and aspects that merely belong to the musical phenomenon– to analyse the role of these visual elements in the case of Kiss, we can establish that –at least for the performers– these visual resources, to the extent that are consciously elaborated as part of the musical experience, should be recognized a more important role than we attribute to mere elements of the musical phenomenon. Of course, it is quite problematic to understand in what sense the image of the musician produces an experiential change comparable to the one we experience when we modulate a piece from one key to another. For the moment, I would like to retain the idea that, for these musicians, understanding the music means knowing how to accompany it with the appropriate iconography that best suits the musical experience to be conveyed.

Although the statement above may seem problematic to the extent that acknowledges non-sonic aspects a significant role in musical experience –and hence if we followed Scruton's criticism these elements would be clearly extra-musical–, I would like to explore whether it can be defended. Can we make sense of the idea, seemingly held by both listeners and musicians, that these elements contribute in some way to the musical experience as such?

In the example above, both the musicians and other popular music critics not only perceive a relationship between imagery and musical sound, but also consider it as significant for the overall experience. Press members and fans are interested in the significance of stage design as part of the experience of a band or musician. Are they really contributing to that experience or are they, as Scruton considers, mere additions it?

I propose to use the following distinction to provide a reasoned answer to this question. The distinction in question is between aspects that have a purely causal effect on the listener and aspects the recognition of which makes a difference to the overall aesthetic experience of the listener. Thus, while some of these visual devices can be seen as pure effect, a facile device to achieve effects almost causally on the viewer, others can be genuine and meaningful visual contributions.

The distinction between elements that play a mere effective role and elements that add to the significance of a work is amply thematised by Hume and Aristotle in relation to tragedy. Hume, for example, critically commented on the use of shocking resources, such as displays of violent actions, in English theatrical performance. Aristotle also drew

this distinction when he referred to various scenic devices or resources –such as costumes, masks, effects, and visual tricks on stage– as part of the 'spectacle' but lacking theatrical significance proper (Dadlez, 2005). For Aristotle, the aspects of the theatrical performance that bear theatrical significance are, then, the logical-causal ordering of facts through poetic and literary resources, accompanied by a certain rhythm and melody (Vaisman A., 2008). For both Hume and Aristotle, an excessive use the elements that are considered part of the spectacle can sometimes undermine the imagination of the spectator, who should be able to grasp the tragic effect of the play only through the poet's good use of words and not through external visual aids. Dadlez has recently elaborated on this common critical conception of theatrical effects or spectacle and has identified a version of this reproach in film criticism (Dadlez, 2005, pp. 355–356).

We can draw certain parallelism between these considerations as applied to musical performance, theatre, and cinema. Certain elements, generally visual, serve as emotional or affective triggers that some critics believe the composition alone should be able to produce. The main difference between film or theatre and music is that the former are visual arts that combine different media, while in music there is a tendency, as we can see in Hanslick, for example, to think that everything musically relevant in a piece has to do with the purely instrumental (Hanslick, 2018, pp. 23–24).[63] In music, it is often believed that the art form is self-contained and consists solely of aural forms and structures (Ridley, 2004, pp. 7–8) and hence the suspicion over the use of visual elements is doubled.

Could visual aspects play a more honourable role in musical experience? I would like to explore, as we might do in film or theatre, whether visual and other often so-called extra-musical elements can be used in such a way that they play a more significant role in musical experience. It seems that, at least in some cases, there is a certain intention on the part of the musicians to seek a certain adequacy between sound and image that can also be perceived as such by the listener. This awareness of the musician's ability to musically integrate these elements is explicitly expressed in many reviews, commentaries, and critiques within popular music literature. Importantly, this literature keeps the distinction between purely gimmicky elements and aspects contributing to the musical experience.

[63] Dadlez and Vaisman agree with the criticism of gimmicky visual elements in tragedy presented by Aristotle and Hume, but recognise that from these same assumptions visuality is understood as an inseparable part of the drama itself, and that a balance can be sought between the two (Dadlez, 2005; Vaisman A., 2008).

To illustrate this point, let us revisit our example. Regarding KISS, it is easy to dismiss items such as comic books, toys, cereal or other quirky merchandise that the band has marketed as being outside the music itself, and which have been met with derision by critics and even fans alike (Harness, 2017). What requires a more detailed analysis is, firstly, how, within the live performance itself, elements such as lighting, costumes, the arrangement of musicians, or the projection of images on giant screens could play more than a gimmicky role. Secondly, how this gimmickry is counterbalanced by other elements that do contribute to enriching the music, as noted by the music press and fans themselves.

Both musicians and listeners seem to have a certain understanding of how certain visual elements are in some respect part of the musical experience itself, rather than mere gimmicks. The tonally organised sound composition and the image of the musician are perceived to be in a relationship of adequacy, as if complementing each other. As we have noted, KISS aimed to sound more aggressive. This dimension of their music was reinforced by a certain aura of aggressiveness or reputation as a dangerous influence on young people in their early days. Their provocative imagery suited this seek aggressiveness

The fact that all these elements are intentionally elaborated can indicate that the band's employment of certain imagery, costumes, make-up, stage acts, and other theatrical elements, is meant to propose a certain musical experience that tries to move away from pure gimmickry.

The use of these elements and their contribution to the musical experience is a matter of degree and can be examined in a case-by-case basis. A musician like GG Allin, on the other extreme of this spectrum, could be considered the epitome of gimmickry. His aim to shock the audience involved committing acts of violence or self-harm during live performances. He even got arrested for some of his actions (Tanos, 2023). This locates GG Allin in what is known in popular music culture as 'shock rock', which include musicians such as Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Alice Cooper, Rammstein, or Marilyn Manson, and who seek to shock the audience regardless other musical intentions they may have (Bryant, 2014).

Public's criticism often also targets certain music groups, commonly referred to as 'boy' or 'girl' bands –including bands such as Backstreet Boys, Take That, N'Sync, New Kids on the Block, or Spice Girls–, that have been met with disapproval because their imagery is perceived as inauthentic. Beyond the also common suspicion about their song-

writing ability, the perception of these bands' imagery as inauthentic –as a commercial strategy aimed at pleasing a young audience through the presentation of attractive stars– involves an interest in these elements as part of what it merits attention and assessment (Shuker, 2016, pp. 83–86).[64]

Thus, popular music shows an awareness of using visuals as part of the musical experience. In the music press and among fans, there is a distinction between gimmicky elements and those that positively contribute to the overall musical experience. After distinguishing the gimmicky, the evaluation of the musical status of other visual elements must be done according to the terms established in section 2.2. of chapter I. It needs to be determined whether these elements can become part of the musical experience or if they merely contribute to the overall musical experience as external elements.

6.2. Sound editing and engineering

Although this text focuses on case studies from the 1950s onwards, it is important to acknowledge the long technological history that has influenced popular music –from the invention of the phonograph in 1877 to the gramophone in 1887, the distribution of music through radio, the invention of vinyl, the transition from analogue to digital, and the current decline of CD sales in the face of streaming music distribution. This section explores the impact of technology on the creative process of music and its relevance to the issue of musical understanding. As in the previous section, I will make use of the distinction between mere gimmicky elements and uses of these technologies that can be aesthetically relevant and that are often evaluated by musicians and listeners.

One aspect of popular music that can be considered as often thematised aesthetically is sound amplification. As Shuker points out (2005, p. 251), the invention of the microphone in 1920 produced a new effect: singers could engage with listeners with unprecedented intimacy. Thanks to amplification technology, popular music has also incorporated sound details that were previously inaudible in a live performance, and that can now be listened even on large stages, such as stadiums. This has motivated popular

[64] Another visual effect that has become very much part of the stage setting is the use of lighting. Thus, it has become common practice to turn off all the lights in a concert hall before the musicians enter to convey a sensation of grandeur upon their entrance. Although I will not be able to give it the attention it deserves in this work, we could also examine whether the lighting designer's work is just gimmicky –combining lights according to certain principles of colour psychology to create certain moods in the audience (Xu & Ju, 2021)– or if they contribute to the musical experience in an artistically interesting manner.

music composers to explore sounds that would otherwise be imperceptible to the fore, and to hide others that will, given the current technology, inevitably come to the fore.

These techniques affect and expand not only vocal possibilities, but also the instruments' possible acoustic range. The possibility of live sound mixing, allows the sound engineer to use the mixing console to equalise, adjust, and amplify the various sound sources to the musicians' decisions. This makes possible, for example, that a guitar solo stands out in front of a whole orchestra, as in Metallica's *S&M* (1999) album.

Other interesting examples of the use of these techniques can be the recording of Johnny Cash's 'Hurt' (2002), produced by Rick Rubin, which includes the sound of the acoustic guitar strings buzzing against the fret. While this sound was typically considered a flaw caused by either the guitar's body or by incorrect hand positioning on the fret, in this recording, this element takes on a central role, contributing to the expressive tone of the song.

Other new formats and digital sound editing have been also essential for the aesthetic imagery of electronic music. Sampling, for example, is a common technique in popular music, involving replaying a fraction of one song to compose another. That a fragment of a song has been sampled is sometimes easily identifiable. For example, the use of Edwin Birdsong's 'Cola Bottle Baby' from 1979 in the 2000 hit 'One More Time' by Daft Punk. In other cases, modifying the pitch, timbre, and equalisation of a sample can make it more challenging to identify. For instance, Daft Punk's 'Face to Face' (2001) samples fragments from 20 different songs, including 'Evil Woman' (1975) by Electric Light Orchestra, 'House at Pooh Corner' (1972) by Kenny Loggins and Jim Messina, and 'Old and Wise' (1982) by the Alan Parsons Project.

The initial examples of this technique, where sampling is still recognizable, are I think more interesting to the present discussion because they convey a sense of self-awareness, whereby the production of popular music constantly draws from and refers to its history (Shuker, 2016, pp. 27–28). The use of sampling invites the listener to recognise the material as well as its transformation under the novel treatment by the musician and sound producer.

Samples are often used to convey a specific imagery, as in genres such as vaporwave.[65] In the song 'B:/ Start Up' (2012) by Blank Banshee, the start-up sounds of

[65] This sub-genre of electronic music has been popular since 2010 and is characterised by the extensive use of samples, not only of music but also of sounds related to consumer culture and internet culture. The technique of slowing down the sounds it samples and the use of reverb are commonly employed to create a nostalgic ambience, often accentuated by references to mass culture from the 80s and 90s.

Windows 95 and Mac computers from around 1998 are sampled. Part of the musical experience involves not only recognising the melodic value added by these everyday sounds, but also how the sound atmosphere proper to a particular time clashes with the present. Finally, it conveys a sense of nostalgia for that technology, which in 2012 already sounds outdated.

Another example that exploits this nostalgia and incorporates it into the musical experience is Midnight Television's 'Now Playing' (2011), which samples the bumper that the HBO company used before each film on VHS in the 1980s. The bumper was originally used to warn viewers about the film's rating or rights of use.

The use of vaporwave has been also interpreted as ironically referring to consumer society and capitalist ideals. For example, 'Global Connection' (2011) by Internet Club samples background music originally intended for office settings, which is used to ironically celebrate the achievements of capitalism. (Born & Haworth, 2017). Proper grasp of the contribution of this technique demands familiarity with the referenced samples and appreciating how they are reimagined in a new aesthetic context.

Another aspect that expands on a similar direction is the inclusion of sound effects, noises, ambient sounds or even conversations as part of the work itself. In these cases, the musicians consider that there is a certain adequacy between the noises included and the other musical elements, and they try to merge them into a single experience. Thus, for example, in Pink Floyd's 'Money' (1973) the sounds of coins and cash registers are included; Metallica's 'One' (1988) includes the sounds of a battlefield. The Beatles' 'Blackbird' (1968) includes the sound of a bird. And the Doors' 'Riders on the Storm' (1971) include sounds of rain and storm. As with the other aspects mentioned, the question is whether paying attention to these sounds is relevant and even required to proper musical understanding, or if they are merely another instance of extra-musical aspects intruding into musical experience proper.

As shown, musicians often modify the sound environment for aesthetic purposes and incorporate noises or non-musical sounds. Although some of these modifications make us of sophisticated sound technology, there is also a culture of 'low-fi' music that values compositions with intentionally low-quality recordings. An example of this is Bruce Springsteen's album Nebraska (1982), which was recorded on a portable recording system. Due to the artist and his assistant's lack of knowledge on how to use the equipment properly, the recording quality suffered, and ambient sound was captured, which is typically avoided in professional recordings. However, this version was selected as the

definitive one because it provided the music with an atmosphere that the musician and his sound engineers deemed valuable and worthy of publication (Milner, 2011, Chapter 6). Similarly, other musicians, such as R.E.M., Beck, or Joji, pursue this low-fidelity ideal.

By contrast to the elements mentioned above, there are other aspects that, although have had some impact on the evolution of popular music, do not seem to play the kind of significant role that has been previously explored.

For examples, some studies highlight the influence of vinyl's development on the culture of singles. In the 1950s, vinyl had technical limitations that restricted its storage capacity to only three or four minutes of recorded material. This limitation had a significant impact on musicians, who had to adjust their compositions to fit this length. As a result, the tradition of the single emerged. (Shuker, 2005, pp. 343–345).

While this aspect of popular music clearly shapes our experience, conditioning a certain attention span and encouraging musicians to think in terms of hooks, catchy melodies, or simpler structures due to time constraints, the average length of the single format it is not a feature that musicians thematise artistically; it is simply a conditioning factor to which they adapt their practice.[66]

An exception to this, and a more interesting example in terms of musical elaboration is the idea of the concept album. singles are presented as part of a larger whole, addressing common theme or narrative. This encourages us to pay attention to how the different songs, and different musical aspects therein, interconnect within this theme. As a result, the artist invites a different way of attending to the music, which involves listening to the whole album as a single song. This can be seen in the album *The Black Parade* (2006) by My Chemical Romance. This album encourages a more cohesive and immersive experience.

These brief examination of some of the aspects that are often considered to be extra-musical, such as audio manipulation or the use of noises and ordinary sound, allows us to acknowledge that, at least in some of the uses that musicians have made of these aspects, they can play a musical role in the sense of being an integral aspect of musical experience. We have also noticed that musical critical pieces and fans seem to distinguish

[66] Moreover, although the single culture is largely dominant in popular music, all musicians tend to have a certain amount of creative freedom in this regard. Even among the most mainstream artists, we find very short or very long tracks. For instance, Taylor Swift has recorded songs under three minutes, such as 'Now That We Don't Talk', and has reached number one in the US with 'All Too Well (Taylor's Version) (From The Vault)', a ten-minute song (Huff, 2021).

between mere gimmicky elements and other more musically relevant aspects that seem contribute to the overall musical experience.

We still need to evaluate the musical status of these aural elements in the terms established in section 2.2 of Chapter I. That is, whether within the musical phenomenon, these elements can become part of the musical experience itself, or whether they contribute to the overall musical experience, but as elements external to the musical itself.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced popular music as my case study. While the expression 'popular music' can refer to two distinct phenomena, I will concentrate on the second sense whose origins can be located in the Anglo-Saxon world since the mid-20th century. This tradition is characterised by being commercially oriented to large – predominantly young– audiences and transmitted through recordings. Therefore, this second sense of the term encompass phenomena such as pop, rock, electronic, urban genres, etc., (Shuker, 2016, pp. 3–5)

Secondly, I have presented some of the main and more distinctive characteristics of popular music as well as the criticisms that are more relevant to the problem of musical understanding discussed in the previous chapter. As we have seen, the notion of musical genre, which plays a role similar to the Waltonian notion of 'artistic category', allows us to properly locate a particular piece and to attend to what may be most relevant for that piece.

A particularity of this tradition is its development along with the technological evolution of sound. As we have seen some aspects that result from that technological development have influenced forms of composing and listening. Live recording, playback technology, autotune, and other techniques introduce novel aspects to the musical experience. Live performances and marketing, in turn, tend to enhance the figure of the musician, and to promote novel relationships between listeners and musicians. In popular music there seems to be a revival of the image of the musician as a genius, as a figure who spontaneously interacts with the various elements of musical performance.

Now, various authors have critically considered these aspects. As we have seen, popular music is often undervalued for its tonal and melodic simplicity as the characteristic melodic and rhythmic treatment of popular music is often simple.

However, there are other non-tonal aspects that are often aesthetically thematised in popular music, and that have been often in the background. Thus, the musical experience of some bands and musicians encompasses the selection not only of chords and melodies, but also of certain costumes, sound editing, instrumental timbre, and stage postures during live performances.

Among the most notable new elements there are some of the visual resources and sound editing techniques commented in this chapter. Still, as some critics have pointed out, it is necessary to distinguish gimmicks from those aspects that are the result of genuine musical reflection. The resulting experience for many musicians is a combination of sonic forms and visual or performative elements that somehow fit together.

Based on this broad understanding of popular music and based on the criticisms it has traditionally received, my aim is to approach these criticisms from the perspective presented in Chapters I and II concerning the experiential content of musical experience and the question of musical understanding. A right characterization of what is the proper musical content of a musical piece will invoke aspects that are relevant or significant for someone who is listening with understanding. The question is, then, whether some of the aspects that popular music has emphasised are as central to the characteristic form of music understanding as it is learning to recognize tonal movement.

As I will try to show, the distinction between the organisational and the non-organisational aspects in music is vital to my notion of musical understanding. Assuming that distinction, I want to assess whether the aspects described above, and that popular music unquestionably promotes, do have an organisational role and, so, if they contribute to the musical value of this tradition.

CHAPTER IV. THE MUSICAL ROLE OF NON-TONAL ASPECTS

This chapter analyses the characteristics of popular music in light of Scruton's view. However, since his view does not integrate the characteristic aspects of popular music, I will embrace a broad view of musical understanding, while remaining within an overall Wittgensteinian perspective.

I will begin by addressing the problem of what is properly musical since this notion is, as we have seen, central to Scruton's critical position against popular music. This problem consists of distinguishing, within the musical phenomenon, which elements are extra-musical, and which are properly musical.

To address this issue, I will first present Scruton's perspective on some non-tonal aspects of music. In particular, I will focus upon Scruton's view on the possible musical significance of sound's spatial information. I will then examine Mahler's interest in incorporating spatial aspects as components of the musical experience. While Scruton acknowledges this interest, he considers it to be secondary to the musical experience.

Next, I will comment on Mahler's use of cowbells in the *Sixth Symphony*. Although they are a fundamental element in the symphony, integrating them tonally is, following Scruton suggestions, difficult. John Dyck, by contrast, considers that these elements are interesting precisely because they are heard non-tonally and evoke connotations related to their causes, but this is no reason to consider them as extra-musical components since the identity of the work strongly relies in the use of these sounds.

With this example in mind, I will propose the concept of musical stylisation to capture the process by which musicians integrate non-tonal elements into the music to explore their possible musical significance and to invite others to recognize it. Composers and musicians musically stylise or integrate new aspects when they treat them as musical material interacting with the rest of the elements that have been thematised. When they succeed in this aim, audiences are able, by drawing on their former musical understanding and background, to grasp the new component and to appreciate its contribution to the musical experience.

In this regard, I will propose to understand the non-tonal integration of expressive atmospheres as a case of this transformation of aspects that merely belonged to the musical phenomenon into musically relevant aspects. Secondly, I will appeal to this same mechanism to explain the integration of visual or sound atmospheres into musical experience. Additionally, I will discuss an alternative way of integrating non-tonal aspects that can be found in Andy Hamilton.

Two more criticisms against Scruton's view will be introduced. Firstly, his excessive emphasis on the abstract character of musical experience –Hamilton and Rob Van Gerwen. Secondly, Scruton's exclusive focus on a particular music tradition –Goerh and Zangwill. In both criticisms it is noticed, in passing, that Scruton's lack of recognition of elements that do not play a tonal role can be motivated by his zealous defence of a particular view of music which is grounded in a particular development of our musical tradition. Finally, I will examine some examples to show how certain non-tonal elements can become successfully integrated into musical experience and meaning.

1. The question of what is properly musical

In Chapter I, I introduced a notion of musical understanding which was based on Wittgenstein's concept of understanding in language. According to this concept, understanding is an ability, and the meaning of a particular expression is its use in each context. More generally, understanding language involves being capable of adequately responding to different linguistic contexts, showing a 'mastering of the rules' within a particular system. Therefore, someone who understands a language is someone who can effectively use the system and respond adequately on each occasion. Thus, understanding is evinced by the ability to follow the rules and act appropriately. Likewise, this ability to

master a system is assessed against the shared patterns of use of the members of a community as they develop, but also change, over its history.

In this chapter, I will examine whether certain aspects of popular music listeners' practices –such as sound engineering, band imagery, and allusions to musical tradition– evince their musical understanding. The key question is whether these aspects should be considered part of the musical content and, if so, how can we explain this fact by relying on the view of music understanding presented in Chapter 1.

As we have seen along the lines of Section 2 in Chapter II, those elements that play an 'organisational' role are, for Scruton, constituents of the musical experiential content. Grasping these elements and their organisational role is necessary to talk about musical understanding. Aside these components, understanding a piece may require other secondary or extra-musical features –such as biographical information about the author, knowledge about the design of certain instruments, or the acoustics of a stage- but, following Scruton, these are not part of the musical experience proper, even if they have some general musical interest.

According to Scruton, musical content proper is sustained by the manipulation and thematization of organisational components, or, in his view, by the tonal organisation of sound. This distinguishes it from other sound arts, which do not require tonal forms of sound organisation. Therefore, tonality serves as a normative principle to distinguish between those who understand music and those who do not.

From this perspective, we can distinguish between the elements that enable and guide tonal organisation and those that form part of the musical experience but whose presence is irrelevant from a tonal point of view. As we saw in section 2.6 of Chapter II, some elements may cause us to perceive different tonal organisations without being part of what constitutes those tonal structure. As Levy explores, certain musical sections can be heard as endings or beginnings due to performative choices depending on how the musician performs the piece.. (Levy, 1995, p. 154). Now, this does not mean that the way sounds are produced is part of the tonal structure grasped.

The centrality of tonality in capturing what is specifically musical is acknowledged by other authors, such as Gracyk who, using Carroll's idea of the 'specificity thesis', considers tonality to be the distinctive feature of musical experience (Carroll, 1988, p. 83; Gracyk, 2007, p. 141). Other authors, such as Hamilton, have also recognised that the experience of tonality is a unique listening experience, and that it plays a crucial role in musical experience (Hamilton, 2007, p. 58). Likewise, Victor

Zuckerkandl has defended the idea that the experience of melody and harmony are essentially musical experiences (Zuckerkandl, 1969, pp. 157–158).

In the following, I would like to examine various additions and novelties to the musical system that fail to contribute to tonality. I would like to explore how these novelties are integrated into different musical works, and how artists and listeners themselves perceive these novelties as part of what is properly musical. In other words, attending to the experience of the listeners, we can claim that they are not mere ornamentation, but aspects that influence our way of organising the musical experience and that, as a result, have a proper musical status. Both for those who propose these innovations and for the listeners that deliver the corresponding uptake to these proposals, paying due attention to these aspects is a criterion of musical understanding.

2. Examining the Mahler's case in Scruton

This section aims to explore the debate over which elements of a musical practice can be considered part of the proper musical experience, and which are secondary or external despite. Although this debate will be applied to popular music, it is relevant to any musical tradition. I will begin with a case study that Scruton also considers: Mahler's use of the cowbells in his *Sixth Symphony*.

Scruton states that when a sound enters the musical world, it loses its character as a sound and becomes a musical sound or tone (Scruton, 1997, p. 79). This is the case, for example, with the telegraph beeps included in the song 'Radioactivity' (1975) by Kraftwerk. As we saw in Chapter II these beeps were eventually integrated into the song, so that they lost their connotations as beeps. Instead, they were experienced as a kind of electronic instrument producing tonal sounds fit the piece's harmonic and melodic forms.

Since this sound is integrated and organised according to the rules of the tonal system, we can assess the contribution of this novelty to the musical experience. In this case, it is integrated into that experience because it is integrated into the tonal whole. Thus, familiarity with this system allows us to evaluate the musician's purpose, and the musical understanding behind it, when incorporating this sound.

Although the inclusion of non-tonal elements is most evident in popular music, Scruton tries to point out that it can also happen in the classical tradition. Scruton acknowledges that there are cases incorporating various elements of sound, including

spatiality and imagery, which deviate from a purely tonal form of engagement or listening.

He cites examples such as the wind-machine in Vaughan William's *Sinfonia Antartica*, the cowbells in Mahler's *Sixth Symphony*, the spatial distribution of musicians in the third movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, or even the use of the human voice –as a case that has a strong appeal to its human source (Scruton, 1997, pp. 12–13, 79, 488–489). His comments on the human voice are applicable to other cases where similar aspects can be relevant. For Scruton, while human voice typically evokes its physical source –and features such as a person's appearance, vocal strength, or other characteristics–, it is no longer perceived as originating from a human source when incorporated into music. Instead, it becomes a part of the symphony, blending in with other tonally organized sounds (Scruton, 1997, pp. 488–489).

I will focus on the example of Mahler's *Sixth Symphony*, both because of his interest in using the spatial experience of sound as part of the musical experience, and because of the use made of cowbells to evoke a certain imagery. I will further develop the issue of the imagery because, as we will see, Scruton suggests that we stop listening to cowbells as an object with pastoral connotations and listen to them as music instead. This would involve, as in the example of the band Kraftwerk, finding a way to integrate their sound as an organisational aspect of the musical experience. Mahler's use of cowbells is interesting because it allows exploring how certain elements can be tonally integrated in spite of their lack of stable pitch and their location offstage.

2.1 The space and the sound of cowbells in the *Sixth Symphony*

As previously stated, the musical phenomenon encompasses several elements, but not all of them are part of the musical itself. For Scruton, aspects like the spatial arrangement of the orchestra have no organisational role as they do not play a tonal role. Furthermore, the spatial information of sound cannot be considered musically significant as it pertains to informational interest. Despite this, Thomas Peattie (2015) comments that Gustav Mahler had a genuine interest in thematising the literal distance of musicians across the stage, and that he explored ways of experiencing music 'as distant' to build on to this interest. I would like to briefly assess how the musician uses space as an additional compositional element before addressing the problems of the cowbells in the *Sixth Symphony*.

Following Peattie, throughout Mahler's *Second* and *Third* symphonies we can detect an interest in musically exploring the concept of distance. On one hand, the composer experimented with placing musicians offstage at great distances from each other to produce a sense of music emanating from afar. On the other hand, he attempted to achieve the same effect with instruments on stage by providing instructions in the scores that indicated forms of playing such as 'like from a distance' (Peattie, 2015, pp. 47–48).

According to Peattie, we can observe at least two senses of space involved in Mahler's compositions. First, there is the literal distance conveyed by the instruments placed at a distance. Second, there is an imaginary sense that involves a certain experience of distance depending on the way the instruments are played. For example, in the Finale of his *Second Symphony*, the off-stage musicians are instructed to play 'as loudly as possible'. This instruction seems to imply that recognising certain gestures of effort, tension, and intensity are part of the manner in which the music is presented to the listener and, hence, experience. Listeners grasp the force with which it is played, and the fact that this intensity of playing is heard at a tolerable volume only intensifies the distance at which they are located (Peattie, 2015, p. 50). This experience of remoteness is incorporated into the musical experience through proper attention to information about the position of the sound and the type of manipulation being made on the instrument. These aspects become, thus, part of the work's experiential content.

Now, one question that arises is whether these explorations of sonic distance are central to understanding the music properly speaking. According to Scruton, the literal and musical space are not commensurable in any sense so however interesting this exploration of physical distance may be, it does not enter the core of musical experience. Tonally speaking, they make no difference to the work, so they are to be understood as accompaniments to the proper musical material (Scruton, 1997, p. 51). As we saw in section 2.3 of Chapter II, literal space and musical space involve two very distinct senses of the notion of space, one referring to the physical space material objects occupy, the other invoking a metaphorical sense suitable to describe musical movement. Two tones are considered distant because they belong to two distinct positions on a particular scale within a system not because they are in a particular physical point.

According to Scruton, the distance between musicians may be of some general interest, but it only plays a secondary role with respect to the musical organisation itself. It is an aspect of the musical phenomenon, and maybe one that may be quite interesting,

but it is secondary to the listener's experience of understanding the music, much like timbre (Scruton, 1997, p. 77). If the musicians were in a different location, or if listeners did not detect proper location, some details of the overall composition may be missed, but nothing essential to our understanding of the music would be lost (Scruton, 2009b, p. 8). In a comparable manner, when we hear someone playing on an aged instrument instead of a new one, the sound quality is different, but the tonal relations, if played accordingly, remain the same.

Unlike Scruton, I believe that innovations such as the use of literal distance in music can become a compositional element. To develop this idea, I will analyse a non-tonal element, such as the experience of space: the use of cowbells in the *Sixth Symphony*.

As previously stated, Scruton argues that the experience of a sound as mere sound cannot be considered part of a musical experience. A sound's experience –the ringing of the cowbell– can be conceptualized in two different ways, either as sound or as music. Both conceptualisations are incommensurable, and one cannot move from one to the other: each conceptualisation is autonomous and self-sufficient (Scruton, 1997, p. 79). As mentioned, Scruton emphasises several times that the musical realm is sustained by the tonal space created by the experience of rhythm, melody and harmony (Scruton, 1997, p. 77).

How do the cowbells become integrated into the music as musically relevant components? The peculiarity of this case is that they do not seem to have a clear melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic role, unlike the beep in the Kraftwerk example. (Scruton, 1997, p. 77) Thus, since these cowbells does not seem to be able to adopt such a role, they could not become part of the musical experience proper. They would be a secondary element, like the timbre of an instrument, which while changing in different ways, it would not alter the main tonal experience. It seems that the cowbells could be, at most, appreciated contemplatively: as a timbre that gives a certain colour to a section of the symphony; Consequently, they will have, at best, a non-organisational role within the music.

Scruton's argument is that cowbells can be considered part of the music without contributing the musical experience proper. The problem I am going to develop is that, following Scruton's reasoning, in order for these cowbells to be heard as music, they must be heard tonally. But listening to them in this way will involve that they would also lose the connotations regarding their causes. In the example presented, this does not seem possible –since the awareness that these are cowbells is always present. Yet it is an indispensable part of the experience of the piece to include the irregular sound of the

cowbells. In what follows, I will try to show how the integration of this element forces us to redefine what we can consider to be properly musical.

Following David Hurwitz (2004, p. 107), Mahler's use of the sound of the cowbells in his Sixth Symphony involves introducing unpitched noise used as a structural tool binding the movements. One might think, in the manner of Pink Floyd's example seen in section 2.6 of Chapter II, that they set a certain rhythmic pattern. But, as Niall O'Loughlin notes (2003, p. 37), Mahler's instructions, far from prescribing a specific rhythm, suggest that they should sound erratic, both in rhythm and pitch, imitating a herding herd. In this sense, O'Loughlin comments that conductor Norman del Mar suggested to the cowbell player not to play in time with the orchestra, but rhythmically independent (O'Loughlin, 2003, p. 37n.12).

We must also consider two further questions: what is the role of pastoral connotations in the use of the cowbell in this symphony, and why do these pastoral connotations preclude the tonal integration of the cowbells in the piece?

Cowbells, although originally intended for herding, have become a common instrument and are often included in percussion sections. In this piece, they are used as an instrument but still retain their original connotations. This is reflected, for example, in some of the earliest receptions of the work that described it as a 'programmatic work without a programme', suspecting that Mahler wanted to compose a pastoral scene (Peattie, 2015, p. 104).

The debate over whether the use of this instrument involved some programmatic musical intentions is broad. Following the view of some authors, it is appropriate to consider that some imagery is part of the experience of the sections of the *Sixth Symphony* that make use of this instrument (O'Loughlin, 2003, p. 46; Peattie, 2015, p. 83). I think that whatever connotations the instrument evokes in the listener, the cowbells resist being integrated tonally.

As noted, the instructions for playing this instrument suggest a certain irregular movement and rhythmic independence from the piece's rhythm. We have two options: either following Scruton's recommendation and listening to the cowbells as just another instrument that provides the work with an erratic rhythm, one with no exact measure; or exploring the experience of irregular rhythm –and its challenging tonal integration– in relation to the connotations that arise from an awareness of its material cause.

Following the first option, the cowbells would afford some experience of irregularity. Its rhythmic pattern will be very much dependent on the conductor's choices,

and different options would be acceptable, in the same way that every conductor chooses different durations for a fermata.[67] Thus, the cowbell's sounds would be included in the tonal narrative, albeit in a heterodox way.

Following to the second alternative, this sound's contribution would invoke certain imagery, which, as Peattie suggests, may be specifically related to the rural atmosphere of Mahler's summer residence where he composed the work (Peattie, 2015, p. 104).

Mahler specified that the cowbells should be heard as a herd of grazing cattle approaching from a distance (Peattie, 2015, p. 105). This sound is erratic by nature and certainly not tonally organised, except by chance. The musician could have specifically structured the rhythm of the cowbells or used another percussion instrument with the same rhythmic irregularity, but it is the cowbells that are best suited to conveying this experience because of their pastoral evocation. The point is that Mahler attempted to transfer natural sounds' irregularity to the symphony's musical discourse, thus transforming this irregularity into music, without the need for tonal integration.

John Dyck (2016) also discusses the use of natural sounds in music, highlighting some interesting issues that may serve to illuminate this question. In his view, natural sounds used in music express a certain 'otherness' in two senses: firstly, in that they evoke the natural sources from which they come, and secondly, as an 'acousmatic otherness'. These two senses are closely related to the points I have made so far, and I would like to elaborate on them.

Cowbells' sounds introduce this experience of otherness because they remind us of the natural movement of a herd. While the typical cause of music requires musical instruments, these are often abstracted –at least to a certain degree– from the listener's attention, in favour of attending to the tonally organised sounds they produce. Thus, we can follow a piece of music perfectly well even if we do not recognise the instrument that produces it. It is part of our musical practice that we can do so.[68] As I interpret Dyck, it

[67] A very famous case is the variable duration of the semibreve with fermata in the opening motif of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. There are versions as different as those of Pierre Boulez with the New Philharmonia Orchestra and Mikhail Pletnev with the Russian National Orchestra, where the tempo and duration are long, and those of Herbert von Karajan with the Berlin Philharmonic and Yannick Nézet-Séguin with the Philadelphia Orchestra, where the tempo and duration are rather short.

[68] In this sense, Andy Hamilton notes that the Western tradition, because of its strong interest in developing large tonal structures, has had a particular interest in standardising the causes of music, trying to polish the sound emitted by the instruments and not to leave residues that refer to any possible cause. For this reason, instruments such as the French horn, which can refer to the context of hunting, human voices, which refer to certain characteristics of the singer, or the case of cowbells as in our example, can be problematic (Hamilton, 2009, pp. 168–169). Similarly, Chion comments on how problematic it would be to abstract

is partly because of this standardisation of the typical causes of musical sound that the natural sounds used in a musical context stand out against the sounds produced with traditional instruments. Thus, they are perceived in their 'otherness' (Dyck, 2016, p. 297).

In the second sense of 'otherness', which also complements the first, natural sounds stand out acousmatically in that they present us with divisions that do not correspond to those typical of tonal organisation. Dyck refers to these deviations, or as we said in the example of Mahler, to this erratic character, as 'microtones', 'micro-rhythms' or 'micro-timbres' (Dyck, 2016, p. 288).While it is characteristic of our experience of music that it thematises certain distances, temporal divisions, rhythmic patterns, timbres, sound relationships, etc., our experience of sound in nature does not typically obey to these divisions. Natural sounds tend to sound random compared to musical organisation. Even if we could not perceive the natural source of the sound, we would acoustically perceive its sonic alterity with respect to the tonal system, i.e. its erratic patterns.

Still, as Matteo Ravasio reminds us, there are natural sounds that could easily fit into a piece. Birdsongs typically possess the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic aspects that characterizes musical experience. And vice versa, there are pieces of music that play with unusual subdivisions, such as jazz musicians Steve Lehman, Anthony Braxton, Tarek Yamani or the band Mikrojazz. Rock musicians also often play with pitch variations using the guitar's whammy bar or an external whammy pedal (Ravasio, 2017, p. 189). Nevertheless, the experience of microtones and micro-rhythms is more common in nature, which explains why using natural sounds in musical works can convey this sense of otherness.

For Dyck, this exploration of the microtones of nature is what makes certain developments in sound art interesting. Thus, in pieces such as Tan Dun's 'Water Concerto for Water Percussion and Orchestra' (2007), the musical experience results from a combination of macro-tones, the standard divisions of our tonal system, and the microtones and micro-rhythms of the sound of water. The experience thus involves our mastery of the tonal system and the appreciation of micro-divisions that also have a character of 'otherness' due to the awareness of their material source (Dyck, 2016, pp. 298–300). According to my interpretation of Dyck, a single aesthetic experience can

from the source of the sound if we were to synthesise dog barks imitating musical notes on a digital keyboard, because, as Dyck comments, we would experience the 'otherness' of this unusual source of music (Chion, 2016, p. 57).

involve the interaction between the two components, but only if their difference is recognized instead of attempting to integrate natural sounds tonally.

Dyck is primarily concerned with the role that natural sounds can play in music. In the given example, although a cowbell is not a natural sound, its rhythm is related to the way a herd moves. This is like recording the rattle of a snake, the flapping of a bird, or the diverse ways in which dry leaves crack as a herd passes by. The comparison remains valid, allowing us to evaluate the non-tonal role of the cowbells in the *Sixth Symphony*.

Returning to our example, cowbells cannot simply be understood as deviations in rhythm and sound pitch that are adopted as eccentric tonal variants, as if the musician wanted to introduce a micro-tone into the piece. Following the intentions of the musician and drawing on the performance tradition of different conductors of the same piece, the introduction of cowbells in certain sections of the *Sixth Symphony* requires attention to its acousmatic otherness and the imagery it evokes. These aspects are constantly under discussion by critics, but always revolve around the idea of shepherding.[69]

Based on these ideas, I will articulate some proposal to address this, and similar, cases.

3. The Mahler case: a question of stylisation

I would like to develop an additional aspect of this idea that a view like Dyck's does not address. I would like to insist on the suggestion that, while the cowbells must sound erratic, they cannot sound absolutely anarchic, as an actual herd would. On the other hand, while they cannot share the same rhythm as the rest of the music, they cannot sound random either. Percussionist John Locke of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra commented that if they are not played properly, instead of evoking a certain pastoral atmosphere, they sound «like the junk man coming down the road» (NPR, 2016). And, as pointed out before, although Mahler wanted to avoid a programmatic air in the Symphony, he expressed his desire for the cowbells to sound like a herd (Peattie, 2015, p. 105).

[69] This combination of musical sounds and pastoral evocations is part of a tradition that has been recognised by conductors such as Semyon Bychkov, Antonio Pappano, Charles Mackerras and Marin Alsop, and acknowledged by the specialist music press (A. Hall, 2019; Lorenzon, 2018; NPR, 2016; Oestreich, 2016). Perhaps the most common interpretation of the cowbell sections is that of Deryck Cooke, according to whom, the cowbells express mainly the feeling of loneliness one would feel when listening to the last earthly sound before being lost in the height of the mountains (Cooke, 1980, p. 86).

Thus, the cowbells cannot sound like a tonal element, but neither can they sound too anarchic or too quiet, like a herd running or feeding. In this respect, I think we can understand how much musicality there is in this inclusion of non-tonal sounds. However, the cowbells' sounds are integrated –be it by using them at the concert hall or by using a pre-recorded herd whose cowbells have been recorded–, the musician must evaluate the appropriate sound texture for each section. In the Sixth Symphony, the cowbells are sometimes heard in the distance and at other times more prominently. The composer's attention to the cowbells' sound aims to balance their evocative imagery with their integration into the musical context, without reducing them to a mere note or rhythmic pattern already present in the tonal system.

The artist's intention is to stylise a non-tonal sound or aspect transforming it into a musically relevant aspect, reflecting on its appropriateness within a particular musical discourse. This stylisation is achieved by treating the sound in a way that the audience can understand the musical contribution its presence makes. If the musician is successful, the audience will perceive these innovative elements as musical and will appreciate the musician's skill in integrating tonal and non-tonal aspects into the same experience.

As a result, the musicians test their talent to incorporate sonic novelties that are not usual components of the musical system they work within. They propose new additions to the system, aiming to integrate them aesthetically rather than whimsically or with gimmicky intentions. In this way, they do not attempt to completely break with the system, but rather to expand it and explore new listening possibilities. This idea will be further developed in the following case studies.

4. Non-tonal integration of expressive atmospheres

In this section, I will explore a case that could be understood as an instance of stylisation. Dyck suggests that one criterion for assessing the musical value of natural sounds in songs, such as 'Blackbird' (1968) by the Beatles, is the musician's ability to incorporate the expressive connotations of birdsongs, such as calmness, tranquillity, and relief, into the work (Dyck, 2016, p. 295). Thus, he comments that:

> […] the reliable effects of natural sounds in music and sound art are continuous with reliable effects of natural sounds in nature. Many natural sounds have reliable effects in sound art only because they have reliable effects in natural, nonintentional contexts. Something more robust than mere intention is needed to anchor the reliable effects of natural sounds in artistic contexts. The water lapping

> in Phillipsz's Lowlands is calming because the sound of water lapping is already calming in natural environments. (Dyck, 2016, p. 294).

As I understand him, for Dyck we can grasp the expressive power of using certain natural sounds, their natural connotations, and the expressive power of tones. Stylizing sound would be, thus, a compositional act that integrates both natural and tonal sounds under their common expressive force.

Following Dick in this respect, involves assuming that part of understanding a piece of music is understanding its expressive emotional charge. For him, in these cases, the emotional impact of a sound complements the expressive character of, say, a melody. Kivy's (1989) view of musical expression can be helpful in this context. According to Kivy, music imitates the dynamic contour of our emotional actions, such as gestures, facial expressions, voice tones, and movements, through its tempo, rhythm, sound pitch variation, timbres, and other elements. This resemblance gives music part of its expressive appearance.

Following this view about musical expression, natural sounds, such as the song of a bird, can be integrated into the musical discourse, at least via their expressive contour, and become evaluable in its expressive contribution. This is possible, for example, when both natural sounds and tonal forms have a certain dynamic contour. Music thus possesses a certain expressive charge, which the musician can wisely supplement with sounds of similar expressive contour taken from nature.

In the example of 'Blackbird', the piece has an expressive mixture of melancholy and comfort, much like the bird's song itself. The song provides a tonal and expressive experience, while the bird's song has micro-divisions and an expressive connotation that depends on the awareness of its cause. This is conveyed through its timbre, the connotations of a fine song coming from a small body, and the imagery of nature around it. The musician incorporates all these elements, and the listeners evaluate the suitability of the composition based on its emotional congruence, both tonally and non-tonally.

The expressive matching of tones and sounds is a common compositional device in popular music. For instance, the album *Diamond Mine* (2011) by Creosote is a prime example of this, as it aims to evoke a romanticised vision of life on the Scottish coast through the inclusion of sounds recorded on location. Another example is the aggressive tone of the song 'White Riot' (1977) by the Clash and the police sirens, the uplifting atmosphere of 'Driver's High' (1999) by L'Arc-en-Ciel and the sounds of an engine

starting or the meditative atmosphere of ‘Riders on the Storm’ (1971) by the Doors and the storms that sound throughout the recording.

One issue with defending the suitability of sounds and music through a shared expressive atmosphere is that it can lead to two problems. Firstly, the expressive power of many sounds is so obvious that including them can be seen as gimmicky. For instance, many aspects of the Korean idol scene, K-pop, are viewed as such an example. This music is often considered as poor because many K-pop bands use various gimmicky strategies to make any detail appealing, without necessarily enriching the music itself (Lie, 2012). Furthermore, the integration of sound or other visual aspects with music only indicates that they share an expressive force, but it is necessary to investigate how this integration is achieved musically.

The example of the song 'Blackbird' can be reinterpreted without relying on the idea that the emotional content is central to the musical understanding of the work. In the next section, I will consider how popular music can also integrate sounds and imagery without appealing to this expressive power of music.

5. Non-tonal integration of sound and visual atmospheres

In this section, I will try to argue that, in the case of popular music, the imagery around the music, which I call 'atmosphere', becomes part of the musical experience and is essential to understanding the work as a whole. This section analyses how this tradition interprets novelties and why they should not be considered a secondary aspect of the musical experience. Instead, the very evolution of popular music invites considering them as part of the understanding of a work. I hope to explain this integration using the aforementioned Scruton’s distinction between the organisational and the non-organisational. But I will do so considering certain remarks taken from the criticisms of authors such as Andy Hamilton and Rob Van Gerwen.

As previously mentioned, in a song such as ‘Blackbird’, one may perceive the integration of the natural sound via its expressive character. However, this could lead to suspicions that the musicians’ talent lies not in their musical ability, but rather in their emotional sensitivity to identify which elements best complement the song. This would be comparable to the role of a music video director, or a CD cover designer, who could produce visual devices matching the expressive character of the song.

Following this line, for example, an author like Hanne Appelqvist would reject the idea that emotional sensitivity evinces musical dexterity. According to her, to understand music, we do not need to understand the emotions it conveys, but we need to understand what is specifically musical, i.e. its tempo, its phrasing, the modulations it contains, and so on (Appelqvist, 2008, p. 92). An analysis of how musicians integrate these elements in terms of atmospheres can be helpful in avoiding this dispute.

In the cited album by Creosote, *Diamond Mine*, the intention is to evoke a romantic vision of the Scottish coast. One way to achieve this is through tonal means, such as using conventions found in folk and indie music characteristic of that region. That is, using certain melodies, arpeggiating chords, and smooth transitions between chords. Another resource that could be used is certain sounds previously recorded, such as the sound of the sea, the typical birds of the coast, and also the sounds of cars, conversations and the typical sounds of a local café.

The track 'First Watch' (2011) stands out among all the compositions on the album for its use of a mixture of ordinary sounds and tones. Julian Hopkins, one of the album's composers, explained that they had recorded various ambient sounds throughout a day. Towards the end of that day, they also recorded their time in a café while they were taking a break. Later, in the studio, when they listened to the recording again, they found that the sounds of cups and plates clanging, coffee pots brewing, conversations, crumpled receipts, and teaspoons were just the right effect they were looking for. According to Hopkins, this combination of sounds corresponds to the way in which one should enter into the album's listening experience (Blanche, 2011). In Scruton's terms, albeit against his grain, these elements would be part of what creates the musical space.

Therefore, it is possible to see that the integration of these aspects can be formulated in less compromising terms. The musician captures a specific sonic atmosphere that he can later combine with the tonal atmosphere. In what follows, I would like to offer a proposal for understanding this experience, namely Andy Hamilton's view that this integration is musical because we have a genuine musical interest in attending to how the music is made, such as the noises or various sounds that we identify in the recording cited above.

5.1. Hamilton's proposal for integration: a twofold thesis

Hamilton's broad view of the possible musical role of non-tonal aspects provides one answer to understand this integration. In his view, these non-tonal atmospheres are

interesting because they have to do with the way music is produced. They involve a genuinely musical interest, as does our attention to tonal forms. Hamilton's proposal is not that these aspects play an organisational role. For him, the musical dimension of these atmospheres has to do with the listener's appreciation of how the music is made (Hamilton, 2007, p. 103). While my approach, unlike Hamilton's, is in understanding the integration of non-organisational aspects into the musical proper, I believe that his attention to these aspects is crucial for reconsidering Scruton's narrow vision.

According to Hamilton, musical experience has two aspects, one acousmatic and the other non-acousmatic. The former pertains primarily to tonal organisations and does not require an awareness of the cause of sound. The latter aspect, on the other hand, involves our awareness of the causes of sound –such as the musical instruments producing the sound, the instruments' timbre, their position, the gestures with which the sounds we hear are produced, the imagery surrounding the use of certain objects in the production of music, and so on. Hamilton considers both aspects to be important and deserving of our musical attention. Thus, Hamilton proposes a twofold thesis. He suggests that listening to music is a single experience with two aspects: one acousmatic and organisational, which orders certain aspects of sound according to tonal principles, and one non-acousmatic and non-organisational, which attends to the contexts of sound production and delights in the sensory enjoyment of sounds. Both aspects are genuinely musical, in contrast to Scruton's view, for whom only the acousmatic experience is properly musical (Hamilton, 2009, pp. 169–170).

Hamilton's notion of twofoldness is inspired by Richard Wollheim's introduction of this notion to account for pictorial experience. According to Wollheim, one must attend both to the pictorial medium –the configurational aspect– and to the representational content of the painting –the recognitional aspect. This means paying attention to the landscapes and figures depicted, as well as to the brushstrokes, colours or textures of the painting. The practice of painting has thematised both aspects –the configurational and the recognitional– throughout its history (Wollheim, 1980, 1987, pp. 20–25).

Based on the notion of musical understanding I have proposed here, I interpret Hamilton as accusing Scruton of the following: Since acousmatic attention to tonal forms is an organisational experience peculiar to music, it is the only properly musical experience within the musical phenomenon. Scruton excludes non-acousmatic and non-organisational attention to the music's material causes, arguing that it has nothing to do

with this form of organisation and are, therefore, not properly musical (Hamilton, 2009, pp. 148–150).

Hamilton's is not defending that the non-acousmatic or non-organisational aspects of our musical experience become organisational. Instead, he advocates for a conception of music, which take into account the deep interest we have in both aspects. Hamilton considers that it is important to acknowledge that music has its origins in dance, rituals, and musicians' gestures, and that it is, to that extent, imbued with human activity. Therefore, listeners' musical interest cannot separate one aspect from the other (Hamilton, 2007, pp. 111–116). When we listen to music, we want to hear it as much as we want to see how it is produced. Even in cases of electro-acoustic music where the sounds are manipulated in such a way that no cause is clearly distinguishable, the music is likely to be heard at least in relation to our bodily rhythms (Hamilton, 2007, p. 106, 2009, p. 173; Harvey, 2010). Therefore, the sounds and imagery surrounding popular music are interesting and musically significant in terms of how music is presented.

Although I consider Hamilton's approach to be virtuous in many respects, I think it is difficult to establish the correlation proposed by Hamilton in the case of music. If Wollheim's concept of seeing-in is applied to the relationship between the awareness of the marked surface –or the disposition of the strokes in a painting– and the object pictorially represented by these marks, it is unclear what the musical equivalents of this relationship might be.[70]

Does playing a chord with a plectrum or finger significantly alter the musical experience, in a way similar to how painting with a brush or spray paint can change the pictorial experience? Beyond this issue, my main difference with Hamilton is that, as I suggested with the idea of stylisation, the musician expects not only to appreciate the means by which she has composed the music, e.g. a certain sonic texture, but also to see how that sonic texture reorganises the piece and provides a distinct experience.

In my interpretation of Hamilton, a piece such as 'First Watch' would be interesting in that we would want to revel in the texture and atmosphere surrounding the music, as if he wanted to transport us to a kind of stage –the café– where the music is performed and presented with the various sounds we hear. While I agree with Hamilton's perspective on appreciating the non-organisational aspects of music, such as the sounds

[70] Let us recall that for Wollheim the pictorial experience consists in seeing something painted on a surface; we cannot separate one thing from the other, because we could not see the object of the painting without the surface, and we could not say that we are having a pictorial experience if we only saw a surface without distinguishing any pictorial object (Dorsch, 2016).

that add colour to a piece, it is also worth exploring the possible organisational dimension of these sound inclusions.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to address another criticism provided by Hamilton: that Scruton's notion of musical experience seems to be part of the tradition of considering music as an abstract and self-contained art.

5.2. The acousmatic and an abstract view of music in Scruton

Scruton argues that tonal organisation is what uniquely characterizes musical experience because tonal experience requires the exercise of imagination and attending to sound with a mere contemplative interest. These aspects locate the experience of music in stark contrast with the experience of the literalness of sound normally involved in listening experiences guided by an informational interest (Scruton, 2009b, p. 43). Scruton does not argue that musical listening should necessarily be an experience of abstract forms without any material connotation; he nevertheless, suggests that «[…] the phenomenal distinctness of sounds makes it possible to imagine a situation in which a sound is separated entirely from its cause, and heard acousmatically, as a pure process» (Scruton, 1997, pp. 11–12).

Critics of Scruton's position, such as Hamilton or Jeanette Bicknell, emphasise the need to avoid the tendency to completely separate musical form from the connotations of its causes. This tendency –which they think in Scruton's is grounded in his notion of acousmatic experience– is part of a long tradition of regarding music as a self-contained art of sound forms (Bicknell, 2000, pp. 69–70; Hamilton, 2007, pp. 111–116).

For Scruton, as we have seen in Chapter I, section 1, sounds would be like shadows, i.e. we could imagine seeing, organising, dividing and identifying them without ever needing to know what objects or events produce them. Though hearing never develops in this way, and we have normally some clues concerning sounds' sources, Scruton pointed out that our musical listening is an extreme case of something we ordinarily experience in listening to sounds, namely, the possibility of developing an acousmatic form of attending to the sound without ever paying attention to its causes (Scruton, 2009a, p. 64).

Hamilton's criticism emphasises the significance of recognising that tonal forms are embedded in practices that involve attention to the production and causes of sound. This is, for him, a crucial aspect of the human interest in such forms (Hamilton, 2007, p. 6).

The same is true of shadows. They have certain distinguishable forms, location and duration, but our experience of them over time involves an awareness of their possible cause. This is an indispensable part of the way we experience shadows. Seeing some shade as a shadow implies seeing it as having certain properties that are co-dependent with the properties of the object causing the shadow, even when we do not know which specific object is the shadow a shadow of.

In Plato's famous allegory (1986, bk. VII 514a-515e), prisoners are forced to see shadows accompanied by sounds. After some time, individuals can distinguish between various projections, thus exhibiting some recognitional abilities. This skill is highly valued and the most skilled individuals are rewarded. Later, upon their release, they do not immediately recognize that these 'shadows' are created by objects. In fact, the released prisoner may resist the idea that there is a connection between the objects they perceive outside the cavern and the shadows they learnt to recognize inside the cavern. This is not surprising. If they have never experienced these projections as being caused by something, they have not truly experienced what we call a shadow and so cannot make the corresponding associations between the shape of the shadows and the shape of the objects. In this respect, the prisoners' experiential content differs from ours. While they perceive figures, shapes, spots, or objects, we experience shadows, i.e. the dark image projected by a body when it is intercepted by rays of light.

From this story we can conclude that, just as I cannot perceive something as a shadow without experiencing it as a 'shadow of something', when we hear a sound the thought of its possible source is present in the way we experience it, even if the source is not materially present. After all, if we tend to identify a sound as 'loud' by relating it to a large object, the experience of this size as part of the initial criterion of identification accompanies subsequent identifications of this sound. Thus, the experience of sounds would carry with them certain expectations of the events that produce them. These expectations being also part of the content of the sound experience.[71]

There may be very extreme cases, such as the case of psychoacoustic experiments, where a listener is exposed to pure tones, simple timbres, or waves, and where it is difficult to identify any possible cause. But these cases do not reflect our ordinary relationship with sounds, where an ecological significance accompanies every

[71] This accords with Kendall Walton's (2008, p. 237) idea that how we experience sounds –how they *appear* to us–, is conditioned by the type of action by which the sound appears to have resulted from. For Walton this information is significant to a correct perception of works of art.

experience.[72] Moreover, that explains why it is not accidental that, in describing our sonic experiences, we usually do not refer to abstract qualities of sound, but to its apparent sources (Nudds, 2010, p. 283).

The acousmatic, as Scruton presents it, has some truth in it, we can group and organise sounds without the causes of the sounds being present, and in such cases, we could say that only sound figures as experiential content (O'Callaghan & Nudds, 2009, p. 15). Furthermore, we can focus solely on the sounds and their properties, even when the sources of the sounds are present. This can be achieved by concentrating on the sounds themselves and on their possible relationships alongside a certain spectrum. But in neither case do thoughts concerning the sources of sound completely vanish from our listening, either because they are still guiding it somehow or because the experience of sound itself carries expectations about the causes. Therefore, it does not follow from the idea that we can conceive of listening and organizing sound independently of the presence of its causes that the thoughts about its causes does not leave an imprint in the experience and that, therefore, we can fully describe it without any reference to them or independently from any ecological interest.

This criticism aims to contribute to the redefinition of Scruton's narrow position insofar as it recognises in the experience of sound the inevitability of accounting for the connotations it carries of its causes. Even if it is true that the tonal order can be described without reference to the causes of sound, if such causes leave the imprint that this criticism hints at, the incommensurability of the world of tones and the world of sounds seems to be reduced. Or at the very least, we are obliged to account for the role of non-tonal aspects in our musical experience.

Moreover, although the notion of acousmatic listening is certainly important to capture musical experience, some authors, such as Hamilton and Van Gerwen, have remarked that that Scruton's emphasis on purely acousmatic listening as the characteristic form of music listening overlooks the fact that acousmatic listening is just one way of listening among many. (Hamilton, 2009, p. 172; Van Gerwen, 2012, p. 224) Thus, following these criticisms and some of the additional criticisms that have been made of Scruton (Goetz, 2000, pp. 151–154; Iseminger, 1999, p. 374; Spencer, 1998, p. 217; Worth, 1999, p. 982), it seems that his notion of musical understanding is thought more in terms of the tradition that he himself most favours, such as the classical tradition.

[72] Van Gerwen (2012, pp. 223–224) comments that this ecological dimension includes sounds, the perceiver, and the surrounding environment.

However, the way of relating to music in this tradition differs from what we see in popular music.

Lydia Goehr (1999) notes that, despite Scruton claims that his analysis is neutral and not based on cultural presuppositions, his analysis is biased towards a few central cases in the classical tradition (Scruton, 1997, pp. 16–17). Goehr suggests that to properly characterize musical experience and understanding would require considering both central and borderline examples. However, as Goehr notices, Scruton's central cases serve as the departure and arrival points for his notion of musical understanding (Goehr, 1999, pp. 404–405, 407–409; Zangwill, 2010, pp. 102–103).

As we see, these authors criticize how the tendency towards abstraction, as well as the rejection of music's interaction with the imagery around it, limits the potential of Scruton's notion of musical understanding to encompass other traditions such as popular music.

6. Musical understanding in popular music

In contrast to Scruton's central cases, Adrian Renzo (2018) proposes an approach to how listeners of popular music relate to the music and to the non-tonal aspects it promotes.

According to Renzo, once we abandon what he calls a 'musicological' or, as I would say, a narrow view of our musical understanding, we will find that these listeners are as attentive as Scruton's ideal listener. Scruton criticized these listeners for not attending to, or at least being distracted from, the organisational force of tonal forms. But Renzo argues that popular music is embedded in a tradition where attention is dispersed among various aspects of the musical phenomenon, tonal organisation being just one of them. According to this author, listening to music while engaging in other activities such as skateboarding, dancing, or travelling by train does not necessarily detract from the musical experience. Similarly, attending to non-tonal aspects does not necessarily cause any distraction. On the contrary, it is a way for these listeners to grasp what is being musically thematised by the musicians (Renzo, 2018, p. 334).

For instance, Renzo highlights the popular music fans' enthusiastic responses towards specific moments within songs (Renzo, 2018, pp. 339–340). This 'moment' arouses the listener's interest for various reasons. For example, recognising that one song is using a sample of another, or perceiving that the chorus of a song in its last repetition,

adds a subtle instrumental arrangement, can provoke this kind of responses (Renzo, 2018, pp. 345–346).

As previously discussed in Chapter III, section 6.2, sampling involves a self-awareness of the tradition, an awareness of what the musicians are appealing to and how that imagery fits into the musical experience they are trying to convey. As we saw in the case of vaporwave, the imagery of his music tries to evoke a certain nostalgia and irony. This is achieved through the sampling and use of sounds belonging to television commercials, recognisable sounds of big brands and the very awareness of their low quality.

Nmesh's 2014 album *Dream Sequins*® provides a clear example of the use of sampling. For instance, the song 'NΞΘN DRΞΛMS INFINITY' includes a 1985 newsreel recording discussing the benefits of the Compact Disc, multiple Nintendo commercials from the 1980s, a snippet of dialogue from the movie *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* (1987), and the sound that NAP Consumer Electronics Corporation used in 1982 for its Video Network product, among others.

As discussed in the press, the imagery that the musician attempts to compose is that of a kind of nostalgia, captured through the recognition of the 1980s popular music's tonal conventions, but also of that decade's sound quality. Additionally, the musician creates a dream-like atmosphere through the slow tempo of the album, evoking the idea of a dream as a random accumulation of images that come to mind during sleep (Beks, 2014; Riboflavin, 2014). Yet even if the images are random, they share a common core, which is its relation to capitalist mass culture. To explore this 'musical dream' through the album, one needs to have a tonal sensitivity to the music conventions of a certain era and an understanding of the consumer culture, where dreams are influenced by the noises and messages of big multinationals. What is noteworthy about these samples is that while some can be integrated tonally, others, such as children's playing noises or conversations, cannot. Therefore, we must appreciate how their micro-divisions are properly integrated into the musical discourse while also evoking appropriately their characteristic imagery.

As noted above, the reviews of this album not only praise the artist's skill as a music producer, but also notice that the proper incorporation of sounds at the right moments in the songs makes this album one of the most highly regarded ones of its genre. This ability to search for the right sounds, to understand the images they evoke, to introduce them at the right moment in a song, to know how to modify them digitally, in short, this ability to stylise sounds, is one of the aspects that I believe popular music

emphasizes. This ability is acknowledged as musically relevant in the critical reviews and listeners' reports of their experience and consist in the capacity to integrate non-tonal elements into the music in a way that makes a difference to how the music is experience and, hence, indispensable for understanding the work.

These aspects are not external to the work, but part of it and, hence, part of what constitutes its proper understanding. The attention to the imagery that the artist proposes to us plays an organising role without being tonal. As noticed, the album's musical reviews and the public positive reception show that these elements are not considered to be mere gimmicky elements. They are the result of the artist's compositional skills, revealing their musical understanding and ability to experiment with new elements.

Similarly, in Creosote's song 'First Watch', the introduction would be a simple minimalistic piano piece without the imagery used. However, once we take into consideration the context in which the practice of concept albums has developed fusing certain imagery with tonal discourse is not uncommon. As noted, the artist's aims at evoking the Scottish coast through a fusion of folk music and the sounds of coastal villages. To achieve this, the ambient sounds recorded and then integrated are chosen for their capacity to evoke such atmosphere. Thus, the artist can reasonably reject, for example, a recording of a restaurant at lunchtime, when there is too much activity and maybe not enough specificity and choose a recording of that same restaurant at an evening instead, when people are resting after work. The artist thus incorporates the adequate atmosphere into the tonal forms.

In sum, these sounds, while not tonally integrated, contribute to the musical integration by organizing the listening experience through the transmission of a particular atmosphere that interacts with the tonal forms.

To fully understand this integration the listener needs to be familiar with this environment –where in such a song these sounds do indeed evoke the end of the working day or the rest before going into the night– and with how certain elements can become significantly used within popular music compositions.

Another example of the use of noise to organise musical listening is the song 'Driver's High' (1999) by L'Arc-en-Ciel. The band uses the sound of an engine starting to propel the beginning of the song. Following the sound of the electrical contact, the engine accelerates, creating the typical sound of a car before starting a race. The use of this sound is even more distinctive in their live performances. For instance, in their 2015 performance included in the album *L'Arc-en-Ciel LIVE 2015 L'ArCASINO*, the band

elongates the sound by manipulating its tension. Fans are aware that as long as they hear the engine revving, the song has not started yet, but as soon as they hear the wheels of the car skidding, they know that the song is about to begin. This awareness not only organises the listening of the beginning –extending the musical tension as a fermata would– but also marks the character and dynamism of the rest of the song. The band suggests that the tempo of the song is imbued with the adrenaline and tension of a car race. Paying attention to this element is necessary to understand the band's musical approach and their master of some of the techniques that are characteristic of popular music.

The integration of noises or mere sounds is also used in other works to produce contrasts. In Metallica's song 'One' (1989), the song's introduction features a series of sounds commonly associated with a battlefield, such as explosions, machine guns, helicopters, and commando shouts. These sounds create a sense of stress, tension, and chaos, which fits the aggressive and fast-paced nature of thrash metal music (Valkenburg, 2010, pp. 15–25). However, immediately following this chaotic intrusion, the clean sound of an electric guitar is heard. The guitar plays a slow-tempo, minor mode, chord progression, with a melancholic and dark character. As the song progresses, typical elements of the genre, such as distorted guitars and accelerated riffs, are introduced, causing the tempo to increase and so returning to the sombre, aggressive, dissenting tone established in the opening.

This song explores different atmospheres in accordance with the tonal dynamics of the piece. While these atmospheres are not tonally integrated, they create a contrast appropriate to the dynamics of the piece. The musicians' imagery is used to capture this contrast and complement the song musically.

Finally, I would like to point out an aspect that is more controversial than sound and that invokes the possible role of the artists' psychological persona in the listeners' experience. Van Gerwen discusses this aspect when he considers how the awareness of the intentionality of musical activity informs our appreciation of the music:

> The composer will be the one who has constituted the intentional structure that we hear the musical work as possessing, and it is the performer who inflects the musical product through his handling of the instrument. These contributions have psychological reality. (Van Gerwen, 2008, p. 38)

While this is true of any musical performance, it could be argued that in popular music attention to those aspects of the performance that manifest a particular personality or mode of being on stage become more prominent. This opens the possibility of perceiving in the music the organizing role of the musicians' expressive gestures and

modes. Manipulation of the instruments that become expressive of a particular performer, or their particular musical quality are aspects that are often referred as valuable in musical reviews.

An example of this psychological dimension of musical appreciation frequent in popular music is the phenomenon of ad-libs –see Chapter III, section 3. Ad-libs are used by musicians to infuse their songs with their own personality and to evoke the frame of mind of an urban tribe. These ad-libs invoke the way people of a certain group speak. The way the artist elaborates on these forms via the ad-libs conveys a certain imagery that integrates into their overall musical performance. Thus, for instance, these ad-libs have a rhythm and must be carefully introduced at key moments in the music. Listeners need to acknowledge them as part of comprehending hip-hop and trap, and to notice their role in emphasising the artist's persona. Ad libs bring to the foreground the significance of their vocal prowess, both in singing and conveying a certain attitude through their voice.

For instance, in Desiigner's song 'Panda' (2016), his use of ad-lib has been often praised precisely for conveying the artist's particular way of speaking in a way that becomes integrated with the music (Maher, 2018).

Furthermore, trap music provides an extreme example of integrating certain attitudes on stage as part of the music. Consider the case of an artist like Yung Beff and one of his most highly acclaimed live performances, such as at the one that took place in Sala Apolo in Barcelona in 2018. Many of the expectations that a common listener would have –like listening to the singer's voice over a pre-recorded music, or his delivery of an album's tracks from the beginning to the end–were undermined. Still, the performance was highly acclaimed, and there was a sense that its unity and continuity had been preserved, even as these disruptions were acknowledged (Di Filippo, 2018).

As another example of his innovative approach to performance, we can also mention other concerts where the artist refrained from singing over the songs and instead encouraged the audience to do so, while the music played. If he did sing, he did so without regard for tuning or rhythm (Álvarez Vaquero, 2016). In a similar spirit, during the concert held at OchoyMedio Club in Madrid in 2016, the performance of the song 'Intro' –from the album *A.D.R.O.M.M.I.C.F.M.S* (2018)– consisted only in the singer's moving from one side to the other of the stage, gesturing to the fans, making certain movements at important moments, and without singing -except to highlight a single phrase without using the microphone. The audience sang along to the entire song and screamed in ecstasy

at the artist's presence. Towards the end of the performance, the singer took the microphone only to express gratitude and bid farewell.[73]

Despite the unorthodox nature of his live performances, he has received excellent reviews, and is still considered one of the best musicians in his genre, both in the studio and live.

This style of performance and the emphasis on aspects that may be at odds with music quality is not novel. Musical critical reviews, particularly within the punk rock genre, often vindicate musical simplicity as a means of conveying the kind of aggressiveness that characterizes these bands. This simplicity is reflected in the limited tonal training and poor material means available to record their music (Hiatt, 2018; Hsu, 2016; Rodriguez, 2019). Archetypal examples, such as Yung Beff, or bands like the Sex Pistols, often come from the most disadvantaged economic backgrounds, and this is reflected in their aggressive messages and their concerns with problems of poverty (Hiatt, 2018; Hsu, 2016; Rodriguez, 2019).

The musical proposals presented share an interest in reducing the tonal requirements for composing a song to a minimum. This allows for a clearer presentation of the non-tonal aspects that are of interest in popular music. Aspects such as a particular image reflected in clothing and other body stylisation, also speaks of these bands' social origins; lyrics that address problems that only a section of society recognises –such as the lack of jobs, the use of drugs–; an attitude on stage and a way of singing that, far from sounding polished and seeking redemption in the world of tones, as Scruton would say, wants to sound affected, and emphasise the singers' origins –including noises and sounds that are typical of the speech and behaviour of certain groups.

All these elements are often tested in a musical composition, and only some of them stand the test of time and the audience's judgement. The audience determines, through their responses, whether they form a genuine part of the musical discourse. The appeal of these proposals is not that the music becomes enslaved to noise, as Scruton observed, but rather that the audience and musicians find a way to integrate these elements into the musical discourse. Understanding this music involves recognizing this imagery and understanding the fit between certain sonic dynamics and the dynamics of their social background and life. In this sense, many of the novelties introduced by popular music involve understanding how certain non-tonal elements are incorporated into the music, setting up

[73] This performance is available on the concert hall's YouTube channel at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKsyip8evMs.

rules of appropriateness that we come to grasp and apply once we are familiar with the practice.

One remaining issue is how to determine this fit between images or atmospheres and tonal discourse. One thing is to acknowledge that imagery and tonal aspects can fit each other and another to provide a principled way to determine when this fit is successfully achieved.

Exploring an issue which shares this kind of uncertainty can provide insight into this matter: the issue of the expressive character of musical works. As it is well-known, among the several arguments that Hanslick offered to criticise emotive theories of music, he highlighted the lack of consensus regarding the emotions expressed by certain music (Hanslick, 2018, Chapter 2). This lack of consensus was for Hanslick an unequivocal symptom of the projective, merely subjective, nature of expressive predicates. Echoing this tradition, Appelqvist also comments that there is no principled way to fix the expressive content of music. Just as we say that music expresses joy, we could say that it expresses certain dynamics related to joyful gestures and movements, or maybe other mental states. It is doubtful that there exist any criteria or rules for determining whether a song is joyful, jubilant, optimistic, or jocular. Following Appelqvist, any of these descriptions would be valid because, unlike the rules of tonality, there are no institutions and rules that indicate the correct way to listen emotionally to a piece of music (Appelqvist, 2008, pp. 138–142).

Similarly, when we examine the issue of the alleged fittingness of imagery and sound in popular music, it seems impossible to establish strict rules for determining when a particular sound or visual aspect is successfully integrated in a particular piece. However, as in the case of musical expressivity –and pace Hanslick and Appelqvist–, the lack of a principled manner to determine this success does not impede that audiences recognize, and praise, certain uses of imagery as appropriate. They can do so by exercising the abilities acquired as members of that tradition and on the basis of their recognition of the musical appropriateness of new aspects given the patterns of meaningful relations that are articulated within that tradition. In this sense, I believe that the indeterminacy of knowing why a particular sound element, attitude, or image fit into or contributes to the music is due to the same indeterminacy of knowing, for example, why a particular way of speaking, attitude, dress or image triumphs in a particular urban tribe or in an entire culture. It can only be established via an aesthetic judgment. Popular music's musicians try to incorporate in an artistic manner new forms of speech, clothing,

attitudes, consumption patterns, etc., into their music. Understanding when these novelties are appropriate requires acknowledging the social source of those novelties. This understanding manifests in several forms: dancing in a particular way, engaging in a fan group, collecting certain music, attending to concerts, creating playlists that prescribe certain order as significant, imitating the artist, or creatively sampling their songs.[74]

In conclusion, I have tried to capture some of the constitutive relations that contribute to musical meaning in popular music –as described by Hagberg (2017, pp. 64–68). To capture, as comprehensively as possible, the most relevant contextual-relational networks in which popular music attempts to constitute its own musical experience. As remarked, proper understanding requires not only being aware of these aspects, but also immersion in the relevant musical culture. In the case of popular music, this culture is divided into multiple genres and their corresponding urban 'tribes'. Hence the importance of collecting their testimonies, observing their behaviour and, as far as possible, trying to participate in their practices.

The case studies presented here display, I think, the Wittgensteinian spirit that it is only by immersing ourselves in a particular culture or genre that we can meet the conditions for understanding a particular musical tradition or genre. In the case of popular music, this involves taking into consideration novel aspects which a narrow theory like Scruton's cannot accommodate. Still, acknowledging these novelties does not involve giving up on the difference between what is properly musical and what is gimmicky, superficial or secondary. If we understand what is properly musical not only as that which is organised tonally, but also as that which has an organisational force, these aspects can be accommodated in the same scheme, while retaining their nuclear importance for the musical understanding of this tradition.

Summary

This chapter addresses the problem of determining what is part of the musical experience properly speaking and hence features in experiences that manifest music understanding. Adopting and adapting to the musical case Wittgenstein's notion of

[74] This indeterminacy in finding explicit rules that determine the musical success of an artist in incorporating novelties that the community will adopt is very present in the music industry itself, which achieves success with very few artists compared to all those it invests in (Shuker, 2016, pp. 13–14).

understanding –Chapter I–, I have tried to approach the issues of musical meaning and understanding. As we saw, understanding involves mastery of the rules of a system. In the musical case, and according to Scruton, these rules are primarily tonal rules. Consequently, for Scruton, other elements of the musical phenomenon were considered as mere additions or ornaments without any real contribution to the musical content and experience proper. This view also provided him with the material for his critical approach to popular music. One of the main problems with that tradition is its lack of emphasis on tonal rules and its excessive focus on extra-musical elements. For Scruton, these excessive focus on what he takes to be extra-musical aspects further detriments the exercise of proper musical abilities in favour of things such as the encouragement of idolatry, the fan phenomenon, the spectacularization of music, etc.

However, as I have tried to show, some of these new elements, such as the exploration of non-tonal sound novelties, like noises and sound atmospheres, or the imagery evoked by an awareness of the cause of sound, are not exclusive to popular music. Scruton himself is aware of several cases in the classical tradition that are worth exploring in relation to these novelties. One of the most interesting examples is Mahler's use of cowbells and their spatial distribution in his *Sixth Symphony*.

As we have seen, Mahler's spatial distribution of musicians offstage is widely studied by his critics and commentators. Despite this acknowledgment, Scruton argues that these elements, while interesting for music historiography, do not form part of the properly musical experience afforded by this work. According to Scruton, our appreciation of the location of a sound is not a criterion by which we organize listening tonally and, so, it lacks organisational and music relevance.

Contrary to Scruton's analysis, I have tried to show that the unstable sound pitch as well as the erratic way the cowbells are used, are an essential part of the musical experience of the piece. It is also noteworthy that cowbells carry certain connotations related to their original use in herding. In this sense, I think this example illustrates how musical understanding can involve awareness of the causes of sound and its 'erratic' or non-tonal organisation, pace Scruton.

John Dyck's observations also emphasise the significance of capturing the causes of sound and its non-tonal movement to properly explain musical experience. Although his observations mostly concern natural sounds, they can be extended to other similar context of musically using sounds, noises, or atmospheres. Dyck acknowledges that natural sounds appreciation requires a different appreciation than tonally organised

sounds due to their micro-divisions. Furthermore, the awareness of their material source also carries various imagery connotations, heightening the difference between the tonal and non-tonal sounds. Despite these differences, these elements are brought into play within the same experience and are part of the listener musical understanding of Mahler's music.

To recognize these uses of non-tonal sound and their contribution to musical experience, I have proposed the concept of stylisation. This concept refers to the compositional elaborations of new material by which musicians successfully integrate new sounds into a piece of music. It is important to note that for stylization to take place, it is not sufficient that new sounds are introduced. The musician must find the right balance between the anarchic nature of the sound and its integration into the tonal discourse.

Building on Dyck's work, I have suggested that musicians often strive for a 'fit' between these new elements and other less controversial aspects of musical language or a stylisation that appeals to the expressive power of sounds and music in general. Thus, in songs like 'Blackbird' (1968) by the Beatles or Creosote's album Diamond Mine (2011), the nostalgic character serves as a link between tonality and sonic atmosphere, so that sounds that are expressive of nostalgia fit with tonal forms expressive of the same emotion. Now, in order not to commit myself to a particular theory of musical expression, I have preferred to speak of tonal and aural atmospheres.

These two dimensions of music, tonal and non-tonal, in Andy Hamilton's words, matches the acousmatic and non-acousmatic or the organisational and non-organisational distinctions. Hamilton proposes a humanistic view that takes into account music's origins in rituals, dances, and other practices. For him, listeners' interest in music is equally distributed between tonal forms and material sources. This means that sounds, noises, timbres, spatial information of sound, or the way in which the musician produces the sounds are of musical interest, and not secondary aspects of the musical experience.

In my view, while Hamilton acknowledges the significance of certain non-tonal aspects of music, he does so without acknowledging their potential organisational role. In this sense, his proposal does not really defy Scruton's view, for he could recognize the importance of these elements while rejecting their true musical significance in virtue of their lack of organisational or tonal role. Still, I consider Hamilton's proposal has the virtue of questioning the abstract image of music that a theory of musical understanding, such as Scruton's, leads us towards.

According to Hamilton, this idea prevents us from including non-tonal aspects as part of the musical experience. For Hamilton, the musical abilities involved in music understanding do not only allow us to organise sound stimuli in an autonomous manner, as Scruton would defend. They also involve experiencing the connotations of sound sources involved in our ecological interest in sounds.

Finally, as some critics like Lydia Goerh and Nick Zangwill have noticed, the centrality Scruton gives to the notion acousmatic listening also seems to favour a way of relating to music that is anchored in the musical tradition that he himself favours. In this respect his view is very much reflecting what is at the core of some musical practice without paying sufficient attention to other musical traditions.

With these criticisms in mind, I finally introduced an approach to popular music and the novelties that artists working in this tradition thematise, while maintaining the Scrutonian distinction between the properly musical and the extra-musical in terms of what is organisational, or plays an organisational role, and what does not play such a role.

I have tried to show the different ways in which the competent or adequate listener of popular music relates to music and to emphasize their role in determining what is musically significant. In this sense, I echo Adrian Renzo's considerations about the distorting nature of some of the typical criticism of popular music as inviting a certain lack of attention or distracted attitude to what is important in this tradition. For Renzo, these criticisms have not paid sufficient attention to how listeners tend to engage with music in this tradition.

Examining some examples and acknowledging certain aspects they thematise or stylise can help to see what can be musically relevant. For example, the practice of sampling promotes attention to brief moments of significance within a particular composition as well as the possibility of alluding to particular cultural meanings. This technique includes the use of sounds, noises, sound atmospheres, etc., to allude to different aspects of popular culture, consumerist society, the feelings of the local atmospheres, other songs, etc. The introduction of these non-tonal aspects contributes to the musical experience by bringing with them a complex of imagery. Music reviews, fan reviews, album sales and the constant debate rehearsed in forums prove the success of these artists as active members of that tradition and evince their musical contribution to this tradition.

Finally, in addition to the sonic aspects discussed, popular music also makes great use of visual imagery in a way that also contributes to the musical experience. As we have

seen, live performances of bands like the Sex Pistols or the imagery of singers like Yung Beff, are at the extreme end of the balance between tonal structures and stage attitudes. A musician like Yung Beff, who does not even sing his songs –and when he does, he does not take care to sing properly–, dramatizes the other musical aspects that he masters. As a result, Yung Beff, as a musician, demonstrates mastery not only in singing, when he does, but also in combining the notes with a certain attitude that accompanies it. As I have tried to show, it is indispensable to understand, in this musical tradition, what the right attitude towards music is appropriate in order to grasp its proper musical content.

Finally, while there are no exact criteria to determine those who effectively and successfully integrate these elements in an interesting manner, I think that this ambiguity is the result of the same ambiguity that makes us difficult to detect in a culture who best expresses certain values and attitudes of that culture. This form of recognition involves an aesthetic judgment.

Thus, within the adopted framework for musical understanding, these non-tonal elements are integrated into the music because the musicians manage to stylise them in a way that is recognize by the audience. Their musical understanding would be evinced in their capacity to properly integrate or stylise imagery, sounds, images, and attitudes within a tonal discourse that reflect a particular urban tribe.

CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of this dissertation has been to address Scruton's criticism of popular music. Particularly, his remark that this genre typically invites a kind of experience that departs from what is musically relevant and significant. Assuming the interest that this musical tradition has in aspects of musical experience that have traditionally been considered external or irrelevant to the organisation of sounds as music, I have tried to show how these aspects are essential for the proper experience of these pieces. To do so, I have embraced a Wittgensteinian view of understanding which places the focus on the contexts of use and on the abilities and rules that characterize a practice. In my view, adopting this framework, allows us to be less shortsighted with respect to popular music's continuities and discontinuities with other well-established traditions and to acknowledge that certain novelties do contribute to the musical experience it affords. I have structure my proposal as follows.

In Chapter 1, I introduce Ludwig Wittgenstein's reflections on meaning and understanding in language. According to this author, the meaning of a particular linguistic expression is established through its use within the practical contexts in which it characteristically appears. Being a competent user of a language involve being able to play what Wittgenstein call 'language games'. This ability consists in using language in a way that exhibits mastering the rules that govern these language games. The set of rules governing certain uses is the grammar of that language game.

Language is not an autonomous practice: it is embedded in institutions, conventions, and intersubjective agreement and its subject to change as the practices within a particular tradition evolve historically. This contextual and intersubjective density provides the soil for the appropriate use of language. Thus, understanding linguistic meaning does not require to inquiry into psychological mechanisms. It only requires attending to our linguistic practices and how we recognize proper responses and behaviour on the part of language users. The plurality of language games also allows for recognizing that not all meaningful expressions are so in virtue of being in a certain referential relation to some external or internal object.

In section 2 of Chapter 1, I explore the impact that Wittgenstein's thought has had on contemporary approaches to musical meaning and understanding. Specially within the analytical tradition in Aesthetics, many authors have explored Wittgenstein's observations about music and his comparisons between understanding language and music. This development has been traced in section 2.1. of Chapter I in authors such as Hagberg, Defez, Appelqvist, Scruton, or Rubio, among others. In these authors, the question of musical meaning is addressed by taking as starting point the notion of musical understanding. Rather than speculate about the possibilities of conveying representational meaning by musical means, they focus on the behaviour of those who interact with the music with understanding. Interestingly, not all the authors who self-identify as following Wittgenstein with respect to the question of meaning and understanding characterize the experience of musical understanding in the same way. Some, like Scruton or Appelqvist, embrace what I call a narrow view of musical understanding. Others, like Hagberg, Hamilton or Gracyk embrace a broader view.

This distinction is important because while broader views have been more receptive to different incorporations in the musical tradition, narrower views tend to establish stricter criteria for musical understanding. Scruton, for example, harshly criticises the way in which listeners of popular music relate to music based on these criteria.

To understand this criticism as well as distinction between narrower and broader positions, I adopt the distinction between what is properly musical or part of the musical experience as a musical experience and what is part of the practices in which we engage with music, but the grasping of which do not count as criteria of music understanding. The latter encompasses all those aspects that are part of the 'musical phenomenon' –such as reading sheet music, writing reviews, learning instruments, finding harmonic

modulations, classifying genres, dancing, attending concerts, etc. When examining the activities of a musical tradition, it is possible to distinguish between those that contribute to musical understanding and musical meaning proper and those that, while important, are not part of what constitute musical understanding proper. The properly musical ones would be those that play an organisational role, making a difference to the experiential content of the music.

A person who understands music, then, is someone able to recognize when certain aspects are relevant and how they contribute to the experience of the music. This ability is expressed in the way one responds to certain aspects. Someone who understands that a musical phrase is the piece's finale responds appropriately by perceiving that phrase as closing the piece. I have used the expression 'musical content' rather than the common one 'musical meaning' or 'sense' to avoid the implied question concerning what does a particular music means. Since I am addressing this issue from the perspective of understanding music, understanding a piece does not need to be spelled out in terms of some extra-musical meaning the music refers to or stands for. It suffices to identify the criteria for responding to the music adequately to grant the listener an experience of understanding. As we have seen, the primary condition for this form of understanding to takes place is being immersed in a particular musical tradition.

This distinction is taken in part from Scruton's view on music. I think this distinction is important if one aims to prevent collapsing the criteria of music understanding into everything that is part of a form of life. Still, I have tried to show that the way Scruton draws this distinction can be challenged by paying due attention to the very evolution of our musical practices. But before addressing Scruton critically, I have introduced, in Chapter II, his view of musical understanding. This view is articulated in two parts: first I have outlined his view on the experience of listening sounds in general; and, second, I have presented his view on musical experience. This overview is necessary to explain Scruton's view of musical experience, and his later criticism of popular music based on such view.

Scruton's characterisation of ordinary listening establishes vital differences with respect to musical listening. I have spelled out these differences in section 1 of Chapter II. The key distinction between ordinary listening and musical listening is that the former is driven by an informational interest, whereas musical listening is driven by a contemplative interest. Musical listening is thus unrelated to our capacity to identify the causes of a sound or to perceive them as produced by different events.

Despite this stark contrast between ordinary listening and musical listening, Scruton notes that in ordinary listening, we observe a form of experiencing sound that is vital to the later development of musical listening. He refers to this form of listening as 'acousmatic' listening –section 1.3 of Chapter II. This ability allows us to recognize a sound even if we cannot perceive by any other sensory means the object or event causing that sound. Thus, I can recognize my friend's voice through the phone or an ambulance characteristic sound from afar without having visual access to any of them. According to Scruton, this is vital because it means that we can organize sound information independently from attending to its causes.

In the same section, I also remarked that we need to distinguish between two senses of the notion of 'acousmatic' in Scruton. The first sense refers to our ability to identify sounds without seeing their source, such as the examples introduced above. The second sense refers to the ability to focus on sound qualities and relate them to each other in relation to a spectrum. We exercise this ability when, for example, we perceive that two sounds are at a certain tonal distance from each other. The later sense is key for musical listening and constitutes its core

This acousmatic ability underlies musical experience and involves an autonomous form of organizing sound. It is manifested, for example, when we recognise that the pitch of another person's voice is 'higher' than our own. This 'height' is not literal –since it is not related to any actual spatial property of the sound's cause. Rather it is a metaphorical heigh, determined by the sound's pitch location within a spectrum. Using this ability, we can distinguish between different sounds based on their acousmatic qualities, rather than on their material causes. In these cases, the experiential content of our hearing would include these qualities, and no information about the causes of the sound would be relevant.

The ability to attend to sounds in this way is fundamental to Scruton's notion of musical understanding –Chapter II, section 2. In his view, musical experience is a contemplative act, based on our capacity to organise sounds' qualities acousmatically. It therefore lacks any informational role. This form of attending to sound and to find relations between different sounds based on their acousmatic properties makes possible, for instance, the experience of melody. Furthermore, as this ability has become more and more trained and sophisticated, we have developed various systems, scales, or modes that have developed throughout history in different musical traditions.

The conjunction of acousmatic listening, thematising purely sonic relations, and a contemplative attitude constitutes, for Scruton, the complex imaginative skill proper to musical experience. In section 2.3 of Chapter II, I put forward the idea that, for Scruton, this notion of imagination is understood primarily in opposition to literal experience. Again, this notion serves to clearly demarcate the realm of musical experience –where sound is organized according to purely sonic parameters, hence, autonomously– from the realm of ordinary sound experiences, where the listener's experience is of the literal properties of the sounds.

In this sense, it is easy to understand Scruton's dismissal of popular music. According to Scruton, a proper musical culture or tradition fosters imaginative and contemplative engaging with sounds; hence promoting acousmatic experiences. For him, the tonal system is one, if not the most, refined products of this activity whose goal is producing works following the acousmatic relations between sounds –section 2.4 of chapter II. Scruton believes that this system constitutes the best reflection of a musical grammar in Wittgensteinian terms: a set of rules that guide musical experience, shared by a culture and sustained by historical institutions.

Scruton considers that popular music not only does not contribute in an interesting way to the development of music patterns that involve the exercise of our acousmatic abilities –due to its tendency to harmonic simplicity–; it also fosters a form of engaging with music that diverts the listener's attention from those aspects that properly constitute the musical experience to other aspects –which he relates to its spectacle character– of the musical phenomenon that lack musical significance.

For example, popular music often structures the rhythm not so much based on the accents derived from the melodic and harmonic development of the music, but it does so by following the physical or artificial rhythms that the musician wishes to introduce into the music –section 2.5 of Chapter II. For example, in pieces such as 'My Big Mouth' (1997) by Oasis or the development of the 'blast-beat' technique used by bands such as Slayer, the production of sonic atmospheres that mimic external rhythms –be it the imitation of machinery, a series of explosions, a wild dance or a violent and noisy atmosphere– carries much of the rhythmic role. These incorporations into the music do not follow a tonal logic. Rather, they and are partly a product of the spectacularization that characterizes this tradition, which is more concerned with transmitting the imagery of its urban tribes, than with cultivating the tonal tradition on which it is based.

The problem, then, is that the imagery that these musicians seek to convey through their music is the product of the visual and sonic aspects around them, which, instead of inviting a form of acousmatic attention, require attention to their material connotations. The attention to sound that is most characteristic of popular music is guided not so much by the exercise of acousmatic abilities but by its power to evoke images of informational value; in particular, to evoke aspects that are of the visual and imagery aspects.

In Chapter III I tried to give an overview of this tradition to understand how popular music proposes a particular musical experience. I have sought to highlight the main features of this tradition and the context in which it develops, focusing on certain characteristics that bring to the foreground the problem of musical understanding.

One of the aims of this approach is to show that some of the technological changes and aspects derived from how this music is commercially distributed should not be addressed solely through a commercial lens. They have been incorporated in a musically significant way into the works produced within this tradition. Acknowledging this will help resisting the traditional criticisms against popular music that underly its superficial or inauthentic character.

Other characteristic aspects of popular music –such as allusions to its own history, or to specific products of mass culture and contemporary technology–, which are often appealed to articulate some of the criticisms against this genre, allow us to revise these criticisms. These aspects are often used in a reflective manner and not merely as mere effects. Thus, self-awareness is crucial in understanding the tradition of popular music, as it often relies on allusions to its own history to create its unique experience. These allusions not only involve adopting the tonal conventions of a particular genre, but also incorporating aspects that refer to the imagery and sound engineering of that genre.

Similarly, we can revert the usual disvalue attached to aspects that are typical of popular music and that tend to prioritize spectacularizing the experience over rhythmic and melodic development. Assuming that rhythmic and melodic patterns may not be thematised in interesting ways, we are also blind to the possible contribution of other elements when adopting a view of musical experience that exclusively favours the tonal aspects. Thus, section 5.1 includes a peculiar case where the ‘Scotch Snap’, a rhythmic pattern related to the Scottish way of speaking exported to the United States, is introduced into the music as a musical element. It reflects a rhythm of speech instead of a tonal one,

and with it, a part of the musician's attitudes and imagery are incorporated into the musical experience.

If, instead of taking the tonal organisation of sound as a starting point, we look at how musicians in popular music compose their pieces, we find several aspects to highlight as musically significant. On the one hand, there are the visual elements that constantly accompany certain musicians. Clothing, make-up, instrument design or attitude on stage become often used in a way that overcomes mere gimmick effects. On the other hand, new sonic aspects are incorporated as the result of the development of amplification and sound editing. Thus, studio editing has made it possible to incorporate certain noises, sounds, soundscapes, or changes in timbre, pitch or rhythm, and to give them a prominence that have to do with an appreciation of their sonority within the work, and not with its alleged tonal role.

The recording of the song ‘Hurt’ (2002) by Johnny Cash is remarkable in this respect. Small details, such as the vibration of the guitar strings against the frets, are included in the studio version, conveying a sonic atmosphere that is almost impossible to reproduce in live performance. Similarly, the use of sampling in popular music takes advantage of this technology, both to elaborate on the sonic properties of the tonal background structure and, to show its self-awareness and constant allusion to its tradition using fragments from other songs.

In appreciating popular music, it is important to hear as well as to see the musicians’ performance, and the vital role that certain images play for some bands has been widely acknowledged.

Recognising that some of these novelties require a different treatment, and that their possible contribution to musical experience has been mostly overlooked by insisting on a tonal approach, does not involve giving up on the distinction between aspects that are mere gimmicky and aspects that really contribute to the musical experience. What Aristotle and Hume thought about the distinction between theatrical resources and mere spectacle can be rehearsed in analogous terms for the case of popular music. Boy bands or musicians at music festivals, such as Eurovision, are seen as mere products of the major record companies, rather than authentic musical manifestations.

Thus, my aim in the last chapter has been to use this distinction between what is musically relevant –or part of what the listener has to respond to if they do understand the music– and what is merely part of the musical phenomenon without playing any constitutive role in musical meaning –such as gimmick elements– together with the notion

of musical understanding that has been proposed in Chapter I –and that is inspired in Wittgenstein view of language– to address the problems that raised against popular music.

In Chapter IV, I revise, while acknowledging some of its virtues, Scruton's narrow view on musical understanding. Like him, I think that a good method to answer this question is to focus on those elements that do play an organizing role in the listener's musical experience. Unlike him, I do not think that this organizing role needs to be solely characterized in tonal, melodic or harmonic terms.

I try to motivate this by drawing on some well-known examples that have been amply discussed in music literature, like the use of cowbells in Mahler's *Sixth Symphony*. This example is especially interesting because the use of the bells presents the following problem: on the one hand, they seem to part of the work since the work would be different if they were not included. On the other hand, at least following Scruton's understanding of what is musically relevant, they cannot be part of the work musically speaking, because they should play some organisational role in terms of melody, harmony and rhythm. But these elements do not play any of these roles, so, it is unclear how this sound could be heard musically.

If we look at the performative tradition of the piece, the cowbells are played in a way that intentionally alludes to its nature as a herding object. That is, its use tries to capture the erratic rhythm of the animals' movement. Thus, these sounds are not tonally integrated into the piece. If this is the case, then we should accept that in the sections where Mahler uses the cowbells, these only provide a certain tonal and rhythmic colouration that is not part of the properly musical.

Some authors, like John Dyck, Andy Hamilton or Rob Van Gerwen, have also seen this work as providing an interesting case of using non-tonal material as part of a musical work and have tried to offer some explanation of how these elements become integrated in the work. Following Dyck, these natural sounds, which are similar in nature to noises or sound environments, should be appreciated as an indispensable part of the piece, since they provide an experience, whose interest lies precisely in the fact that it contrasts with the tonal experience.

This contrast has two aspects. On the one hand, while tones offer us macro-divisions, such as the distances between the pitches of different sounds, which we thematise musically and call scales, natural sounds or even noises offer us micro-divisions in terms of time, timbre or pitch. On the other hand, these sounds inevitably appeal to

their causes, which awakens an imagery that is integrated into the tonal discourse, making it richer and more interesting.

A similar appraisal of the use of non-tonal sounds in this and other similar pieces can be found in Andy Hamilton. He suggests that, from a humanistic view of music, we need to acknowledge that our interest in music has two aspects: a tonal aspect that allows us to grasp tonal forms and a material aspect that drives our attention to the way music is produced. According to this conception, music's proper apprehension involves this twofold attention. For Hamilton, dismissing the material dimension of musical experience involves ignoring the role that aspects related to the ways the music is produced play in our experience. Proper musical understanding cannot be reduced to mere tonal abilities. Both aspects of music, the organisational of tonal forms and the material dimension of music making, are genuine components of musical experience.

Both Dyck and Hamilton address this example by considering that musical experience cannot be exclusively characterized in terms of an acousmatic experience, à la Scruton. Their approach to this example is that sounds, noises or evoked images are claimed as musically relevant in their non-organisational nature. What is interesting about these inclusions would be the contrast that the musician introduces between the world of tones and the world of sounds.

I think that from Scruton's theory of music understanding one can accept that much: such non-tonal aspects are genuinely musical and form an indispensable part of understanding the musical work, but they are not part of the way of organising sounds that is typical of music. They would therefore be musical but not organisational, constituting an exotic use of sound within music that strikes us precisely because they are integrated without doing so in a musical way (Hamilton & Scruton, 1999; Scruton, 2009b, pp. 7–8, 2018a, p. 82).

My proposal is not to refute the centrality of tonal organisation, but to problematise the way in which Scruton criteria for acknowledging organisational power to certain elements. In my view, certain aspects, while resisting an analysis in terms of tonality, also play a significant organising role and, hence, are part of the musical experience. If we look at the practices of popular music listeners, we realize that these non-tonal elements often organise the musical experience precisely based on these aspects' material connotations.

To proceed in this direction, I have followed Hamilton and Van Gerwen's in their criticism to Scruton's view of the experience of sound that permeates his notion of

musical understanding. According to this criticism, Scruton seems to maintain that the experience of musical sound proper can be conceived in a completely independent way from any thought about the sounds' causes or modes of production He even suggest that our acousmatic ability to order sounds could take place even if never knew about the sources of sound (Scruton, 2009a, p. 62). However, this claim of total independency seems unacceptable. As Hamilton and Van Gerwen try to show this claim underestimates the way in which information about the causes of sound permeates its experience.

After re-examining Scruton's view of musical understanding from wider approaches that emphasise the importance to musical experience of experiencing non-tonal aspects, I have tried to show how some aspects in popular music might be properly understood as part of the specifically musical experience, and hence, as criterial for the proper understanding of these works.

First, I have emphasized the need to pay attention to the concrete practices and observe what listeners are interested in when they listen to, for example, an album full of samples and references to mass culture, such as the electronic music album *Dream Sequins*® (2014) by Nmesh.

Artists like these manifest a skill, that I have referred to as the stylisation of sounds, that allows them to use certain aspects of the musical phenomenon in a way that is musically relevant. Their awareness of the cultural and material connotations of sounds allows them to select, trim, lengthen, edit, and integrate them into the tonal discourse in ways that become successfully recognized by the audience. These artists do not simply look for gimmicky sounds, but they propose novel and surprising additions that, while not typically features of their musical discourse, they become so via their successfully stylization or integration. They aim at achieving musical adequacy between mere sounds and tones without subordinating one to the other. They present them in their own nature and exploit the imagery they evoke.

Unlike other approaches, I believe that this imagery reorganises listening, introducing dynamics, atmospheres, divisions, accents, or contours that contributes to a musical experience that already has a tonal movement at its base.

Expanding in this direction, it may be that we need to take seriously not only the role played by sonic, non-tonal. aspects, but also the role of some of the visual aspects that are typically part of live performances.

Other issues, like in what way, if at all, the musicians' psychology is reflected in the music and imbues it with a new dynamic is a more difficult question to establish.

Multiple testimonies from the music press and fans suggest that the artist's musical ingenuity is reflected in the attitudes that accompany the music. In other words, composition is not only a matter of knowing how to organize the music tonally, but also of knowing how to accompany it with the appropriate gestures. Understanding how the audience expects to relate to the music is crucial in this tradition. Many musicians have gained recognition not only for their tonal innovation, but also for their ability to convey the appropriate attitude to the music.

Popular music is a vast terrain of constant innovation and exploration of these non-tonal elements, so that this thesis can, I suggest, be a first step in trying to explore them not only from the usual sociological, ideological or cultural studies perspectives, but also from a philosophical perspective that tries to explore their status as an organising force, that is, for what some musical aesthetics consider to be the properly musical.

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