Echoes of Opposition

The Power of Dualities in Art. I. Music

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Resumen: Una obra de arte que aspire a satisfacer el ideal de Gustav Mahler de asemejarse al mundo mediante "abrazarlo todo... como si el universo entero comenzara a vibrar y resonar" debe reflejar el orden dialéctico intrínseco a los sistemas físicos, construyéndose a sí misma sobre ambigüedades y fuerzas contrapuestas. En la primera parte de este artículo, este principio es explorado exclusivamente mediante el lente de la música, abarcando el género clásico, el pop rock, y el jazz. El impacto de la tesis - que las obras de arte más profundas emergen de la interacción de opuestos contrastantes - se examina en relación al proceso creativo y la expresión artística. Más allá de transmitir la ontología de la dialéctica, estas obras también guían implícitamente a sus audiencias hacia los beneficios espirituales de aceptar perspectivas diametralmente opuestas en lugar de adherir a ideologías rígidas y singulares, fomentando en última instancia una conciencia ampliada en sintonía con la infinita extensión de la realidad experimental.

Palabras clave: expresión artística; música clásica; dialéctica; jazz; pop rock.

Resumo: Uma obra de arte que aspire a satisfazer o ideal de Gustav Mahler de se assemelhar ao mundo "abraçando tudo... como se o universo inteiro começasse a vibrar e ressoar" deve refletir a ordem dialética intrínseca aos sistemas físicos, construindo-se sobre ambiguidades e forças opostas. Na primeira parte deste artigo, esse princípio é explorado exclusivamente através das lentes da música, abrangendo os gêneros clássico, pop rock e jazz. O impacto da tese — de que as obras de arte mais profundas emergem da interação de opostos contrastantes — é examinado em relação ao processo criativo e à expressão artística. Além de transmitir a ontologia da dialética, essas obras também guiam implicitamente seu público para os benefícios espirituais de aceitar perspectivas diametralmente opostas, em vez de aderir a ideologias rígidas e singulares, promovendo, em última instância, uma consciência ampliada em sintonia com a extensão infinita da realidade experimental.

Palavras-chave: expressão artística; música clássica; dialética; jazz; pop rock.

Abstract: A work of art aspiring to satisfy Gustav Mahler's ideal of resembling the world by means of "embracing everything... as if the whole universe began to ring and resound" must reflect the dialectical order intrinsic to physical systems, constructing itself upon ambiguities and opposing forces. In the first part of this paper, this principle is explored exclusively through the lens of music, encompassing classical, pop rock, and jazz genres. The impact of the thesis that the most profound works of art emerge from the interplay of contrasting opposites is examined in relation to the creative process and artistic expression. Beyond conveying the ontology of dialectics, such works also implicitly guide their audiences toward the spiritual benefits of embracing diametrically disparate perspectives rather than adhering to rigid, singular ideologies, ultimately fostering an expanded awareness attuned to the infinite breadth of experiential reality.

Key words: artistic expression; classical music; dialectics; jazz; pop rock.

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1. Introduction

The history of philosophy has witnessed the expansion of the concept of dialectics to versatile grounds. Ever since Heraclitus and Anaximander proposed polarities intrinsic to the material world and the Socratic method of reasoning was noted down by Plato as the one involving constant dialogical shifts of perspectives in search of a common point of view, dialectics has made it not only to different branches of philosophy, but also realms other than the philosophical (Farjoun 2019). Dialectical materialism, for one, was the transposition of Hegel's historical dialectics to the domain of politics. Here I purport for the first time that dialectics is intrinsic to art that resonates particularly intensely with our aesthetic senses. At this starting point of this discourse, I connect analogically this conflict of opposites that will be revealed as central to all forms of art with the image of the Way.

One essential characteristic of every way is that it connects entities that can be considered separate in the first place. As a result, the notion of the Way may be the simplest and the most picturesque of terms usable to describe the principle of dialectics. A web of life composed of intersecting relations, that is, ways is, thus, an inherently dialectical web. Polarities, in other words, are essential to it. In it, all entities, like atoms in a molecule bound by the Lennard-Jones potential, alternately come close to and separate from one another, fluctuating around the state of dynamic equilibrium between the mutually attractive and mutually repulsive forces by following intricate physical laws (Fig.1).

At same time, one of the highest ideals in art has been to speak the language of the physical world. And if this language is inherently dialectical, so must the language of perfect art be too. In what follows, a simple proposition is being elaborated. The proposition is as follows: the combination of opposites is the key to the appeal and the captivating effect that magnificent works of art have on the human mind. Without further ado, the journey will commence by illustrating this principle with a plethora of examples from various arts, starting with music in this first part of the paper, and then proceeding to painting, film, architecture and other arts in the second part, before discussing it from diverse points of view.

The discourse that follows will largely take the form of a compilation of examples that illustrate this dialectical character of many notable works of art and support the hypothesis that the style in which opposites are conjoined in a work of art is a greatest determinant of its artistic appeal (Uskoković 2023). Works of art falling into different categories are included in this compilation and tied into logical threads by the cords of the aforementioned hypothesis. Along the way, voices of numerous academic and nonacademic thinkers are twined and cited in the effort to gain support for the arguments presented. Because academic art has been historically more of an exception than a rule, not only are the great majority of the works of art referred to in the text nonacademic in origin, but also, conversely, an equally spacious room for expression is given to academic affiliates, art analysts, newspaper critics and anonymous YouTube commenters.

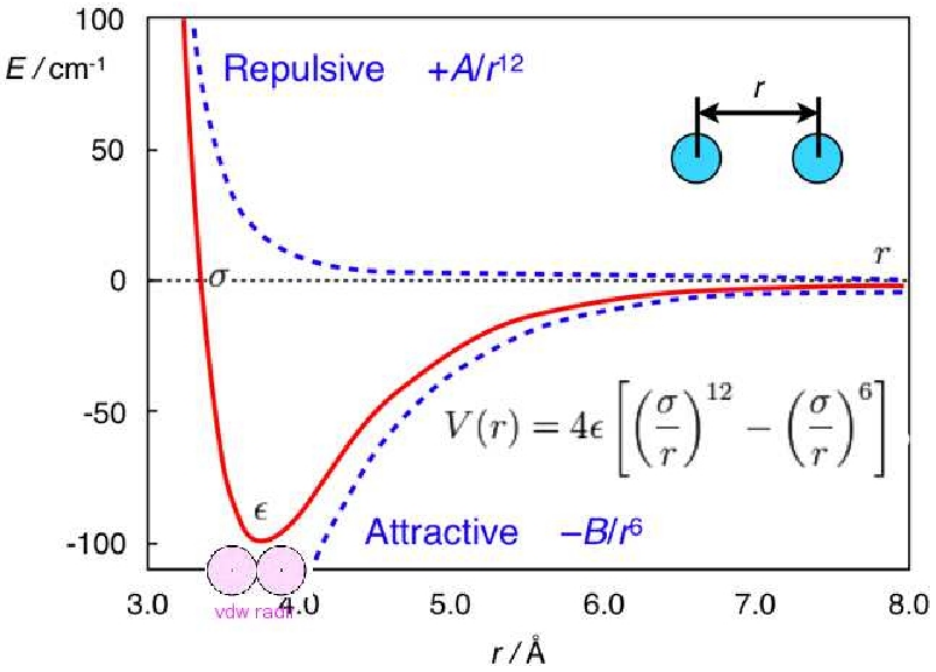

Fig.1. Lennard-Jones potential for an interaction between two adjacent atoms alternately approaching and distancing from one another. The potential is a sum of two terms: the repulsive and the attractive, the former of which more intensely depends on the distance, r, than the latter, *i.e.*, r^{-12} vs. r^{-6}, respectively. The most energetically favorable distance between the atoms corresponds to the van der Waals' (vdw) radius, ε. According to the laws of quantum mechanics, however, the atoms cannot occupy a static point on this potential curve, but must rather move back and forth between two points along one of the many possible horizontals. As they undergo such oscillations, they always distance from one another with respect to ε more than they approach each other. This asymmetry of this potential is the key property of solid materials *per se*.

2. Examples from the classical music genre

If we were to grasp the fact that harmonious motion is characterized by the balance between tension and freedom and that this principle applies to any type of movement, from the vibration of a guitar string to the quantum oscillations of electromagnetic waves to the sway of trees and towlines in the wind, we could conclude that the moving potential of human expressions, including the artistic, has got to be based on an encounter of antipodal emotional, mental or physical forces. Indeed, many are classical musical pieces disseminating waves of emotions that appear antithetic to each other. To start with, let us head back in time to the first half of the 18th Century and the time when music composed by Johann Sebastian Bach gained a completely new aural dimension, capable of enclosing the listener into a sonic cathedral and allowing him to float through a world of unspeakable depth and beauty. There, we need not delve in the composer's chefs-d'oeuvre that Mass in B minor and the two Passions were, but may linger on his more modest preludes, fugues and sonatas, where textural contrasts become evident via an interplay between subjects composed in the tonic and countersubjects in the dominant. Our next stop comes half a century later,

with the music of Ludwig van Beethoven. Although his early works were strongly influenced by those of his Classical predecessors, primarily Haydn and Mozart, by confronting the lightsomeness and sanguinity of the Classical period with sounds evocative of gloom, passion and emotional tempests, the composer slowly emerged on a new shore, which we now call Romantic. Examples that "reveal the double foundation of Beethoven's music (as of all art) and the union of the two" (Mies 1929, pp. 154) are, of course, countless, sometimes executed immaculately as in the Pastoral Symphony, when he was guided by "the larger the stream, the deeper the note" (Mies 1929, pp. 154) principle, as well as in the *Appassionata*, the angelically daemonic adagio of the string quartet No.12, *La Malinconia* theme of the String Quartet No.6 or during the mesmerizing apposition of the violent theme and the lyrical theme of the final, seventh movement of the String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131, and sometimes falling short of perfection, as in certain parts of *Missa Solemnis* and *Fidelio.*

Next we move on to Franz Schubert, another early Romanticist, albeit short-lived, who famously remarked, "After this, what is left for us to write", upon hearing Beethoven's final string quartet, No. 14 in C♯ minor, Op. 131. The exemplary composition of his can be *Ellen's Third Song*, nowadays known as *Ave Maria*, composed in 1825. Listening to it, one could almost visualize an ethereal creature appearing from behind thunderous clouds, evoking a concoction of ominousness and clemency, as if the artist managed to capture the brief moment in time in which the storm ceded its place to rays of sunshine and produced a rainbow in the soundscape. The song was originally a part of an epic poem by Walter Scott, in which a girl or a gamine, Ellen, escapes the turmoil and impending revolution in her homeland to find a sanctuary in a goblin's cave. As the hero walks towards the top of a mountain, he contemplates returning to the safe harbor of his home and resigning from the battle that awaited him. However, after catching Ellen's song from the distance and hearing it sung in a heavenly voice sending prayers to the Virgin Mary and calling for help, he continues his voyage to the top of the mountain full of vigor and determination. As such, this song provides a brief window to heavenly peace and beauty from within a world bordering mayhem, refreshing the spirit of the warrior before yet another battle in which he would sacrifice his life for the sake of defending the sacraments of justice and love. Aural antagonisms similar to the encounter of the ominous and the blissful in *Ave Maria* could be heard in other Schubert's songs as well, from alternation of the idyllic instances of tranquility and the moments when "the storm breaks out... the skies become overcast, the wind whips up the waves and the seagull cries" (Robertson 1947, pp. 171) in his homage to the sea, *Am Meer*, to *Litanei* where a chromatic shift of the bass notes into the deep is paired with the rising melody of the voice so as to invoke a sense of ethereal balance and harmony, to the coupling of the calming vocal passages and the dramatic piano sequences evocative of the rolling waves of a turbulent sea in *Lied eines Schiffers an die Dioskuren* and *Nachtstück*. Neither do Schubert's late piano sonatas, with their "unique affective combination of turbulence and tranquility", the blending of "lilting enthusiasm" with "dreamy pensiveness", and the frequently "ambiguous stance halfway between major and minor" (Libbey 1999, pp. 408 – 409), as in the finale of Sonata in B♭, stray far from these compositionally complex songs where mixed emotions collide so naturally.

A century or so after Schubert's *Ave Maria* was given birth to, Dmitri Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony exemplified what had come to comprise by then the classical approach to raising tension and seizing the listeners' attention: juxtaposition of diametrical opposites. In this case, one could hear two themes dominating the first movement, the first one ominous and gloomy, sharply dotted and played in canon for the first few bars, and the second one "beautiful and poetic... a ray of hope, like a little strip of azure-blue sky between dark clouds" (Bjørkvold 1989, pp. 307). As for the second movement, evident is the entwinement of major and minor keys in a scherzo that is both savage and sensual in nature and that combines inauspiciousness with humor, the latter of which went so far as to let bassoons imitate laughter and the orchestra exhibit clownishly wobbly rhythmical irregularities. As for the third and the fourth movements, they both begin in a minor key and end in a major one, alongside placing "expressionistic etching of petrified fright (that) gets perilously close to naturalistic screeching and yelling" (Bjørkvold 1989, pp. 315) and "the color of resignation and pallor of death" (Bjørkvold 1989, pp. 315) side by side with the sound of elation, hope and heartwarming lyricism, as in accord with the composer's own vision that underscored this marvelous work: "Its basic ideals are the sufferings of man, and optimism. I wanted to convey optimism asserting itself as a world outlook through a series of tragic conflicts in a great inner, mental struggle" (Bjørkvold 1989, pp. 316). No one should be surprised then that Shostakovich, who was claimed to be an epitome of a "dual creative persona" and who therefore naturally found his niche in symphonic music, for "the creative friction of dualities is the very stuff of symphony", when asked in an interview to pinpoint some essential guidelines in his aesthetic microcosm, replied that "his aesthetic included both Bach and Offenbach", hinting thereby at the juxtaposition of "profundity and levity", of "a Dostoyevskian capacity for tragedy and a Gogolian capacity for satire" that his music embodied, of "the power to strike tragedy and the ability to etch a gothic grotesquerie across the heavens in its witty, zig-zag calligraphy" (Stevenson 1982, pp. 81 – 103), the same quality that crystallized over a century or so in the lineage of composers spanning from Mussorgsky to Prokofiev as authentically Russian in style.

As it usually happens, the internal clashes of personal demons inside the artist's soul become intensified by the dialectical pulls imposed on one by the social milieu in which one artistically express oneself and Dmitri Shostakovich was all but an exception to this rule, having experienced a constant antagonism between his own inclination to pathos and fatalism and the demands for optimism and elation coming from the proletarian voices to which he reluctantly conformed throughout his career. A critic thus found an analogy for the latter in "a tightrope-walk between opposed temptations, whether those of *Proletkult* and the avant-garde, as in the early Leningrad years, or between private musing and public display, as so often in the middle-period symphonies" (Norris 1982, pp. 170), seeing in the composer an exemplar of "a dissociation of identity very like that suffered by the protagonist in tragic drama" brought about by the ideological tension that was tearing apart his whole being from the inside out. This psychic split evokes the fate of Robert Schumann, who alternated between two contrasting personalities in his compositions, one being Eusebius, the creature of a taciturn and melancholic disposition, and another being Florestan, the creature of an impetuous and spirited disposition, setting grounds for the schism that would occur in the compo-

ser's own mind as well.

Rarely ever was the juxtaposition of a downward drag into depths of depression and an elated opening of the heart to the endless beauty of the Universe as pronounced in the classical realm as in the music of Gustav Mahler, widely praised for its embodying a blend of musical elements seemingly not combinable at all, such as "the intimacy of solo songs and the grandiosity of symphonic music, a sublime musical language with the simplicity of folk melodies" (Anon. 2012). His Ninth Symphony, for example, possesses a sundry of such entwinements of mutually antipodal emotions, be it:

- the alternation of the sublime syncopated theme that opens the first movement and the antithetic, dark, loud and gloomy one, all until they merge into one at about four-fifths of its course;

- the ballroom ländler suggestive of romance intercepted with cavalry-like sounds evocative of battleship in the second movement;

- the third movement that begins with an elfish leap of curiosity and then allows the downward drag of stringency to be blown into it;

- or the fourth, final movement wherein the esterbend flows of eternity-evoking tranquility clash with the climactic rises into impassionate heights.

As another example, the third and last stanza of his song I*ch bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* is orchestrated so that it sinks into an abiding quietness and placidity in synchrony with the singing voice delivering a triumphant punch line that lifts the song from the abysses of a sense of permanent loss to a sudden arrival at the doorsteps of heavenly happiness (Fig.2). In view of this, it should not surprise that *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* invited a music critic to notice how "a divinely serene and deeply sad melody runs throughout, at which you will both smile and weep" (Hefting 2002, pp. 202). Hence, when Mahler paid his only visit to Sigmund Freud, the psychotherapist concluded that the composer's thirst to produce "the conjunction of high tragedy and light amusement (was the reason) why his music has always been prevented from achieving the highest rank through the noblest passages, those inspired by the most profound emotions being spoiled by intrusion of some commonplace melody" (Johnson 2007, pp. 181). On a different note, other critics have found exactly this "juxtaposition of profundity and apparent banality one of the things that makes Mahler so fascinating" (Johnson 2007, pp. 182). Listen, for example, to the famous *Trauermarsch*, the opening movement of Mahler's Fifth Symphony, sounding as if Eshu, himself, the deity of crossroads, composed it right after he had made his famous walk through a village wearing a hat that was white on one side and black on the other, causing the villagers to engage in a fiery quarrel over what color the hat really was, wishing to teach them that even the diametrically opposite insights can be both truthful at the same time. In this case, one has a hard time deciding whether the march is triumphant or a funeral one and drawing a line where the optimistic gazes upward, into the heavens end and the down-

ward looks of deep depression, into the darkest existential abysses begin and *vice versa.*

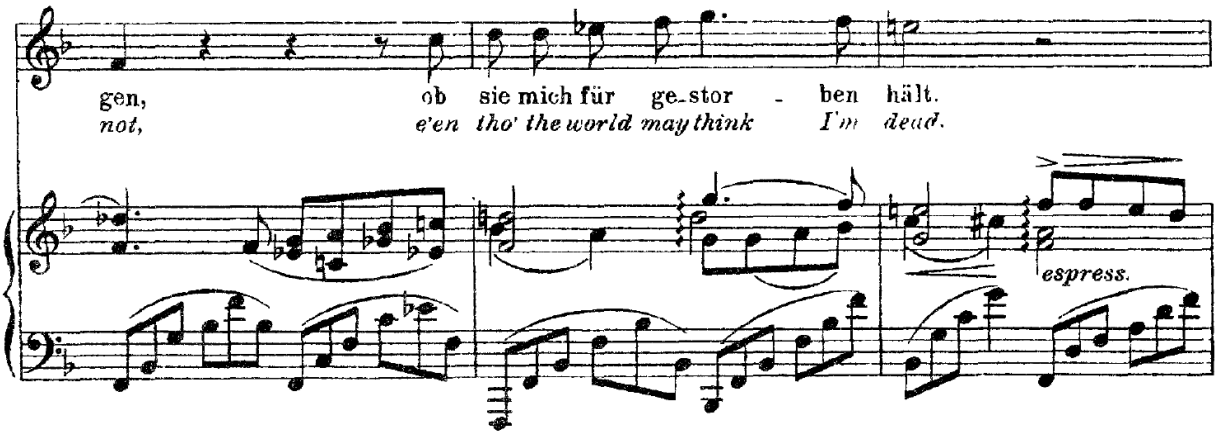

Fig.2. Mahler's *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* composed to the lines of a poem by Friedrich Rückert is analogous to a musical web comprising innumerable tangled antagonistic pulls in diametrically opposite ways, into the dark and into the light, only one of which may be illustrated by this moment in the song where the voice exclaims its death to the world while the orchestra switches suddenly from relative quietness to an exuberant demonstration of joy evocative of life.

The operas of Richard Wagner, Mahler's main musical predecessor, are, then, often praised for their neo-Hegelian, dialectical character in which heavy darkness dances around with fairy-like lightness, and Wagner himself described his music as a "heroic funeral" (Chua 1999, pp. 224), clearly alluding to a clash between a heroic and triumphant shine of spirit and a deathful descent into perfect stillness. Similar battles of darkness and light could be found in many other pieces of classical music, from Classicism to atonality, unexpectedly dazzling us with their simple, yet genially moving glints of unearthly splendor. Hence, when a modern American composer, John Corigliano (2009) revealed that his aim in music is "to try to locate and develop the deep harmony between seemingly disparate materials: exotic and familiar, primitive and sophisticated, old and new", might he have known that every enticing artistic expression comes forth as a concoction of contrasts. For, "musical form is the result of the 'logical discussion' of musical material" (Craft 1959, pp. 15), as Igor Stravinsky observed in support of the dialectical character of all the crucial elements of the musical composition and performance.

One example of such a dialogue of musical elements in a piece may come from the first movement of Haydn's comical Symphony No. 88, where the opening tune of the allegro part and its accompaniment, representing two characters, "fight like Laurel and Hardy" (Hurwitz 1992, pp. 53), with their roles becoming reversed near the middle of the movement, before the flute heralds a restoration of the dominancy of the original tune. Another one among innumerable romantic examples could be Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No.7 in D minor, in the first movement of which the Bohemian composer used the concept of harmonic uncertainty by invoking a contrasting, lyrical major-key episode to reinforce the echo of mournfulness and fatality of the central, minor-key motif in the listener's head, the idea to which he would return again in

the last movement when he let the orchestra wrench the music from the somber sentiments to the enraptured ones before the piece eventually concluded with an uplifting touch. When it comes to atonal modernism from the first half of the 20th Century, one example may be the opening movement of Béla Bartók's String Quartet No. 4, where through glissandos, trills and homophonic gaps two themes contrast each other like day and night, the aggressive, dancelike theme and "a mysterious, dark and tranquil one" (Papaspyrou 2011). Then, when critics describe the symphonic works of Jean Sibelius as "Italian music gone north" (Hurwitz 2007, pp. 87), the enthralling nature of their soundscape is being implicitly ascribed to the confounding concoction of the Mediterranean warmth and the Scandinavian iciness intrinsic to them.

Back to Wagner's music, the meeting of a passionate tempest of emotions in it, like a "sonorous tide whose sunlit waves now came to expire at my feet" (Storr 1992, pp. 118), as Jean-Paul Sartre put it, can also be invoked as the reason for the huge discrepancy in people's ascribing value to it; namely, some have tended to be enchanted by it, while others, including Rossini, who once sat on a piano to produce grandiloquent dissonance and illustrate what Wagner's music was leading to (Lebrecht 1985, pp. 169), seem to have been thoroughly repelled by the "lordly pretension, self-aggrandizement and mystagogical self-dramatization" (Lebrecht 1985, pp. 119), as Thomas Mann would call it. Whichever the response, Wagner's style was built on positing unexpected sentiments next to one another; or, as put forth in the first stanza of a humoresque poem entitled *Direction for Composing a Wagner Overture*, "A sharp where you'd expect a natural, a natural where you'd expect a sharp, no rule observe but exceptional, and then bring in a harp" (Lebrecht 1985, pp. 169).

The most renowned successor of Wagner's operas in which the sounds of a funeral and of a carnival are merged in a most rapturous way imaginable, Gustav Mahler faced an equal variety of critical responses to his works (Painter & Warvig 2002, pp. 267 – 378), ranging from utmost repugnance to exhilarating adoration, quite logical in view of the dialectical nature of his characteristic sound, which has been unanimously labeled as the one of "painful wondrousness" (Pfohl 2002, pp. 342), a concoction of the tragically deathful spirit and the vibe of marble virgins dancing in timeless, ethereal spaces of the human mind. Among those who worshipped him, Mahler, having taught himself a mastery in crafting dialectical clashes of opposites and yielding states of illuminative syntheses thereby, was praised for an exceptional ability to interweave "powerful fortes and scarcely audible pianos" and draw tonal threads that divide light from shadow, "as unique for their ascent to dizzying peaks climaxed by ecstatic force as for their pianissimo hovering at the point of dematerialization", "evoking secrets and questions that are most consoling and threatening for every existence" (Maier 2002, pp. 76). Mahler's drive to produce idiosyncratic juxtapositions of antipodes was allegedly, according to rather hostile critics of his work and personality (Hirschfeld 2002, pp. 344), caused by the conflicting relationship of the composer with his social milieu, which he simultaneously sought approval from and looked down on from the sublime vistas of his Apollonian mind whereon otherworldly muses prayed, sang and danced. More sympathetic critics confronted these allegations by outlining misery, sadness and joy, all entwined in Mahler's life events (Revers 2002, pp. 173 – 183), as

the key that unbolted the creative space in which he tamed the dragonish forces of darkness and let the pearly muses of paradise dance side by side with them.

The music of yet another Romanticist, Felix Mendelssohn was widely criticized exactly because of one such neglect of the emotionality and spiritual voids into which it inevitably drags those enwrapped in its heavenly quilt on the account of an overemphasis on light fancifulness (Niecks 1991, pp. 384). The most admired traits of his musical work came from the subtle blends of the sprightly and the gloomy, the vivacious and the grave, though only in rare moments nearly as intricate and moving as those accomplished by his predecessor and the gold standard for what Romantic music should sound like: Ludwig van Beethoven. One of the typical juxtapositions of contrasts in Mendelssohn's music came from the composer's habit of placing a tranquil terminus at the end of heroic phrases, as exemplified by *Andante and Rondo Capriccioso*, where not only is the first and the slower segment of the piece composed in the major E key, while the faster one proceeds in the minor E key, when the other way around would have been naturally expected (Radcliffe 1954, pp. 164 – 165), but the slower of the two phrases comprising the melody from the intro ends with a crescendo, while the more energetic one ends tranquillo. In addition to this, the transition from the soft melody of the opening in E major to a dramatic C major passage followed by a climactic return to E major is such that the diminished sevenths are left as remnants of this transitory passage, darkening the otherwise bright mood of the major key. This brings us to another element from the repertoire of Mendelssohn's artistic mastery, which is the imposition of contrasting countermelodies, be they the elating passages that intercept the ominous melodic flow of the Beethovenian second movement of the Italian symphony, the countermelody played by the cellos against the main theme upon its reiteration towards the end of the somber first movement of the Scottish symphony, or the bassoon-colored part accompanied by a "marvelous chromatic descent" (Spies 1991, pp. 101) appearing twice, suddenly, in the course of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* overture, three minutes into the opening and three minutes before its tranquil ending that symbolically takes the listener back to the beginnings.

On top of all this, it is worth pointing out that the classical music forms are inherently texturally dichotomous, as illustratable by the relationships between soloists and the choir in responsorial singing practiced since antiquity, between soloists and instrumental ensembles in concertos, and between pairs of contrasting themes in sonata compositions. The construction of keyboard instruments using distinct black and white keys, the distinction between semitone and whole tone in scale construction, like that between the diatonic and the chromatic scales, are fundamental polarities from which these contrast at the level of the composition have come to emerge. Moreover, compared to the modern music for the masses, whose emphasis on sheer entertainment makes it akin to drugs that stop the symptoms of depression for a while, but then restore them with many times higher intensity when the music subsides, the classical music has rarely ever been the display of one-sided emotions. Usually, if there is ecstasy, there is also a grain of doubt peeking from the back; if there is flow, there is also restrain on the edges; if there is fright, there is usually, but not always, a flicker of hope hearable in the distance or sometimes making its way to the fo-

refront of the soundscape; and so on. Intrinsic to the classical sound, this juxtaposition of a variety of emotions, naturally streaming through the human spirit in togetherness, creating harmonies that stupefy and bedazzle, that hinder or move, helps the listener rebalance his versatile emotional makeup and become a whole, healthy and sapient human being.

3. Examples from pop rock music genre

Not all popular music entertaining the masses is frivolous and numerous songs could be used to illustrate the idea that combining emotions and perspectives that appear hardly compatible at all is what endows artistic pieces with the ability to captivate the attention of the listeners and enlighten them. Innumerable are also complex songs that require a sophisticated ear to perceive how their expansion on a single emotional plane is infused with subtle tones or instrumental lines that splendidly contradict this basic emotion and thus contribute to the captivating multidimensionality of the song. Therefore, to select a musical piece that one is fond of and look for the precise instrumental sections that leave one breathless upon their appearance usually leads to recognizing that this section stands in partial opposition to the emotional content of its background. Building musical works of art with this guideline in mind results in pieces in which each instrument has a personality of its own; in a multidimensional collision of their multitude, the stellar bursts of artistic beauty are produced.

3.1. Concoctions of the dark and the dreamy

Should we give a listen to Salem's *King Night* (2010), we might hear a similar clash of tonal colors as that intrinsic to Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony: the horror of frightening drums that resemble falling bombs and whizzing warplanes, although blended with angelic melodies sung in the background. A similar theme can be found in the song *Murmurs* recorded four years later, in 2014, by the band *Hundred Waters*, with ambulance sirens hearable in the van in which the band did the recordings, making it impossible for the listener to draw a line between the frightening cacophony in it and the soothing aural waves of motherly comfort evoked to counteract these primordial fears. Likewise, when Tracey Thorn sings about protection, about safety and about comforting another to the rhythmic sound resembling the frightening whir of helicopter blades in Massive Attack's *Protection* (1994), this encounter of opposites conceals the secret to the song's timeless beauty. In fact, since British pop artists of the 1980s found the blend of darkness and dreaminess captivating, including the likes of the Smiths, whose mood is "bleakly beautiful" (Law 2013) and whose "every song is hummable and melancholic in equal measure" (Anon. 2019), the Cure, Depeche Mode, Siouxsie & the Banshees, Soft Cell and early Cocteau Twins, the band whose "greatest ability was to be very frightening and very pretty at the same time" (Anon. 2016), many have embraced this transfixing

duality of ominously dark and joyfully dreamy.

The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, the first and the foremost pop record that disobeyed the attribute of entertaining and came unprecedentedly close to that of classical (Uskoković *et al.* 2024), offers an especially striking example of one such concoction of dark and dreamy. Listening to this possibly the most important piece of pop music, one may get an impression that it presents a mixture of innumerable human emotions, aside from being recorded with the use of multiple exotic instruments and voices. At certain moments it feels as if ultimately joyful and chaste cellars of one's dreamy childhood and the darkest dungeons of one's fears and depressing visions have opened in one's mind in parallel and got wrapped up together in the flight of fancy that the sound of this record conveys. *Rubber Soul*, a record that presented a turning point in the oeuvre of the Beatles and offered a similar mix of spirited and dismal, presented a great inspiration for Brian Wilson in the making of this epic collection of songs: "The arrangement demonstrates the stark use of contrasting tones and textures – elements Brian used to maximum advantage in designing the instrumental arrangements for Pet Sounds" (Granata 2003, pp. 72). Here, Paul McCartney praised Brian Wilson's bass lines not only for their being literally offbeat, but also for "putting the note where it was not supposed to be" (Granata 2003, pp. 197), yielding an aural multidimensionality that could be cited as the key to the timeless sense of magic emerging from the grooves of this record. At its pinnacle, the song *God Only Knows*, which, like the tallest cypress tree in a garden at night, majestically towers over the rest of the record, three voices overlap, each declaring godly love for Thee, and "if we were to freeze any given moment in that vocal tag, we'd likely hear a major-minor chord" (Granata 2003, pp. 177), serving as an example of this blend of elating and saddening within a single aural pot.

Pyramid Song by Radiohead (2001) is another example we may pick from the endless catalogue of modern music that fills the listener with twinkly speckles of fear and sparkles of joyous stars at the same time. It plunges the listener into an amnesiac sea of meditative blankness and yet lets the antique archetypal memories astoundingly emerge on the surface of his mind like mermaids and pearls from the mysterious depths of the ocean of the mind. Quite along these lines falls the song *What Else is There* (2005) by Royksopp, combining spacey synthesizers and soft drumbeats that have an uplifting effect on the listener with the melancholic and downing voice of Karin Andersson. At the confluence of these two streams, the listener is dragged in both directions, sublimely up and despondently down, which produces an enchantingly multidimensional, mind-opening effect on him. Another landmark aural site where the strong cohesion between the deepest emotional downs and the most elated emotional highs could be sensed lies impressed in the grooves of Big Star's record *Third / Sister Lovers*, explaining why a Rolling Stone critic said that "to listen to it is to be plunged into a maelstrom of conflicting emotions" (Puterbaugh 1992). Cut by the sharp blade of the disparity between critical praise and commercial failure following the release of the Big Star debut, #1, a combination of disappointment and joy spilled out of the music on the following releases of the band, the next of which the critics described as "an ever-deepening work that is at once funny, sad, and frightening... miraculously treading the line between credible naiveté and jaded satire" (DeNicola &

Mori 2012), starting a trend that culminated for many in Chris Bell's I Am the Cosmos (1992), the record about which a critic said the following: "Records I like have a lot of Yang and a lot of Yin. You know, I like for things to be the way batteries work". In fact, when a Pitchfork Media journalist, Jeremy Gordon describes A Sunny Day in Glasgow's song *In Love With Useless (The Timeless Geometry in the Tradition of Passing)* as "the stuff Buddhist koans are made of: a song that conveys both weight and weightlessness, floating like a butterfly while punching like a prizefighter" (Anon. 2015), one could wonder if that exact same description could be applied to most tunes that profoundly exalt the spirits of contemporary youths. For, just like gravity and grace were combined in Simone Weil's vision of the Universe (Weil 1942), so are some of the most impressive tunes of the modern music built around heavy downward drags into the dark wells of depression, while at the same time lifting the listeners up into the air by the lightness of their touching, angelically, the empyreal side of the emotional palette of our beings.

3.2. Confluences of various ups and downs

The modern pop song format, in fact, offers innumerable opportunities for dialectical confluences of auditory associations where lyrics would pull the listener one way, while the music exerts a push in an antithetic direction, producing a dazzling flash of enlightenment in the listener's head and oftentimes leading him to comment along a similar line of thought as that shared by an anonymous person on Portishead's *Roads* (1994): "This is the type of song you want to cry to, to kiss to, to make love to, and slice your wrists too all at the same time; so many emotions in this song" (punkarchy1 2011). And when Yim Yames of My Morning Jacket – a rock band that has done a favor to the American country music by rejuvenating it and enabling its escape from the lackluster birdhouse it is caged in with the psychedelic mellowness that they infused it with – sings about a knot coming loose inside one's heart (2005), in the distance one could hear a joyful melody played by the piano confronting a sad voice, distantly evoking "the honky-tonk sounding tack piano buried deep within the 'sometimes I feel very sad' theme" (Granata 203, pp. 128 – 129) in the lamenting tune from the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds, I Just Wasn't Made For These Times.* Remotely, this pairing of (a) the saddening downward glide of the vocalized notes on the scale and (b) the jollily hoppy piano melody calls to mind the Kooks' *See the Sun* (2008) and the magical moment in it when the vocalist utters "I see the sun rising but all you see is its fall, fall, fall", with every subsequent "fall" being sung at a lower pitch while the song simultaneously transitions into a mini-climax, prompting us to consider each musical masterstroke as a crossroad where various ups and downs or lefts and rights are being synchronously invoked. Finally, depression and elation strived to be concocted in the music of the Stone Roses too, and the band saw the blend of bubblegum pop softness and punk rock hardness as one the progenies of this marriage between ups and downs ought to strive for, the reason for which they had settled on "stone roses" in search of a name for both themselves and their eponymous debut record, commenting years later that it "doesn't mean anything, it's hard and soft, which is sort of what we are" (Spence 2012, pp. 40).

Radiohead's *No Surprises* consists of Thom Yorke's sad and weary singing superimposed on top of joyous twinkles of the lead guitar and light rocking of the boat of harmonies left and right, similarly producing a magical blend of jumpy joyousness and dispirited melancholy, which prompted an anonymous online commenter to conclude how "this song is so great: it is sad when I am sad and happy when I am happy" (ninjakitty88 2006). If one leans one's ears and heart even closer to the rocking boat of emotions that this song is, swinging freely between the moods of elatedness and dispiritedness, one may not be able to tell if its harmonic base rolls lazily through a single chord, modally, or flows through a standard progression thereof or both, a harmonic effect that lies at the core of the song's schismatic blend of monotonousness and movingness, directly contributing to concocting the cocktail of melancholy and merriment in its aural content (Fig.3). Like John Keats (1821), crying "O Melancholy, linger here awhile" (pp. 148) one moment and "O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away" (pp. 151) another moment in his elegy on the death of Isabella, or the Pot of Basil, alternately embracing and shunning sadness and making way in and out for the light of joy inside his and the reader's mind, producing a sense of holy bedazzlement thereby, so does this song sway one's boats on the sea of melancholy, under the starry sky of joy, creating a narrow, but infinitely lasting pathway to beauty that is truth and truth that is beauty, as the English poet deemed it in *Ode on a Grecian Urn.*

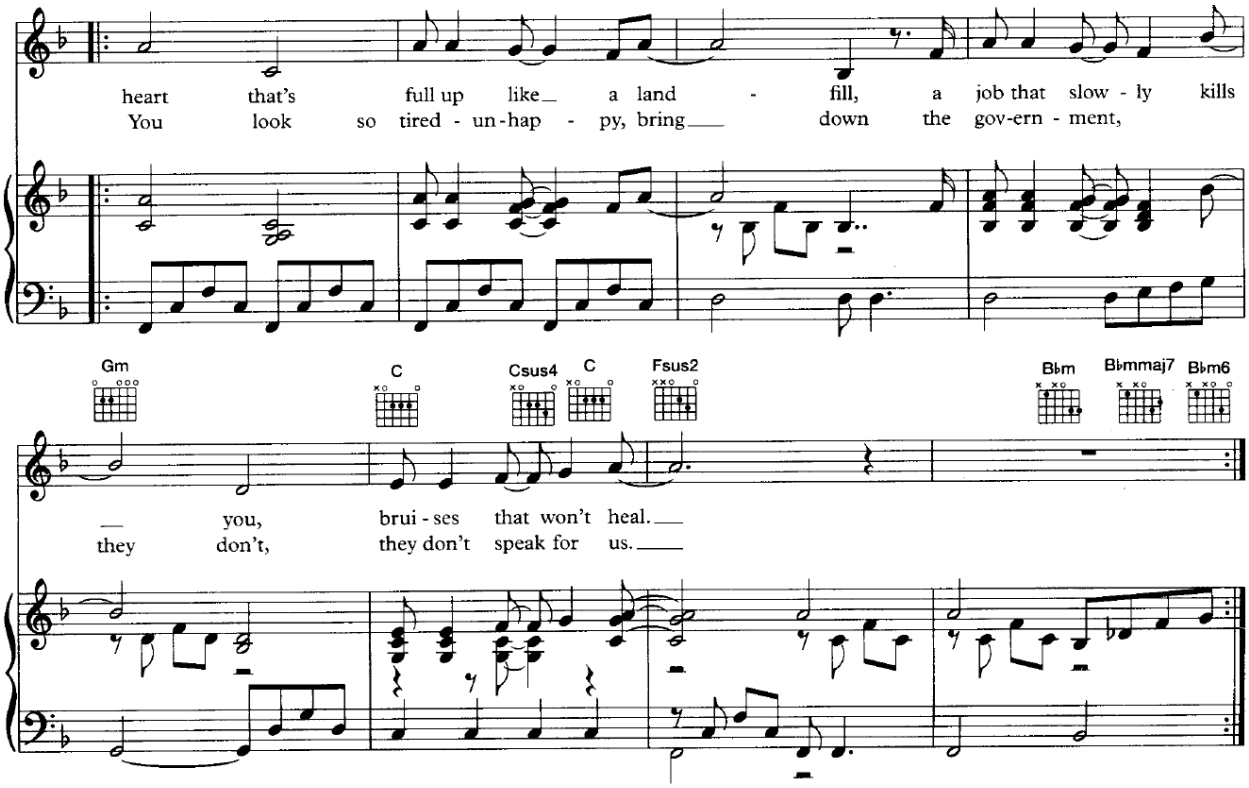

Fig.3. *No Surprises* by Radiohead exemplifies a song that makes it difficult to untangle whether its harmonic base is modal or it involves a subtle chord progression, making the sound simultaneously monotonous and moving, melancholic and merry.

From here on, I could confidently say that the most striking works in the pop music genre are neither exclusively dark and depressing nor solely hip and joyous. Rather, the most sublime artistic accomplish-

ments in this realm are tied to combining the two to the right measure and creating fabulous concoctions of heavenly grief and cosmic joy, nectars from which gods and angels will gladly drink from. Sad and shadowy, grievingly confessional melodies coupled with lush percussions and rhumboid drumbeats cheerfully rattling in the background is what makes the iconic A-side of Marvin Gaye's record *What's Going On* sound so fabulous, captivating and ageless. Despite an enormous amount of music produced on our planet each day, it is quite possible that the world has yet to hear of an equally striking musical way of coupling a talk about "too many of you crying, too many of you dying" (Gaye 1971) to luscious dance beats, where the latter do not dilute and diminish, but accentuate and reinforce the former message of compassion and the former do not dissipate and drive to standstill the dancing vibe of the song, but deepen it instead. Likewise, a reviewer of *Protest Songs* by Prefab Sprout praised Paddy McAloon's songwriting for producing songs that are "incredibly dreamy, yet a certain tension is always broiling just beneath the surface, just enough to keep the listener on his/her toes and (make sure that) it never really succumbs to laziness or excessive languidness" (Ankeny 1985), pinpointing the dialectics that permeates the deep aural layers of tunes by the North England's favorite 1980s band.

Public Enemy's rap chef-d'oeuvre, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* owes its genius to an idea to create sounds that would be tense but also thrilling, shrilly but also sprightly, disquieting but also elating, unsettling but also danceable, transmitting thereby the urgency for something revolutionary to happen while moving people in joy and positivity in that direction, alongside, of course, embodying a balance of vocal opposites in the form of Chuck D's solidity, seriousness and stability on one side and Flavor Flav's frivolousness, flightiness and sprightliness on the other. The sound of Roxy Music, particularly on their second record, *For Your Pleasure*, epitomizes the aesthetic benefits produced by the clash of visions within a band, each pulling the creation into an opposite direction, notwithstanding that such antagonisms rarely last for a very long time. In the case of this English band, this polarity was formed between the conventionalism and gregarious, retro, alpha-male persona of Bryan Ferry on one end and the avant-garde, futuristic and experimental musical style and introverted, queer personality of Brian Eno on the other, and it logically came to an end soon after this classic recording was released.

3.3. The case of Radiohead

Returning to the sound of Radiohead, we could reemphasize its bursting with anger and bitterness in parallel with awakening angelical softness and grace, evoking in the distance the very teaching style of the Christ, presumably captivating for centuries due to its blend of seemingly diametrical opposites: fury and grace, anger and love. Listen to Thom Yorke from *The Bands* era, sending out angry outcries through gnashed teeth, though combined with shrill sublimity of the sounds emerging from his throat, and you will be teleported to vistas pervaded by greatly elevated aesthetical senses, prayerful and aerial, feeling as if standing face-to-face with the snow-white statues of Greek goddesses, while at the same time being in-

fused by the furious powers that thrill and propel your spirit swimming in these aural waters upwardly and allow it to grittily explode with the treasures held inside in all directions. Fiercely repelled from the stiff and phony world of grownups, as if wishing to distance himself as far as possible from it, an impression is that he has returned to the stage of an emotively eruptive infant, vocally and emotionally, in whom cranky cries of sheer frustration have become blended with a sense of soft and soulful squatness inside the mother's warm womb or embrace.

What makes the music of Radiohead special and different from the plethora of the band's indie followers is a phenomenal ability to couple this depressing pull downwards with uplifting outbursts of inner strength and optimism, giving the latter a whole new, deeper dimension, as if suns of spirit reborn to save the world are made to illuminate one's insides, sending sunrays of thrillingly moving energy all around one, at the same time as one's heart spills its content in infinite sadness and despair, as if it has fallen into a black star of a kind, the concoction hearable on practically every song on *The Bends* and *OK Computer*, the two records that stand forth as gemmed crowns of the band's space rock phase. As for Radiohead's *OK Computer* (1997), considered by many to be the epitaph to the classic concept rock album, innumerable dialectical crisscross pulls lie engraved in the record's grooves (Footman 2007, pp. 46), including:

- the opening notes of *Airbag*, evoking collision of the feelings of crashing and vanishing on one side and ascending, subliming, being "born again" and pining to "save the world" on the other;

- the chopping and piercing progressive sound of paranoia in *Paranoid Android* heard alongside its opposite in terms of placidly peaceful tonal colors resembling droplets plucked from angelically white clouds where rainmaking Gods overseeing the Earth reside;

- the mishmash of otherworldliness and alienation from the uptight terrestrial social niche on one side and an openness of the heart and mind to the entire Cosmos and millions of planets and stars teeming with life in it on the other in *Subterranean Homesick Alien*;

- the dizzying ascent of our mind along stairs of sublime sentimentality coupled to feeling as if our consciousness has been "crushed like a bug in the ground" into an incoherent swarm of stars in our head, turning *Let Down* into "a rapturous, cathedral-like tribute to utter misery" (Footman, 2007, pp. 73);

- the cryptic electronic voice of *Fitter Happier* that declares a list of things to be done in what appears to be an inseparably ambivalent concoction of sympathetic benevolence and cold remoteness, leaving the listener unsure whether the guidance to become a superbly creative and happy individual or a miserably fitting screw in the social machinery sends its echoes to his ears, all sauced with the outcry, "I go forwards, you go backwards, somewhere we will meet", in *Electioneering*;

- the blending of the identities of the delinquent, intrusive and mentally rapist climbing-up-the-wall "I" and panicky, scared-of-otherness-to-the-bone and hidden-behind-the-facade-of-a-warm-home "You" in *Climbing Up the Walls*;

- the mood of depression, despair and claustrophobia, all depicted by Thom's submerging himself under water in the video clip for *No Surprises*, blended with an outburst of joy that touches stars in its boundless uplift, yielding "a ravishing, soothing melody coupled with downbeat subject matter" (Footman 2007, pp. 109), "a bitter lyric bundled up in a gorgeous tune" (Footman 2007, pp. 110), as if joy and sadness are made to hold their hands together and endlessly spin in orbit around each other[1];

- the sound of terror and war in *Lucky*, of helicopters hovering over our heads and trembling face-down plunges into muddy trenches mixed with the heroic rise into sublime planes of being whereon love and peace sovereignly reign, as if fulfilling the central aim of ancient Chinese musicians to aurally draw a space wherein Heaven and Earth meet (Hart and Lieberman 1999, pp. 56) while "standing on the edge" wherefrom these visionary landscapes could be seen;

- the very closing lines of the record where a sense of unstoppable streaming towards supersonically stellar realms of being confronts simultaneous letting of the "slow down" cry of our soul to slide down the kaleidoscopic slide of our consciousness with graceful nostalgia;

- love/hate relationship with robots and computers that subtly emanates from behind each corner of the record's captivating soundscape.

Even the title of this record that surprisingly quickly established itself as an etalon to compare other albums against in the critical milieu insinuates a blend of opposites, of sympathetic humaneness and a robotically cold mode of being; or, as articulated by Tim Footman (2007, pp. 141), "The two words – the informal, cheery 'OK' (perhaps accompanied by a thumbs-up) and the cool, mechanical 'Computer' (suggesting unemotional analysis and calculation) – make an unlikely pairing; but that, in a way, is what the album's about: the flawed, flesh-and-blood human, trying against the odds to achieve happiness, or at least OK-ness; pitted against the megalithic power of industry, electricity, ones and zeroes".

Further, in the times dominated by emotionally linear, one-dimensionally sounding singers, Thom Yorke's singing style stood out due to its touching combination of slacken downiness, disheartened lethargy and unpretentious weariness on one rail along which the train of his vocal expressions journeyed and yearning for beauty, tear-jerking passion and radiant fervor on another. As such, the singer sounded as if trying hard to impress anyone and, at the same time, as if trying his best to dig out the voices of unearthly beauty and deliver them outwards so that many glistening eyes of the world could be adorned with it. Be-

1 Radiohead – "No Surprises", In: OK Computer, Parlophone (1997).

fuddled at first, the critics and the audiences gradually accepted this blend of opposites intrinsic to the signing style and personality of Thom Yorke; or, as a Pitchfork Media critic, Ryan Dombal (2016), noticed while musing on Yorke's never-ending door-opening walk through an imaginary world spanning sunlit seacoasts and frozen mountain slopes, space elevator rides and dark caves, being unable to untangle whether he is now lost or found, or both at the same time, "Does it show a content middle-aged man who's never met a knob he couldn't turn, or someone terrified of the choices he's made? Is it willfully perplexing or deservedly complex? The answer to all that and more, of course, is yes", *i.e.*, an attempted unity of all sentiments and worldviews under the Sun into an expression as great as the Cosmos, an expression for which the same group of music critics said that "if it were an ice-cream flavor, it would be every flavor mixed together" (Anon. 2017).

3.4. The case of Morrissey

What makes the music of Morrissey and the Smiths so illuminative is the fact that clever cynicism and sincere sentimentality, quite opposite in their essence from each other and seemingly irreconcilable as such, are mashed to such an extent in it that one cannot recognize anymore where one begins and the other ends. Similarly to the way mellifluousness of the voice and the jagged satire of the lyrics are blended in the singing of another popular English singer of the era, Paul Heaton, one cannot draw a line with certainty as to where cynicism and pretense with a thorny appearance begin and where sincere lyricism gliding on euphonious waves end in Morrissey's vocals. In his analysis of the musical reflections of the cultural ripples and streams in England at the dusk of the 20th century, Michael Bracewell (2002, pp. 120) linked Morrissey's status of a superstar, spanning over almost three decades now, with his "presentation of himself as a living contradiction – terminally romantic yet hopelessly unlovable" and went on to claim that "the conflation of opposites and the use of paradox is a fundamental aspect of Morrissey's writing" (pp. 117), while referring to "Morrissey's extraordinary understanding of the artistic power of paradox: if you describe alienation in the voice of a conquering hero or the comedy of hopelessness in the soaring refrain of a love song you create a dynamic of romanticism that triggers immediate empathy through a comic reversal of comedy itself" (pp. 120).

Morrissey's voice is enticing because it resembles an emotional pot in which a little bit of everything, from the best to the worst, is found: gentleness and prickliness, inspiration and desperation, mellowness and destitution, kindness and hate, exaltation and apathy, humbleness and egocentric megalomania, bonding one to all things social while simultaneously shoving them off. Naturally, thus, fans get exalted and depressed at the same time by listening to Morrissey, whose lyrics "sought to tease, amuse, comfort and confront" (Fletcher 2012, pp. 7), and yet always return to his voice for guidance, attesting to the allure of the encounters of antipodes in this life, which the harder it is, the more beautiful it is too, and, conversely, the easier it is, the emptier it gets, while the more we are dragged into the vortices of compassionate melan-

choly, the greater the chance the orbits of our thoughts will be bounced into the realm of heavenly joy, where angels sing their odes to "love that moves the sun and other stars" (Alighieri 1321). Listening to Morrissey's *Everyday is Like Sunday* from *Viva Hate*, for example, with its legendary line "every day is like Sunday, every day is silent and grey", has a stupefying effect on our aesthetic senses because they have a hellishly hard time discerning whether the song is a celebration of the Sunday spirit of joy and emotional laissez faire portrayed by the Velvet Underground (1967) or it is a hymn to squatting in the corner and letting the goddesses of depression fold the wings of our exhilarating spirit, wind it in and out and then magically open the door to expressions that come straight from the bottom of our soul and that are heart-meltingly honest.

3.5. The cases of Oasis and Arctic Monkeys

The music of Oasis, another cult band from Manchester, England, echoing a walk along a thin line between cockiness and coolness had a captivating effect on the listeners owing to its two-way push, towards its empowering message that went beyond mere lyrics and away from its prickly and peevish performers, producing the same effect as that which John Lennon wished to achieve when he referred to heads in the Albert Hall as Lancashire holes (Beatles 1967), repelling the fans and instigating their independent thinking as opposed to fictile and easily exploitable idolatry. The lyrics of the song closing the band's album (1995) recorded at the peak of its radiance, *(What's the Story) Morning Glory?*, describing a ghost "slowly walking down the hall, faster than the cannonball", before finding oneself "caught beneath the landslide, in a champagne supernova in the sky", being accompanied with the characteristic production making high notes sound acerbic and low notes gravelly, directly evidence this inclination toward being crucified on the cross of opposites. And so, when Liam Gallagher, the lead singer of the band, calls his brother "love" and "a sad f***" in a single sentence (Ben-Beaumont-Thomas 2017), he subtly reveals the secret to the (super)sonic power of the band's sound, lying along the thin and sharp line whereat love and hate, two diametrically opposite feelings, meet and coalesce.

Yet another example from British pop music that comes to mind in our treading the thin line of balance between empathic admiration of another and sane independence from another is the song that ends the debut record by Arctic Monkeys (2006), listening to which makes one feel as if explosively shoving away everyone around one in a moody and punkish burst of self-withdrawing rebelliousness and yet devoting one's entire heart and being to each and every one at the same time, evoking an image of a sailor, all in white, standing on a cliff with a gorgeous view of the sea, immersed in a sense of dreamy loneliness and yet giving a marine salute to the world, dedicating oneself entirely to the world. At first the protagonist of the song disparages the surrounding clique "because their minds are all made up", ostensibly criticizing their epistemic closeness and prejudiced frames of mind, but then seconds later he declares unreserved sympathy for them, which reaches a climax in the closing sequence of riffs, a living proof of how mountai-

nously great expressions can arise even when we search vainly for them all throughout their course and then in those last moments pull ourselves from the abyss and ascend into heavens. An older example of this effect may come from *Beggars Banquet*, the Dionysian rock 'n' roll classic conceived by the Rolling Stones, a record that opens with a salutation to the devil, yet after a strenuous walk down a demonic road or flare and fury, it ends with a heavenly praise to the people and a toast to the divinest in us: the love for a fellow soul.

3.6. Of rock 'n' roll as a whole

As a matter of fact, from deep within the grounds of the treasured tradition of rock 'n' roll we could dig out a story of its origins, highlighting this entwinement of devilishness and divineness that resides deep in its core. In it, a cowboy accidentally fell into a snake pit and was unable to escape from it. Having found himself face to face with a rattling snake, he knew that to save himself he needed to tell the snake a story about the beauty of saving lives using, of course, none other but the language of the snake, full of clank and clatter, lest he be misunderstood and bitten by its venomous tongue. Indeed, more often than not in life we are called upon to speak the language of bandits and crooks, lest our showing the ways of salvation be misunderstood, as well as to descend deep in depression and take the dismayed worldly souls resting in these pits by the hand, unless we never become able to bring them back to the daylight, the art which was in the classical realm mastered flawlessly by Franz Liszt, the composer whose "countenance would assume that agony of expression, mingled with radiant smiles of joy, which I never saw in any other human face, except in the paintings of our Savior by some of the early masters" (Lebrecht 1985, pp. 169), and whose music reflected this ambivalence between guilt and gaiety quite veritably.

And so, as Bruce Springsteen (1978) instructed us, we must venture valiantly and with colossal wonder into that devious "darkness on the edge of town", for only there would we be able to get the solid proof of the divine liveliness of our being and glimpse the subtle twinkle of the celestial constellations that we, creatures built from stars, are being made of. Thus, to extend one arm into the muddiest lowlands of being and to reach out in heavenward directions with the other arm of ours, then grasp these termini firmly and turn ourselves into a bridge across which the energies can travel back and forth, drawing roads of salvation before the former and providing contrasts instrumental in preserving enthusiasm and preventing the spread of lethargy to the latter is, correspondingly, what we must do. "Dark and light at the same time" is how Ben Watt (2016) of Everything but the Girl described the music of Bert Jansch, and we ought to be sure that this impression of a simultaneous pull by an unbearably oppressive darkness and immersion into a river of light that liberates and enlivens the spirit is common to every music that reaches out to souls fallen from grace, which we all ultimately are, and brings them back to the daylight of divine experience. With this Janusian recipe in mind, the cowboy succeeded in improvising a story that highlighted the merits of goodness and grace in the snake's ominous, distressing and neurotic language and, as the story

convinces us, gave birth to the sound of rock 'n' roll by his musical storytelling. To this very day, this story stands forth as a reminder that the authentic rock 'n' roll as well as the modern music originating from it will lead to the death of the soul if it retains its prime "kick" whose message is freedom and freedom only and neglects to spread the message of love together with it, when the only way to "save a life" (Fray 2005) is to use this language of freedom, snaky and strident, to tell the story of love, thus interbreeding two of the most fundamental, albeit mutually antagonistic pillars sustaining life, Freedom and Love, spinning in the heart of one another like the black and the white in the Tai-Chi-Tu symbol.

The truest and the most touching examples of rock music have thus retained both its soft side and its shrill side, having their creators' "hearts beating rhythm" while the "soul keeps on singing the blues" (Berry 1956), along with a plethora of other superimpositions of opposites that this has naturally entailed; or, as pointed out by the rock 'n' roll critic, Dave Marsh (2007. pp. 34), "Rock's not all swagger and rebellion; it's their opposite, too; in fact, I would say that rock 'n' roll contains multitudes or else it would have turned into nothing but a fad", before adding that "rock 'n' roll seems to have been both freedom and torment, freedom to do things the world claimed could not be done, torment because of the obstacles to doing them, including the ones you place there yourself". Hereby, if a captivating encounter of opposites can be found routinely engrained in this sound, we can be sure that it is the one of lifesaving beauty and soothing harmony on one side and banging and throbbing fury and anger on the other, relentlessly washing over each other. Like the "sweet and salty" (Cousins 2012) of the river and the ocean, respectively, the meeting point of which is often cited as the one where life has originated, so is it with this entwinement of madness and grace, for life, really, is naturally born and rejuvenated on the back of it. Dionysian and Apollonian vibes, forming a duality formulated by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), are, in fact, so neatly balanced in most tunes picked from this genre that the guiding voices of "the god of intoxication, wine, ecstasy, and of drunkenness bordering on violence and madness" (Gioia 2006, pp. 71 – 72) of the former and of "the deity who epitomizes restraint, purity, and orderliness" (Gioia 2006, pp. 72) of the latter seem to be inextricably entwined around each other like a pair of passionate lovers.

Some might say that this music still speaks to snakes in us and is thus inherently imperfect and damaging for the global consciousness, for it implicitly supports such sinuously serpentine stances and worldviews that hide hissing anger deep in their core. Others may, however, object to this point, claiming that the missionary path for the enlightened ones, those who keep the lifesaving beauty glowing within their hearts, takes them straight to the darkest and most hellish reigns of them all, for it is there that the glow of their spirits will be most meaningful for the accomplishment of their mission of saving the world, which, thus, endows the rock 'n' roll sound with a far greater glow of perfection than it seems. Just like Orpheus developed otherworldly creative capacities and managed to soften hearts of innumerable souls around him and let them sublimely float in the air by dedicating his life to the mission of "reforming the religion of Dionysus in the spirit of Apollo" (Gioia 2006, pp. 72), so is there the room for belief that lear-

ning the poisonous rattling and humming language of the snakes in us first and then permeating it with the lifesaving rhythm and melody – like a benevolent alien that infiltrates a spoiled system pretending to be its veritable part, but only to begin to change it for better once comfortably set inside of it – is the road which the most courageous, Orphean creative spirits in this world will set their feet on.

In any case, had rock 'n' roll sound remained at the level of shallow boogie-woogie and overly predictable, linearly sounding rockabilly, carrying forth an aural vibe that is said to be strictly masculine, inspired by boyish fascinations with "mechanical and rotary motion – rolling, spinning, twisting, screwing" (Eisenberg 2005, pp. 80), it would have failed to evolve into the most powerful musical stream on the planet that it is now. Luckily for us, however, these solely Yang features of its rocky beginnings, which were all about providing an impetus for aimless jiggling and joggling, happened to become balanced with their diametrical opposites in terms of watery, Yin softness and floaty and gentle, inherently feminine cravings to embrace all life in one's arms and lull it to a sound sleep, helping rock 'n' roll to evolve into a sound wherein "there are monsters, there are angels, there's a peacefulness and a rage, there is sugar and there is salt, there is ice and there is fire" (Voice of the Beehive 1991) and with the mesmerizing power of these innate contradictions pioneer a trail that gradually broadened into a starlit avenue, now an essential musical medium for the relentlessly fresh exhibitions of modern artiness.

As a matter of fact, every time we tie a string onto a guitar frame and tune it, we are invited to think of how smoothness and silkiness of sound can be given rise to only insofar as the string's tightness and rigidity are preserved. "It was juxtaposition of something being extremely tight, but very loose at the same time" (Gibney 2014), is how Christian McBride described the Famous Flames' *Cold Sweat*, allegedly the first funk song ever recorded, before extending the same description to jazz *per se*, which we now, after witnessing how the imposition of the limitations of the beat has yielded aural frameworks for the dissemination of the greater message of freedom in musical language than the world has ever seen, could apply to the entire realm of popular music in general. Here, the wheels of my memory begin to retrace a critic's fascination with the overlap of a scream that "means abandon, the loss of control" and a guitar sound marked by "remarkable restraint, with gripping rhythmical playing and searching harmony that demand closure" (Attfield 2011, pp. 54), tightly wrapped up around each other in the glaring opening of the ageless album by Dinosaur Jr.: *You're Living All Over Me*. Hence, to shun the more sophisticated rhythmicity of the classical music, where any repetition of the phrases was considered a sin, and imprison the listener inside a beatbox to spread around the ideals of freedom, of gliding through space like an ethereal wavelet liberated from any oppression, physical or mental, is analogous to the use of a rock to prove the fluidity of water and is a task whose apparent success can bring any cognitive apparatus reflecting on it to the brink of enlightenment.

4. Examples from jazz music genre

The music of Charles Mingus could be a perfect exemplar of the captivating blends of anger and tranquility in the jazz domain. Not only is Mingus being taught in jazz conservatories for his art of playing a musical instrument "softly as well as strongly" (Litweiler 1984, pp. 29), but everywhere in his oeuvre one digs, one finds such concoctions of mellowness and aggression that would later epitomize the sound of Radiohead and many other bands. For example, like a newborn, one moment screaming uncontrollably and the next moment being calm like an angel, so do moods spanning cheerfulness, despondence, vehemence and relaxedness shift in *Los Mariachis* on Mingus' record symbolically titled *Tijuana Moods*. Then, *East Coasting* is a Mingus' record famous for the contrast created by the "free-floating, richly inflected, airy bop fantasies" (Litweiler 1984, pp. 26) of the trumpet player, Clarence Shaw, who spent no longer than a single summer with the band, and the suppressed anger displayed by the rest of the orchestra. One of the key members of Charles Mingus' band in 1960 was Eric Dolphy, an alto saxophonist, bass clarinetist and flutist known for his arrhythmic, free jazz virtuosity, who based his style on free-association solos in which "each element contrasts vitally with all other elements" (Litweiler 1984, pp. 79).

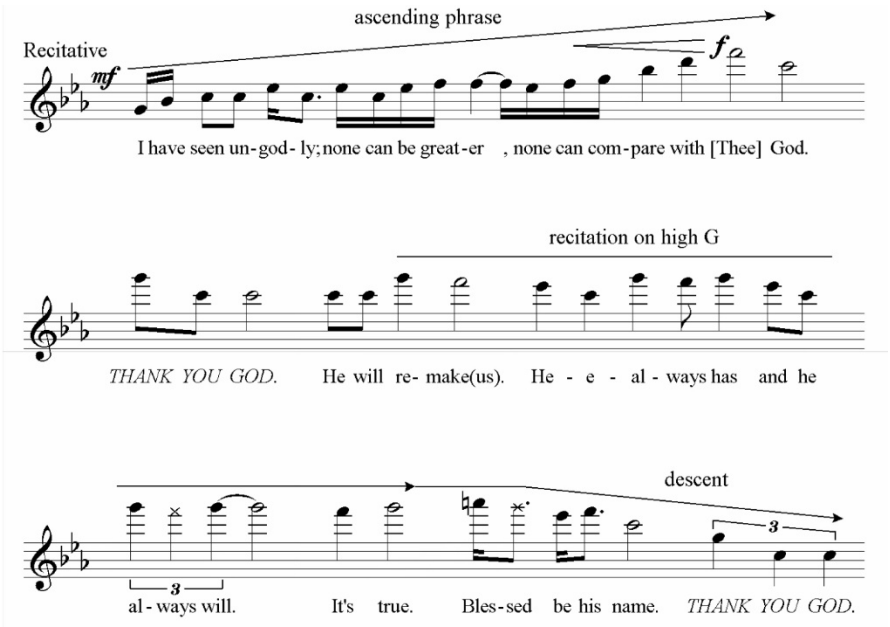

Fig.4. Alternation of ascending and descending phrases typifies Coltrane's sax solos in *A Love Supreme* and is illustrated by lines 57 – 64 from *Psalms*. Eleven out of thirteen occurrences of the phrase "Thank you, God" are accompanied by a minor third or fifth descending to the tonic, suggesting consolation and acceptance and being relentlessly interposed by the rolling piano figures, whispering cymbals, tympani vibrations and bass bow bouncing. Reprinted with permission from Porter 2000, pp. 246.

A Love Supreme, according to many the most significant jazz album ever recorded, brims with a captivating concoction of "anger, joy, sadness, ecstasy, tragedy and triumph" (Anon. 2015). Here, aside from Elvin Jones' asymmetric and polyrhythmic percussions characteristically contrasting with their complexity Col-

trane's straightforwardly rhythmic and harmonically simple passages, one could hear perpetual "multiphonic lines that turn upward" (Porter 2000, pp. 99), suggestive of spiritual yearning, "mingling with downturning phrases", suggestive of acceptance and consolation (Fig.4). When it comes to Coltrane's fellow tenor saxophonist, Sonny Rollins, his style was also applauded for its amalgamation of various sentiments, from blues to swing, with *Blue 7*, the final tune on his most popular album to date, *Saxophone Colossus*, being particularly praised for using the relaxed tone of the song, brimming with laidback feelings, as "freedom that pushes the song to great heights" (Daily Guru 2011), thus showing "how moving one can be without being overly aggressive" and how simplicity can be the route to stellar senses.

Earlier, Miles Davis summed up the dialectical nature of inspiring musicality elaborated here in a simple principle that guided his improvisations on the stage, impelling him to always strive to fill the space not with more of the same, but with a spirit that is different and complementary to the genies released into the atmosphere by the other jazzmen in his ensemble from the magic lamps of their instruments: "Don't play what's there, play what's not there". Therefore, many of the West Coast jazz standards performed by Miles Davis and the likes of Dave Brubeck, Bill Evans and Gerry Mulligan, for instance, contain a blend of a cool, distant dreaminess on one side and of joyous, playful and spontaneous intimateness on another, as if pulling the listener both ways, inside and outside, dreamily focusing him on his centerpiece of consciousness and yet lovingly opening him to the world around. Also, in the four jazz records cosigned by Miles Davis and Gil Evans, from *Miles Ahead* to *Sketches of Spain*, one might hear Evans' relentlessly superimposing dynamic chord changes upon a static, modal harmonic substrate set by Miles (Litweiler 1984, pp. 110), thus producing an aural conflict between stillness and movement that enlivens the human soul. Also, in Miles Davis' second quintet in its acoustic and early electric phases, the first of which started with *E.S.P.* and ended with *Nefertiti*, the first impression is that of the quintet's bold renunciation of any specific emotion by embracing them all at once, proposing an "interchangeability of emotion – or else dispassion"[2] (Litweiler 1984, pp. 110) and thus arriving at an expressionist state of nirvana, unassociated with any sentiment in particular - in line with the advice by "the man down at the tracks" from Television's *Marquee Moon* (1977), the song about "a kiss of death, the embrace of life": "Look here junior, don't you be so happy and, for heaven's sake, don't you be so sad" - and unattached to the transiency of life, floating freely through it, yet being devotedly in love with every instance of it.

5. Examples among the vocalists

Liam Gallagher's voice did draw oases in juvenile heads with its blend of grainy and hoarse, breathtaking rebelliousness on one side and pampered, overindulged and sophisticated, aristocratic girlishness on the

2 According to the author, "Woody Shaw was speaking for his whole generation of modal players when he said: 'I don't like to stay outside too long and I don't like to stay inside too long. I like the music I play to go in many different directions and take on many different colors'" (pp. 119).

other, as much as the one of Van Morrison, the musical guru that elated many spirits of this world, has charmed with its blend of tonic angriness and soul-soothing softness and warmth, conciliation of which, as many sages would confirm, is all but a cakewalk. His boldest and most innovative of records, *Astral Weeks*, the making of which bore much in common with Miles Davis' improvisatory conduction of an orchestra composed of individual improvisers in his fusion, jazz rock phase, was described once as "one of those albums that seemed to be about everything and nothing, the past and the now, the vital and the fleeting, and that somehow stood complete in its vision" (Barton 2011), that is, in its painting an intersection of every emotion under the Sun, the natural addition to which was Ivan's soulful singing in a voice evocative of angry lions and prophets of peace, a voice wherein mystical restfulness and righteous unrest lay dormant to an equal extent.

Listening to Joanna Newsom, one could hardly discern where the witchy voice of an old enchantress ends and where the beatific cries of an infantile child begin, together, however, producing flights of angelic devotion and emotional majesty. Sue Tompkins, the talk-singing vocalist of the Glasgow band, Life Without Buildings (2001), similarly strikes the listener with the blend of harsh insolence and soft wonder as she sings of "looking in your eyes", making it impossible to discern whether it is impertinently staring at an imaginative yuppie with whom she happened to share an elevator ride or gazing at the eyes of a beloved creature as mountains of wonder tumble down into the ocean of her soul that she had in mind. It is as if thunderbolts of angst and gentle waves of love simultaneously radiate from her eyes, yielding a blend so incomprehensible that it naturally places the listener in a state of an all-illuminating paradox. Patti Smith is another female vocalist that has embodied a similar paradox by being crucified between the religious beliefs inherited from her mother and atheism learned from his father (Bracewell 2002, pp. 330). She consequently claimed that "people are raised to be polarized" (Bracewell 2002, pp. 334) and tended to transfuse these internal conflicts into her music wherein she "crunched visions of teenage rebellion into snarled prayers and cooed accounts of spiritual communion through a cast of misfits and outlaws" (Bracewell 2002, pp. 339), finding ultimate peace in mental and emotional struggle and shrieking irritation in uttermost placidity and quietness, as if reflecting the conflict between reason and faith to which many thinkers attributed the essence of creativity. Among female singers, then, Cindy Lauper naturally comes to mind with her captivating skyward screams of ecstatic joy and tear-jerking cries evoking sobs of heartrending sadness blended into one. Right next to her in the Pantheon of female voices, one finds "dazed, beautiful and bruised" (Catatonia 1999) Cerys Matthews, standing straight in front of us in a picnic skirt covered with soil and mud due to her dreamily hopping from one paddle to another in the spellbound forest of the city of our times, sending forth sky-tearing shouts in which infinite, teary-eyed indignation is evened out with its antidote in terms of elating outbursts of equally tearful love and devotion, as encouraging and uplifting as it can be, leaving an impression that fragrances of both Earth and Heaven, like the groans of trombones and the whistles of flutes in the Hostias of Berlioz's *Requiem*, are flawlessly blended in this fairy's heart (Fig.5).

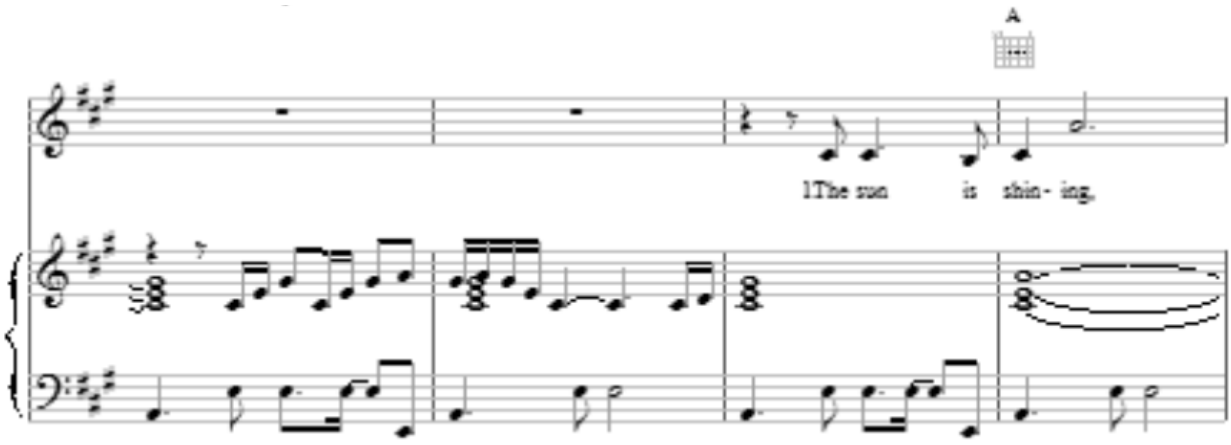

Fig.5. "The sun is shining" is the line with which Cerys Matthews opens Catatonia's Dead from the Waist Down, with a voice in which multitudes of opposites lie crisscrossed in a rarely inspirational manner.

The child in us, with its fears of the dark and the unknown, and an angel out of this world, full of euphoric optimism, symbolizing the beginnings and the ends of our roads, respectively, so to say, stood immaculately blended in the voice of Judy Garland that inspired many, especially in the times dominated by overly uptight and standardly phrased vocal performances. The voice teacher, Peter Elkus (2007) described her singing style by stating that "one could sense that she was very much on the edge, desperate, vulnerable and 'out there'; all of this was expressed through a throat that was open in vocal terms and affected by the tiny contractions of the fear that lay within her", subtly highlighting the encounters of opposites in her, of fear and of "the ability to express what she felt", that is, of the contractive force of gravity and of the dissipative force of explosive expressiveness, finely balanced in every star of Heaven and Earth alike. Macy Gray huskily singing *Still* or *I Try* charms the listener with a blend of the cool and the energetic, exerting a pull both ways, down to Earth, tranquilly, and up, into the sky, effervescently. The music of Molly Nilsson, blending depression and aerial lightness, is equally Icarian, flying through the air, inspirationally, thanks to the finely balanced upward and downward pulls, which are neatly summed in her own brief description of one of her records: "Dispatches from a troubled world, wrapped in melodic, lo-fi synth-pop" (Anon. 2018).

Then comes Natalie Merchant, stepping out of the dark and lonely landscape of the soul, having found in it the only niche wherefrom she could spread the wings of joy and emerge like a lotus flower, all in white. This blend of opposites that she couches she depicted in the kitschy booklet of her elegiac record *Ophelia*, posing in the miniature album of photographs contained therein both as a sinner and a saint, a hooker and a nun, a smoker and a sportswoman, a stripper and a bookworm. It is also featured in the title of her solo debut, the record titled *Tigerlily*, being a reference to a personality and a musical sentiment that is "both fierce and delicate" (Anon. 2016). "What makes it even more cool is the ambiguity of the message — is this conveying happiness? tenderness? anxiety? desperation? horror? a little bit of everything? who knows?" (Starostin 2011), the music critic, George Starostin noted during a contemplation on her singing in *Eat for Two*, a traditionally children-oriented opening track of a 10,000 Maniacs record, in this case le-

gendary *Blind Man's Zoo*.

Capturing the mental derangement and synthetic schisms of New York City and blending them with the inner cravings for a saintly peace of mind that her stage name, St. Vincent, insinuates, the singer whose songs were described as brimming with opposites, as "radiating and reveling in paradox – vibrant yet melancholy, cunning yet honest, friendly yet confrontational, deeply personal yet strangely inscrutable" (Anon. 2017), and whose self-titled record the singer, herself, described as "a party record you could play at a funeral" (Phillips & Minsker 2013), can also be said to combine the best of the vibes of the two worlds: the earthy and the ethereal. In the realm of voices that have stood midway between Heaven and Earth, as all sublime spirits should do, the Icelandic diva, Björk ought to be credited too for the combination of an extraterrestrial etherealness and exceptionally touching down-to-earth naturalness in her magical appearance and voice, alongside the ecstatic staccatos, bordering spiritual hysteria, and the affectionate softness, evoking soothing lullabies, that are encompassed by her singing style. A proof that Björk was wholly aware of the need to tune her voice to this and millions of other medullas, too many to be counted here one by one, to incarnate a sound that moves like a maelstrom of the divine seas comes from one of her interviews: "There are periods when I am an extrovert and there are periods when I am an introvert. It's a very natural progression, in and out, kind of like the tide.... So I try to be somewhere in the middle; there is no one answer. You have to tightrope walk all the time, to keep yourself open enough to communicate and retreat enough to plant new seeds and grow" (Diver 2007).

At the end of this stroll through musical examples, we could recollect the words of Claude Lévi-Strauss with which Anthony Storr (1992) began his treatise on tremendous effects music has on flourishing of our minds, "Since music is the only language with the contradictory attributes of being at once intelligible and untranslatable, the musical creator is a being comparable to the gods, and music itself the supreme mystery of the science of man". This line may prompt us to consider musical pieces that envelop and embody this dialectical encounter of opposites as those that have succeeded in elevating the spirit of sound waves in which we are all immersed to higher grounds and be worthy the epithet of magical. And as we know that the rise of music, as drifty and dreamy as it can be, is conditioned by the relative rigidity of materials that produce it, be they tight strings of a guitar or a piano that tend to quickly return to their initial state after being plucked, or narrow tubes in wind instruments whose unyielding strength lets the air waves resonate when passing through, the following could be deduced: the more floatingly and light-footedly music treads through space, while still barreling powerfully, like a train, carrying forth pulses that impel us to sink into meditative slumber, ever so dreamingly, and at the same time moving us to rise in the grand shininess of our spirits and bless the world with this inner light, the more delicately the dialectics of creation is woven into it and the more awesome, in the genuine sense of the word, it is.

6. Conclusion

The exploration of dialectical opposites in music on the preceding pages reveals that the most profound and emotionally compelling compositions thrive on the interplay of contrasting elements, *e.g.*, tension and resolution, order and spontaneity, dissonance and harmony. From classical symphonies to jazz improvisations and rock anthems, the essence of musical brilliance lies in its ability to balance opposing forces, mirroring the very structure of the physical world.

While this first part has focused exclusively on music, the discussion does not end here. The second part of this study will extend this principle to the visual arts, including painting, film, and architecture, before briefly touching upon other creative fields such as literature, acting, gastronomy, and martial arts. By examining a broad spectrum of artistic expressions, the goal is to demonstrate that this dialectical entwinement is not unique to music but rather a fundamental characteristic of art as a whole. Ultimately, the combined discussion of all these examples will serve to reinforce the central thesis: that the fusion of opposing forces is what grants works of art their lasting power and profound appeal.

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