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Musical Expressiveness: a Layered Account

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Abstract

An account of instrumental music's emotional expressiveness has come to be considered a benchmark for theories of expressiveness: because of its abstract character, the attribution of expressive qualities to instrumental music is particularly puzzling.

In my dissertation, I contend that a more pluralistic account of musical expressiveness than the ones currently available is necessary. Whereas available accounts normally defend a single phenomenological characterisation of musical expressiveness, I argue that a viable account needs to provide a layered characterisation of the phenomenology of expressive perception.

A basic layer of core expressive properties is characterised by a correspondingly thin phenomenology, whereas a more complex and varied phenomenology corresponds to the historically and cross-culturally variable levels of expressiveness.

With regard to the latter aspect, I introduce the concept of a heuristic device. I define heuristic devices as a range of diachronically and synchronically variable strategies that use information from an extra-musical domain in order to create or appreciate music with certain properties.

Theories that deny emotional arousal a place in accounting for expressiveness need to determine how music-induced emotions are related to the music's expressive qualities, as well as whether they contribute to its value as an art form. In order to answer these questions, I develop a general criterion of artistic relevance for music-induced emotions, which is missing from the available literature.

I examine a special class of descriptions of music, which I term 'atmospheric'. Atmospheric descriptions of music are widely found in music criticisms. I argue that currently available theories of musical expressiveness and representation would need substantial qualification if they aim to account for them.

Finally, I consider evolutionary explanations of musical expressiveness and the role they may have in philosophical accounts of expressiveness. I contend that an evolutionary explanation that aims at grounding the phenomenology of musical expressiveness should meet five challenges. I argue that the most widely held resemblance theories of musical expressiveness may need such a hypothesis, or at least something that serves a similar role.

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Introduction

This work examines contemporary solutions to the problem of musical expressiveness, and proposes an alternative view.¹

Pure music has come to be considered a benchmark for theories of expressiveness in art, as it is deprived of the representational content that could motivate a description in emotional terms. For instance, Goya's painting *The Third of May 1808* expresses the despair of the men awaiting to be executed, the implacable and inhuman determination of the firing squad, and the painter's horror for war, its disasters, and its capacity to deprive people of their humanity. It does all of this because it represents various things in a certain way: the soldiers in the firing squad form a unified, dark block, while the victims are lit by a lantern, their eyes wide open in terror or covered by their hands.

The second movement in Beethoven's *Third Symphony* stands in stark contrast with Goya's painting. While most of the piece is pervaded by despair and sadness, there is nothing that the piece represents, or is about, that could warrant its description as 'sad'. The *Third Symphony* is a piece of pure, or absolute, music, and as such it doesn't denote, depict, or refer to anything. The problem becomes then to explain how an abstract art form such as pure music could be so powerfully expressive of emotions.

I shall call *expressive perception* the experience of inanimate objects as expressive of emotions. Our experience of a winter evening landscape as melancholy or sad is a case of expressive perception, as is the experience of the *Aria* opening Bach's *Goldberg Variations* as peaceful and calm.

¹ For the sake of readability, in this introduction I deliberately avoid references and footnotes other than this one. Detailed references regarding the state of the debate may be found in Chapter 1.

This thesis starts with a preliminary chapter, the purpose of which is to introduce the current state of the debate on musical expressiveness, and expressiveness more generally. I start by examining some basic distinctions, starting with the one between something *expressing* an emotional state and something being *expressive of* that state. The former is the outward manifestation of an actual emotional state, as when one weeps because of one's sadness and disappointment, while the latter refers to the presentation of visible signs of emotional states, without implying the actuality of such states. For instance, an actor's face on the stage is expressive of sadness, although the actor may well not be sad while performing. This distinction, made famous by Kivy but present already in Alan Tormey's seminal work on expression, is now fundamental to most discussions of musical expressiveness.

In this first chapter I also mention how the contemporary debate has drifted away from two tempting solutions to the riddle of musical expressiveness. These solutions are similar in that they both take musical expressiveness to be dependent upon an actual emotional state, either in the composer, or in the listener (and at times in both). If this is right, the expression 'the music is sad' is in fact an ellipsis for either 'the composer expressed sadness in composing this piece' or 'this piece has the capacity to make one feel sad'. In other words, one might think that a piece of music is sad because the composer felt sadness while composing it, or intended to express her sadness in doing so. Alternatively, one might hold that the music is sad because it arouses sadness in its listeners, or at least it has the disposition to do so. These views are known as, respectively, the expression theory and the arousal theory of musical expressiveness. Despite their intuitive appeal, both these views have been proven unsatisfactory.

Additionally, I review the requirements for a theory of musical expressiveness found in the literature. I accept some of these, at times in a revised version, and add to them additional ones. As a result, I list ten desiderata for a satisfactory account of musical expressiveness.

In formulating these desiderata, I have stressed the value of a theory of musical expressiveness that may be extended to other contexts, both artistic and non-artistic. While in this work I focus on *musical* expressiveness, it is important to stress that problems such as the one we face in the musical case emerge whenever descriptions in emotional terms are used in the absence of a representational context, and whenever an interpretation of emotional descriptions as elliptical in the senses introduced above is unavailable. For instance, abstract paintings are also often described as expressive of emotions, yet they lack representational content by definition. A landscape at sunset may also be remarkably expressive, yet a landscape, as a chunk of natural environment, isn't about anything.

I offer now a summary of the account I advance in this dissertation. I do so while presenting an overview of the work's structure.

My main claim is that currently available accounts of musical expressiveness oversimplify its phenomenology, describing as competing and incompatible characterisations of it that are equally viable. The account I defend is a layered model, in which basic, phenomenologically thin experiences of the musical emotions, are the common ground on which thicker, cross-culturally and historically variable experiences of musical expressiveness may arise. The fault in some of the most prominent theories of musical expressiveness is to have mistaken these for mutually exclusive descriptions, rather than as alternative and equally viable, and to have characterised them as essential to any experience of musical expressiveness, as opposed to accessory to it.

I reach my positive conclusions through an examination of resemblance theories of musical expressiveness. While they may have strong competitors, and have been subject to a variety of objections, the resemblance theories proposed by Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies remain popular views of musical expressiveness. Generally speaking, resemblance theorists hold that the experience of expressive music is due to a resemblance between the music and human emotional expression. However, it is unclear whether they should be interpreted as claiming that

resemblance between music and human expression is part of the causal mechanisms responsible for our experience of expressiveness, or rather as holding that perception of such a resemblance is constitutive of the phenomenology of expressive perception.

I start by examining the causal interpretation of resemblance theories. James O. Young has recently defended a resemblance theory that treats the resemblance between music and human emotional expression as the causal ground of expressive perception. I argue that such an interpretation is best avoided, as it turns resemblance theories into makeshift scientific accounts, both outdated and incomplete. Outdated, because in the presence of actual empirical evidence as to the causal role of resemblance, it is of no use to discuss philosopher's untested intuitions with regard to causal mechanisms. Incomplete, because while Young supports his claim with plenty of reference to empirical results, I show how the body of evidence he discusses points to a larger set of causal mechanisms than the ones allowed by Young's own interpretation of resemblance theories. In other words, while some of the music's expressiveness is due to resemblances between music and human emotional expression, other empirical results suggest that other factors also play a role. This picture gives reasons to be sceptical with regard to resemblance theories as a characterisation of the causal grounds of expressive perception.

I turn then to the phenomenological interpretation of resemblance theories. I contend that, regardless of how Kivy and Davies's theories may be further interpreted or refined, they are both committed to construing resemblance to human emotional expression as an essential part of the phenomenology of music listening. In the case of Kivy, I mainly rely on analyses offered in the available literature, whereas I develop an original strategy to show how Davies's appearance emotionalism requires human emotional expression to be part of the phenomenology of expressive perception in music. The strategy is based on the claim that appearance emotionalism is able to preserve its distinguishing features

and alleged advantages over other views only by construing human expression as part of the phenomenology of expressive perception.

In Chapter IV, I advance a criticism of Davies's view, appearance emotionalism. If I am right in holding that this account requires human expressive behaviour to figure in the experience of expressive music, then appearance emotionalism would not be able to account for emotional descriptions of music that are not grounded on the music's resemblance to expressive behaviour. This invites us to look for counterexamples to Davies's theory. I do so by examining first the linguistic side of Davies's account. He holds descriptions of music in emotional terms to be literal, rather than metaphorical, although in these cases emotion words are not used in their primary, psychological sense, but rather in their secondary sense, which only refers to the emotion's typical exterior behavioural manifestation. For instance, 'sad', applied to the second movement of Beethoven's *Third Symphony*, does not refer to the mental state of sadness, but rather to the typical outward manifestations of it, which the music presents in its ebb and flow. This use is distinct from the psychological one, but related to it – it is an instance of polysemy, rather than homonymy. While I agree with Davies's characterisation of emotional descriptions of music as literal and polysemous, I believe that a class of descriptions isn't captured by this characterisation. We often describe in emotional terms perceptual stimuli (musical, visual, etc.) without being able to specify in what sense they resemble the outward manifestation of the emotional state in question. I suggest some musical examples. I call this *secondary polysemy*, hinting at Wittgenstein's well-known discussion of secondary sense. Some of the examples discussed by Wittgenstein share with my examples the impossibility of justifying the use of the same word in different contexts.

Moving from linguistic descriptions back to phenomenology, it is clear that the experience of musical expressiveness underlying cases of secondary polysemy could not feature human expressive behaviour, as it lacks the link between music and human emotional expression typical of the standard cases described by Davies. That

link was secured by the music's resemblance to human expressive behaviour, but this is exactly what is missing in the case of secondary polysemy. This suggests that we need an account of the experience of expressive music that is appropriate to these cases.

Chapter V develops such an account. Some emotion words are applied to music, even though it is impossible to specify in what sense the music is like the expressive behaviour associated with the emotional state in question. I call the properties tracked by such descriptions *basic expressive properties*. I describe my preferred account of basic expressive properties as *austere*, because of its minimalistic phenomenology. Developing a suggestion by Malcolm Budd, I argue that the application of emotion words to music in the case of basic expressive properties is grounded in the capacity these emotional concepts have to elucidate aspects of our experience of music, even though it is impossible to specify the basis of such application.

In the final part of the chapter, I defend my view from what I term the *sui generis* objection, that is, the charge of construing the application of emotion terms to music as unrelated to their use in the central, psychological context. I show that the austere account I propose is not to be interpreted as a *sui generis* account of musical expressiveness.

It will be noted that, while secondary polysemy hints at experiences of musical expressiveness that are not accounted for by standard resemblance-based accounts, I do not intend my account to dismiss experiences of musical expressiveness grounded in the music's resemblance to human emotional expression. That these two experiences of musical expressiveness could coexist as accurate characterisations of expressive perception in music is a feature of the layered and pluralistic account I offer.

Chapter VI develops this thought, and explores ways in which extra-musical objects or processes could guide the composition, listening, and performance of music. I term heuristic device a strategy that exploits a mapping between music and

an extra-musical domain in order to compose or perform music possessing one or more intended properties, or to make such properties more salient in listening. At least in Western music history, an extra-musical domain was prominently exploited in order to guide composition, performance, and listening: human expressive behaviour. Renaissance composers such as Giulio Caccini and Jacopo Peri were explicit in stressing this compositional strategy. In order to create a sad musical line, they thought of the suprasegmental features of human voice in the grip of sadness.² The features of a sad-speaking voice guided the composition of sad music, and may have guided the performance of it as well. Additionally, a listener who kept the analogy in mind might have been inclined to listen for ways in which music *is like* an expressive voice.

I suggest how the framework I develop could be used to make sense of some claims regarding authenticity in music performance. Particularly, the idea of a correspondence between the heuristic devices used in composition and those used in performance and listening seems to capture well what advocates of historically informed performance have in mind.

However, different musical traditions could exploit different extra-musical domains. Steven Feld observes how Kaluli music theory and practice features extensive and systematic comparisons between melodic structure and the structure of waterfalls. Feld's remarks could be re-interpreted as claims about the Kaluli's use of heuristic devices exploiting the flow of waterfalls in order to describe melodic structures and evaluate their performance.

The chapter on heuristic devices concludes with some reflections on resemblance theories. My description of heuristic devices suggests an error theory of resemblance-based accounts of musical expressiveness. While it is certainly possible to exploit the music's resemblance to human expressive behaviour in order to guide

² In phonetics, *suprasegmental* or *prosodic* features are characteristics such as stress, tone, or word juncture that are added over consonants and vowels. Suprasegmental features often extend over entire syllables, words, or sentences.

composition, listening, and performance, resemblance theorists have made the mistake of considering as essential to the experience of expressive music what in fact are accessory processes.

Chapter VII summarises the results of the previous chapters in a new model of musical expressiveness. I call it a *layered account* of musical expressiveness, to stress how a phenomenologically thin experience of basic expressive properties underlies the variety of experiences provided by heuristic devices.

I briefly present a recent proposal by Saam Trivedi, animated by a pluralistic intent similar to mine. I agree with Trivedi that it is incorrect to reduce the experience of expressive music to a single description, but I disagree with the details of his account. Particularly, I question his appeal to imagination, and whether his view is as pluralistic as it looks.

The two final chapters deal with the problem of the emotions aroused by music in the listener. It is generally accepted that the music's expressive character is independent from its capacity to elicit an emotional response in the listener. One does not need to be moved to sadness in order to perceive the music's sadness. However, it has been a matter of debate which emotional states may be induced in the listener by instrumental music, and whether these should count as relevant to the appreciation of music *qua* music. This latter issue concerns the *artistic relevance* of music-induced emotions.

Chapter VIII examines a sceptical view of these matters, defended by Kivy. While he accepted that music may arouse emotions such as happiness and sadness, Kivy rejected the idea that these emotional states may be artistically relevant, as they result from idiosyncratic associations. Kivy admits only one sort of artistically relevant music-induced emotion, which takes the music as its object and is grounded in the belief that music is beautiful or otherwise artistically praiseworthy. I examine more liberal views of the music's capacity to induce artistically relevant emotions, and particularly the claim that the listener's emotional state may mirror the music's expressive character. I hold that these views should be preferred to Kivy's sceptical

view. My strategy against such a view is twofold. On the one hand, I show how Kivy's claims stand in apparent contrast with recent empirical research on the music's capacity to induce emotions. On the other hand, I argue that some of the considerations he offers against competing accounts are unconvincing.

In Chapter IX, I suggest a criterion of artistic relevance for music-induced emotions. While some authors have remarked that at least some of the emotions aroused by music may help us to appreciate music, nobody has advanced a general test for the artistic relevance of emotions aroused by music. After defending the criterion, I test it on the various sorts of music-induced emotions described in the available literature, showing that at least some of them are in fact artistically relevant.

The Appendix contains two chapters that could not find a place in the main work. The first is a digression on Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis regarding expressive perception in music, which he advanced in support of his contour theory. While Kivy later rejected this as an exceedingly speculative move, I contend that something along the lines of Kivy's hypothesis is required by all resemblance theories of musical expressiveness, as well as by the imagination-based account recently defended by Saam Trivedi. I suggest five challenges the hypothesis should meet if it is to be regarded as plausible.

The second chapter in the Appendix examines what I term *atmospheric properties*. These are tracked by descriptions of music such as 'eerie', 'dreamy', 'mysterious', and the like. While these descriptions are easily found in music criticism, it seems incorrect to characterise atmospheric properties as a subset of expressive properties, as they do not describe emotional states. Neither is it plausible to assume that these terms refer to the music's reference to something extra-musical, as these terms are applied to music that is assumed to be deprived of any representational content.

I contend that we should consider atmospheric properties as an irreducible category, and that an attempt to reduce these properties to expressive properties would fail, at least given the available accounts of musical expressiveness.

I. Musical Expressiveness: an Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the philosophical problem of musical expressiveness. Rather than engaging in a comprehensive literature review, I will focus on the questions that have shaped the recent debate and on the conceptual tools that have been employed to answer them.³

I start with a distinction between expression and expressiveness, and trace its origin in the recent literature. After that, I review the various questions related to the central philosophical problem: part of the debate on musical expressiveness consists of discussions regarding the conflation of different problems under a single heading. This is especially evident in the distinction between *explanation* and *analysis* of expressiveness, an issue of particular importance for the present work.

I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the desiderata for a theory of expressiveness. While I agree with the requirements one can find in the existing literature, I argue that some important desiderata have been ignored. Particularly, I will claim that a theory of musical expressiveness should not be divorced from a theory of expressiveness in general.

1. Expressiveness in music

1.1. Kivy: 'To express' vs. 'to be expressive of'.

In his seminal book *The Corded Shell* [1980], Peter Kivy applies to music a distinction already fleshed out by Tormey [1971].⁴ When a human being in the grip of sadness

³ For an overview of the topic of musical expressiveness, see Budd [1985], Sharpe [2004: 85-108], Davies [2006b: 144-152], Rinderle [2006, 2010], Robinson [2011], Bertinetto [2012], and Lentini [2014].

⁴ "Noh masks and cypress trees may *have* sad expressions, but their expressions are not expressions *of* sadness. Sad expressions are to the expression of sadness as anger-like behavior is to the expression of anger. Anger-like behavior may occur in the absence of

bursts into tears, she is *expressing* sadness: a psychological state is manifested outwardly through a more or less culturally inflected behavioural output. A Saint Bernard's face, however, is merely *expressive of* sadness: the dog's sad look is independent from the psychological state the animal is in. This provides the backbone of Kivy's contour theory of musical expressiveness. Just as the Saint Bernard's face is perceived as sad in virtue of its similarity to a human sad face, and without inferences as to anyone's psychological state, so music is perceived as expressive because of the similarity between its ebb and flow and human emotional behaviour, bodily and vocal. [Kivy 1980, 1989]

Stephen Davies [1994] employs a similar distinction. According to him, the music's sadness does not need to be the manifestation of an actual psychological state of sadness. Rather, musical expressiveness consists in the presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance, that is, publicly observable bodily and vocal expressive behaviours.⁵ Musical sadness is grounded on the same phenomenon that explains the downcast look of a weeping willow: its similarity to human emotion characteristics in appearance warrants the description of both the music and the willow as 'sad'.⁶

The distinction between 'expressing *e*' and being 'expressive of *e*' is central to contemporary theories of musical expressiveness. All theorists agree that a viable theory of musical expressiveness should be able to distinguish expression of psychological states through music from the music's possession of expressive

anger, but an expression of anger cannot (*logically* cannot); and analogously, sad expressions may occur without sadness (the beagle and the Noh mask), while the expression of sadness cannot" [Tormey 1971: 39]

⁵ Davies is inclined to particularly stress the importance of the music's resemblance to gait, carriage and comportment. He takes resemblance to vocal behaviour to be less important to music's expressiveness.

⁶ Davies defended the explanation of musical expressiveness in terms of noninferential, resemblance-based expressiveness before Kivy's published works on musical expressiveness, in his PhD dissertation and in Davies [1980a]. For Davies's discussion of the differences between his account and Kivy's, see Davies [1994: 260-67].

properties, despite disagreement as to how to do so and to what extent expression of actual psychological states is relevant to the appreciation of music.

A concise way to flesh out the distinction is the following: *expressiveness in music is not essentially linked to the expression of an actual psychological state*. The next section examines the distinction between expression and expressiveness more closely.

1.2. Robinson: Expression vs. Expressiveness.

In a somewhat neglected recent essay, Jenefer Robinson [2007] reviews the differences between expression and expressiveness, as well as their interaction.⁷ The basic distinction directly follows from the conceptual tools presented in the above: expression in art is an artist's manifestation of inner psychological states through the artwork. Sometimes expression is mediated by an agent implied by the work's structure, as happens with the so-called implied author in literature.⁸ Expression defined in this way is to be distinguished from expressiveness, which does not require the expression of an agent's inner emotional states. Most music composed before the Romantic period, Robinson claims, is expressive just in this sense, whereas composers in the Romantic period often explicitly set out to create music that expressed their personal feelings.

Despite being conceptually distinct, expression and expressiveness often work together: the possibility of using artworks as a vehicle for personal expression depends on the artist's capacity to endow the work of art with expressive properties that bear some relation to the emotions the artist intends to express.

Although the distinction traced by Robinson may seem obvious in light of the difference between 'expressing *e*' and being 'expressive of *e*', her essay takes such a

⁷ A similar distinction and its application to the musical case had already been suggested by Robinson in an earlier contribution [1997: 12]. For a thought-provoking historical overview of the debate on expression and expressiveness, see Guetzalski [2011].

⁸ The concept of implied author was introduced by Wayne Booth [1961].

distinction further. According to Robinson, not only is expression not *necessary* to expressiveness; it is also not *sufficient*, as there are cases of extremely inexpressive expression, in which expressiveness is either absent or minimally present. The sad emoticon used to communicate one's state of mind is one of Robinson's examples. Her point is that some expressions, that is, some outward manifestations of inner emotional states, function sometimes as mere signs for such states, whereas expressiveness has *cognitive value*: it informs us what it is like to be in such a state.

I do not attempt here an evaluation of Robinson's positive claim concerning the cognitive value of expressiveness. However, if she is right in claiming that expressions as signs for emotional states are not sufficient for expressiveness, then a point follows regarding resemblance-based accounts of musical expressiveness: it is not enough for an inanimate object to resemble an expression of *e*, in order for this object to be expressive of *e*, for the expression in question could be of a sort that lacks expressiveness.⁹ Recall Kivy's example of the Saint Bernard's sad face. From the fact that the dog's face resembles a human expression of *e*, it does not follow that it should be considered as expressive of *e*. To be sure, the purpose of Kivy's Saint Bernard example is not to claim that music resembles human expressive behaviour in exactly the same way in which a dog's face may resemble a human expressive face. After all, music develops through time, possesses no identifiably visual contours, etc.

The purpose of Kivy's example is to show that there is a meaningful sense in which we may describe certain perceptual configurations using psychological terms without grounding such use in the attribution of an actual psychological state to a sentient being. This much is granted even from Robinson's perspective. However, it is not recommended to start an analysis of musical expressiveness with a prototypical example of something that may count as a case of *minimal expressiveness*.

⁹ Robinson writes: "But if what I have said in this paper is correct, then experienced resemblance to people's behavior when they are expressing a certain emotion is never going to be sufficient for anything above a minimal level of expressiveness." [2007: 28]

Robinson's essay ends with another important point. Some philosophers, most notably Jerrold Levinson, have considered essential to expressiveness the presence of an expresser, even though this expresser may be only fictional.¹⁰ According to Levinson, this is necessary in order to meet an important requirement: a viable theory of musical expressiveness should account for the link between expressiveness in inanimate objects and the central case of emotional expression, that is, the case of a sentient being manifesting outwardly an inner psychological state. In line with this requirement, Levinson stipulates that musical expressiveness can be analysed as the musical expression of emotions in music by a hypothetical persona that listeners hear in the music. But this account, Robinson argues, is not an account of musical *expressiveness*. Rather, it is an account of the *expression* of a hypothetical persona in the music. Aside from failing to explain expressiveness proper, Levinson fails to realise that it is not required from an account of expressiveness that reduces expressiveness to expression. Quite to the contrary, a viable account of expressiveness should avoid such assimilation.

In line with Richard Wollheim [1993] and Paul Noordhof [2008], I will use *expressive perception* when referring to the experience of expressive properties. Perceiving the gloomy character of a winter landscape, the joy in a bouncy major tune, or the anger and frustration in a painting's impulsive brushstrokes, are all cases of expressive perception. I restrict expressive perception to expressiveness that is not essentially related to the manifestation of inner states by a sentient being, although I do not deny that expressive perception could be related to such cases: as Robinson points out, expressiveness and expression are often related and mutually supportive.

¹⁰ "Crucial to the account is the idea that the expressiveness of music resides in the invitation that music extends to the listener to hear it as expression in the primary sense – that is, expression, by persons, of inner states through outer signs. Thus, to hear music as expressive is to hear it as an instance of personal expression." [Levinson 2006: 192]

1.3. Davies: Primary, secondary and tertiary expressions.

In an attempt to dismiss expression theories of art while at the same time explaining their initial appeal, Davies [1986] distinguishes between primary, secondary, and tertiary expression.

Primary expressions are the unintentional, unreflective behavioural correlates of emotions. Smiling out of happiness is an example of primary expression of happiness.¹¹

Secondary expressions are activities a subject may engage in as a way of expressing her emotional states or as a response to them. For instance, grief for the death of a loved one may prompt the grief-stricken person to work hard at a new project, in the attempt to cope with her loss. Without the appropriate contextual information, it is impossible to understand the expressive character of secondary expressions. This is because their connection with the emotions that give rise to them is neither natural, as in the case of primary expressions, nor conventional.

It is *tertiary expressions* of emotion that are conventional manifestations of inner states. The commission of a mausoleum, for instance, is a conventional expression of grief. Because of the conventional association between expressive acts and felt emotions, there is normally no need for additional contextual information in order to understand the emotional state of a person who engages in the tertiary expression of her feelings.

According to Davies, expression theories of art take various forms but share a common assumption: the expressive properties we perceive in artworks are a result

¹¹ Davies does not deny that voluntary behavior may interfere with the primary expression of emotions – we can hold back our tears – nor does he take primary expressions to be entirely “natural”: they are shaped by enculturation, although arguably only to a limited extent. [Davies 1986, 150]

of an artist's expressive process. In creating the artwork, the artist injects her feelings into the product of the creative process.¹²

Davies's claim is that expression theories incorrectly interpret an observation that, by itself, is undoubtedly correct. Our responses to expressiveness in the arts are akin to responses to primary expressions at least in a respect: rather than expressed *through* the artwork, emotions are expressed *in* the artwork, just as they are expressed *in* tears and laughter. In other words, primary expressions have a more intimate connection to the emotions they express than the external relation linking secondary and tertiary expressions to the emotions expressed. Insofar as they stress that we respond to artworks as if they were primary expressions of feelings, expression theories point to an important feature a theory of expressiveness should possess: it should be able to account for the immediate character of expressive perception, as well as for our tendency to locate expressive properties *in* the artwork.¹³

But expression theories incorrectly take this to imply that an artwork's expressiveness *is* a case of primary expression. Artworks, however, do not stand to an artist's feelings in the same relation as the one linking tears to sadness. I cannot rehearse here the numerous objections raised against expression theories.¹⁴ At their most general, empirical objections show that music expressive of an emotion may be

¹² Notable versions of the expression theory can be found in Dewey [2005] and Ducasse [1964]. Collingwood [1958] has been traditionally described as an expression theorist, although recent scholarship stresses the sophisticated and unorthodox character of his account [Robinson 2005: 229]. Finally, Cooke [1959] develops a theory of musical expressiveness that is grounded in assumptions akin to those of the standard expression theory: the music is expressive because the composer injects her emotions into it.

¹³ Regarding the immediate character of expressive perception, Davies observes elsewhere that "The listener's phenomenal experience of music's expressiveness is more like a face-to-face encounter with someone who publicly and vividly displays his feeling than it is like hearing a dispassionate description of an emotional state. The expressiveness is immediate and direct, not filtered through an arbitrary symbol system." [Davies 2003a: 153]

¹⁴ That this relation cannot account for the expressive properties of artworks is a widely accepted point. Discussion and criticism of the expression theory can be found in Hospers [1955], Beardsley [1958: 325-28], Osborne [1970], Tormey [1971] and Davies [1994: 170-184].

written by composers at a time where they did not feel the emotions in question; conceptual objections stress that the process of expression does not need to result in a product that is expressive of the emotion giving rise to the process.

This brief excursus on expression theories is useful in order to highlight a fact regarding musical expressiveness. Although expressive properties in music do not essentially depend on a composer's expressive act, expression theories rightly point out that we detect expressive properties in music in an immediate fashion, without the need of contextual information or inferences. Moreover, expression theorists are inclined to stress that emotions are expressed in the music, rather than through it. This, along with the widely accepted rejection of expression theories, suggests that a viable theory of musical expressiveness should account for these two characteristics without resorting to explaining the music's emotions as a product of the composer's emotional state.

2. Problems of expressiveness (1): Matravers's four questions.

In a recent overview of the debate, Derek Matravers [2007: 374] has outlined four questions regarding expressiveness in music.

- (i) What is it about the music that causes us to hear it as expressive?
- (ii) What does 'the music is sad' mean?
- (iii) What is it to hear music as expressive?
- (iv) What is the connection between the expressive qualities of music and its value?

These questions could be taken to address, respectively, four aspects of the problem of expressiveness: explanation, analysis, phenomenology, and value. This dissertation will focus on the first three questions, and particular attention will be devoted to the relation between causal explanations and phenomenological

descriptions. In what follows, I will briefly describe each of the four problems, and then focus on the distinction between questions (i) and (iii).

2.1. What is it about the music that causes us to hear it as expressive? (Explanation).

Scientifically oriented approaches to the problem of musical expressiveness investigate the causal mechanism that may explain the perception of expressive properties in music. Typically, these approaches start by collecting empirical data regarding musical features that correlate with expressive properties – for instance, descending contours and slow tempos will reliably be associated with sadness or other low-activation emotional states.¹⁵

The next step consists in elaborating an explanatory hypothesis consistent with the findings: why do some musical features result in the perceived sad character of the music? Evolutionary explanations are by far the most common way to account for the correlation between basic musical features and the music's expressive character, although the theories on offer are varied.¹⁶

Philosophical attempts at elucidating the phenomenon of musical expressiveness have been marred from the start by the tendency to tackle explanatory questions as if they were the main philosophical question. This is obviously problematic: while it is not only admissible, but perhaps even advisable to take into account empirical research when defending a philosophical account, it is questionable whether the philosopher is equipped to investigate the causal mechanisms underlying expressive perception.¹⁷

¹⁵ As an example, see Costa et al. [2004].

¹⁶ See for instance Cook [2002, 2007], Panksepp [1995].

¹⁷ Matravers agrees that the 'explanation' question is not a philosophically relevant one: "Some philosophical literature has focussed on (i) – that is, the nature of the properties of the music that underlie its expressiveness (Kivy). However, it is not clear why this is a distinctively *philosophical* problem; it is, rather, an empirical matter best investigated by psychology." [2007: 375] Matravers agrees that, if certain conditions hold, empirical explanations may turn out to be philosophically relevant.

Section 3 of this chapter is devoted to an overview of the literature concerning the differences and interactions between a philosophical analysis of expressive perception and the investigation of its causal basis.

2.2. *What does 'the music is sad' mean? (Meaning).*

Matravers dismisses the importance of (ii) on the ground that its answer is obviously tied to (iii). The question regarding linguistic meaning is therefore entirely subordinated by him to the one concerning the phenomenology of expressive perception.¹⁸ While I agree with Matravers on this, it is worth noting that the debate concerning the meaning of utterances such as 'the music sounds sad' has sometimes been tackled in isolation from an analysis of the experience of expressive music. The debate in question opposes literalists to metaphoricists. Whereas literalists hold ascriptions of expressive properties to music to be an instance of literal language use, metaphoricists take expressive descriptions of music to be metaphors. The latter category reasons that, if music is not sentient, then it cannot be literally sad. It follows that the attribution of expressive properties to music is non-literal.¹⁹

A further distinction is between metaphoricists who believe expressive descriptions of music to be ineliminable metaphors [Scruton 1997] and those who enjoin listeners to abandon expressive descriptions on the ground that these are nothing more than metaphorical descriptions of literally possessed aesthetic properties. [Zangwill 2007]

But the fact that some take one or the other side independently from their characterisation of the phenomenology of music listening does not mean that a literalist or metaphoricist strategy could not in principle be grounded in phenomenology.

¹⁸ But see Barwell [1986], who conducts linguistic analysis independently from a characterization of the experience of expressiveness and its underlying causes.

¹⁹ For a discussion of this argument, see Carroll [1999: 96].

A philosopher who ties his defence of literalism to the phenomenology of music listening is Davies. [2011b] According to him, it is the music's resemblance to human emotional expression that allows us to describe it using emotion terms literally. The way emotions are typically manifested is often described with the same word used for the emotion as a psychological state. Someone's carriage may be 'sad', and her face 'happy', but these descriptions need not imply an inference as to the state of mind of the subject they are applied to. Likewise, we call the music 'sad' because it presents emotion characteristics in appearance, without implying an impossible attribution of psychological qualities to the music. The use of 'sad' or 'happy' in these cases is an instance of polysemous use of words, that is, a use that bears a relation to the central one.

In Chapter IV, I introduce Davies's view and argue that his defence of literalism needs an important qualification. Particularly, I contend that a class of emotional descriptions of music is not covered by the literalist strategy employed by Davies.

2.3. What is it to hear music as expressive? (Phenomenology).

This has often been taken to be the most central philosophical question associated with the problem of musical expressiveness. [Matravers 2007; Noordhof 2008] Despite this centrality, the phenomenological question has been conflated with the question concerning the causes of musical expressiveness. In the next section I explore the main aspects and sources of such confusion.

The phenomenological question first requires us to determine the general kind of experience expressive perception consists of. Consider, for instance, O. K. Bouwsma's often quoted remark according to which "[...] the sadness is to the music rather like the redness to the apple, than it is like the burp to the cider". [Bouwsma 1954: 98] This witty line is normally taken to mean that an arousalist interpretation of expressive properties does not do justice to the phenomenology of expressive

perception.²⁰ This is akin to perceptual experience of secondary qualities such as colour, in that expressive properties are located in the object. Rather than being similar to an experience of emotional arousal, expressive perception would then be more like an ordinary case of perception of secondary qualities. But are these two experiences (expressive perception and color perception) entirely alike? Some philosophers contend that this assimilation could not account for central features of expressive perception. [Elliot 1967; Noordhof 2008] A possibility is that expressive perception essentially involves aspect perception (or ‘seeing-as’),²¹ or, alternatively, seeing-in, two notions developed by Richard Wollheim [1980].²²

Other authors are inclined to interpret the difference between expressive perception and ordinary perception as the result of the involvement of *imagination* in the former.²³ As mentioned above, Levinson argues that all expressive perception of music requires the listener to imagine a musical persona expressing herself musically, although this imagining may occur only “in a back-grounded manner”. [Levinson 2006: 193] As with many others, I am sceptical with regard to the capacity

²⁰ Arousal theories of musical expressiveness, despite having been defended in recent years, are generally considered implausible by philosophers of music. The problems faced by a recent, sophisticated defence of the theory by Matravers [1998] leaves one wondering whether there is any hope for the arousal theory to make a new comeback. For classical objections to the arousal theory, see Davies [1994: 184-199]. Criticism of recent versions of the theory can be found in Beever [1998], Kingsbury [1999, 2002], and Kivy [2001]. Aaron Ridley [1995] has tried to combine aspects of Kivy and Davies’s resemblance-theory with arousalist elements. Geoffrey Madell [1996, 2003] has defended a different version of the theory, but his proposal has received little critical attention and even less support. On these grounds, I do not discuss the arousal theory at any length in this work.

²¹ The concept of seeing-as is famously discussed by Wittgenstein [2005].

²² Matravers discusses the interpretation of Kivy’s contour theory as a seeing-as or seeing-in theory in [1998: 123-26] and in [2003: 355-56].

²³ See for instance Levinson [2006], Walton [1988, 1994], Budd [1989] and Parkhurst [2012]. Noordhof [2008: 337] contends that the appeal to imagination explains two ways in which expressive perception is unlike ordinary perception. First, expressive perception seems to lack the immediacy of ordinary perception, such as colour perception. Second, “[...] our experience of expressive properties seems to be the result of engagement. It is possible to hear music as inexpressive noise, or merely as what people call ‘sad’, especially if you are not attending to it. It is tempting to think that the difference arises from whether or not our imaginations are engaged.” [2008: 337]

of Levinson's proposal to shed light on the nature of musical expressiveness in general.²⁴ However, I do accept that in some relevant cases our listening could be relevantly shaped by imagining a musical persona. In this I am in line with authors such as Robinson [2005] and Ridley [2007].

Finally, various philosophers have stressed that there is no reason to assume that a unique phenomenological characterisation of the experience of expressive music could ever be available. [Budd 1995: 154; Trivedi 2001] While I offer a characterisation of what I take to be the minimal case of expressive perception, I agree with these authors in contending that our experience of expressive music cannot be reduced to a unitary phenomenological basis.

2.4. What is the connection between the expressive qualities of music and its value? (Value).

This work will not deal extensively with the issue of whether and how musical expressiveness contributes to the overall artistic value of a musical work. I concur with Davies [1994: 267] in taking musical expressiveness to be partly constitutive of a work's artistic value. Most of the work needed in order to support this point is negative: those who deny that expressive properties accrue to the work's value normally do so because they analyse expressive properties as either shortcuts for technical descriptions or metaphorical descriptions of the music's aesthetic properties.

As these solutions are implicitly ruled out by the positive account of musical expressiveness I offer, I will not deal explicitly with the problem of value.

Despite these qualifications, I do say something in this dissertation that relates to the problem of value. Towards the end of this work, I will develop and defend a criterion for artistic relevance of music-induced emotions. The emotions aroused by music, I contend, are often linked to a listener's understanding and appreciation of

²⁴ See for instance Davies [2003a]. Kivy [2009] is mainly critical of Robinson's interpretation of the persona theory. [Robinson 2005: 322-381]

the music, and may further direct her attention to the music's features. Insofar as some such artistically relevant emotions are dependent on the music's expressive properties, we have a reason to think that musical expressiveness plays a role in fostering the appreciation of musical works.

3. Problems of expressiveness (2): grounds vs. analysis.

As anticipated, the distinction between the underlying mechanisms of expressive perception and its analysis has been at the crux of philosophical disputes on the topic. On a first approximation, the problem is to clearly distinguish answers to Matravers's question (i) and answers to (ii) and (iii), that is, between the 'explanation' question and the 'meaning' and 'phenomenology' questions.

The first to stress the distinction has been Levinson. In a review of Kivy's *Corded Shell*, he writes

First, I must point out that Kivy does not at the outset distinguish clearly enough between analysis of what attributions of expressiveness to music *mean*, and an account of the *grounds* (or *causes*) of musical expressiveness. [...] The analysis of what it means to ascribe emotional predicates to music should not be conflated with an informative account of what typically grounds the expressiveness that such predicates report.

[Levinson 1981: 150]

As I remarked above, the grounds/analysis distinction may be interpreted either as opposing causal accounts to linguistic analysis, or as contrasting causal accounts with phenomenological descriptions. In this work I will be mostly concerned with the distinction between the causes of the experience of expressiveness in music (the 'explanation' question) and the description of such an

experience (the 'phenomenology' question). I review here some of the literature concerning this distinction.

Matravers [2007: 375] observes that, at least in some relevant cases, the cause of a mental state is part of the mental state's content. Suppose I fear the tiger that is hiding in my bathroom. The tiger is the cause of my fear, and part of the content of my mental state is a representation of the tiger, which is the intentional object of my emotion. But this case does not seem to represent a valid analogy with the case of musical expressiveness: lay people, and even expert musicians, listen to expressive music without being in any sense aware of the causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perception. The difference is that, while my emotional state of fear is *about* the tiger, there is no similar sense in which one could say that the mental state characteristic of expressive perception is about the music.

Noordhof makes a similar point. He asks us to imagine that a causal theory of perception were true. In this case

We would not require that the objects of our perceptual experience reveal themselves as causes in our experience. The same point applies to functional analyses of mental states or dispositional analyses of colours. How these items are experienced does not provide a knock down consideration in favour or against these analyses.

[Noordhof 2008: 333]

Noordhof reproaches resemblance theorists (and Levinson) for mistaking the causes of expressive perception for its phenomenological description. As I will argue in the following two chapters, this criticism, as well as Matravers's, is grounded in the ambiguity manifested by resemblance theorists when characterising their proposal.

Levinson further objects that

[...] even if a resemblance-based account of musical expressiveness could deliver the right verdicts in individual cases [...] that would not constitute an acceptable *analysis* of musical expressiveness. For it would not elucidate what musical expressiveness *was*, but only what ensembles of musical features were coextensive with and underlay such expressiveness

[Levinson 2006: 196]

The point Levinson is making is that a resemblance theory that contents itself with the identification of the *causes* of musical expressiveness is only able to provide a nomological connection between musical features and the experience of expressiveness. These two features are linked by means of a law-like principle that connects features of the music to an unspecified mental state that is characteristic of expressive perception in the musical case.

Levinson's critique prompts a final reflection. We should note that an account of musical expressiveness may be able to provide a purely *extensional* analysis of expressiveness. Focus on the 'meaning' question may suggest a similar approach. An extensional analysis does not need any commitment to the identification of the underlying causes of expressiveness; nor does it need to characterise the experience of expressive music. An extensional account would simply require the identification of a property *p*, the possession of which always entails the possession of expressive qualities. For instance, one may say that 'the piece of music (M) is expressive of emotion E' can be analysed as

(a) M is expressive of E *iff* M may be used by an agent A to communicate emotion E to a suitably qualified listener

Under this account, a piece is expressive of happiness if I can use it to communicate happiness to listeners who, although suitably qualified, need not have heard the piece before. This merely indicates that something in the piece is reliably

connected with the emotion of happiness. The deflationist, extensional analysis we are dealing with does not need anything more.

While this analysis may capture the totality of instances of expressive music, it does so without characterising the experience of expressive music and its relation, if any, with its underlying causes.²⁵ It also leaves without a satisfactory answer the question as to the enigmatic character of musical expressiveness. How could pure instrumental music be expressive of emotions? The answer to this question is arguably to be found in the explanatory and phenomenological details of a viable account. An extensional characterisation such as the one discussed above is silent about exactly these details.²⁶

In this section I have discussed various authors who believe that the debate on musical expressiveness has been marred by lack of analytic rigour in distinguishing between causal explanation and phenomenological description. I concur with these authors in believing that some of the available accounts of musical expressiveness conflate causal explanation and phenomenological description. Indeed, a recent resemblance-based account of musical expressiveness defended by James O. Young [2014] seems oblivious to the admonitions reported above. In the next chapter, I will examine Young's view and the role of causal explanation in resemblance-based accounts of expressiveness.

²⁵ Noordhof [2008: 333] seems to consider Levinson's persona theory as a case of mistaking an analysis of the sort I describe here for a phenomenological characterisation of expressive perception.

²⁶ Scruton is similarly critical of this extensional approach when he writes that "[...] we should not attempt to account for the expressiveness of music in terms of realistic truth-conditions. No useful theory of expression will result in a proposition of the form 'x is expressive of y if and only if X exhibits features *f*, *g*, *h* ...'. For such a proposition misrepresents what is being done by people who describe the emotional content of musical works." [Scruton 2009: 51]

4. Problems of expressiveness (3): the scope of expressiveness.

Most philosophers of music, psychologists and musicologists agree that music is expressive of (some of the) emotions. Their disagreement is about exactly how many of the psychological states we call 'emotions' music may express without the help of words. The dispute concerns the *scope* of musical expressiveness. Malcolm Budd warns us that

[...] music's ability to express emotion should not be exaggerated: the scope of the musical expression of emotion is not the complete field of the emotions, and unless a liberal conception of states that involve emotion is adopted the list of kinds of emotion that music – the music we are familiar with – can express is embarrassingly short.

[Budd 1989: 129]

What is this embarrassingly short list? The answer to this question depends on one's preferred characterisation of emotional states, as well as on what sort of account of musical expressiveness one embraces. Davies, who grounds his theory of musical expressiveness on the music's presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance, finds in this characterisation a principled reason to restrict the sorts of emotional states that music may be said to express. If emotion characteristics in appearance are what allows music to be expressive, then the music's expressive scope will not exceed the range of emotions that are distinguished on the ground of their outward behavioural manifestation.²⁷

While some emotions may not require an intentional object, particular instances of emotion types are identified through their intentional object (I am happy about *the good weather*, love *my partner*, fear *the war*, etc.). However, pure music is

²⁷ "Only a limited range of emotional types can be individuated solely on the basis of observed bodily comportment (where the face cannot be seen and nothing is known about the context of action). Music is expressive because it is experience as resembling such behaviors, and it can express only the emotion types that they do." [Davies 2006: 183]

incapable of providing such objects. This is particularly worrying in the case of what Julius Moravcsik [1982: 208] has named 'Platonic attitudes', that is, emotions that necessarily require an intentional object. A common example is that of hope. Eduard Hanslick had already noted in 1854 that

The feeling of hope cannot be separated from the representation of a future happy state which we compare with the present; melancholy compares past happiness with the present. These are entirely specific representations or concepts. Without them, without this cognitive apparatus, we cannot call the actual feeling "hope" or "melancholy" [...].

[Hanslick 1986: 9]

Does this mean that pure music cannot express hope? Resemblance theorists such as Kivy and Davies accept this conclusion.²⁸ Others disagree. These authors either contend that emotional states of the complex cognitive sort exemplified by hope do not require an intentional object in order to be identified, or argue that the music (or the listener) provides the object required for the Platonic attitude.

Jerrold Levinson [1990b, 1995] belongs to the first category. He contends that Platonic attitudes such as hope may be perceived in an instrumental piece in virtue of the music's presentation of a non-cognitive profile specific to an emotion.

Other authors argue that non-cognitive profiles do not allow us to discriminate between different emotion types.²⁹ If music is expressive of cognitively complex emotions, then it might express such emotions by providing an adequate cognitive content.³⁰ Karl and Robinson [1995a, 1995b] claim that this is the case, and identify

²⁸ See Davies [2003a: 164] for his criticism of Robinson's [1994] view. Putman [1987] discusses the limits of musical expressiveness in the light of the distinctions between emotion types traced by Moravcsik [1982].

²⁹ A much discussed study by Schacter and Singer [1962] is often cited in support of this view.

³⁰ As Peter Mew puts it: "[...] literature and the visual arts present objects and invite feelings; music presents feelings and invites objects." [Mew 1985: 34]

the object of such emotions in the dramatic persona that inhabits the music and in its musical vicissitudes.³¹

A different, but related issue is the one concerning the specificity of the emotions presented by music. Tokens of emotions as psychological states are individuated at a level that does not seem attainable by musical emotions, as the former take intentional objects that contribute to the emotion's identity. However, various authors have stressed the music's power to describe emotions in a way that is too specific for words to capture.³²

5. Desiderata for a theory of musical expressiveness.

This section will be devoted to reviewing the requirements that a viable account of musical expressiveness should meet. While an exhaustive list of desiderata is likely to be as hard to agree upon as it is unhelpful, a reasonable set of requirements will help us to detect the most important issues to tackle and to stress blind spots in the extant literature.

5.1. Notable lists of desiderata: Davies, Trivedi and Levinson.

Davies [2003b: 171-72] proposes a central constraint on any viable account of musical expressiveness: the way in which expressive predicates such as 'happy' and 'sad' are used in the musical case must bear some sort of relation with the central

³¹ See also Robinson and Hatten [2012]. A moderately optimistic view of the persona's capacity to express complex emotions is also found in Cochrane [2010].

³² Ridley [1995a, 1995b] argues that his hybrid cognitive/arousalist theory allows him to explain the individuality and ineffable character of musical emotions. Guczalski [2005] questions Ridley's solution and offers an alternative. Davies dismisses the ineffably specific quality of the emotions presented by music. According to him, the music's presentation of emotion-characteristics in appearance is specific to a particular piece, but this does not mean that a general emotion word could not be appropriately applied to different pieces, which differ only in the way they present the emotion in question. He writes: "On my account, music is not expressive of highly particular emotions, but of rather general emotions of the sadness and happiness varieties. It is highly particular, though, in the manner by which it presents these emotion-characteristics." [1999: 287]

case of human emotional expression. From this requirement it follows that one must avoid a *sui generis* characterisation of musical expressiveness, that is, an account according to which musical expressiveness is in no meaningful way comparable to the human expression of emotions. This desideratum grounds Davies's rejection of attempts to explain away expressive descriptions of music as shortcuts for technical descriptions.

Saam Trivedi [2001: 414] poses three distinct requirements. The first one reflects the same concern as the one posed by Davies and discussed above: musical expressiveness must be related to the ordinary notion of expressiveness, that is, the outward manifestation of psychological states.³³ Trivedi's second requirement is motivated by the rejection of the idea that a purely causal account could constitute a viable analysis of expressiveness in music: such an analysis should clarify what it means for the music to be expressive, as opposed to investigating the causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perception. Trivedi's third requirement is that an account of musical expressiveness "must be a nonmonolithic theory that embraces the variety of *experiences* of musical expressiveness." [2001: 414] According to Trivedi, this final desideratum is important because some accounts, such as Levinson's persona theory, describe expressive perception on the basis of an unwarranted generalisation from a narrow set of cases: while it may be true that one sometimes imagines a musical persona, there are many cases in which the music's expressiveness is experienced without engaging in any imaginative activity. A theory of expressiveness should therefore explain how the experience of expressive music could take the form of various, relevantly different experiences.

I concur with Trivedi in considering this desideratum important for an account of musical expressiveness. However, I suggest including in this requirement the

³³ Trivedi's interpretation of the connection between musical expressiveness and ordinary expressiveness is more demanding than Davies's, and more in line with Levinson's: both believe that the expression of the psychological states of a real or fictional agent is necessary in order to make sense of the use of emotion words in describing inanimate objects. I argue later in this chapter that this interpretation is too demanding.

concerns raised in section III of this chapter regarding the distinction between the causal and phenomenological questions, and partially voiced by Trivedi's second requirement. A viable theory of expressiveness should not only result in a correct characterisation of the experience of expressive music. It should also distinguish causal explanations of expressiveness from the phenomenological description of the experience of it, as well as clarify what sort of relation, if any, holds between the two. I call this the 'causal/phenomenological distinction' requirement.

The most straightforward discussion of requirements for an account of musical expressiveness is found in Levinson [1990].³⁴ Because I will accept these requirements in full – with some reservations concerning the first two – it is worth quoting Levinson at length:

1. Musical expressiveness should be seen as parallel or closely analogous to expression in its most literal sense, that is, the manifesting of psychological states through outward signs, most notably, behaviour ("analogy" requirement).
2. Musical expressiveness should be seen to be related intelligibly to expressiveness in other arts, either by being transparently a species of expressiveness in art generally, according to some plausible account of that, or else a close relative of expressiveness as exhibited in other arts, where the divergence is explicable in terms of salient differences in the media involved ("extendability" requirement).
3. Musical expressiveness should be seen to belong unequivocally to the music – to be a property or aspect thereof – and not to the listener or performer or composer ("externality" requirement).
4. Musical expressiveness should be something an attuned listener experiences or perceives immediately, rather than arrives at intellectually, through reasoning or weighing of evidence, at least in basic cases, i.e. ones of simple expression ("immediacy" requirement).

³⁴ Another explicit list of desiderata is suggested by Scruton [1997: 170]. Some of the requirements in Scruton's list are represented in the ones I discuss. A detailed discussion of all of them, however, will take us too far afield.

5. Musical expressiveness may conceivably be of states too specific for words, but it must also comprise, and centrally, familiar psychological states of a general sort (“generality” requirement).

6. Musical expressiveness should be such that, when perceived or registered by a listener, evocation of feeling or affect, or the imagination of feeling, naturally, if not inevitably, ensues (“affectivity” requirement).

7. Musical expressiveness should be such that experience of it is or can be valuable, and something that contributes, at least normally, to the values of pieces that possess it (“valuability” requirement).

[Levinson 1990: 91-92].

5.2. Discussion of Levinson’s desiderata.

I accept Levinson’s list of requirements, with two important caveats.

First, the analogy requirement deserves a few words of comment.³⁵ There is an intuitive reason for this requirement. If emotion words were applied to music in a *sui generis* manner, that is, without any meaningful relation to the use of emotion words in the psychological sense, then they would be a case of homonymy.³⁶ In the case of homonyms, we can learn to apply one use of a word independently from the other(s). But this is not the case when it comes to emotion words applied to music. As Matravers clarifies:

The term ‘sad’ is not ambiguous; it means the same in its aesthetic as it does in its non-aesthetic uses. In addition, it is the latter, not the former, which fix its meaning. I can know what it is for people to be sad without knowing what it is for a work of art to be sad; but not vice versa.

[Matravers 1991: 323]

³⁵ It will be noted that this requirement is equivalent to one advanced by Davies and discussed above.

³⁶ A common case of homonymy is the use of ‘bank’ to refer both to a riverside and to a financial institution.

Despite the importance of the analogy requirement, Levinson's characterisation of it is rather strong. I will argue that a weaker interpretation of the analogy requirement is preferable. In order to do this, we need to recall the distinction between expression and expressiveness as traced by Robinson. Although functionally related, expression and expressiveness are independent concepts, in that we may find minimally expressive expressions, as well as expressive material that does not give expression to anyone's emotional state, real or fictional. Robinson's conclusion regarding Levinson's persona theory was that it is not a theory of musical *expressiveness*, but rather of musical *expression*, albeit perhaps only of a fictional sort.

The upshot of these observations is that the analogy requirement, as intended by Levinson, is unduly demanding. If expressiveness is conceptually related to the expression of emotions, but may exist independently from it, then there is no need to require the music to present an agent's emotional state in order to make sense of the music's expressiveness.

To clarify this, I will briefly examine a relevant debate between Robert Stecker and Davies. Questioning whether Davies's theory really keeps its promise of accounting for the music's expressiveness, Stecker notes that "Until some connection between music and felt emotion – or at least the type of psychological state of which felt emotions are instances – is established, one has not really given an account of expression in music." [1999: 279] Stecker's point is that an account such as Davies's, which explains the music's possession of expressive properties by its presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance, fails to secure the connection between external appearance and psychological state that is central to the expression of emotions.³⁷

³⁷ Stecker reiterates this objection in a later essay [2001: 87].

Davies replies to this objection with a concession: under his account, it is true that music is not expressive in the sense of presenting emotion characteristics that bear a connection with someone's psychological state. [1999: 284] However, this does not pose an obstacle to the fulfilment of the analogy requirement (using Levinson's terminology). As long as the listener's musical experience of emotion characteristics in appearance is dependent on her capacity to recognize and distinguish emotions in the central case, a connection is secured between the musical emotions and the real life ones.³⁸

Davies's strategy embraces an attenuated version of the analogy requirement. Under this interpretation, the analogy between the use of emotion terms in the description of music and their use in the "central" psychological case does not require a link between the music's emotions with the emotions of a real or fictional agent. Rather, the use of emotion words in music has to be meaningfully dependent on the use of such words in the psychological sense.

I accept this attenuated version of the analogy requirement, largely for reasons dependent on Robinson's observations discussed above: a strong analogy requirement is only necessary to an account of musical expression, not to one of musical expressiveness. Moreover, an account of expression in music is bound to be dependent on an account of musical expressiveness. This is because music can be intelligibly used as an expressive outlet only if endowed with the appropriate expressive properties – that is, with the appropriate expressiveness. For instance, I can use sad music to express my depressed mood. Therefore, an account of the musical expressiveness is more fundamental than an account of musical expression and, precisely for this reason, the strong analogy requirement that may be

³⁸ Davies admits that he may sometimes write of music *expressing* sadness, but this is simply to be paraphrased as 'the music is expressive of sadness'. He adds: "So long as I am allowed to retain 'the music is expressive of X' and 'Xness is expressed in the music', I would give up 'the music expresses X'." [1999: 284]

appropriate for the latter is likely to presuppose the weak analogy requirement necessary to expressiveness.³⁹

My second qualm regarding Levinson's list concerns extendability. The debate on expressiveness has focused on music on the ground of the shared belief that musical expressiveness is more philosophically puzzling than expressiveness in the other arts.⁴⁰ This focus on music has resulted in a lack of concern for the parallels between musical expressiveness and expressiveness in the other arts.⁴¹

Extendability stresses the parallel between musical expressiveness and expressiveness in other art forms. I find this requirement intuitively sound: while music may well allow expressive possibilities unknown to other arts in virtue of its peculiarity as an art form, it is implausible that expressive perception in the case of, say, abstract painting, should be described as completely unrelated to expressive perception in the musical case.⁴² This would not only go against a well-entrenched linguistic habit – we call 'expressive' a symphony, an abstract painting, and the movements of a dancer. It would also threaten to break into a multifarious set of disconnected uses the apparent unity of the specific expressive predicates we use:

³⁹ Maria José Alcaraz León suggests that it may be wrong to identify the central case of the use of emotion words with their application to human expressive behavior. Musical expressiveness and ordinary expressiveness may be on a par in elucidating the nature of emotional states: "Thus, for example, a facial expression or a gesture may be what clarifies the expressive content of a musical passage. And, maybe, vice versa, someone could clarify her perceptual experience of an expressive face or gesture by comparing it with a musical piece. Thus, a musical passage, phrase or piece could be used instead of an ordinary expressive means in order to elucidate our feelings." [Alcaraz León 2013: 277]

⁴⁰ Davies aptly entitles a recent overview of his theory of musical expressiveness 'Artistic Expression and the Hard Case of Pure Music'. [2006]

⁴¹ Notable exceptions are Matravers's *Art and Emotion* [1998] and Jenefer Robinson's *Deeper than Reason* [2005].

⁴² Matravers implicitly suggests that Levinson fails to meet his own extendability requirement when he observes that Levinson's persona theory of musical expressiveness does not seem to be applicable to abstract painting. He writes: "Is the 'way of appearing' exhibited by one of Rothko's melancholy canvasses the same as the way of appearing exhibited by one of Mozart's mournful pieces? Can it be characterized in a way that is neutral between the senses? It does not seem to me that I experience the Rothko as the direct expression of sadness of a persona, and I do not think I subsequently take this to have been done in a *sui generis* pictorial manner." [2007: 378]

the term 'sad' takes one meaning when applied to a symphony and a radically different meaning when applied to a painting.

Moreover, certain art forms combine the expressive potential of arts that may possess expressive properties when considered in isolation. For instance, the French *chanson* combines expressive properties of poetry with those of music. It is hard to see how French *chansons* could have a unitary expressive interpretation, resulting from the interplay between music and lyrics, if musical expressiveness had to be considered as radically different from its literary counterpart.

It is of course hard to provide a positive, definitive argument in favour of the extendability requirement without a fully worked-out theory of expressiveness across the arts. However, linguistic and artistic practices suggest that the burden of proof is on the opponent of extendability.⁴³

I have so far defended the extendability requirement as described by Levinson. One may wonder whether such a desideratum should be extended to cover cases of expressiveness of a non-artistic sort. Both non-artistic artefacts and natural objects are often described as possessing expressive properties.⁴⁴

A landscape may look melancholic, gloomy, or serene. A tree stands proud on a cliff's edge. The sea is enraged during a storm, calm and placid in the absence of wind.⁴⁵ A city's streets may be vibrant or menacing, and yellow curtains are not as sombre as black ones. In light of these facts, one may wonder whether a viable account of expressiveness in music (and in the arts in general) should be extendable to non-artistic objects, such as everyday artefacts and portions of the natural world. This idea is controversial. Budd [2008b] has criticised Wollheim's theory of expressive perception on the grounds that it conflates expressiveness in nature with

⁴³ Stecker [1984] reviews the expressive possibilities of various art forms, and draws a sceptical conclusion concerning the availability of a general theory. However, he does not exclude its possibility.

⁴⁴ Philosophical literature addressing expressive qualities in non-artistic and natural contexts is scarce. See for instance Emily Brady [2009] on animals, Cain Todd [2012a, 2012b] on wine, and a general account of artefact expression by John Kulvicki [2008].

⁴⁵ Wollheim [1993] opens with examples of expressiveness in nature.

expressiveness in the arts. If a unified account of expressiveness across the arts is already unwarranted, Budd claims, even more so would be a monolithic theory of expressiveness in art and nature. Particularly, Budd suggests that perceiving expressive properties in nature always requires us to undergo an emotion ourselves, whereas this does not seem necessary in the artistic case.

The distinction traced by Budd is problematic. On the one hand, it is questionable that the perception of expressive properties in nature requires the arousal of a corresponding emotional state (or of any emotional state with some relation to the one perceived in the natural object). It is perfectly possible to imagine a case in which one experiences the melancholy in a landscape without being moved to feel melancholic. Other expressive attributions are even more unlikely to give rise to emotional responses: if it is possible, and perhaps even likely, to be moved to sadness by a gloomy winter day, it seems hard for the enraged sea to cause us to feel rage ourselves, or for the pine tree that proudly stands straight to make us feel proud of anything.

On the other hand, it is unclear why the most salient difference between art and nature – that is, the fact that the former is the intentional product of an agent – should have a bearing on the basic case of expressive perception. Intentional use of expressive material is crucial to the production of works of art: it explains how it is possible to put art's expressive properties to the service of personal expression, as detailed in the above description of the interaction between expression and expressiveness. However, such an intentional use is arguably not necessary to instantiate expressive properties in artworks. To use Kivy's formulation, expressive properties "come with the territory" [1990: 183], without the need of successfully realized intentions. Finally, it seems that the possibility for an intentional agent to endow artworks with expressive properties is bound to be related to the expressive properties possessed by the raw natural materials the artist is manipulating: the expressiveness of Titian's reds is not unrelated to the expressive character of his red pigments.

In light of these considerations, it seems that the burden of proof would be again on those who deny that expressive perception in art and nature have anything in common. I suggest therefore that a viable account of expressiveness in music should be generalizable not only to all of the arts but also to cases of expressiveness in natural objects and non-artistic artefacts.

In line with Levinson's original terminology, I call this requirement *augmented extendability*.

5.3. *Additional desiderata.*

In addition to the ones above, I suggest three requirements of my own.

Resemblance theories of musical expressiveness take various forms. A common feature of such theories, however, is the claim that musical expressiveness can be described as a kind of animation of the inanimate musical material: we apply psychological properties to something – the music – that is devoid of psychological life. The origin of this idea can be traced back to Kivy. In order to explain some puzzling aspects of resemblance-based perception of musical expressiveness, he suggested an evolutionary explanation that assimilates our tendency to perceive expressive properties in the music to the adaptive tendency to animate objects in the environment. According to Kivy [1980], just as we are inclined to mistake a stick for a snake, so we are prone to interpret auditory stimuli as if they were expressive vocalisations produced by a living being.⁴⁶

Similar assumptions regarding our propensity to endow inanimate objects with psychological life are accepted by Davies, although he takes Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis to be more demanding than needed. [1994: 258-60] Finally, Levinson's persona theory, while not a canonical resemblance-based account, also relies on the

⁴⁶ The details of Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis and its problematic aspects will be examined in the first appendix.

idea of a resemblance-based animation in order to make sense of our tendency to detect agency in music. [2006: 197]

What all the instances of expressive animation of the inanimate have in common is the description of inanimate objects by means of predicates, the meaning of which is primarily psychological. The requirement I am advancing here draws attention to a different, contrasting phenomenon. We often use terms that acquire their primary meaning from the description of inanimate objects in order to characterise aspects of psychological life, such as attitudes, personality, feelings and emotions. A lover's love for a partner is 'sweet', and so are her smiles; disappointment is 'bitter'; loneliness makes us feel 'blue'; a person may be 'stormy' and her face 'hard'; her character may be 'cold' or 'tepid'.

I contend that a viable theory of expressiveness needs to make sense of these descriptions. Particularly, we can expect an account of expressiveness to share part of the conceptual machinery needed to make sense of inanimation. It is at least plausible to hypothesize that the process that prompts us to describe inanimate objects as having psychological properties overlaps with the process through which we come to describe psychological states and intentional behaviour in inanimate terms. As I will elaborate in Chapter V, the available theories of expressiveness that explain expressive perception in terms of animation of the inanimate are ill-suited to account for descriptions such as the above ones. I call this the 'inanimation' requirement.

The second requirement concerns the compatibility of the account with empirical data regarding the cross-cultural transparency of musical expressiveness. Of the canonical texts devoted to the problem of musical expressiveness, few deal with the perception of expressive properties in cross-cultural perspective. However, theories of musical expressiveness often put a considerable weight on what are supposed to be hard-wired tendencies. If the mechanisms responsible for expressive perception are akin to hard-wired perceptual tendencies (such as Gestalt laws), then a prediction would seem to follow as to the degree of cross-cultural agreement in

describing expressive music: one would expect people from various times and places to detect similar expressive properties. If it is rather conventions that mainly determine the expressive character of music, we should expect a different scenario: musical expressiveness within a musical tradition will be transparent only to those who are educated in that particular musical idiom.

Kivy, despite his refusal to consider empirical work in a sustained fashion, realised early on that a viable theory of musical expressiveness should account for the cross-cultural commonalities and differences in expressive perception of music.⁴⁷ Davies [2011c] is the only one among the chief writers on the subject who has examined cross-cultural research in some detail. The spirit of his remarks is methodological: the available research, he argues, is marred by conceptual confusions and unwarranted assumptions.

My intent is to use cross-cultural research as a benchmark against which to test the predictions that follow from the account I defend. In order to do this, I will check the account against the available literature on the cross-cultural perception of expressive properties in music. I call this the *cross-cultural plausibility* requirement.

The third additional desideratum is connected with the debate regarding the scope of musical expressiveness, and could be regarded as a qualification of Levinson's generality requirement. In addition to accounting for the generality of emotional descriptions that are applied to music, a viable theory of musical expressiveness should account for the various degrees of agreement among listeners when it comes to applying emotion words to music. The theory should make sense of the general agreement at the level of descriptions such as 'happy' or 'sad', as well as of the idiosyncrasies that surface when listeners produce more elaborate and specific descriptions.⁴⁸ I call this the *expressive scope* requirement.

⁴⁷ Kivy [1980: 87-91] discusses Westerner's capacity to detect emotions in Hindustani *Ragas*, but with characteristic disregard for empirical work (which at the time, one may concede, was in any case scarce).

⁴⁸ Collier [2002] offers empirical evidence that agreement among listeners is substantial only in the case of suitably general emotion words.

5.4. *Desiderata for an account of musical expressiveness: a summary.*

Here I list the ten requirements I accepted in the above discussion and succinctly describe them. Roughly in order of importance, they are the following.

(i) *Causal/phenomenological distinction.* A viable account of musical expressiveness should distinguish the causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perceptions from the experience of expressive properties in music, and clarify what relation, if any, holds between these two aspects. Additionally, the account should avoid any simplification of the phenomenology: it may be impossible to assimilate all experiences of expressive music to a unitary phenomenological characterisation.

(ii) *Analogy.* A theory of musical expressiveness should describe the attribution of expressive properties to inanimate objects in a way that maintains a relationship between the central use of emotion words and their derived application to inanimate objects. In other words, a viable account of expressive perception should avoid a *sui generis* characterisation of expressive properties as applied to inanimate objects.

(iii) *Augmented extendability.* A viable theory of expressiveness in music should account for the relation between the perception of expressive properties in music and the perception of such properties in other inanimate object. Although there might a way of experiencing expressive properties that is peculiar to music in virtue of its specificity as a medium, we should expect a basic notion of expressiveness to be able to cover cases as different as expressive perception of inanimate natural objects, non-artistic humanly-made objects, and artistic objects proper.

(iv) *Externality.* An account of musical expressiveness should explain our attribution of emotion terms to the music as a qualification of the music, as opposed to a description of the emotional state of the composer, performer, or listener.

(v) *Immediacy.* A viable account of expressive perception in music should avoid characterising expressive properties as something the listener arrives at through

reasoning or inference. Rather, it should explain and qualify the analogy between the immediacy of ordinary perception and that of expressive perception.

(vi) *Expressive scope*. A theory of musical expressiveness should determine the range of expressive properties the music may possess in a way that is in accordance with the descriptions of music offered by competent listeners. If descriptions of music in terms of general emotion words such as 'happy' or 'sad' show a high rate of intersubjective agreement, more specific descriptions may fail to do so. A theory of musical expressiveness should reflect these variations.

(vii) *Affectivity*. A viable account of musical expressiveness should explain how it is possible for expressive music to arouse in the listener an emotional state.

(viii) *Valuability*. An account of musical expressiveness should be able to explain how the experience of musical expressiveness contributes (at least sometimes) to the value of the music that occasions it.⁴⁹

(ix) *Inanimation*. We often describe emotional states or expressive looks using words that find their primary application in the description of inanimate objects. A viable account of expressive perception should avoid characterising the basic case of expressive perception as the animation of the inanimate, as this would not make sense of the linguistic practices just described.

(x) *Cross-cultural plausibility*. A plausible account of musical expressiveness should square with the empirical data regarding the cross-cultural transparency (or otherwise) of expressive perception.

The requirements I have listed here will go in and out of focus at various points in the course of this work. However, at the end of this dissertation I will aim to

⁴⁹ As anticipated, I deal only marginally with the problem of value in this work. It is worth noting that the valuability requirement is sometimes dismissed as a requirement for a theory of musical expressiveness by theorists who contend that emotional descriptions of music are metaphorical, dispensable descriptions of the music's aesthetic properties. An example of this is Zangwill [2004, 2007].

provide a comprehensive discussion of how my preferred account of musical expressiveness meets each of these desiderata.

II. Resemblance Theories: Causal Interpretation

In this chapter I discuss the causal interpretation of resemblance theories. As we have seen, resemblance theories have been on various occasions accused of mistaking a causal account of the experience of expressive music for an analysis or phenomenological characterization of such an experience. [Levinson 2006; Noordhof 2008]. I will contend that a causal interpretation of resemblance theories is untenable. In doing so, I express a moderate degree of scepticism concerning the import of empirical work on phenomenological accounts of expressive perception.

Discussing resemblance theories as causal theories of musical expressiveness may strike the reader as uncharitable: despite their occasional ambiguities, Kivy and Davies never seemed to suggest that what they were after was a mere causal account of the causal mechanisms responsible for the experience of musical expressiveness. However, in a recent defence of resemblance theories, James O. Young [2012, 2014] seemingly ignores the phenomenological component of Kivy and Davies's proposals, and reduces the theory to a hypothesis concerning the causal grounds of expressive perception in music. Despite this, Young believes to be defending an orthodox version of Kivy's contour theory and Davies's appearance emotionalism.

Discussing Young's version of resemblance theory is important for two reasons. First, it is the most recent defence of the theory by a prominent philosopher of music, yet it still shows that resemblance theorists are unclear as to the distinction between the causal and phenomenological levels, and particularly with regard to the implications of the former for the latter. Second, Young's defence of resemblance theories shows how a purely causal interpretation of them is untenable, or at best obsolete.

1. Young's resemblance theory

Young describes himself as a proponent of an orthodox resemblance theory of musical expressiveness, which he regards as “commonplace” and “commonsensical”.⁵⁰ [2014: 19] But he also holds that the theory is an empirical one. [2014: 15]

This is puzzling, because empirical theories may well be neither commonplace nor commonsensical and, more importantly, what makes them true is independent from their degree of intuitive plausibility. An account of the phenomenology of music listening could perhaps benefit from having a commonplace and commonsensical character. But such an account is not what Young is after, as becomes evident as soon as one looks at the sort of evidence he cites in support of his view.⁵¹ In fact, Young's defence of the theory does not offer any discussion of the phenomenology of music listening, or of the appropriate analysis of statements such as ‘the music is sad’. Instead, Young offers abundant and updated empirical evidence that is supposed to support resemblance theories. What is this evidence? In what follows, I review the studies Young cites in support of resemblance theories, and discuss whether they indeed support such a view.

Young opens the discussion of empirical evidence favourable to resemblance theories with the following claim: “The resemblance theory is an empirical theory. The theory will be confirmed to the extent that features of the human voice and human behaviour expressive of some emotion are found to resemble features of music expressive of the same emotion.” [2014: 15]

This is problematic for two reasons. First, resemblance theorists do not normally regard their theories as mere empirical hypotheses regarding the sources of musical expressiveness. Second, philosophers tend to agree that music does in fact

⁵⁰ He borrows the terms from Kivy himself [1980: 57].

⁵¹ Notice that, even as a characterisation of the phenomenology of expressive perception, resemblance theories are far from being commonsensical, as many competent listeners deny that the resemblance between the music and human emotional expression is in any way part of their experience of expressive music.

resemble expressive vocalizations and movements, but there is no corresponding general agreement regarding the plausibility of resemblance theories. Various philosophers, such as Levinson [2006] or Trivedi [2017], take resemblances between the music and expressive behaviour (bodily and vocal) to be part of the correct explanation of the experience of musical expressiveness, yet reject resemblance theories because they deem them incapable of offering a correct analysis of such an experience. This suggests that the crucial point for a proponent of the resemblance theory will not be to ascertain the resemblance between the music and expressive utterances or bodily behaviour, but rather to show that such resemblance plays a role in the experience of expressive perception.

2. Young's defence of the contour theory.

I will now turn to the empirical studies cited by Young, although I will also cite, where possible, additional empirical evidence. Young starts with results supportive of the resemblance between music and vocal expression, relying in particular on Juslin and Laukka's [2003] review article. From this comprehensive examination of the available literature, the authors conclude that "the present findings strongly suggest that music performance uses largely the same emotion-specific patterns of acoustic cues as does vocal expression".⁵² [2003: 798]

The results in question are of particular relevance because they do not seem to be confined to Western music. A study of Carnatic *Ragas* (South Indian music) has found that the musical expression of emotions matches the vocal expression of emotion. [Bowling et al. 2012] More generally, emotional prosody is generally cross-culturally transparent, in that the emotion expressed is often understandable despite

⁵² A more recent study by Scherer et al. [2015] is also supportive of this thesis: "As a general conclusion we can retain that overall there are many similarities in vocal emotional expression across speech and singing, confirming theorizing that suggests a parallel evolution of speech and music from primitive affect bursts, sharing similar codes for the signalling of affect." [2015: 233]

the complete lack of semantic information.⁵³ This mirrors the relative cross-cultural transparency of musical expressiveness.⁵⁴ Additional evidence shows that individuals affected by congenital amusia have troubles in detecting emotions in speech prosody. [Thompson et al. 2012] This body of research points to a profound structural analogy between expressive music and emotional prosody, to be explained perhaps by their shared evolutionary history.

Patrik Juslin [2001] has suggested that music's expressive power may derive from a tendency to react to musical stimuli as to emotional vocalisation. Music, with its intensification of standard prosodic features associated with the expression of emotions, would then be interpreted by the brain as a "super-expressive voice".⁵⁵ According to Young, Juslin's theory constitutes further evidence in favour of Kivy's contour theory, which stresses in particular the music's resemblance to vocal emotional expression.

Another piece of evidence in favour of the contour theory is represented by Jaak Panksepp's hypothesis concerning the origin of musical chills – the shiver one feels when listening to music, particularly to high-pitched passages.⁵⁶ Panksepp suggests that

High-pitched sustained crescendos, arising from a grief-filled score that pierce the "soul" so to speak, seem ideally suited for evoking chills. Perhaps acoustic properties that are especially effective in triggering the response are sounds that resemble the separation cries of babies – the primal care-soliciting signals that promote nurturant attention, especially by mothers. Musically evoked chills may arise from the mirror-like responses of our ancient brain separation-distress systems that made us socially-dependent animals because we can not only experience the

⁵³ See Scherer et al. [2001] and Sauter et al. [2010].

⁵⁴ See Chapter VII for a discussion of musical expressiveness in cross-cultural perspective.

⁵⁵ See also Juslin and Västfjäll [2008].

⁵⁶ See for instance Panksepp [1995, 2009] and Panksepp and Bernatzky [2002].

painful emotional impact of social loss but reflect on what this means for our lives, which may arise from profound arousal of frontal executive regions of the brain.

[Panksepp 2009: 242]

The range of signals of distress considered by Panksepp goes beyond mother-child communication. It includes distress signals and territorial or separation calls found in other mammals. It is exactly this early evolutionary genesis that may account for the emotional potency and immediacy of music that resembles those vocalizations. If true, this would show that there is a causal connection between the emotional significance of vocalization in mammals and the expressive qualities of music.⁵⁷

The moral Young draws from these studies is that Kivy's version of the resemblance theory, the contour theory, is widely supported by the most recent empirical evidence. But is it?

As far as I can see, there are two main issues with this. First, these findings do not appear to support Kivy's contour theory any more than other versions of the resemblance theory. If it is true that causal mechanisms grounded in the way we process expressive vocalizations are ultimately responsible for expressive perception in music, this does not entail that expressive vocalizations are in any way part of the experience of expressive music.⁵⁸ The empirical results discussed by Young are orthogonal to Kivy's claims regarding the role of human expressive vocalisations in the experience of emotional expressiveness, and fail to support his contour theory against other versions of resemblance theory. For example, even if we found out that

⁵⁷ It should be noted, however, that much of the evidence provided by Panksepp seems to be more about the *arousal* of emotions through music, rather than about the emotions *expressed by* the music.

⁵⁸ For instance, while discussing Juslin's super-expressive voice' theory, Aniruddh Patel specifies that: "[...] even though most instruments do not sound like voices from a phenomenological standpoint, they can nevertheless engage emotion perception modules in the brain because they contain enough speech-like acoustic features to trigger these modules." [2007: 346]

these mechanisms are ultimately responsible for *all* musical expressiveness, this would not disqualify Davies's [2006a: 182; 2006b: 151-52] claim according to which the most important resemblance is that between expressive music and human bodily behaviour. This is because Davies's claim is one about the phenomenology of music listening, rather than about what causes the experience of expressive music. In fact, the evidence cited by Young may well be welcomed by opponents of the resemblance theory such as Levinson, who concedes that resemblance is likely to have a causal role in the experience of expressiveness, but denies that it is part of our experience of expressive music. [Levinson 2006: 57]

From this I conclude that, if Young is defending a resemblance theory of musical expressiveness, he must either add additional evidence in support of the phenomenological characterisation of expressive perception, or recognize that his resemblance theory is in fact different from Kivy's. Of course, Young could cast aside these worries, in line with his empirical take on resemblance theories. The experimental results may then fail to support a specific phenomenological interpretation of the theory, but after all Young's version of it is solely concerned with the causal mechanism responsible for the perception of expressive properties in music.

Second, even if treated as merely about the causal basis of expressive perception, these empirical results point to a broader range of phenomena than human expressive behaviour. The original claim of resemblance theories was that music is expressive of emotions in virtue of its resemblance to vocal or bodily expressions of emotions. Instead of this, we are offered here empirical evidence in support of the idea that musical expressiveness is grounded in a broad range of phenomena connected with emotional and social life, such as alarm calls, territorial calls, separation calls, etc.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Further concern regarding this point will be expressed later in this chapter.

3. Young on conventions.

Kivy's original contour theory conceded that resemblance in contour could not explain all musical expressiveness. For instance, Kivy considered the expressive quality of major and minor chords and harmonies a result of convention.⁶⁰ Young contends that recent empirical research shows that Kivy was pessimistic: the expressive character of major and minor modes, as well as that of dissonant intervals, may be amenable to the same general explanation advanced by resemblance theorists for other musical features, namely, a resemblance between the music and human expressive behaviour. While perhaps not enough to discount conventions altogether, this would reinforce the plausibility of the contour theory, and of resemblance theories of musical expressiveness in general.

However, the psychological evidence used by Young against conventionalism is also problematic, and so is the way Young interprets it. Let us first review it briefly.

There are indeed good reasons to suppose that the expressive character of major and minor chords is not entirely grounded on conventions. Kastner and Crowder [1990] have shown that infants have a preference for major over minor chords. Lahdelma and Eerola [2016] found that both naïve and expert listeners perceive the emotional character of isolated major and minor triads.⁶¹

Other research has shown that major intervals are more common in excited speech, whereas minor intervals abound in subdued speech. This situation mirrors the musical one. [Bowling et al. 2010] In another experiment, actors were asked to convey different emotions through the utterance of disyllabic lines, and the minor

⁶⁰ More precisely, Kivy [1980: 80-83] believes that an expressive character first acquired by contour later crystallised in a convention.

⁶¹ It is worth noting here that the naïve listeners in question were musically untrained, yet very familiar with the Western musical idiom. Subjects who grew up listening to Western music might not be suitable to test hypothesis regarding the conventional or natural character of major/minor triads, regardless of how little musical training they had.

third was by far the most widely employed interval for the expression of sadness.⁶² Young takes this empirical evidence to be favourable to Kivy's contour theory: the expressive character of major and minor music may be accounted by its resemblance to happy and sad prosody.

The expressive character of consonant and dissonant intervals also seems to be far from being the result of conventions. Developmental studies have shown that infants discriminate very early between consonant and dissonant chords, and have a preference for the former category.⁶³ While preference is not equivalent to the attribution of a determinate expressive character, these results suggest that chords are positively or negatively charged from the earliest stages of development.

Young suggests that this preference for consonance may be dependent on the similarity between dissonant intervals and alarm calls.⁶⁴ He calls this "a reasonable hypothesis" [2014: 33], and offers in its support neuroimaging evidence: minor and dissonant chords produce a higher BOLD (blood-oxygen-level dependence) signal in the limbic system. [Pallesen et al. 2006]

Young's use of empirical evidence faces both technical and methodological difficulties. The technical worries are two.

First, it is important to note that intervals may be harmonic (vertical) or melodic (horizontal) in the musical case, but they may only be melodic in speech. Given the difference in expressive character between intervals used melodically and harmonically, caution is advisable when grounding explanations on resemblance to prosodic features. For example, the tritone (augmented fourth/diminished fifth) may

⁶² Curtis and Bharucha [2010]. However, this experiment also presents data less compatible with Young's hypothesis. The ascending major third was not featured often in instances of happy speech, and the minor third, while appearing very often in its descending form, was never used as an ascending interval in expressing sadness. The problem with this is that, in Western music, the ascending minor third is *at least* as expressive of sadness as the descending minor third.

⁶³ Crowder et al. [1991]; Trainor and Heinmiller [1998]; Zentner and Kagan [1998]; Trainor et al. [2002]; Masataka [2006].

⁶⁴ But notice that, according to McDermott and Hauser [2004], non-human primates do not show any preference for consonant over dissonant intervals.

be expressive of tenderness and yearning if used melodically (as in Bernstein's famous *Maria*), but it is invariably jarring when used harmonically.

Second, major and minor chords have both a major and a minor third. What changes is their order, in that the major chord is constituted by a minor third on top of the major one, whereas the minor chord is built by adding a major third on top of a minor one. It may therefore be problematic to account for the expressive character of major and minor chords using evidence on the occurrence of major and minor thirds.

Aside from these technical difficulties, there are more problematic methodological issues with Young's interpretation of these results.

First, the resemblance between the intervals found in emotional prosody and those found in music expressive of a similar emotion is not a perceivable resemblance, such as the one between melodic and prosodic contour. The extraction of the melodic contour from speech is not a straightforward operation, because we do not speak in musical intervals. It would not be enough to say that the resemblance need not be consciously perceived – something that resemblance theorists would readily accept. The point is that the resemblance in question is not one that we could focus on even if we were aware of it, whereas we could do that with the resemblance between melodic contours in music and speech.

Second, Young's resemblance-based account of dissonance faces similar problems to those encountered by his revision of the core of Kivy's contour theory. By broadening the domain of causal mechanism relevant to the explanation of musical expressiveness up to the inclusion of alarm calls, the theory loses its original ambition of accounting for expressive perception in music through the music's resemblance to human emotional expression.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ For instance, Young suggests that the positive emotions associated with consonant intervals and major keys may depend on "our preference for motherese [infant-directed speech]". [2014: 33] But note that emotional expression is but one of the functions of infant-directed speech. [Fernald 1995: 402-403]

While I concur with Young in believing that current psychological research suggests that the role of conventions is more limited than Kivy originally suggested, I deny that these results are supportive of resemblance theory of musical expressiveness.

4. Young's defence of appearance emotionalism.

Even greater issues emerge when Young tries to use empirical evidence in support of Davies's appearance emotionalism.

As we have seen, while Kivy's contour theory stresses the music's resemblance to vocal emotional expression, and particularly with emotional prosody, Davies emphasises the importance of the music's resemblance to bodily emotional expression. On the basis of this, Young characterises the sort of empirical evidence required in support of appearance emotionalism in these terms: "Ideally, one would find psychological evidence that confirms that the expressive properties of music result (in part) from a resemblance between these properties and human expressive movement." [2014: 19]

Young believes that a series of experiment conducted by Manfred Clynes and Nigel Nettheim could provide such evidence. In the first of these experiments, subjects were taught a finger pressure pattern that the researchers had previously paired with a specific emotion. Subjects learned the pattern without being told what the corresponding emotion was. The pressure pattern was supposed to correspond to the particular dynamic form of one of the following seven emotions: anger, hate, grief, love, sex, joy, and reverence. Subjects were then given a list of names of these seven emotions, and were required to pair them to the finger pressure patterns. They did so reliably. In the second experiment, subjects were shown footage of the hand producing the finger pressure patterns, and asked to pair these with the seven emotions mentioned above. They did so reliably. In the third experiment, Clynes and

Nettheim transformed the patterns of finger pressure in auditory stimuli.⁶⁶ They asked subjects to pair the stimuli with the seven emotions on the list. Once more, subjects reliably identified an emotion's characteristic dynamic form, even after its modal transformation from touch to sound.⁶⁷ It is worth noting that a fourth experiment showed how sounds generated from white urban Australian finger pressure patterns was accurately paired with the corresponding emotion by Central Australian Aboriginals.

These empirical results are used by Clynes and Nettheim to show that a common dynamic form is reliably correlated to emotional states across different sensory modalities. They call this dynamic structure the *essentic form* of an emotion. The possibility of reinterpreting patterns of finger pressure associated with an emotion in terms of sounds that are expressive of the same emotion is taken by Clynes and Nettheim to be evidence of the cross-modal transparency of essentic forms.

However, the use of these results in support of Davies's appearance emotionalism is less straightforward than Young seems to think.

First, one should notice that patterns of finger pressure are not emotion characteristics in appearance. While they may correlate meaningfully with emotions, they are not the typical behavioural signs of emotions. This is particularly evident if one looks at what essentic forms are in Clynes and Nettheim's theoretical framework. As they explicitly say, "Dynamic qualities of expression should be distinguished from aspects of postural or facial expression [...]" [1982: 51] It follows from this that, even if Clynes and Nettheim's experiments were actually of some relevance for a theory of musical expressiveness, it is not clear how they would support an account such as the one favoured by Davies.

⁶⁶ I will not discuss here in any detail the process of transformation from pressure pattern to sound stimulus. It is clear, however, that this is a crucial methodological aspect for this sort of experiment.

⁶⁷ The only two emotions that were significantly confused were love and reverence.

Second, Clynes and Nettheim interpret these empirical results as supporting the hypothesis that “there appears to be a common brain algorithm for the various sensory modes underlying the production and recognition of dynamic expression of specific qualities.” [1982: 51] The unity in terms of brain processing is what allows individuals to translate the essentic form characteristic of an emotion into a corresponding essentic form in another sense modality. As it is, the theory does not privilege any particular sense modality, hence it is hard to see in what sense it is supportive of appearance emotionalism rather than another version of the theory.

Third, Davies [2011b] defends a literalist view of the attribution of emotion terms to music. According to him, statements such as ‘the music is sad’ are not metaphors, but rather stand for something like ‘the music presents emotion characteristics in appearance typical of sadness’. In other words, the emotion term is used to refer to the typical exterior manifestation of an emotion, rather than to a felt psychological state, making it possible to apply the word to inanimate objects. Emotion characteristics in appearance have to figure in one’s account of musical expressiveness in order for Davies’s literalist strategy to be applicable.

Young’s causal interpretation of Davies’s theory is again silent with regard to the role of emotion characteristics in appearance in the phenomenology of music listening. In Young’s revised version of the theory there is no need for emotion characteristics in appearance to be in any sense part of the experience of music listening – nor, as we have seen, to be essentially involved in its causal grounds. If what grounds our attribution of emotional terms to music is similarity in brain processing due to a common dynamic form, then the literal application of emotional terms is deprived of its justification, as this was found in the use of emotion words to refer to their characteristics in appearance. From this standpoint, it is impossible for Young to defend a literalist view of emotional descriptions of music by appealing to Davies’s original strategy.

5. Conclusion

Young concludes his review of empirical data claiming that “the current best psychological evidence strongly indicates that the resemblance theory, as originally defended by Kivy and Davies, is correct.” [2014: 33]

As I have tried to show, this is far from being true. Not only does Young’s defence of the theory fail to do justice to the phenomenological characterisation of the experience of musical expressiveness that resemblance theories appear to be offering. It also fails to support a causal interpretation of the thesis, according to which music is expressive in virtue of its resemblance to human expressive behaviour. As studies cited by Young himself suggest, the range of evolutionary explanations for expressive perception could encompass mechanisms that have no direct relation to expressive behaviour, such as territorial calls, infant-directed speech, and dynamic correlates of emotions across different sensory domains. Unless we turn ‘resemblance’ into a vacuous placeholder for any causal mechanism that is in some way related to human or animal behaviour, there is no informative way in which it could be said that empirical data support resemblance theories of musical expressiveness.

Regarding this, it is useful to briefly comment on a passage in which Young discusses the commonplace experience of hearing music moving in a virtual space.

“[...] we experience music as moving as a result of cross-domain mapping, a pervasive feature of our experience of the world. Cross-domain mapping is the transfer of concepts derived from one sensory modality to experiences derived from another sensory modality.”

[Young 2014: 19]

The reason why this passage is important is that Young mentions cross-domain mappings when describing the connection between musical movement and movement in space. It is worth noting, however, that it is sometimes impossible to

cash out the mapping between two concepts across different domains in terms of resemblance – at least, the sort of resemblance that resemblance theorists have in mind. Synaesthesia is a case in point.⁶⁸ Regardless of the temptation we may feel to say that the two sensations *resemble* each other, it is impossible to point out the resemblance between the sharpness of an aged cheese and that of a blade, or the resemblance between the blue of sadness and that of ultramarine paint. The connection between the two domains cannot be re-interpreted as a resemblance of the sort involved in descriptions such as “the music resembles subdued speech”.

I will consider these cases in greater detail in Chapters IV and V, where I contend that some expressive features of music are connected to emotions in a way that cannot be accounted for by currently available resemblance theories of musical expressiveness.

But let us concede, if only for the sake of the argument, that there is a meaningful way in which it could be said that the causal connection between music and emotions is somehow amenable to the music’s resemblance to human emotional expression. This would show that Kivy and Davies had correctly identified the causal basis of musical expressiveness before empirical research could do so. While perhaps being proof of their ingenuity, their theories, so interpreted, would be reduced to a historical curiosity. Interpreted as a causal account of musical expressiveness, resemblance theories are obsolete at best, plain wrong at worst.

At the beginning of this chapter, I stated that it is important to discuss Young’s version of resemblance theory for two reasons: because it is recent and sophisticated enough to be regarded as representative of the current state of the debate and as suggestive of future developments, and because its insistence on a causal reading of the resemblance theory is particularly apt to show the problems with such interpretation.

⁶⁸ I use the term to indicate ordinary cases of synaesthesia, rather than the condition of ‘synesthetic’ individuals.

The general conclusions of this chapter are related to these two points of interest.

On the one hand, my discussion has shown that resemblance theorists are still unclear as to the distinction between the phenomenological level and the explanatory level. Such confusion is likely to make impossible any genuine progress in this area.

On the other hand, it will be clear that the available scientific literature on musical expressiveness is not sufficient to establish either of the two most reputable formulations of the resemblance theory. In the best possible scenario, a reduction of the theory's content to a hypothesis regarding the mechanisms responsible for the perception of expressive properties in music would render the resemblance theory of musical expressiveness a historical curiosity.

6. A note on Gestalt psychology

I conclude this chapter with a brief excursus on Gestalt theories of expressiveness.

From its very inception, Gestalt psychology was characterised by the rejection of the dominant associationist paradigm. [Katz 1950: 3-7] The upshot of this in the domain of expressiveness was the dismissal of theories that explain expressive perception as a result of inferences based on the analogy between the appearance of an inanimate object and a sentient being. This approach results in phenomenological characterisations of expressive perception that sound explicitly at odds with the one offered by resemblance theorists such as Davies and Kivy, as does this passage from Arnheim:

A weeping willow does not look sad because it looks like a sad person. It is more adequate to state that since the shape, direction, and flexibility of willow branches convey the expression of passive hanging, a comparison with the structurally similar psychophysical pattern of sadness in humans may impose itself secondarily.

[Arnheim 1966: 64]

The reason why I intend to discuss these views here is that Gestalt theorists often confuse the phenomenological and causal levels in a way reminiscent of Young's account. On the one hand, they describe the way in which expressive phenomena appear to a subject. Both in central cases of expression and in the related case of an inanimate object expressive of an emotion, we see their expressive character immediately, without the need of conscious or unconscious inferences.

We perceive the slow, listless, "droopy" movements of one person as against the brisk, straight, vigorous movements of another, but do not necessarily go beyond the meaning of such appearance by thinking explicitly of the psychical weariness or alertness behind it. Weariness and alertness are already contained in the physical behavior itself. They are not distinguished in any essential way from the weariness of slowly floating tar or the energetic ringing of the telephone bell.

[Arnheim 1966: 65]

But when Arnheim needs to clarify the connection between the perceptual configuration of an object and its expressive qualities, what we get is no longer a phenomenological description, but rather a causal story regarding the mechanisms responsible for expressive perception. More precisely, Gestalt psychology postulates a similarity in structure between brain configurations when perceiving expressive objects and when undergoing emotion. This analogy in structural configuration is called the *isomorphism principle*.⁶⁹

Gestalt psychologists hold that expressive behavior reveals its meaning directly in perception. The approach is based on the principle of isomorphism, according to which processes that take place in different media may be nevertheless similar in their structural organization. Applied to body and mind, this means that if the

⁶⁹ See also Köhler [1970: 259-62].

forces that determine bodily behavior are structurally similar to those that characterize the corresponding mental states, it may become understandable why psychical meaning can be read off directly from a person's appearance and conduct.

[Arnheim 1966: 58]

The problem with this idea is not only the notion of isomorphism is too conjectural and vague to result in a tenable theory regarding the causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perception – let us grant, for the sake of the argument, that the causal explanation defended by Arnheim is in fact true. The problem is that it is impossible to specify the analogy, likeness, or isomorphism between a brain state to a mental state *in terms that may figure in the phenomenology of that mental state*. Regardless of its validity as a causal explanation of expressive perception, this theory cannot result in a characterisation of its phenomenology.

The analogy with the failure of Young's causal reinterpretation of resemblance theories should be evident. Just like Gestalt psychologists, Young is mistaken in regarding evidence regarding the causal mechanisms involved in expressive perception as relevant for its phenomenology.

III. Resemblance theories: phenomenological interpretation

Resemblance theories of musical expressiveness posit that resemblances between the music and human emotions are the key to the experience of expressive perception in music. This chapter examines some interpretive issues concerning two versions of resemblance theory, Peter Kivy's contour theory and Stephen Davies's appearance emotionalism.

Commenting on Kivy's contour theory, Derek Matravers claims that "The theory can be interpreted in two ways. First, as an account of the *cause of* the experience of music as expressive and the expressive judgement. Secondly, as an account of the experience itself and the meaning of the judgement." [1998: 116] The twofold interpretation proposed by Matravers is grounded on ambiguities in the theory itself. As we have seen in Chapter I, one of the points raised by critics of resemblance theories is that these approaches seem to mistake a causal explanation of musical expressiveness for its philosophical analysis.

I will briefly elaborate on how Kivy's view may be considered ambiguous between a causal and a phenomenological account, but I consider the previous chapter sufficient to show that a causal interpretation of the theory is not satisfactory. This chapter deals with the interpretation of resemblance theories' characterisations of the experience of expressive music. In the first part of this chapter, I review the interpretive problems relative to Kivy's formulation of the theory. In the second part, I show how Davies's appearance emotionalism is also ambiguous. I suggest that a particular way to resolve the ambiguity is to be recommended if one wants to preserve central features of the theory.

1. Peter Kivy: contour theory.

In this work, I am not interested in a thorough discussion of Kivy's contour theory and of the objections it had to face, partly because of Kivy's own repudiation of it.⁷⁰

With regard to the phenomenological reading of Kivy's contour theory, I follow Matravers in singling out five interpretations of Kivy's claims concerning the phenomenology of expressive perception in music.⁷¹

1.1 *Hearing the music as an expression of sadness.*

This analysis of the contour theory, which Matravers considers "the least charitable interpretation" [1998: 119], assumes that the experience of expressive music is the experience of the music's literal reproduction of the auditory behavioural correlates of emotions. But, clearly, we do not in general hear music as the reproduction or representation of human expressions of sadness, even though this may be possible in rare cases.⁷²

1.2 *Hearing the music as appropriate for the expression of sadness.*

According to Matravers, this second analysis presupposes what it should explain: "in the absence of a completely different explanation altogether, something cannot be an appropriate doer of something unless it in fact does it." [1998: 119] This means that, in order for the music to be heard as appropriate to the expression of sadness, music should be heard as such an expression. But this construes as primitive the aspect of the experience of expressive music that the account intended to elucidate.

⁷⁰ Kivy's rejection of his earlier view is in [2002]. For discussion and criticism of Kivy's view, see Newcomb [1984a], Howard [1993], Bertinetto [2006], and Caballero [2013].

⁷¹ See Matravers [1998: 118-126]. Matravers borrows his first three interpretations from Budd [1991].

⁷² A more liberal (and plausible) reading, and one that Matravers does not consider, would be to say that the experience of expressive music is in some sense akin to the experience of human emotions. I will discuss this possibility later in the chapter, when dealing with the phenomenological interpretation of Davies's appearance emotionalism.

1.3 Hearing the music as resembling a human behavioural expression of an emotion.

Matravers considers this “the natural reading of the theory.” [1998: 119] His main qualm about this is that the perception of a resemblance is not an enduring, unitary process, whereas the experience of musical expressiveness is. As long as the music is sad, we hear it as sad: the experience of expressive music is not something we could identify with a particular moment of the listening process.

Matravers considers two possible solutions of to this problem. [1998: 120-21] First, we could analyse the experience as the *recognition* of relevant musical properties. Under this interpretation, awareness of the resemblance between music and emotions is cashed out in terms of the experience of recognition of such a resemblance. But it is hard to square this solution with the unitary character of expressive perception in music: a characterisation of the experience as the recognition of shared properties seems unable to account for its enduring nature.

Alternatively, we could characterise the experience as *holding onto a belief*. Whenever the music presents a perceptual configuration that is relevantly similar to that of human expressive behaviour, the listener forms a belief concerning the expressive character of the music. Such a belief is held as long as the music shows the relevant features, that is, as long as the music is expressive. The problem with this second solution, Matravers claims, is that holding onto a belief of a particular sort is not a mental state that is associated with a specific phenomenology. So interpreted, Kivy’s account could not therefore constitute a phenomenological characterisation of the experience of expressive music.

1.4. Hearing human emotional expression as an aspect of the music.

This interpretation is based on the idea that listening to expressive music is a sort of aspect perception. The general problem with this interpretation (and the following one) is that the use of the notions of seeing-as and seeing-in by Kivy is simply too rudimentary to be of any help. At one point, Kivy even seems to claim that seeing-as

is identical to seeing-in as described by Richard Wollheim, which is certainly false. [Kivy 1989: 172]

At any rate, seeing-as seems to have some initial plausibility: just as we can switch from seeing Jastrow's ambiguous figure as a duck to seeing it as a rabbit, we can focus on the technical aspects of music or switch our attention to the music's expressive qualities. First we hear the piece as music, then as expression. This formulation, however, should already give us pause. For how could we analyse the experience of expressive music through the notion of hearing-as, if hearing-as is characterised as hearing the music as emotional expression? This is exactly what the hearing-as experience was supposed to explain.⁷³

Moreover, it is unclear that appeal to hearing-as could provide a key to the phenomenological characterisation of expressive perception, as there is arguably no phenomenological state specific to expressive perception.⁷⁴

1.5. *Hearing human emotional expression in the music.* Some passages in Kivy's work seem to appeal to the notion of seeing-in. Again, it is not clear whether Kivy is applying the term in an uncontroversial way. For instance, he sees an analogy between the experience of expressive music and certain cases of animation of

⁷³ An early expression of scepticism concerning the analysis of expressiveness in terms of aspect perception is found in Tormey: "Despite the popularity of aspect and "seeing-as" models in recent discussion of aesthetic perception, considerations such as this seriously impair the attempt to explain our perception of aesthetic qualities by analogy with the perception of aspects, or as instances of "seeing-as". Aspect perception has been a useful model in freeing us from the temptation to think of aesthetic objects as ontologically peculiar and distinct from, say, the material objects we hang on our walls; but it is misleading when it suggests that seeing, or hearing, an art work as *expressive* (or garish, or sentimental) is no different from spotting the face in the cloud or the duck in the figure." [1970: 116] Interestingly enough, one of the references cited by Tormey in support of his view is a paper by Kivy himself, where he claims that the perception of aesthetic properties cannot be assimilated to aspect perception. [Kivy 1968]

⁷⁴ Alessandro Arbo, [2009: 106] for instance, denies that hearing-as could be identified with a particular kind of perception.

inanimate objects, such as when we mistake a stick for a snake while walking in the woods. Kivy describes the latter as a case of seeing-in, while it clearly is not.⁷⁵

Regardless of these minor oversights, could seeing-in be meaningfully used to elucidate the phenomenology characteristic of expressive perception in music? Seeing-in is a twofold experience constituted by a configurational aspect (the surface we see things in) and a recognitional aspect (the things we see in it). Using seeing-in to account for the phenomenology of expressive perception in music would require an account of what it is to hear emotions in the musical material. However, we are simply at a loss when it comes to applying this to musical expressiveness, because we could not say that we hear the human expression of sadness in the music, on pain of relapsing back to the formulation rejected in section 1.1.

1.6. Summary.

From this discussion, it should be clear that the phenomenological account of expressive perception in music offered by the contour theory is by no means clear. Five possible qualifications of the account have been found wanting. In addition to the confusion regarding the phenomenological side of his account, Kivy introduces a causal element. I will now turn to this causal interpretation of the theory.

A causal slant in Kivy's account becomes apparent as soon as he faces the problem of the *underdetermination* of musical resemblances. Music does not resemble human expressive behaviour any more than it resembles other things: the motion of the waves in the ocean, the rise and fall of the stock market, etc. [Kivy 1989: 61-62] In other words, the formal and dynamic structure of music seems to underdetermine the resemblances perceived in it: why human emotional expression, rather than something else? Kivy speculates that we might possess an evolved disposition to animate inanimate objects and perceive them as living beings. Put a bowtie on a spoon and you will easily see a gentleman. It is this sort of propensity to

⁷⁵ On this see Budd [1991: 191].

anthropomorphise our surroundings that grounds our perception of human emotional expression in music. The problem with this move is that the central experience of expressive music seems now to be one of animation, rather than one that somehow features the music's resemblance to human expression. Resemblances only trigger the evolved mechanism that leads to expressive perception. They have shifted their role from a part of the phenomenology of expressive perception to one of its underlying causes.⁷⁶

Moreover, Kivy supplements the contour theory with a conventional account of musical expressiveness: sometimes music is expressive in virtue of established implicit conventions. Kivy believes this qualification to be required in order to make sense of the expressive import of musical entities that could not possibly resemble human expressive behaviour, such as major and minor chords. [1989: 80]

So reinterpreted, the role of resemblance in expressive perception is shifted, first, from the phenomenological to the causal level, and then it is reduced to a *partial* causal account of musical expressiveness, as some expressive properties are due to convention rather than to resemblance. This is a far cry from the resemblance-based analysis of musical expressiveness the theory seemed to offer.

I have claimed that Kivy's contour theory of musical expressiveness is ambiguous between an account of the causes of expressive perception and an account of its phenomenology. In doing this, I have followed Matravers's reconstruction of the theory.

⁷⁶ Notice that Matravers is sceptical even with regard to the causal role of resemblance, once Kivy has accepted that the central experience of musical expressiveness is one of animation. His worries are motivated by the loose constraints posed by resemblance on animation as described by Kivy: "Resemblance does not seem to constitute a very significant constraint on our being able to see one object as another. Accepting the truism that all things resemble each other to some degree, a wooden spoon does not resemble a human being in any obvious sense. To reiterate, I am not claiming that resemblance has no role in an overall account; it obviously does. I am claiming that the role does not lie in explaining why we animate music (if indeed we do). Resemblance is not necessary for such animation to occur." [1998: 127]

However, I should stress that Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis may be differently interpreted. It could be described as an attempt at unifying his account, although Kivy does not describe it as such (after all, he seems to ignore the interpretive ambiguity of his theory). If it is true that we possess an evolved disposition to animate inanimate objects and perceive them as living beings, this propensity may be seen as a bridge between the causal and phenomenological claim: the contour theory provides an evolutionary explanation of how we have come to perceive music in such-and-such a way (causal claim), and further holds that such an experience is what characterises expressive perception in the musical case (phenomenological claim). I discuss Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis at length in the appendix of this work.

Before turning to Davies's appearance emotionalism, I wish to discuss an aspect of Kivy's theory that has been so far overlooked in the literature.

2. Expressiveness vs. representation.

Many of the tools employed by Kivy's contour theory recall the ones employed in theories of depiction: he talks about noticing resemblances, seeing-in, etc. Despite these superficial analogies, Kivy explicitly denies that musical expressiveness could be reduced to a case of representation. He writes: "[...] on my view, sad or melancholy music is not a *representation* of sadness or melancholy (whatever that would be), although at times (but not always) it is sad or melancholy in virtue of representing something else." [1984: 72]

This view is motivated by the fact that the composer's intentions play a role in representation that they do not play in the case of expressiveness: while musical representations need to be backed by an appropriate intention, musical

expressiveness does not.⁷⁷ In making this move, Kivy is appealing to a widely accepted intentional constraint on representation: something can be a representation of something else only in the presence of an appropriate intention.⁷⁸ The scratches a cat makes on an old couch do not count as representations of a mouse, regardless of how much they may resemble one. This is because the cat lacks the appropriate intention to represent a mouse.

However, Kivy is prepared to make a concession. If it turned out that a plausible account of representation could include cases lacking appropriate intentions, then it would be possible for musical expressiveness to be considered a sort of representation. Particularly, Kivy mentions the defence of such a revised notion of representation by Dennis W. Stampe [1977], and reassures the reader that “It would cost me nothing in terms of loss to the basic shape of my argument to agree with this view, and to adopt “representation” as the operative concept in musical expressiveness.” [1989: 65] Therefore, whether or not musical expressiveness could be described as a case of representation is ultimately dependent on what a correct account of representation is like.

But the reasons to keep expressiveness separate from representation are not limited to the former’s independence from intentions. A sad musical piece is not *referring to* sadness (or sad behaviour), nor is it necessarily *about* sadness or sad behaviour – although it may sometimes be. This feature would be lost if expressiveness were to be assimilated to a sort of representation. Kivy’s disregard for this is all the more relevant considering the fact that he explicitly denies that expressive music is about the emotion it expresses.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ “My primary reason, however, for not employing the concept of representation is because representation, in my view, implies conscious intent on the part of the composer; and that, it seems to me, is lacking, more often than not.” [1989: 64]

⁷⁸ See Blumson [2014: Chapter 3].

⁷⁹ See for instance [1989: 117]. As will be evident from the following section of this chapter, Davies [1994: 264-67] disagrees with Kivy on this point.

3. Stephen Davies: appearance emotionalism.⁸⁰

Kivy's theory is not the only resemblance theory on the market. I will now turn to a different version of the resemblance theory, Stephen Davies's appearance emotionalism. In this work, I focus more on Davies's theory than on Kivy's one, for various reasons.

First, Kivy [2002: 48] repudiated his own contour theory and became agnostic as to the correct explanation of musical expressiveness.

Second, Kivy's contour theory has been the object of more critical attention than Davies's appearance emotionalism. Third, an aspect of my own account of musical expressiveness is usefully introduced with reference to Davies's defence of literalism regarding emotional descriptions of music, as will be evident in the following chapter.

Appearance emotionalism is often discussed in tandem with Kivy's contour theory. While both accounts stress the role of the music's resemblance to human emotional expression, they also differ under relevant respects. Davies [1994: 260] offers a useful review of the main differences between his account and Kivy's. He identifies three substantial points of disagreement.

First, Kivy sometimes seems to say that the contour theory is an account of how music *expresses* emotions. But this is something a resemblance-based theory cannot do.⁸¹ While there is no reason to banish all talk of musical expression, one should be clear that what the music does is to present emotion characteristics in appearance. This is something conceptually different from expression as the outward manifestation of a psychological state.

Second, Davies [1980a: 78; 1994: 262-63] is less sceptical than Kivy with regard to the possibility of musical expression of the platonic attitudes, that is, emotional states that require an intentional object. He agrees that some such cognitively

⁸⁰ This section is based on Ravasio [forthcoming].

⁸¹ On this, see the dispute between Davies and Stecker discussed in the previous chapter.

complex emotions could be suggested by the successive feeling states presented in a suitably sophisticated musical piece, though he is not overly optimistic about this possibility.

Third, Davies concedes that instrumental music may be about the emotion it expresses. As we have seen above, Kivy denies that this could be the case. In doing so, he is guided by the Saint Bernard's case: the dog's face is expressive of sadness, but it does not refer to sadness or comment on it. The music may perhaps be about emotions, Kivy concedes, in the rare cases in which the composer explicitly set out to represent such emotions. [1990: 194] This much is true, Davies replies, but it might not be the end of the story in the musical case. There is no need to set the bar for aboutness as high as the one for representation: music could comment on the emotions and be about them without at the same time representing them. A composer could do so by using musical equivalents of emotion characteristics in appearance in order to point to features of emotions, or to present their typical dynamics and temporal development to a listener. Such a use of the music's presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance in order to comment on emotions is a case of intentional use of a natural, unintended meaning, as when I point at the spots on a child's face to instruct people about the symptoms of measles.⁸²

Elsewhere, Davies [2006a: 182; 2006b: 151-52] implicitly points to another difference between his account and the contour theory. He claims that the resemblances that count the most are those between the music and bodily expressive behaviour, as opposed to vocal expressive behaviour. Kivy's contour theory, on the other hand, seems to stress more the similarity with vocal emotional expression, and particularly with emotional prosody.⁸³

⁸² The notion of natural meaning was famously developed by Grice [1957]. However, Davies's view of natural meaning (which he dubs 'meaning A') does not entirely overlap with Grice's. [Davies 1994: 36-38]

⁸³ *Emotional prosody* refers to the suprasegmental features of emotionally charged human speech.

I turn now to some exegetical matters concerning appearance emotionalism. Davies is aware of scientific evidence concerning the causal basis of expressive perception. This fact, along with decisive elements in Davies's characterisation of the theory, makes a purely causal interpretation of appearance emotionalism an uncharitable account of what Davies is after. Despite this, it is unclear what sort of experience Davies takes to be essential to expressive perception in the musical case. Consider these formulations of the theory (in chronological order):

[1] [...] music is experienced as having features displayed in human behaviour, especially the features of behaviour which give rise to the emotion-characteristic in appearances.

[1980a: 73]

[2] [...] In the first and basic case, music is expressive by presenting not instances of emotions but emotion characteristics in appearances. Our experience of musical works and, in particular, of motion in music is like our experience of the kinds of behavior which, in human beings, gives rise to emotion characteristics in appearance.

[1994: 239]

[3] I believe that the expressiveness of music depends mainly on a resemblance we perceive between the dynamic character of music and human movement, gait, bearing, or carriage.

[1994: 229]

[4] [...] I think music is expressive in recalling the gait, attitude, air, carriage, posture, and comportment of the human body.

[2006a: 182]

[5] One possibility is that the form of music maps the dynamic structure of the physiological patterning of emotions. Another is that music is experienced as resembling expressive human utterances and vocalizations. A third, I think more plausible, suggestion is that the movement of music is experienced in the same way that bodily bearings or comportments indicative of a person's emotional states are. In other words, music is experienced as dynamic, as are human action and behavior. And when music is experienced as like behaviors presenting characteristic appearances of emotion, it is experienced as similar to the behaviors not only in its dynamic profile but also in its expressive profile. [...] Harmonic and textual clarity go with happy music, while harmonic density and unresolved tension go with sad music, and again, these are experienced as resembling the outward-directed openness and enthusiasm with which happy people greet the world and the inward self-absorption and gloom that misery brings on.

[2006b: 151-52]

[6] We experience music as presenting emotion characteristics in its aural appearance and attribute them [emotion terms] accordingly. But on what basis do we so? As is clear from earlier examples, we do so because we experience music as presenting an appearance that resembles characteristic human behavioral displays of affect.

[2011a: 26]

In these various formulations we can distinguish two main analyses.

Formulations [1], [3], [4], [5] and [6] seem to offer a *thick characterisation* of the experience of expressive music. Music is experienced *as presenting emotion* characteristics in appearance (as in [6]), or is experienced *as having* characteristics displayed in human behaviour (as in [1]), or is perceived as *resembling* bodily expressive behaviour (as in [3]), or *recalls* the expressive comportment of the human body (as in [4]). What unifies these formulations is the presence of emotion characteristics in appearance. Regardless of how the thick characterisation may be

refined, such a description of the phenomenology of expressive perception is committed to the idea that emotion characteristics in appearance figure in the experience of expressive music.

On the other hand, formulation [2] points to a different account. It offers a *minimal characterisation* of the experience of expressive music: to have such an experience is to experience a resemblance between the experience of expressive music and the experience of human expressive behaviour, or simply to have an experience that is relevantly *like* the experience of human expressive behaviour. Again, I am not interested in the detailed way in which this view may be fleshed out and refined. What interests me is that the minimal characterisation, unlike the thick one, does not include emotion characteristics in appearance in the content of the experience of expressive perception.⁸⁴

Rather than being concerned with the exegetical task of exploring Davies's various formulations in detail, I want to isolate central elements in his analysis in order to identify a core phenomenological characterisation. Regardless of how Davies would further qualify his position if pressed to do so, in what follows my aim is to single out the elements that would have to belong to any qualification of the account. It is this core account that I will criticise in the following chapter, when claiming that it cannot make sense of some cases of expressive perception.

The strategy I will adopt is to show that appearance emotionalism cannot reduce the experience of expressive music to the minimal characterisation, on pain of losing some of its central features. This suggests that the only viable interpretive solution – at least among the ones currently on offer – is provided by the thick characterisation: appearance emotionalism is committed to the claim that emotion characteristics in appearance are in some sense part of the phenomenology of expressive perception in music.

⁸⁴ The minimal characterisation recalls a formulation of the relation of music to emotions proposed by Scruton in *Art and Imagination*: "It is not that music is analogous to the emotion, but rather the experience of hearing the music is analogous to the experience of hearing the emotion." [1974: 127]

There are three main reasons why the minimal characterisation does not fit well with other features of appearance emotionalism.

First, the minimal characterisation is committed to the claim according to which human expressive behaviour is in no way part of the phenomenology of music listening. This leaves unexplained the role emotion characteristics in appearance play in the account. If emotion characteristics in appearance do not figure in the phenomenology of expressive perception in music, where do they find their place?

Emotion characteristics in appearance are crucial for an important feature of appearance emotionalism, namely its defence of literalism regarding the attribution of expressive properties to music. According to Davies, emotion words are applied to music literally, and this literal application is grounded in the music's presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance: because music presents such appearances, we apply to it the emotional term we may apply to human beings that display similar expressive behaviour, regardless of their actual emotional state.⁸⁵ However, according to the minimal characterisation, emotion characteristics in appearance are not part of the experience of expressive music. From this it follows that accepting the minimal characterisation would require Davies to relocate emotion characteristics in appearance at a level at which they may still ground the literal application of emotion words to music. If he fails to do so, he would lose his literalist strategy.

At this point, Davies may reply that emotion characteristics in appearance play a role in the causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perception. Perhaps the way in which auditory cues are automatically processed by the brain is fundamentally analogous to the way in which we process human expressive behaviour. My qualm regarding this reply is not only that, being an empirical claim, it makes unclear the philosophical import of appearance emotionalism. Rather, the main problem for this suggestion is that it seems to be empirically false, as I have

⁸⁵ Regarding Davies's literalist strategy, see chapter IV.

tried to show in the previous chapter. Moreover, even if true, it is unclear how locating emotion characteristics in appearance at the causal level would allow Davies to preserve the strength of his literalist strategy: whether the application of emotion words to music is literal or metaphorical is arguably independent of our discoveries regarding the causal mechanisms responsible for the expressive perception of music.

Second, appearance emotionalism is able to account for the limited number of emotions music may express. It does so by restricting this number to the emotions that may be identified through their characteristics in appearance. As Davies writes:

If the theory that in hearing the emotions expressed in music we are hearing emotion-characteristics in sounds in much the way that we see emotion-characteristics in appearances is correct, then we might expect that the limited range of emotion-characteristics that can be worn by appearances corresponds with the limited range of emotions that may be expressed in music [...].

[1980a: 77]

If the range of emotions expressible in music is indeed limited, then appearance emotionalism has the advantage of offering a prediction regarding the scope of musical expressiveness that squares with the evidence we have from informed listening practices.⁸⁶

However, this advantage is no longer available if the experience of expressive music is described in the way mandated by the minimal characterisation, as this excludes emotion characteristics in appearance from the phenomenology of

⁸⁶ "Only a limited range of emotional types can be individuated solely on the basis of observed bodily comportment [...]. Music is expressive because it is experienced as resembling such behaviors, and it can express only the emotion types that they do. Sadness and happiness are the leading candidates, along with timidity and anger. Swaggering arrogance, the mechanical rigidity that goes with repression and alienation from the physicality of existence, ethereal dreaminess, and sassy sexuality are further possibilities." [Davies 2006: 183]

expressive perception. The minimal characterisation describes the experience of expressive music as an experience that is akin to the experience of human expressive behaviour. But such a characterisation is too indeterminate to result in a prediction concerning the music's expressive scope.

Third, if we accept the minimal characterisation, it is hard to see how it could be possible for Davies to engage in the debate concerning what sort of expressive behaviour, between bodily and vocal, is the most relevant to the perception of musical expressiveness. Davies contends on various occasions that the music's resemblance to bodily behaviour is more prominent than its resemblance to vocal behaviour.⁸⁷ But this claim makes sense only if the phenomenological characterisation of expressive perception in music is thick enough to include a mode-specific presentation of human emotional characteristics in appearance. While this is clearly allowed by the thick characterisation, it is hard to see how it could be possible if we accept the minimal one.

One may reply that the minimal characterisation does not specify that the experienced resemblance between the experience of music and the experience of human expressive behaviour need be neutral as to sensory modality. There may be two different experiences, one occurring when we perceive bodily expression, and the other typical of the perception of vocal expression. The dispute about which modality is the most relevant for music would be a dispute about which of these two experiences the experience of expressive music normally resembles the most. While I have no decisive objection against this reply, it is hard to make sense of the distinction between these two experiences. In the light of the other difficulties encountered by the minimal characterisation, postulating a difference between the two experiences looks suspiciously like an *ad hoc* move.

⁸⁷ Formulation [5] is an example of this.

If the reasons I offered above are compelling, a thick characterisation makes appearance emotionalism a more coherent and powerful theory than a minimal one. The thick characterisation could be fleshed out and refined in various ways. What all of these qualifications will have in common is that emotion characteristics in appearance will figure in the phenomenology of expressive perception in music. It is this thick characterisation that I will criticise in the following chapter.

IV. Appearance Emotionalism and Secondary Polysemy

1. Introduction⁸⁸

In this chapter, I discuss Davies's defence of literalism about expressive properties in music.

I will start with a brief outline of two opposite approaches, the metaphoricist and the literalist. As the claims defended by these two accounts are relative to a specific class of emotional descriptions of music, it is useful to specify the scope of the linguistic expressions in question. These are descriptions of music that attribute psychological properties to it, particularly properties related to the emotional sphere. Music is described as 'sad', 'happy', 'despairing', 'joyful', and so on, and these adjectives are presumably not meant to indicate the actual possession of emotional states by the music. Although agreement about these descriptions is hardly ever complete, all the evidence suggests that competent listeners reliably produce similar descriptions of the expressive qualities possessed by music.

Davies's defence of literalism is centred on the concept of polysemy. According to him, the use of emotion words in describing music bears a relation to the central use, in which these words denote psychological states, but it is not identical with it: emotion words refer in the musical case to the presentation of behavioural correlates of emotions. The use of emotion words in describing music is therefore not metaphorical, but polysemous and literal. I will argue that there is a class of polysemous uses of emotion terms in describing music that has not been analysed by Davies. I respond to two objections, and conclude by presenting the consequences of my claim for the phenomenology of music listening.

⁸⁸ Sections 1-5, and 8 of this chapter are based on Ravasio [2017b].

2. Metaphoricism vs. literalism

Metaphoricists tend to couple the idea that descriptions of music as 'sad' or 'happy' are only metaphorical with a related anti-realist position concerning the metaphysics of expressive properties. For instance, Scruton [1997: 154] holds that emotional descriptions of music are ineliminable metaphors, and pairs this thesis with the claim that expressive properties are not real properties of music. Zangwill [2007: 392] holds that emotional descriptions of music are metaphors that track the aesthetic properties of music and no other property. Others, such as R.A. Sharpe, [1982: 81] take emotional descriptions of music to be the layperson's way of pointing to musical features.

Against metaphoricists, literalists claim that emotion words applied to music constitute a case of literal use of language.⁸⁹ This view is normally paired with a form of aesthetic realism concerning expressive properties. In Davies's case, the linguistic claim is linked to a metaphysical claim that construes expressive properties as response-dependent properties possessed by the music itself. Relative to a certain kind of experiencing subject (human listeners with a shared evolved nature), music can be legitimately described as possessing expressive properties.

3. The polysemy strategy

Davies's literalist account appeals to the concept of polysemy. Polysemy is described by linguists as the association of a single phonological shape with two or more systematically interrelated meanings (e.g. 'mole' used to refer to both a small burrowing animal and a secret agent working undercover). It is normally contrasted with homonymy, which is the association of a phonological shape with two or more

⁸⁹ A sophisticated and somewhat unorthodox literalist position is the one held by Trivedi [2008]. As Davies [2011b: 23–24] points out, arousal and expression theories of musical expressiveness also tend to result in a literalist reading of emotional descriptions of music. According to these theories, words such as 'sad' and 'happy', when applied to music, refer to emotional states experienced by, respectively, the listener and the composer.

unrelated meanings (e.g. 'bank', which may refer to both the riverside and the financial institution). Davies contends that emotion words, when used in describing music, are not used to refer to emotions as psychological states. Instead, they refer to emotion characteristics in appearance. These are behavioural correlates of emotions. Although we learn to recognize them from a concurrent actual emotion, to which they give expression, their subsequent recognition is independent from the occurrence of any actual emotion. We describe an actor's face and posture as sad because we have learnt the sort of faces people pull when in the grip of sadness.

How does Davies explain the shift from actual emotions to emotion characteristics in appearance in the musical case? The polysemy strategy is grounded on a specific phenomenology of music listening: it is because we experience expressive music as presenting emotion characteristics in appearance that we may describe it with emotion words used in a secondary sense, related to the primary psychological one. Because this use is not an idiosyncratic use of emotion words in the psychological sense, but rather the use of a different polyseme with a related meaning, the main argument in favour of a metaphoricist strategy is rejected. This main argument in favour of a metaphoricist strategy relies on the apparent impossibility of a literal use of emotion words in the description of inanimate entities such as pieces of music.

This is taken to entail that either we are irrationally attributing psychological states to the music, or we are using emotion words metaphorically. Against this interpretation, Davies construes the expressive qualities we attribute to music as depending on the music's presentation of behavioural correlates of emotions. This results in a use of emotion terms that, although related to the psychological use, differs from it. The emotion terms may therefore be literally applied to music and other inanimate objects (e.g. to a weeping willow presenting the typical downcast configuration of a body bent by sadness).

4. There is polysemy, and there is polysemy

The polysemous use of emotion words in music that Davies describes is based on our musical experience of emotion characteristics in appearance. According to Davies, music is experienced as resembling typical human emotional behaviour, and this is what grounds our use of emotion words in describing it. I will call this phenomenological foundation of the polysemous use of emotion terms in music the *experiential basis* of such use. Call the sort of polysemous use I just described *emotion characteristic in appearance polysemy* (from now on, *ECA polysemy*).

My claim is that there is a kind of polysemous use of emotion words that is different from ECA polysemy. I call this secondary polysemy, with reference to Wittgenstein's discussion of secondary sense, to which I will briefly refer. I will present three examples of secondary polysemy. In these cases, I contend, the experiential basis cannot be traced back to the music's presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance.

4.1 Underdetermined Musical Cues.

To illustrate his contour theory, Kivy [1980: 20] discusses the well-known case of Monteverdi's *Lamento di Arianna*. One might concede that in this case the music bears a clear resemblance to the emotional prosody typical of sadness and despair. Other instances of expressive music might clearly appeal to our spatialized experience of music and recall the demeanour of people in the grip of emotions. But consider now the elated ascending glissando at the beginning of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. What kind of emotion characteristic in appearance does this glissando correspond to? Does it recall a vocal or a bodily human expression of emotion? Suppose we allow for both interpretations. The glissando could be heard as a musical presentation of either vocal or bodily behaviour. The trouble with this is that allowing emotion characteristics in appearance to be underdetermined as to their sense modality might result in an exceedingly ambiguous determination of the

emotion expressed by the music. If we interpret the glissando as a rise in pitch, we might hear it as a piercing scream of pain. As a bodily behaviour, it might recall a body rising up as if freed from a burden. To go back to vocal behaviour, the glissando might also be considered analogous to the rise in pitch characteristic of happy or excited speech prosody. In contrast to the relatively determinate character of the emotional descriptions we might offer of this musical stimulus, the emotion characteristics in appearance we might associate with the glissando are unable to determine its emotional character, shifting as they do from the positive to the negative side of the emotional spectrum. These considerations suggest that the source of the glissando's expressiveness is not to be found in its connection with the phenomenology of music listening outlined by Davies.

4.2 Timbre.

Emotion characteristics in appearance have an essential connection with emotions as psychological states: they acquire their secondary meaning of mere 'appearances' when they occur in isolation from those psychological states. Timbre, although expressive, often cannot be meaningfully interpreted as an emotion characteristic in appearance. A saturated, dark timbre, rich in overtones and using a low register, has a menacing character. It is natural, for the resemblance theorist, to look at resemblance to the speaking voice. Speaking in a raspy, dark voice, and using a low register can sound equally threatening. A raspy, dark voice, however, is not a behavioural correlate of an emotion: when it occurs in humans, it might give rise in what we are saying to a menacing and slightly ominous feel, but (i) it does not need to occur when people are in fact being menacing, nor does it often occur in these cases; and (ii) it may occur regularly in the expression of other emotions, or when we are expressing no emotion at all (as some individuals simply happen to have a dark and raspy voice). Its expressive character seems independent of its occurrence in human expressive behaviour—something that is definitely not true of things such as

prosodic cues or bodily behaviour. Whereas these assume their expressive character through their behavioural association with the expression of actual emotions, timbre does not need such an association.

4.3 The expressive character of harmonic intervals.

I believe that the distinction between the two cases of emotional polysemy lies at the heart of various difficulties faced by resemblance theories of musical expressiveness. For instance, Kivy realized from the outset that it was problematic for a resemblance-based account such as his contour theory to explain cases in which an expressive character is attributed to isolated musical features, that is, to bits of music that do not essentially occur as part of a melodic contour. This is a self-inflicted problem for a theory that seeks to explain musical expressiveness in terms of features that require a melodic contour or movement in tonal space.

This problem is particularly evident in Kivy's [1980: 77] discussion of major and minor chords, the expressive quality of which he explains through conventional association. Rather than accepting the questionable associationist strategy, one could consider the ascription of expressive quality to these musical entities as a case of secondary polysemy, in which there is no phenomenal resemblance between the music and emotion characteristics in appearance to justify our ascription.⁹⁰ Why should we accept this suggestion? In the lack of a plausible interpretation of chords and harmonic intervals in terms of emotion characteristics in appearance, I contend that secondary polysemy offers the best candidate for an account of the expressive character possessed by these musical entities.

Another example in favour of this strategy is represented by the tritone as harmonic interval. We speak of this interval as tense, and indeed we often use it to

⁹⁰ Davies observes, however, that "chords are not merely aggregates of pitched tones" [Davies 2011e, 102]. Rather, chords are perceived in terms of harmonic function. The tones of which the chords are composed are part of melodic lines that possess their own contour. This line of reply could allow Davies to argue in favour of a complete assimilation of the major/minor chords case to his standard explanation of musical expressiveness.

emphasize the yearning quality of the music when approaching a resolution. Yet the tritone's resemblance to a tense voice (or to a tense body) is impossible to specify in terms of emotion characteristics in appearance. A tritone does not sound like a tense voice, because, for one thing, we can produce no more than one pitched sound at a time (unless appropriately trained). Neither could it resemble a tense movement, as hearing movement in music requires a succession of musical sounds, through which we hear movement in the musical space. In conclusion, what the tritone shares with a tense voice is nothing but its being tense, or rather, the fact that it seems to be aptly described as 'tense'.

I believe that secondary polysemy is an instance of a sort of secondary use of words that has been described by Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein noticed that we talk about mental and physical 'strains'. We do not find the use of the same word in the two circumstances puzzling, although we are at a loss when it comes to justifying the basis of this linguistic habit.⁹¹ What grounds our use of the same word in these two cases? Wittgenstein denies that we can further specify the resemblance of mental and physical strains, except by pointing to the fact that we find the same word appropriate to describe both situations.⁹²

In connection with these remarks, there is a passage in Davies's most recent defence of his theory of musical expressiveness that is worth discussing.

⁹¹ "But why do you speak both of physical & mental 'strain'?'—'Because they have a certain similarity, they have a common element.' What is this common element?' [...] 'It is a certain tension.' That doesn't get us any further, for why do you talk of tension in these different cases." [Wittgenstein 2015, Ms 105: 14]

⁹² Discussing these remarks by Wittgenstein, Michel ter Hark observes: "This does not mean that to speak of similarity here is forbidden. If the point is to emphasize a difference with word ambiguity where two items are referred to by the same word, e.g. 'bank', but not in virtue of any similarity, it might be even relevant. The point rather is that if the similarity cannot be specified, it cannot be cited as a justification of one's use of words." [ter Hark 2009: 600]

I think music is expressive in recalling the gait, attitude, air, carriage, posture, and comportment of the human body, just as someone who is stooped over, dragging, faltering, subdued and slow in his or her movements cuts a sad figure, so music that is slow, quiet, with heavy or thick harmonic bass textures, with underlying patterns of unresolved tension, with dark timbres, and a recurrently downward impetus sounds sad.

[Davies 2006: 182]

Here Davies mentions various “first-order” properties of music that make it possible to hear it as expressive. After mentioning melodic and rhythmic aspects (which in the passage are paired with behavioural correlates of emotions), he goes on to list ‘dark timbres’ and ‘unresolved tensions’, using a language that is characteristically ambiguous between an interpretation in terms of musical properties and one in terms of psychological properties. Music, he says, is expressive in recalling behavioural correlates of human emotions. It is clear how musical movement might recall the gait, carriage, and posture of people in the grip of emotions. Through the movements of a melodic line in tonal space, music may resemble, for instance, the figure cut by an individual who is expressing sadness. This is the experiential basis for the polysemous use of emotion words identified by ECA polysemy.

But how do dark timbres and unresolved tensions secure the recalling of expressive behaviour? Dark and menacing timbres, I have argued, do not receive their expressive quality from their behavioural correlation with the expression of emotions. Unresolved tensions, as exemplified by the case of the tritone, are hard to hear in terms of vocal behaviour. Neither can they be interpreted as bodily behaviour, as their tense character is in principle independent of any “horizontal” musical movement (which seems required for the experience of movement in the tonal space).

Dark timbres and musical tensions, I contend, relate to sombre mood and psychological tension just as physical and mental strains relate to each other in the Wittgensteinian case discussed above. A view that relates musical properties to human emotion characteristics in appearance in order to explain their expressiveness is bound to leave a number of basic cases unexplained, in which music is experienced as possessing expressive or psychological properties.

5. ECA polysemy and secondary polysemy: a sketch for a distinction

I have so far pointed to a number of examples to suggest that our use of emotion words and other psychological predicates in describing music falls into two different categories: ECA polysemy and secondary polysemy. I have not yet proposed, however, a general criterion to distinguish the two cases. What is the best way to flesh out this distinction? I suppose that this could be done in a number of ways, but I wish to focus here on two aspects: justifiability and resemblance.

5.1. *Justifiability.* In the domain of emotional description of music, secondary polysemy differs from ECA polysemy because of differences in what grounds the use of emotion words in the two cases. Whereas ECA polysemy is grounded on Davies's phenomenological analysis of expressive music, according to which "we experience music as presenting emotion characteristics in its aural appearance", [Davies 2011: 26] secondary polysemy cannot be justified in the same way. That is, although we might be able to specify how a slow descending melody can constitute a musical appearance of a body bent and slowed down by sadness, we are not able to do so in cases such as those mentioned above. It is worth noting, in passing, that we might sometimes be able to suggest a causal explanation for cases of secondary polysemy. Suppose we discover that a timbre's capacity to suggest a particular mood is related to its particular constitution in terms of upper harmonics and its effect on us. This might explain our related use of certain emotion words, but does

not constitute a justification of the use in question.⁹³ Davies correctly identifies the experiential basis of ECA polysemy. This use of emotion words is based on the musical presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance. Secondary polysemy, however, has a different experiential basis, and is therefore differently grounded.

5.2 *Resemblance*. Another way to describe the experiential basis of ECA polysemy is to say that music is experienced as resembling human expressive behaviour. This is how we come to hear music as presenting emotion characteristics in appearance, and it is because of this that theories of musical expressiveness such as Davies's have been labelled 'resemblance theories'. Secondary polysemy cannot be analysed in terms of an experience of resemblance with human expressive behaviour. More accurately, we might speak of a 'resemblance', or 'recalling', but this will have to be a different sort of resemblance to the resemblance in outline and dynamic structure that grounds ECA polysemy.

6. Davies's reply⁹⁴

Davies's [2017: 58] reply to my objection is twofold. On the one hand, he doubts that the musical features in question are expressive of any determinate emotion. If they are not, then one cannot fault appearance emotionalism for its failure to cover such cases, for appearance emotionalism is a theory of musical expressiveness, and as

⁹³ In a German formulation of the remarks discussed above, Wittgenstein considers and rejects a possible causal explanation for the use of 'strain' in both the physical and mental domain: "I now know why I always wanted to call it "a strain". (I have found out that whenever that happens, certain muscles become tense.—But this is exactly what I did not know when I was inclined to call it a 'strain'.)" [Wittgenstein 2015, Ms150: 12] [Original text: "Nun weiß ich auch warum ich das immer "eine Spannung" nennen wollte.' (Ich habe etwa herausgefunden, daß dabei gewisse Muskeln gespannt sind. — Aber das wußte ich eben nicht als ich geneigt war es Spannung zu nennen.)" (my translation)]

⁹⁴ Sections 6 and 7 are taken from Ravasio [forthcoming].

such aims at explaining the musical expression of *emotions*, and not of psychological states in general.⁹⁵

On the other hand, and relatedly, Davies believes that I have offered an unfair description of appearance emotionalism, unduly heavy on the phenomenological side. He writes:

Ravasio thinks that appearance emotionalism is committed to a particular phenomenology of the listening experience, one in which we are aware of a resemblance between human expressive behaviour and the dynamics and structures of musical processes. This isn't quite how I think of it. Our immediate awareness is likely to be of the music as expressive on its own terms. But when I think about why it is so, or how I can justify attributing one expressive character as opposed to another to the music, the resemblance with humanly expressive comportments comes to mind.

[Davies 2017: 58-9]

I assume that this clarification is meant to suggest that, even granting for the sake of the argument that the cases I described are to fall under the scope of a theory of musical expressiveness, appearance emotionalism fails to account for such cases only if its phenomenology is mistakenly described as containing a necessary reference to emotion characteristics in appearance. But this, Davies makes clear, is not how he conceives of the theory.

⁹⁵ "What I question is the idea that, on their own, tense intervals, dark timbres, and the like are unambiguously expressive. So I also deny that the argument here establishes the subsequent conclusion that music involves modes of expressiveness not covered by appearance emotionalism." [Davies 2017: 58]

7. Reply to Davies's reply

I proceed now to defend my challenge to appearance emotionalism against Davies's two replies. I will question the first reply by appealing to Davies's own characterisation of what should count as an emotional state, while the second reply will be challenged on the basis of the discussion of appearance emotionalism offered in the previous chapter.

The first reply concerns the scope of musical expressiveness. Davies is claiming that appearance emotionalism, as a theory of music emotional expressiveness, is not committed to accounting for descriptions of music in terms of any possible psychological predicate. For instance, the description of a piece as 'neurotic' would qualify as a description of music in psychological terms, but it is one that a theory of musical expressiveness is not meant to cover. So, while I may have a point in claiming that musical features may embody psychological tension, relaxation, and so on, in ways that cannot be accounted for by appearance emotionalism, this is not something that could possibly count as a counterexample, as the explanation of such cases is outside the intended scope of a theory of emotional expressiveness in music.

This reply may well work for psychological predicates that have no obvious emotional component. But one may wonder whether excluding cases such as those I mention would not mean to set the bar of what should count as an emotion too high. The examples I use involve the following psychological description: 'elated', for the glissando in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*; 'menacing', for a saturated, dark timbre, rich in overtones, and using a low register; 'tense', for harmonic intervals such as the tritone. [Ravasio 2017b: 24-26] Should these fall within the scope of emotional expression?⁹⁶

⁹⁶ In introducing and discussing my article in the issue where it appeared, Ryan Paul Doran and Shelby Moser observe the following: "[...] whilst tension is not an emotion *per se*, it certainly seems to be a state that one can feel and express (much like other affective states that are not fully-fledged emotions, such as moods). As such, there doesn't seem to be any obvious and principled reason why the contour account shouldn't be expected to accommodate such cases." [Doran and Moser 2017: 5]

The question of what exactly should count as an emotion is too large to be tackled here. However, it is worth noting that Davies's own conception of the nature of emotions is favourable to the idea that elation, psychological tension, and a menacing mood should count as emotional states. In discussing emotional contagion from music to listener, Davies [2011d: 47] refers with approval to criticism of the standard cognitive theory of emotions. While some emotions may indeed be identified by their intentional object and a belief regarding such object, as required by the cognitive theory, other emotions do not need either of the two components. A phobia of spiders need not be associated with any belief regarding spiders, and may survive one's acquiring the belief that most spiders are harmless. On the other hand, a state of free-floating anxiety does not require an intentional object.

According to Davies, emotional contagion from music to listener constitutes another counter-example to the cognitive theory of emotions: sad music has the capacity to make us sad, but our sadness does not have the music as its intentional object, nor is there a relevant belief regarding the music that justifies our sadness.

The point I wish to make is that, especially in the light of Davies's rejection of the cognitive theory of emotion, there is no principled reason for him to reject states such as elation, tension, or a menacing mood as falling outside of the scope of a theory of musical expressiveness. In the absence of further clarification regarding the sort of psychological states that music may be said to be expressive of – and that therefore would need to be accounted for by a viable theory of musical expressiveness – appearance emotionalism is able to meet the challenge posed by secondary polysemy only if it can account for the cases of emotional expressiveness I describe. This is the strategy that one may pursue in accepting Davies's second reply.

Davies's second reply questions my characterisation of what it is to experience expressive music according to appearance emotionalism. While I interpret appearance emotionalism as requiring that the perception of human expressive behaviour be part of the phenomenology of music listening, Davies denies that this

need be the case. Appearance emotionalism is not committed to such a phenomenological characterisation. But this leaves open various possibilities concerning the sort of analysis appearance emotionalism is indeed offering. Davies's suggestion in the passage cited above is that music is heard as expressive "on its own terms". The listener is only likely to become aware of the musical resemblance to human expressive behaviour upon further reflection.

One may wonder whether this formulation of appearance emotionalism is faithful to the theory as presented in any of the six quotations presented in the previous chapter. Regardless of this, my qualm regards the relation between Davies's contention that we hear music as expressive "on its own terms" and the requirements posed by the thick characterisation of appearance emotionalism I outlined earlier. For if I am right in holding that appearance emotionalism needs to be committed to the claim that human emotional expression necessarily figures in the phenomenology of music listening, then it follows that, in whatever way one may interpret Davies's qualification regarding the phenomenological claims advanced by his theory, such a qualification could not result in human emotional expression being excluded from the experience of expressive music, on pain of losing the advantages of the thick reading of appearance emotionalism over the thin one. But it would seem that, in order for Davies's theory to meet the challenge posed by secondary polysemy, the phenomenological commitments of appearance emotionalism would need to be reduced to the commitment required by the thin characterisation, or at any rate avoid the ones demanded by the thick characterisation.

However, as shown in the previous chapter, appearance emotionalism loses in strength and consistency if it abandons the phenomenology mandated by the thick characterisation. From this it follows that appearance emotionalism can only successfully account for secondary polysemy if it is modified to such an extent as to lose significant explanatory power and desirable features.

Either one accepts that secondary polysemy may indeed restrict the ambition of appearance emotionalism to count as an all-encompassing theory of musical expressiveness, or one is left with a theory that is intact in its original ambition of generality, but at the same time deprived of some of its explanatory power and distinctive features. The choice is then between narrowing the scope while preserving the explanatory power, and preserving the scope while losing in explanatory power.

8. Consequences for the phenomenology of expressive music

Davies's polysemy strategy is linked to a particular phenomenology of music listening. This phenomenology provides the experiential basis on which the polysemous use of emotion terms in descriptions of music is grounded. My analysis of the kinds of polysemy involved in the relevant emotional descriptions of music suggests that there is a class of descriptions that does not acquire its polysemous status from the phenomenology outlined by Davies. Secondary polysemy undermines the argument according to which the literal use of emotion words in describing music is based on their reference to emotion characteristics in appearance. The experiential basis on which secondary polysemy is grounded must be of a different sort.

If all of the above is correct, I take it that it will not be without consequences for an account of the phenomenology of musical expressiveness. According to Davies, the expressiveness of music depends on its presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance. He ties his defence of literalism to a phenomenology of musical expressiveness that entails a necessary reference to human expressive behaviour. I have suggested that a reference to human expressive behaviour is not necessary for the experience of expressive properties in music. A more liberal account of the connection between the use of emotion words in a psychological sense and their derivative musical use is therefore paired with a more liberal, thinner

phenomenology of music listening. It will be the purpose of the next chapter to explore further the phenomenology associated with the secondary use of emotion terms we have just examined. For the time being, it is important to note that the phenomenology of expressive perception in music already appears to be irremediably fragmented. If ECA polysemy and secondary polysemy do not share a unitary phenomenological basis, then there is no single experience of expressive music.

9. A historical note

It is useful here to refer to another early discussion of secondary uses of words, namely the one contained in Ludwig Klages' *Vom Wesen Des Bewusstseins*. [1955: ch. VI]

Klages compares two sorts of derivative uses of language, one exemplified by expressions such as *Tischbein* ('table leg') or *Berggrücken* ('ridge' – literally: 'mountain back') and the other related to what he calls 'the double meaning of sensory adjectives' (*die Doppelbedeutung sinnlicher Beiwörter*). [Klages 1955: 27-8] As an example of the latter category he lists expressions such as 'high tone' and 'warm colour'. A first distinction stressed by Klages is what we could term the *perceptual salience* of the characteristics identified by the expressions belonging to the latter class. Granted, not everyone is going to perceive a certain colour as warm. For those who do so, however, the warm character of the colour is just as immediately given as its hue.

Klages [1955: 29] further notices that, if the expression is of the first class it can easily be paraphrased without loss of meaning and is therefore eliminable, whereas the ones belonging to the second class can be clarified only by an actual presentation of the sensory stimuli to which the words are applied. One may eliminate the expression 'mountain saddle' by explaining that it refers to the area around the lowest point of the optimal pass between two massifs. One cannot, however, explain

what a warm colour is without offering a sensory presentation of it. Every rewording of the expression is either uninformative (e.g., 'the opposite of a cold colour') or does not preserve the original meaning (e.g., 'a lively colour'). This seems to be in line with the remarks on justification we have offered above. In fact, emotional polysemy of the secondary sort seems to behave very much in the way of the synesthetic uses of sensory adjectives described by Klages. Its meaning cannot be preserved if the relevant emotion term is omitted and it indicates a character of the object that is perceptually salient.

V. Basic Expressive Properties: an Austere Account

In the previous chapter, I claimed that there are cases in which the application of emotion words to music cannot be justified by reference to the music's resemblance to emotion characteristics in appearance. The application of emotion words in these cases is secured by an instance of what I have called 'secondary polysemy'.

The polysemous use of words that secures the application of emotion words to the standard cases accounted for by appearance emotionalism is grounded in an experiential basis that has as an essential component emotion characteristics in appearance – in the way mandated by the thick characterisation outlined in Chapter III. The question now arises regarding the experiential basis that secures the application of emotion words in the case of secondary polysemy. In other words, what is the correct analysis of the experience of expressive perception when the emotion words are applied to music in their secondary sense?

I will refer to expressive properties individuated by instances of secondary polysemy as *basic* expressive properties. They are basic for at least two reasons. On the one hand, they typically characterise simple, unanalysable sensations, such as the experience of a coloured patch or the experience of a single sound. On the other hand, basic expressive properties are normally constitutive parts of more complex cases of expressive perception, as when a coloured patch contributes to the expressive character of a painting, or when a chord is part of a larger expressive musical excerpt.

I start by presenting evidence for the existence of basic expressive properties in both artistic and non-artistic contexts. I do so drawing on anecdotal evidence, art-historical evidence, and experimental results. These sources strongly suggest that there are a number of cases in which perceptual stimuli in various modalities are

expressive of emotions or mood, even though it is impossible to specify their resemblance to human expressive behaviour.

Subsequently, I develop an account of basic expressive properties. I describe the account as 'austere', because of the rather minimalistic characterisation it offers of what grounds our experience of basic expressive properties.

I consider a possible worry for the account, which I term the *sui generis* problem. An account of expressive properties in inanimate objects should avoid a characterisation of such properties that leaves unexplained their link to the central, psychological case of emotional expression. Resemblance theories maintain the connection between the two sets of properties by appealing to the resemblance between expressive inanimate objects, such as music, and human emotional expressions. The austere account I defend has no obvious way to preserve such a connection. I argue that, despite appearances to the contrary, a connection is preserved under the austere account.

I move then to discuss inanimation, that is, the application of concepts the primary application of which is to the inanimate world, to psychological states and their manifestations – think of a 'bitter sorrow', a 'hard character', or a 'sweet smile'. These uses are left unexplained by currently available resemblance-based theories of expression, which are characterised by a unidirectional stress on the animation of the inanimate. While this is not an obvious problem, if these theories are aimed at elucidating the emotional expressiveness of *music*, it does weigh against the possibility of expanding such theories into a broader theory of expressiveness. I suggest that the austere account of basic expressive properties has the resources to shed light on these cases.

I conclude by outlining a few empirical predictions that follow from the account I propose, and elaborate on their consequences for aesthetic education.

1. Basic expressive properties: anecdotal, art-historical, and empirical evidence

I list here notable examples of expressive features that cannot be explained as depending on a resemblance to human expressive behaviour. While most of the examples do not belong to the musical domain, I believe it is important to stress how the sort of expressive properties individuated by secondary polysemy are not exclusive to the musical domain. After all, one of the requirements I set out in the first chapter of this work was that a theory of musical expressiveness should be suitably generalizable to other domains. It is in line with such a requirement that I present here examples from other art forms, nature, and non-artistic inanimate objects, such as colour patches and figures.

Anecdotal evidence and common parlance suggest that a range of expressive properties could be attributed to landscapes. Consider for instance Richard Wollheim's evocative description of a rainy afternoon:

Autumn rain has been falling throughout the early afternoon. It stops abruptly, and the sun breaks through. Drops of water sparkle on the leaves and on the grey slates, and they drip down on to the pavement, which glistens with a hard sheen. There is a smell of wallflowers and sodden lawn. The sky is blue, but streaked with black, suggesting distant rain. This is a melancholy scene.

[Wollheim 1993: 143]

In this case, there is no meaningful way in which the expressiveness of the scene described by Wollheim may be grounded on a resemblance to human emotional expression.

Benenti and Meini [2017] have noted how expressive properties are also conveyed by what they call *low level expressive features*, which do not exhibit the perceptual complexity or temporal extension typical of higher-level expressive features.

To take some trivial examples, being nonetheless pretty faithful to phenomenology, grey is sadder than red, which in turn is more arrogant than light blue. Analogously, in the musical domain, [a] minor chord is sadder than [a] major chord.

[Benenti and Meini 2017: §8]

Benenti and Meini's goal is to enhance the contour theory in such a way as to include low level expressive features manifested by colours, lines, chords, etc., but also by more complex arrays, such as landscapes. They do so by explaining the expressive character of these features through their dynamic contour – a concept they borrow from Gestalt psychologists such as Arnheim [1956]. Unlike musical contour, the concept of dynamic contour does not require unfolding in time, and is therefore apt to be extended to items such as the ones mentioned above.⁹⁷

In a recent contribution on the expressive qualities of colours, Cynthia Freeland has noted how resemblance theories such as Kivy's contour theory may be ill-equipped to deal with the expressiveness of colours, as these do not display the sort of resemblance to human emotional expression required by Kivy's account.⁹⁸ With regard to Mark Rothko's work, she notes how: "A major challenge for the art critic attempting to account for the expressiveness in Rothko's mature work is their simplicity." [Freeland 2017: 235].

⁹⁷ Benenti and Meini's proposal seems to address more the causal mechanisms responsible for the expressiveness of low level features than the conceptual analysis of the attribution of expressive properties to such features. Moreover, their explanation still holds that dynamics are expressive because of their capacity to convey the appearance of human expressive behaviour. Their view is therefore incompatible with the claim I defend regarding secondary polysemy. For these reasons, I have chosen not to discuss their proposal any further on this occasion.

⁹⁸ Kivy's theory is of course a theory of *musical* expressiveness, and as such it does not aim to account for colour expressiveness. The point of Freeland's remark is that the available accounts of expressiveness in the arts may not be extendable to colours because of their perceptual simplicity.

There is also a growing body of empirical evidence regarding the expressive character of perceptual stimuli, especially visual, that do not resemble in any obvious sense human expressive behaviour.

Meier and Robinson [2005] offer a review of studies examining the link between positive affect and brightness, verticality, and nearness. They note however that there is still uncertainty with regard to the directionality of such links: positive affect may produce a bias in the perception of brightness, verticality, and distance, but does it also work the other way around? Some results suggest that this isn't always the case. For instance, Meier and Robinson [2004] examined the connection between affect and spatial position. While they found that evaluation induces a spatial position bias, they established that spatial position does not prime evaluations.⁹⁹

Lindauer [1990a] investigated the qualities of the physiognomic stimuli *takete* and *maluma*.¹⁰⁰ He found that subjects tend to rate physiognomic stimuli, such as contrasting figures named by the nonsense words *takete* and *maluma*, differently from neutral stimuli. He elaborated pairs of opposite adjectives, and found that *takete* and *maluma* were reliably rated by subjects as belonging to opposite ends of the spectrum – for instance, *takete* was rated as aggressive, tense, and unfriendly, whereas *maluma* was characterised as peaceful, relaxed, and friendly. A much narrower gap separated the evaluation of the two neutral figures.

In a subsequent study, Lindauer [1990b] determined that *takete* and *maluma* may prime the perception of neutral stimuli. More specifically, they found that the neutral stimulus took a meaning opposite to that of the non-neutral one. Thus, a

⁹⁹ Fisher [1963] found a link between depressive affect and distortion of up-down perception.

¹⁰⁰ The figures associated with the two words are reproduced in Lindauer's article, as well as in innumerable Gestalt psychology textbooks. They are sometimes called *bouba* and *kiki*.

neutral figure is rated as more peaceful when following the aggressive *takete* than it is when occurring in isolation.¹⁰¹

Pavlova et al. [2005] found that static figures may enable emotional attribution, and determined that, irrespective of the figure's shape, its inclination correlated with the emotion perceived in it: the more prominent the figure's inclination, the stronger its capacity to prompt descriptions in terms of negative states such as fear and suffering. Quite interestingly, this study also suggested that a simplified depiction of standard human emotional expressions (a stylized face with upward or downturned mouth) did not significantly alter the correlation between inclination and emotional attribution. The authors concluded that "Although both explicit emotional depiction and perceived dynamics enable emotional attribution, the latter seems to represent the more powerful source of information." [Pavlova et al. 2005: 1112]

In an early cross-cultural study of synesthetic tendencies, Osgood [1960] found that Anglo-Saxons, Navajos, and Japanese subjects agreed in characterising happiness as 'colourful' and 'bright', sadness as 'colourless'.

D'Andrade and Egan [1974] have also investigated the association between colour and emotions, testing whether the associations typically perceived by English speakers are also present in Tzeltal speakers from Mexico. Their results are positive. Additionally, they point to the hypothesis that it is the degree of saturation of a colour that makes it look happy, rather than its hue. Hence, while a typical bright yellow is promptly characterised as happy, a dull yellow would not elicit a similar description.

Finally, Palmer et al. [2013] have investigated the cross-modal match between music and colours, and suggested that this may be mediated by the specific emotion

¹⁰¹ For an interesting application of the *takete* and *maluma* stimuli to music, see Murari et al. [2015]. This study shows how a variety of non-verbal sensory scales is consistently applied to musical pieces. The pairs considered include, in addition to the already mentioned *maluma/takete*, blue/orange, hard/soft, smooth/rough, bitter/sweet, heavy/light, and cold/warm.

attributed to both the musical piece and the colour.¹⁰² What is relevant in this study is that colours are the sort of simple stimulus that may qualify as expressive in the basic sense, as they do not present a significant resemblance to human emotional expression. As the authors note: “It is realistic for angry faces to be associated with redder colors (experiment 2) because angry faces do tend to be redder than happy or sad faces due to increased blood flow, but happy faces are not yellower nor sad faces bluer.” [Palmer et al. 2013: 8840]

2. The austere account

My account of basic expressive properties is modelled after a suggestion found in Malcolm Budd’s [2008a] discussion of Frank Sibley’s [1959] work on aesthetic properties. Budd is concerned with a neglected aspect of Sibley’s account: the attribution of aesthetic properties by means of metaphorical, or quasi-metaphorical, descriptions. Examples of these are words such as ‘taut’, ‘dynamic’, ‘tightly-knit’, ‘gay’, ‘melancholy’, ‘balanced’, etc.

I should say at the outset that it is entirely contingent to the discussion that follows whether Sibley is right in considering such descriptions metaphorical. Budd himself [2008a: 148] expresses sympathy for the idea that these descriptions are derivative, but literal. For the purposes of the account I am after, the only thing that matters is that these are descriptions that take their primary meaning from a non-aesthetic domain, and that they are used in an extended sense in order to characterise our experience of some aesthetic qualities.

There are two possible readings of this phenomenon. According to a weaker reading, the extended sense in which a term is used to describe an aesthetic property does not require mastery of the term’s primary application. Thus, understanding what a jagged rhythm is does not require us to think of the rhythm as indented –

¹⁰² Schifferstein and Tanudjaja [2004] have determined a similar role for emotion in mediating between colour-odour associations.

much like a jagged saw tooth. Similarly, to understand what is meant when a poem is described as tightly-knit, there is no need to think of interlocking loops – as in a wool sweater. In fact, the mastery of the expression’s meaning as used in the description of the rhythm and of the poem could be achieved independently from the mastery of the primary application of the terms. Budd is however interested in a stronger reading of the claim.¹⁰³ According to this interpretation, the non-aesthetic application of the term is presupposed and required by the aesthetic application of the term in the extended sense. Budd exemplifies this with the application of the terms ‘taut’ and ‘dynamic’, to a poem and a painting, respectively. In these cases, “the concept of tautness or dynamism is essential to capturing the character of the aesthetic quality – it is intrinsic to its identification.” [Budd 2008a: 145]. The very notion of tautness that we use to describe a string that isn’t slack is what grounds our description of the poem as taut, and the same concept of dynamism we use to describe an energetic performance is presupposed by the description of the painting as dynamic. We have moved from a *derivation* of the secondary use from the primary one – as in the weaker cases – to a *foundation* of the extended use in the central one.

How do we make sense of the extension of a term’s application and meaning described by the stronger interpretation? Budd briefly considers a resemblance-based account, and then develops a different, more promising proposal. He starts by examining some aspects of Wittgenstein’s discussion of secondary sense as it is found in the *Brown Book*. [Wittgenstein 1969] Particularly, Budd is interested in two points defended by Wittgenstein. First, even in those cases of secondary use in which a resemblance between such applications and the primary ones may be specified, one need not to be aware of such resemblance – neither of its presence, nor of the features that are responsible for it. Second, the experience of the resemblance

¹⁰³ According to Budd, this is the interpretation that Sibley’s thesis “invites” although he observes that some of the examples offered by Sibley seem to fall into the weaker interpretation. [Budd 2008a: 145]

between the objects that are described by means of the same term may consist partially, or even entirely, in being prompted to so describe the two objects.¹⁰⁴

Budd proceeds to develop this analysis of Wittgenstein's observations on secondary sense into an account of Sibley's quasi-metaphorical aesthetic terms. His suggestion is that

[...] for at least some aesthetic qualities commonly ascribed by an expression used metaphorically (or quasi-metaphorically) nothing more, but nothing less, is needed for someone to perceive an item as possessing that quality than for the person, in perceiving the item, and triggered or confirmed by that perception, to regard that expression (or some synonymous expression) as being well-suited to capture an aspect of the item's character.

[Budd 2008a: 149]

According to this account, using a term in an extended sense in order to describe an object outside the term's primary domain of application merely requires one's regarding the term as apt to characterise the object, or an aspect thereof.¹⁰⁵ Thus, one's description of a blue cheese's taste as 'sharp' does not require one's

¹⁰⁴ For instance, when discussing the application of the term 'blue' to various shades of blue, Wittgenstein notes that "To say that we use the word 'blue' to mean 'what all these shades of colour have in common' by itself says nothing more than that we use the word 'blue' in all these cases" [Wittgenstein 1969: 135].

¹⁰⁵ In a discussion that seeks to find a common thread between Wittgenstein's treatment of psychological concepts and his analysis of secondary meaning, Michael ter Hark notes the following: "[According to Wittgenstein] many psychological concepts are used against the background of a pattern of primitive reactions and unquestioning responses. For instance, primitive pain-behaviour is a 'sensation-behaviour' which gets replaced by a linguistic expression of pain. Primitive reactions then are important for concept formation. If this is so, what are the primitive reactions in case of words used in a secondary sense? The answer is: the words themselves. Put otherwise, in the case of a synesthetic use of words the primitive reaction is a verbal reaction. That is, the inclination to use words in such and such a way, to use them 'spontaneously' so, is a primitive verbal reaction which as such marks the start of a new use of language." [ter Hark 2009: 602] This suggestion is largely in line with Budd's interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks: just like pain behaviour is the typical reaction to pain experiences, the secondary use of words is a primitive reaction to particular experiences, and as such it is beyond justification.

experience of a resemblance, however muted, between the cheese's taste and, say, the tactile feeling of a sharp blade, but simply one's regarding the term 'sharp' as appropriate to describe the cheese's taste, or an aspect thereof.

The issue is of course how the aptness in question is to be cashed out. Budd describes the process as an experience in which we come to regard the term as well-suited to describe an aspect of the object's character. But what does it mean for a term to be well-suited, or apt, if we are incapable, nor need we be capable, of describing the relation of the term's extended application to its primary one?

Budd's suggestion is grounded on the term's capacity to change our experience of the aesthetic object – in the example he discusses, of a work of art.

Now suppose a characterisation in metaphorical terms is offered to someone who experiences difficulty in coming up with an adequate description of the aspect, and this characterisation seems to them to fit the character of the work well, perhaps exactly: it seems to them to hit it off, perhaps perfectly. When she now looks at, reads, or listens to the work, regarding this characterisation as being well-suited to convey the work's character, without anything else needing to happen, she thereby experiences the work as having that character. Her experience of the work has changed: previously it was inchoate, the character being obscure; now it is distinct, the character apparent.

[Budd 2008a: 150]

This passage suggests that for a term *t* to be apt, or well-suited to capture an aspect of an object, it is necessary for the experience-of-the-work-as-*t* to be distinct from the experience of the work in the absence of the description provided by *t*. Thus, for a painting to be 'dynamic' "is just for it to be such that 'dynamic' is uniquely well-suited to convey an aspect of it, considered as the painting it is [...]."

[Budd 2008a: 151]

It seems to me that this account stands in need of an important qualification. For while it may be true that a term used in the secondary sense may change our experience of an object, and while I accept that this may be all one can say regarding the aptness of the application of such a term to such an object, one needs to make sure that the term is *targeting a property of the object*, as opposed to merely *adding a property to the object*. This means that, even though the change in the experience made possible by a term *t* may be such that *only t* (or a synonymous term) is apt to bring it about – a requirement necessary to the strong reading discussed above – the experience of the object as *t* is to be an experience of an aspect that the object possesses independently of how it is described.

Thus, while the experience of such an aspect may be *uniquely accessible* to us through a verbal description, it doesn't follow from this that the aspect in question is *generated by* the experience of the object under a certain verbal description of it.¹⁰⁶

With this caveat, I accept Budd's analysis, according to which

If Q is an aesthetic quality for which this minimalist account is correct, the experience of perceiving an item as possessing Q is, in brief, just the experience of perceiving the character of the item as being well-caught by 'T' (let us say).

[Budd 2008a: 150]

As will be apparent by now, my suggestion is that basic expressive properties behave in the way just described by Budd. The experience of basic expressive properties is exhausted in the experience of finding a verbal description apt to characterise an aspect of an object or experience. For instance, experiencing the

¹⁰⁶ While it fends off an undesirable linguistic relativism, this qualification is still compatible with the claim that verbal descriptions may relevantly shape our experience of the world. Consider for instance this passage from *The Brown Book*: "We could also easily imagine a language (and that means again a culture) in which there existed no common expression for light blue and dark blue, in which the former, say, was called "Cambridge", the latter "Oxford". If you ask a man of this tribe what Cambridge and Oxford have in common, he'd be inclined to say "Nothing"." [Wittgenstein 1969: 134-35]

subdued character of a coloured surface is, in the most basic sense, to find the term 'subdued' appropriate to the description of such perceptual configuration. I call this the austere account of basic expressive properties.

3. The *sui generis* problem and its solution

When compared to resemblance-based analyses of expressiveness, the austere account of basic expressive properties presents a peculiar problem. As noted earlier, resemblance theories such as appearance emotionalism can explain the rationality of the application of emotion words to music by referring to the polysemous, extended application of such words. While adjectives such as 'happy' or 'sad' may be primarily used to denote psychological states, a related, literal, and unproblematic use of such words denotes the outward display of such emotions. When emotion words are applied to music, they are used in the latter sense. In this way, appearance emotionalism avoids a *sui generis* characterisation of musical expressiveness, that is, it avoids construing musical descriptions in emotional terms as being entirely unrelated to the use of emotion words in the primary, psychological sense.

A *sui generis* characterisation of basic expressive properties is problematic for two reasons.

First, it construes emotional descriptions of music as irrational, as it does not provide any characterisation of the grounds on which we make such attributions. In the lack of rational justification, one is left wondering why emotion words are used in the first place, as any other random word choice would do equally well.

Second, because it denies a connection between emotional descriptions of music and emotions as psychological states, it leaves unexplained a number of obvious connections between expressive music and actual emotions, such as the

purported capacity of music to influence mood, or the way in which one may use music in order to illustrate, communicate, or explore emotional states.¹⁰⁷

The worry is that, under my account of basic expressive properties, the non-*sui generis* use of emotion words when they are used to indicate the musical presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance is not matched by a correspondently non-*sui generis* use in the case of basic expressive properties.

My strategy in replying to this worry is to deny that the use of emotion words in the case of basic expressive properties is unrelated to the use of emotion words in the primary sense. While the austere account is explicit in denying the presence of a resemblance relation, it is not committed to deny the presence of any relation whatsoever.

In order to see what sort of relation could solve the problem, I introduce a distinction, first developed by Oswald Hanfling, between *strong* and *weak* secondary sense relations.¹⁰⁸ [Hanfling 1991: 127] His distinction is prompted by the various examples of secondary sense offered by Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations*. [Wittgenstein 2005] Consider how children of a tribe could learn to play trains without knowing what a train is, and so without knowing that playing trains is modelled on something that exists independently of the game of playing trains. Now, compare this with Wittgenstein's famous example of the adjectives 'fat' and 'lean' applied to days of the week. Hanfling observes that

In the case of fat and lean the secondary use could not exist without the primary. In the case of playing at trains, however, the dependence of secondary on primary meaning is a weaker one. For it is clearly possible (as supposed by the example

¹⁰⁷ On music's capacity to evoke emotions and moods, see Chapter VIII. Regarding the idea that music may be able to convey an experience of *what it is like* to experience that emotions, see Robinson [2005].

¹⁰⁸ It will be noted that the distinction between the strong and weak relations is a way to flesh out Budd's distinction between the strong and weak reading of Sibley's thesis regarding the quasi-metaphorical application of aesthetic terms.

itself) that the children of a tribe play this game in the secondary sense even though they have no concept of trains in the primary sense.

[Hanfling 1991: 127]

The relation between secondary and primary meaning is weak if the use and meaning of the term in the secondary sense could be mastered independently from the term in the primary sense. To offer a different example, this may be the case for the use of the same term to describe both tactile and gustatory sensations: it is reasonable to suggest that the mastery of the term 'sharp' in the gustatory domain is independent from mastering its use to describe, say, the cutting power of a blade.

The relation is strong if the secondary use is parasitic on the primary one. Or, to put it more clearly, if the secondary use is dependent on the primary. The relation of dependence is twofold, as it involves both *use* and *meaning*: to master the secondary use of the term presupposes mastery of its primary use, and explanation of the secondary meaning is contingent on knowledge of the primary meaning.

Now, the point I wish to make with regard to my characterisation of basic expressive properties is that the relation between (i) the secondary use of emotion words as described by the austere account, and (ii) the primary, psychological use of such words, is an instance of a strong relation in the sense just described; namely, the application of these emotion words to music is contingent on mastering their primary use.

How could this qualification solve the *sui generis* problem? As I noted above, a *sui generis* characterisation of expressive properties is problematic in two respects: it is non-rational, and it is incapable of explaining the relation between musical emotion and actual emotions. If I am right in saying that basic emotional descriptions are not *sui generis* because they are an example of the strong relation between primary and secondary sense, then I should be able to show how my account avoids the two problems just mentioned.

Regarding the irrationality of emotional descriptions of music, the most promising strategy is to bite the bullet: it is in fact true that the austere account I propose, and the strong relation between secondary and primary meaning I embrace, do not describe the application of emotion words (in the case of basic expressive properties) as rationally justified.¹⁰⁹ However, what the austere account allows us to do is to reframe the rationality of the response in terms of the shared *disposition* to describe music using emotion words, rather than in the justification of this use in features common to both music and emotions. We cannot discuss rationally why we apply emotion words to simple perceptual stimuli the way we do, but we share a common nature that grounds such reactions. While non-rational, the use of emotion words involved in basic expressive properties is not idiosyncratic or random.¹¹⁰

As regards the relation between musical emotions and actual emotions, the strong relation between secondary and primary sense re-establishes the dependency relation between the two senses, both in use and in meaning: it is impossible for someone who cannot apply emotion words to the central psychological case to apply emotion words to music in the way described by the austere account, and it is impossible for someone to explain the meaning of emotion words applied to music if the meaning of emotion words in their central case is unknown.

¹⁰⁹ Hanfling [1991: 127] also describes the strong relation as irrational, in that he denies that we could offer a rational explanation of the link between the two uses. He welcomes this conclusion, and observes that (i) it serves to distinguish secondary sense from metaphor, as in the case of metaphors we can explain their rational basis – indeed, we need to understand it in order to understand the metaphor, and (ii) it fits well with Wittgenstein's view that 'explanations come to an end' when it comes to justifying the use of words.

¹¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Davies [2011d: 55-6] makes a similar point with regard to mirroring emotional responses to the music's expressive character. While non-rational (because the music is not the intentional object of the emotion), these responses are *appropriate* to the music's character.

4. Inanimation

In outlining the requirements for a theory of expressiveness, I suggested that such a theory should be able to account for what I have called, for lack of a better term, 'inanimation'. While available theories of expressiveness tend to focus on the problems raised by our application of psychological properties to inanimate objects, they have largely ignored the use of words that find their primary meaning in the description of inanimate objects, and are used in an extended sense to characterise psychological states. In addition to the examples from everyday language mentioned earlier ('sweet love', 'bitter feeling', 'hard face', etc.), I wish to stress here how inanimation plays also an important role in art. Consider for instance a Chinese poem by Li Yu (c. 937-978), which concludes with the lines:

This separation grief.

It's altogether a different kind of flavor in the heart.

[Samei 2008: 247]

In this example, the poet describes sorrow by assimilating it to a flavour one is tasting. Shakespeare, on the other hand, uses a taste-based description to characterise wit:

Thy wit is a very bitter sweeting; it is a most sharp sauce.

[*Romeo and Juliet*, 1235]

This phenomenon hasn't escaped the attention of psychologists and philosophers. Wolfgang Köhler observed that

Something arouses a "bitter" feeling in us. Again, one talks about being in a "soft" mood. "Sweet" love seems to occur in all countries, also "bright" joy and "dark" grief. In wrath there is something which many call "hot."

[Köhler 1970: 225-26]

At the start of a section aptly titled “Of the sensory descriptions of human character” (*Von der sinnlichen Bezeichnung menschlicher Charaktere*), Ludwig Klages observes that “[...] only with the help of terms for sensory properties can we understand each other regarding processes, states, and characteristics of the human mind.”¹¹¹ [Klages 1955: 30] He offers numerous German examples of similar expression, including ‘mean-spirited’ (*engherzig*, literally ‘narrow-hearted’), ‘profound’ (*tiefsinnig*), ‘bubbly’ (*übersprudelnd*), ‘burning love’ (*brennende Liebe*), ‘bitter grief’ (*bitterer Kummer*), and ‘sour toil’ (*saure Mühe*).

Wittgenstein explicitly discusses a case of inanimation as a case of secondary use of language: “Why do we call a feeling ‘murky’? As when one says ‘because both the weather and the feeling make the same impression on us’?”¹¹²

Standard resemblance-based views of expressiveness cannot account for such descriptions. While they rely on a symmetric relation (resemblance) they normally add a condition that excludes the possibility of a bi-directional process. The condition could be termed the *animation condition*: expressive perception is the consequence of an innate tendency to animate non-sentient things. This idea is commonly accepted by resemblance theorists, at least since the publication of Kivy’s *Corded Shell* in 1980.¹¹³

¹¹¹ [Original text: “[...] wir über Vorgänge, Zustände, Eigenschaften menschlicher Seelen grundsätzlich uns nicht anders verstandigen können als mit Hilfe der Namen für sinnliche Arteigenschaften.” (my translation)]

¹¹² [Wittgenstein MS150, 11]. [Original text: “Warum nennt man eine Stimmung “trübe”? Wie wenn man sagt, “weil beide das Wetter & die Stimmung uns denselben Eindruck Machen”?.” (my translation)]

¹¹³ In the Appendix, I discuss the evolutionary hypothesis that Kivy developed in support of the idea that expressiveness is the result of an animation tendency, indicating how the suggestion has been taken up by other resemblance theorists. It is worth noting that Susanne Langer [1948] had a similar problem: because she grounded the music’s capacity to symbolize feelings on an isomorphism in structure between music and the general form of emotions, she needed to explain why we read emotions in the music and not music in the emotions. For a discussion of Langer’s account of musical expressiveness, see Budd [1985: 104-120].

In fairness to resemblance theories, it is inappropriate to fault a theory of expressiveness, that is, an account of how and why we attribute expressive properties to inanimate objects (animation), for its incapacity to account for the description of psychological states and processes in terms of concepts primarily applied to the inanimate world (inanimation). However, it is true that a theory that may be able to account for both animation and inanimation may plausibly be considered preferable on the grounds of its more comprehensive nature.

My claim is that the account of basic expressive properties I offer could be such a theory. What I want to suggest is that the cases of inanimation I discussed are instances of secondary polysemy: we apply words in an extended sense, without being able to further justify the use of these expressions in a domain different from that of their primary application.

This makes inanimation a candidate for the austere account I defended above: if the application of a concept is justified by their aptness to draw attention to a property of the object it is applied to, as described by the austere account, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that a concept that finds its primary application in the inanimate world may illuminate a particular aspect of our experience of a psychological state. This is what happens in the case of inanimation: when we describe a sorrow as 'bitter', a characteristic of sorrow is isolated by the use of the concept of bitterness, through this concept's capacity to make this characteristic more salient.

5. Empirical predictions and consequences for aesthetic education

It is reasonable to predict that perceptual features that are expressive in the secondary sense will interfere with those that are expressive in the sense described by appearance emotionalism and other resemblance theories. As an example, consider that of a timbre (expressive in the secondary sense), applied to a melodic contour (expressive in the sense described by appearance emotionalism). Matching

expressive properties (e.g.: dark timbre / sad contour) should be judged more expressive than they would be if presented on their own. Non-matching presentations (bright timbre / sad contour) should be judged as less expressive. Moreover, agreement as to the music's expressive character should be higher in the matching cases than in the non-matching ones.

These predictions may be developed into an empirical program aimed at testing my claims regarding the expressive import of features that are expressive in the secondary sense. If confirmed, these predictions may have a pedagogical upshot: because it is impossible to ground the expressive import of secondary expressive properties in a resemblance to emotion characteristics in appearance, secondary expressiveness may be unjustly downplayed in aesthetic education. Perceptual features that are expressive in the secondary sense may thus slip into an ineffable no man's land, and be neglected or belittled simply because they are harder to deal with when it comes to grounding their expressive character in observable, describable features, such as a melodic contour's resemblance to carriage and gait.

However, the experimental framework described above may be easily reworked into an exercise aimed at developing sensitivity regarding the expressive character of features that are expressive in the secondary sense. In the musical case, this would mean isolating features that are expressive in the secondary sense, and allowing students to variously pair them with features that are expressive in the sense described by appearance emotionalism.

In fact, a rudimentary version of such an exercise is already familiar to anyone who has played a tune on an organ, synthesizer, or electronic keyboard, changing the timbre and evaluating the corresponding changes in the expressive character of the piece. In an idealized version of this exercise, the melodic contour and dynamic aspects of the piece would be left untouched, and the students required to manipulate the timbre in order to achieve different expressive results.

VI. Heuristic Devices

My aim in this chapter is to explore a particular way in which extra-musical information might guide the production of music and shape our experience of it. I will name as *heuristic devices* the various strategies by means of which composers, performers and listeners use extra-musical elements to endow the music with musical properties and appreciate them.

Although I contend that such properties could be of various sorts, in this chapter I will limit myself to expressive properties. I will first clarify what heuristic devices are by means of two examples. I distinguish the use of heuristic devices in composition, performance and listening, and develop a criterion of appropriateness. In the final part of the chapter I clarify the relation between heuristic devices and the resemblance theory of musical expressiveness, discussing critically the way in which Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies interpret some of the heuristic processes I am interested in.

1. Introducing heuristic devices

What are musical heuristic devices? In the most general sense, heuristic devices consist of a range of strategies in which information from an extra-musical domain is used in order to create music with certain properties, or in order to appreciate such properties when listening to the piece. I will show what I mean through two examples.

In Florence, at the end of the sixteenth century, a group of musicians and intellectuals gathered around the figure of Giovanni de' Bardi and came to be known as the 'Florentine Camerata'. One of their artistic goals was to revive the style of singing used in Greek tragedy, which was believed to have expressive powers

unknown to the music of their own time. In a letter to Vincenzo Galilei, one of the most prominent intellectuals in the group, the humanist and historian Girolamo Mei, expresses his persuasion that Greek tragedy employed only one melodic line (as opposed to the intricate counterpoint typical of Mei's own time), and from this derived its power to express and arouse emotions. In fact, it is only by having a single melodic line that music is able to mimic the speaking voice, and it was exactly this resemblance to human expressive vocalization, Mei speculated, that allowed Greek music to be so expressive.¹¹⁴

In other words, what the composers associated with the Camerata were doing consisted in writing music while being guided by the melody's resemblance to human emotional prosody. They employed this strategy in order to create expressive music. As an example, Jacopo Peri wrote, in the Foreword to his *Euridice* (1600), that "[...] having in mind those inflections and accents that serve us in our grief, in our joy, and in similar states, I caused the bass to move in time to these, either more or less, following the passions [...]."¹¹⁵

Consider now a different example. Taking her cue from the ideas of musicologist Edward T. Cone, [1974] Jenefer Robinson has argued that Romantic music featured an extensive use of a dramatic persona as the subject of the emotional vicissitudes presented in a piece. She disagrees with Cone, who believes that our response to *all* music is a response to a dramatic persona we hear in the music.¹¹⁶ However, it is certainly true that a considerable part of the Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire acquires a more convincing musical meaning, she claims, if we hear in the music the life of an imaginary agent. What otherwise were separate expressive properties begin to look like the psychological process that leads from

¹¹⁴ "Now, granted that music, insofar as pertains to song, revolves about qualities of the voice and especially with respect to whether it is high, intermediate or low [in pitch], the idea began to form in my mind that principally in these qualities must lie the basis for its power [...]." [Palisca 1991: 57].

¹¹⁵ Cited in Kivy [1980: 19].

¹¹⁶ Cone's theory bears an obvious resemblance with the one independently suggested by Levinson [2006].

one emotion to another, and may thereby suggest cognitively complex emotions, such as hope.¹¹⁷ Robinson's view is that the thought of a persona that animates the music guides the composer in the making of the piece as well as the listener in attending to it. In my terms, the musical persona functions as a heuristic device.¹¹⁸

I have now suggested two ways in which information from an extra-musical domain may guide the creation of expressive music and shape our experience of it. In this chapter I will focus mainly on these two examples, but the list could of course be longer.

Moreover, in this work I will restrict my focus to heuristic devices for musical *expressiveness*, that is, I will consider only the cases in which heuristic devices are used to endow the music with expressive properties or to enhance our perception of them when listening. However, heuristic devices may serve a variety of other purposes in music making and appreciation. For instance, they might provide the source of certain formal features of the music. As an example of this, consider the use that was made in Baroque music of the analogy between musical development and the rhetorical structure of a speech.¹¹⁹ In this case, extra-musical information is mainly used in order to organize the structural aspects of a piece, and has only secondarily to do with the music's expressive properties.

Before proceeding further, a crucial question regarding heuristic devices needs to be answered. I have so far claimed that heuristic devices consist in using extra-musical information in order to create music that possesses certain musical properties. But how can a process guided by extra-musical information result in the creation of *musical* properties?

Suppose I asked my niece Cecilia to help me to bake some scones. I am cutting the dough in disks and she has to place them on the baking tray. The disks have to

¹¹⁷ See for instance Karl and Robinson [1995a, 1995b].

¹¹⁸ It should also be noted that authors other than Robinson and Cone agree that a musical persona may sometimes be responsible for the music's expressive character. See Ridley [2007], and Cochrane [2010].

¹¹⁹ See Tarling [2004].

be evenly distanced in order for the maximum amount of scones to bake without sticking together as they rise. I tell my niece that the disks are soldiers that are getting ready to parade, and every soldier needs to be evenly distant from the surrounding soldiers in their battalion, otherwise they won't make a good impression and the President won't be happy. Suppose I manage to captivate Cecilia's attention with this simple story. She positions the dough disks on the baking tray and spaces them evenly. As she does so, she imagines the soldiers taking their place in the formation. The disks are now evenly spaced, and I can bake the scones successfully.

Two observations regarding this story are in order.

First, no understanding of the reason why the disks need to be evenly spaced was required for Cecilia to be able to arrange the disks as she did. What counts is that the disposition of the disks as make-believe soldiers also happens to be an ideal arrangement for the dough disks to bake correctly.

Second, information as to the typical arrangement of soldiers in a parade is not essentially related to the baking of scones. Rather, it belongs to an entirely different and independent domain: all armies in the world could be disbanded and we would still continue to bake evenly spaced dough disks into scones.

One way of describing what is going on in this hypothetical scenario is to say that an imagination-guided process has allowed Cecilia to position the dough disks in a way that is ideal to the purpose of baking them.

Heuristic devices in music work in a similar way. They track one of the causal mechanisms responsible for the experience of the musical property in question by guiding the compositional process in a way that is specified by information from an extra-musical domain. Imagine I compose a melodic line, and I do so guided by the melodic and rhythmic character of human expressive utterances. Guided by the analogy between music and emotional prosody, the compositional process results in music that is expressive of a certain emotion.

2. The phenomenology of heuristic devices

I have described heuristic devices as strategies used in order to create music that possesses certain properties. What these strategies have in common is that they exploit experiences that involve the representation of some extra-musical object. For instance, the heuristic device developed by the Camerata exploits the experience of perceiving the resemblance between music and emotionally charged speech in order to produce expressive music.

Is there anything the experiences exploited by heuristic devices have in common? In other words, is it possible to offer a general phenomenology of heuristic devices? My answer to this question is that this is unlikely. There are a variety of experiences that I am willing to describe as heuristic devices, and the phenomenological characterization of these experiences is likely to differ significantly enough to render it moot or simply impossible to isolate a common description. Consider using the organization of a speech according to the rules of rhetoric in order to endow a piece of music with certain structural contrasts and formal properties. Thinking of a piece as of a musical oration was not uncommon in the Baroque period. In this case, the shifts from one section of the music to the one that follows are heard as shifts from a part of a speech to the next. The experience in question relies more on an isomorphism in structure, or perhaps on a similarity in function. (For instance, both in a musical piece and in a speech an introduction sets the stage for what is to follow.)

If we go back to the Camerata example, the sort of experience that is guiding the composer in this case is of a different sort. It might be aptly described as a hearing-in experience, with a configurational aspect (the music) and a recognitional one (human vocal expression). Hearing a dramatic persona in the music seems to be closer to the experience just described than it is to the first one, although one might also reasonably describe it as a hearing-as experience.

3. Heuristic devices for composers, listeners, and performers

Heuristic devices may be used at various stages in the production and appreciation of music. A more or less aware process of mimicking the human speaking voice may shape the composition of melodic lines, but a similar device might also guide performance, as it does in blues improvisation.¹²⁰ Similarly, listeners may attend to a piece while being guided by extra-musical cues of various sort. For instance, one might attend to a piece and the successive emotional states it presents as the emotional development of a dramatic persona. What I want to suggest with these remarks is that heuristic devices are active at three different levels: composition, listening and performance.

3.1. Compositional devices.

As shown by the Florentine Camerata case, heuristic devices can be consciously exploited by composers to create expressive music. A plaintive piece of music can be modelled on the falling melodic line typically produced when people express sadness in speech, as happens in Monteverdi's famous *Lamento di Arianna*. Robinson points out how some Romantic composers might have thought of the psychological life of a dramatic persona in composing their music, especially considering how it was not uncommon in this period for composers to put into music their own

¹²⁰ Performers in the blues tradition often stress the analogy between their instrument and the human voice. Blues guitarist B.B. King, for instance, stated "I started experimenting with sounds that expressed my emotions, whether happy or sad, bouncy or bluesy. I was looking for ways to let my guitar sing." (Cited in Juslin and Timmers [2010: 458]) In an interview, he declared: "I was at the Apollo Theater one time, and a critic gave me one of the greatest compliments anyone has ever given me. He said, 'B.B. King sings, and then Lucille sings.' That made me feel very good, because I do feel that I'm singing when I play. That's why I don't play a lot of notes like some people. Maybe that's the reason most of my music is very simple—that's the way I sing. When I'm playing a solo, I hear me singing through the guitar." (cited in *Guitar Player*, 1st October 2015).

psychological life.¹²¹ [Robinson 2005: 303] In this case the persona in the music may sometimes be reliably identified with the music's composer. Anthony Newcomb, for instance, observes that "Music for Schumann was an expressive enterprise and a form of communication, reflecting in some way the experience of its creator." [Newcomb 1984b: 233]

As a general formulation, I suggest the following:

The composer is able to create music with the property p because, in the compositional process, she is guided by extra-musical information from an extra-musical domain d .

For instance, the composer is able to create a piece of music expressive of grief because, in the composition of the piece, she uses the melodic contour of the grief-stricken human voice as a guide for the composition of the piece's melodic contour.

3.2. *Listening devices.*

Listeners often conjure extra-musical images while listening to music. While this practice is more often than not a distraction from attentive listening, some listening strategies exploit concepts belonging to extra-musical domains in order to bring out or make more salient properties of the music itself. Heuristic devices, as listening strategies, work in this way. More precisely:

The listener is able to identify or better appreciate property p because, in the process of listening, she pays attention to features f, f', \dots specified by an extra-musical domain d .

¹²¹ Recognizing the presence of a musical persona, it should be noted, does not commit to the correspondence between the emotions expressed by the persona and the emotions felt by the composer, although the inference may sometimes be warranted.

For instance, the listener may be able to better appreciate the grief in the music by paying attention to the similarities between the music and a grief-stricken voice, or by imagining the melodic line to be a grief-stricken voice. In this sense, hearing the speech-like quality of the solo songs written by the Camerata composers may result in a heightened experience of their expressiveness. Or, as Robinson [2005: 330] claims, the mode of listening that hears a dramatic persona in the music is useful to understand certain expressive properties of the music. To take yet another example, listening to Baroque music as a dialogue between imaginary speakers could help the listener to appreciate the formal qualities of a piece.

3.3. Performance devices.

The case of heuristic devices as performance devices should be easy to deal with once we have clarified the two previous categories. Performance has aspects of both composition and listening. On the one hand, the performer is a composer insofar as a score underdetermines its performance, leaving some room for decisions. On the other hand, performers are the first listeners of their own performance. Because of this, performance devices have elements of both compositional and listening devices. On the one hand, to the extent at which performance is a sort of composing, heuristic devices as performance devices mirror the compositional case. This is particularly evident in the kind of performance that is the closest to composition, that is, improvisation.

On the other hand, a parallel with heuristic devices as listening devices is also instructive, as the performer is also a listener to her own performing. The difference in this case is that the outcome of the listening influences the performance, as performers might attune their playing to the feedback provided by the listening experience. The use of heuristic devices in musical performance may then result in a loop: the heuristic devices employed to appreciate the music the performer is playing (listening devices) shape the performance itself, and this latter change is

going to be reflected in an altered listening experience, which might once more provide cues that suggest the performer to change something in her playing, and so on. Notice how the interplay between the use of heuristic devices in performing and listening is nicely described in this passage from Judy Tarling's *The Weapons of Rhetoric*:

Performers can check their own performing skill against the 'Perfect Orator' model [...]. A raised understanding of the art of rhetoric may also enhance the experience of attending concerts, and increase the usefulness of criticism to performers.

[Tarling 2004: iv]

Tarling is concerned with the use of musical analogues of rhetorical figures. The model provided by rhetorical figures can function as a reference for both performers and listeners when interpreting and attending music.

This point is also made by Paul Thom, who observes how baroque music theorists

[...] go on to recommend that musical execution be modelled on rhetorical delivery, and that music "be composed in Imitation of a Discourse". The comparison between music and rhetoric, not just in terms of their effects, but in the most specific details of form and technique, pervades the baroque age.

[Thom 1983: 95]

4. Heuristic devices in historical and cross-cultural perspective

From the examples of heuristic devices offered above, it will be already evident that these are not unchangeable, but rather linked to a specific music-historical period. A musical persona, Robinson claims, is a familiar presence in the Romantic and post-Romantic repertoire, but it is not typical of, say, Baroque music. Likewise, the analogy between music and the speaking voice that was so vividly present to the

composers influenced by the Camerata has gradually faded. Discussing articulation, Nikolaus Harnoncourt observes that

Problems of articulation are especially apparent in Baroque music, or more generally in music from about 1600 to 1800 since, as a rule, this music is basically related to speech. The parallels to speech were strongly emphasized by all theorists of the period. Music was often described as “speech in tones”. To put this in simplified and somewhat approximate terms, I like to say that music prior to 1800 *speaks*, while subsequent music *paints*.

[Harnoncourt 1988: 39]

Heuristic devices do not vary only diachronically, but also cross-culturally. Steven Feld [1981, 2012] has described the fascinating way in which the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea use terms related to waterways and waterfalls to describe tonal movements in their songs – one may well say: the flow of their music. For instance, level melodic contours are named *sa-min*, which is the word that refers to the level area that precedes a waterfall, and *sa-gu* refers both to the melodic descent to the tonal centre and to the sound of a waterfall. [Feld 1981: 31]

It is difficult to determine whether this terminology is simply an intriguing example of polysemous use of words, or rather a heuristic device in the sense I described. In order to function as heuristics, the mapping of melodic contour onto waterfall structure needs to guide, at least sometimes, the compositional and listening process. At least some of Feld’s remarks, however, are compatible with the interpretation of the waterfall imagery as a heuristic device, as they show the presence of such imagery in concrete instances of music making. For instance, he writes that “My purposeful mistakes were always greeted instantly (if greeted by verbalization and not by laughter) with remarks like “the waterfall ledge is too long

before the fall", (problem with an unbalanced phrase before the tonal center)."¹²²
[Feld 1981: 36]

Resemblance between singing voice and birdsong is an important source of reference for Kaluli performance practice: "Finally, (and notice here that we are somewhat on the line of musical theory per se and performance theory in the broader prescriptive and evaluative senses) comparisons with bird voice sounds form an important part of vocal terminology as well. *Dagano mada kalo o:ngo*, or *dagano mada howe:n o:ngo*, 'of a voice really like *kalo*', or 'of a voice really like *howe:n*' serve to focus an evaluation about voice quality judged upon attributions of degree of plaintiveness of the two fruit-doves (*kalo* and *howe:n*)." [Feld 1981: 36]

These bits of evidence from music history and anthropology point to the possible variations in heuristic devices across different times and cultures.

5. The issue of appropriateness

I have distinguished heuristic devices in three subsets: composition, performance and listening devices. This distinction allows for a possible correspondence between the heuristic device used in composition and the one used in performance and listening. Take for instance the case of the musical persona. After having argued that a dramatic persona can be heard in much Romantic repertoire, Robinson writes the following:

My own view is that some Romantic pieces of music should indeed be experienced as containing a persona whose unfolding emotional life is portrayed in the music. By

¹²² Elsewhere, Feld writes: "They commented on mistakes both verbally and by sung correction, and the form of the vocabulary used for responding was most instructive. It seemed that water and waterfall terms were systematically employed as metaphors for sound structure: "Your waterfall ledge is too long before the water drops," "There is not enough flow after the fall," "The water stays in the pool too long," "There is much splashing"; these were typical responses Kaluli made to my melodies, which had unbalanced contours, abruptly ending phrases, overly centered lines, and poorly paced meter." [Feld 2012: 164]

saying they should be so interpreted, I mean that important aspects of the work are likely to be inaccessible to listeners who do not listen in this fashion. To this extent we must listen in this way in order to detect the work's expressive structure.

[Robinson 2005: 333]

If we reinterpret this in terms of heuristic devices, what Robinson is pointing to seems to be that, Romantic music being first composed with something like a dramatic persona in mind, a listener who attends the musical development in a way that is shaped by a similar device is likely to have access to features of the music that would otherwise be harder to hear. In other words, Robinson's remarks seem to suggest that listening to the music written in such a period requires us to keep in mind that the piece might have been produced with a dramatic persona in mind. At the very least, Robinson's observations hint at the fact that our listening would sometimes benefit from such an awareness.

I wish to reformulate these concerns by talking of *appropriateness* in the use of heuristic devices, as this seems to be a good term to capture the 'matching' between compositional, performance, and listening devices. Modern-day historically informed performance of Early music offers another good example of this. When playing a Baroque harpsichord piece that was meant to have a particular reference to human vocal expression, the use of heuristic devices coming from the domain of vocal expression is appropriate. In contrast, exploiting the dynamics and tensions in the harpsichord piece to conjure Romantic images of uncontrolled natural power and sublimity, and performing in a way apt to enhance those images, would be using an inappropriate heuristic device. To cite Harnoncourt again:

When a musician ignorant of the speaking, dialogue-like character of Baroque music reads the articulation signs as if they had been written during the 19th Century, his interpretation will *paint* rather than *speak*.

[Harnoncourt 1988: 39]

This remark, along with Robinson's quote, constitute the normative side of the previously quoted observations on the occurrence of heuristic devices in Romantic and Early music: If such and such device was used in the composition of a piece, then the same extra-musical analogy ought to guide the performance and/or listening of the piece.

From this we can derive a tentative characterisation of what it means for a heuristic device to be used *appropriately*. A performance or listening heuristic device is used appropriately whenever it matches the heuristic device used in composing the piece (or that could likely have been used in composing the piece). Listening to a Baroque piece searching for a dramatic persona in the music would likely count as an inappropriate use of this heuristic device.

It is not my aim here to rule out such an inappropriate use of heuristic devices as illegitimate, or as *ceteris paribus* worse than an appropriate one.¹²³ I simply observe that heuristic devices provide a theoretical framework that may be useful to describe issues of appropriateness such as those stressed by Robinson and Harnoncourt.¹²⁴

¹²³ The term 'appropriate' may suggest an essentially normative context, but this is far from my intent. I simply wish to draw attention to the fact that an *informed* use of heuristic devices at the performance and listening level is one that normally takes into account devices used at the compositional level.

¹²⁴ Aaron Ridley [2007] concurs with Robinson in believing that the musical persona may be required to perceive a work's properties. In discussing Barber's famous *Adagio*, he writes: "Heard as the expression of a persona [...] the work's expressive dimension moves centre-stage, and affords an absorbing portrait of a very particular frame of mind, the character and unity of which are not heard as any sort of side-effect of something else, but as presented directly. [...] The *Adagio* is simply better, more interesting, when experienced as the expression of a persona. And since none of the relevant cultural background or music history counts against such a listening, we should—on ordinary critical appreciation grounds—prefer it. (It is an idea somewhat like this, I take it, that underlies, and is then over-stated in, Levinson's pro-persona position.)" [Ridley 2007: 144]

6. Heuristic devices and causal mechanisms

I claimed that heuristic devices change through history and vary cross-culturally, but how do they become entrenched in a particular musical tradition, and, even more fundamentally, how do they arise in the first place? This is ostensibly linked to the potential that heuristic devices have to shape our creation of expressive music. One obvious way to cash out this idea is in terms of underlying causal mechanisms: what heuristic devices allow a composer to do is to produce music that is reliably connected with the experience of expressive music. Consider again, as an example, the case of the Florentine Camerata. Composers and intellectuals such as Mei had conjectured that Greek music might have acquired its expressive power from its resemblance to human speech. They realized that, by letting the resemblance with human emotional prosody guide the compositional process, they could produce music that was more clearly expressive of emotion than the sort of music they were used to.

In order to clarify what I mean when I talk about causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perception, I will briefly discuss a plausible example of one such mechanism. Psychologist Patrik Juslin has defended the so-called super-expressive voice theory of musical expressiveness. According to this theory, some music is expressive because

[...] it sounds a lot like the human voice, whereas at the same time it goes far beyond what the human voice can do in terms of speed, intensity, and timbre. For example, if human speech is perceived as “angry” when it has fast rate, loud intensity, and a harsh timbre, a musical instrument might sound extremely “angry” by virtue of its even higher speed, louder intensity, and harsher timbre.

[Juslin and Västfjäll 2008: 566]

This theory, if correct, suggests that expressive perception in music is grounded, at least in some cases, in the fact that our brain interprets musical stimuli as vocal ones. Music amplifies cues associated with the various emotions in speech and thereby acquires its expressiveness. The one described by Juslin is therefore a causal mechanism responsible for expressive perception.

Now, the important point about heuristic devices is that they need only to *reliably track* the causal mechanisms underlying expressive perception, but they do not need to be *transparent* about them. What this means is that the sort of experience that guides the composer in the creation of expressive music needs to result in musical material that possesses the disposition of generating the experience of expressive perception – this is what I intend by ‘reliably tracking’ causal mechanisms. For instance, paying attention to the resemblance between the melodic line and emotional prosody is an experience that reliably results in music that is experienced as expressive, in virtue (we shall suppose) of the mechanism identified by Juslin and described above.

However, the sort of experience that allows the heuristic process (say, the experience of resemblance between music and emotional prosody) is not transparent to such mechanisms, that is, it does not contain any reference to that causal story in its phenomenology. Suppose, for instance, that the super-expressive voice hypothesis is substituted by an overwhelmingly more plausible causal story concerning expressive perception in music: the expressiveness of music is due to a mapping between pitch height and spatial position and to the ensuing impression of movement in space, which is interpreted in a way similar to bodily behaviour. This would not disqualify the heuristic device used by the Camerata composers, as the device is clearly successful in tracking a causal mechanism that is responsible for expressive perception.

These remarks are particularly important for the assessment of resemblance theories of musical expressiveness, or at least of some such theories. Why this is so will be apparent in the following section.

Finally, and especially in view of the next section of this chapter, it is important to stress here that my claim is *not* that heuristic devices are necessary for a piece of music to be expressive – this should be clear from the account of basic expressiveness I offered in the previous chapter. Music may possess expressive properties in the complete absence of any conscious or unconscious heuristic strategy at the compositional stage. Likewise, the music's expressive properties are independent of the experience the perceiver is undergoing while attending to the music, that is, regardless of what heuristic device, if any, is used in the music's appreciation. Heuristic devices may facilitate and enhance the production, performance and appreciation of expressive music, but they are by no means essential to it.

I conclude with some observations regarding the relation between heuristic devices and one widely held theory of musical expressiveness.

7. Heuristic devices and resemblance theories of musical expressiveness

In his seminal book *The Corded Shell*, Peter Kivy argued that, in their effort to establish the theoretical foundations of a new style of singing, the members of the Florentine Camerata have in fact outlined a plausible theory of (some examples of) musical expressiveness. What these composers were claiming is that the music's resemblance to human speech can make it expressive of emotions.¹²⁵ Kivy says:

What, then, is the legacy to us of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century speech theories? What use can we make of these speculations? I would urge that what we can salvage from them is the suggestion that the major operator in musical expressiveness – or at least one major operator – is a musical resemblance of some aspects of human expression; and further, that at least one such aspect is human speech.

¹²⁵ Kivy discards a less charitable interpretation, according to which these composers had in mind the *arousal* of emotions in the listener.

This idea, although developed with reference to the birth of the solo song, can be applied across the board to all music that bears a suitable resemblance to human speech. Kivy then supplements this core theory of musical expressiveness with other components, namely resemblance to expressive bodily behaviour and expressiveness by convention. In this chapter, I have argued that the resemblance of music to human expressive speech was used by the Camerata as a heuristic device for the creation of expressive music. From this point of view, what should I make of Kivy's interpretation of the Camerata's speculations?

One should note that it is often unclear whether resemblance theories are making a claim about the phenomenology of music listening or about the underlying mechanisms responsible for expressive perception. In other words, is Kivy saying that we hear music as expressive because our experience of music is the experience of a resemblance (or has as a part of its content a representation of human expressive behaviour), or is he claiming that we hear music as expressive in virtue of some structural similarities between the music and emotionally charged speech (in such a way, say, that our brain is led to process the two in a similar way)? Whereas the latter would result in something like the super-expressive voice hypothesis described above, the former is a claim about the phenomenology of music listening, and it is not straightforwardly testable empirically.¹²⁶

It is not my aim in this chapter to settle this exegetical issue. However, regardless of which interpretation of Kivy's theory one finds most defensible, if I am right in saying that what the Camerata composers were concerned with was the use of a heuristic device for the production of expressive music, then what they were doing has no direct connection with either of the two interpretations of Kivy's theory. For heuristic devices need only to reliably track a mechanism responsible for

¹²⁶ Kivy seems closer to the latter option.

expressive perception; this mechanism does not need to be apparent in the sort of experience that heuristic devices exploit. The causal interpretation is therefore discarded: as a heuristic device, the Camerata strategy of modelling melodic contour on prosodic features cannot teach us anything regarding the nature of the mechanism responsible for the perception of expressive properties.

Nor does my description of heuristic devices imply that the experience of expressive music needs to have as part of its content (whether in a conscious or unconscious manner) the extra-musical references (say, to human speech) that have guided its creation. It follows from this that heuristic devices need not be part of the phenomenology of music listening. This makes it unclear the extent to which the Camerata strategy, as a heuristic device, is able to support the phenomenological interpretation of Kivy's contour theory. There are two lessons one may learn from this.

First, my interpretation of what I take the composers associated with the Camerata to be doing is different from Kivy's, as I do not believe they were after a theory of musical expressiveness, nor do I believe that an accurate description of what they were doing could result in (even a part of) a viable theory of musical expressiveness.

Second, if my interpretation is correct, then the kind of experience that Kivy takes to be supportive of his contour theory is actually the use of a heuristic device, that is, something that is in no obvious sense directly related to a theory of musical expressiveness *per se*. In other words, being guided by the resemblance between music and human expressive behaviour might be a particularly effective strategy for the creation and performance of expressive music, but it does not follow from this that the experience of expressive music has anything to do with this perceived similarity.

We find similar issues in Davies. In the first paper he devoted to his theory of musical expressiveness, there is a passage that is worth quoting at length:

[...] our appreciation of music's dynamic nature is essential to our appreciation of the analogy between our experiences of music and human behaviour. This is apparent when we consider how we would attempt to get another to experience the sadness, say, that we hear in a musical work. At first we might describe the music as dragging and forlorn. If he could not hear the music in this way we would describe the dynamic character of the music in a way which would encourage him to hear the musical movement as dragging and forlorn. For example, we would draw his attention to the slow tempo, the faltering and hesitant rhythms, the irregular accents on unexpected discords, the modulations to 'distant' keys, the dense texture, and so forth. That is, one would encourage him to experience the musical movement as analogous to (which is not to say imitative of) movements which, as part of a person's behaviour, would lead us to describe that behaviour as dragging and forlorn. Having led him to experience the music in this way one would expect him to hear the sadness in the music, just as a person, seeing the appearance of human behaviour as dragging and forlorn, would see that behaviour as wearing the sadness-characteristic in its appearance.

[Davies 1980a: 76]

In my terms, what Davies is describing here is a listening heuristic device. Someone could ask us to pay attention to the ways in which the music is analogous to movements, which in turn are characteristic of a person's behaviour. Crucial to the change in the listener's experience of the music is the shift of attention to some of the music's features (tempo, dynamics, modulations, etc.), which are responsible for the music's expressive character.

I have no doubts that the scenario imagined by Davies is a plausible one. We may in fact successfully elucidate a piece's expressive character in just this way. However, the point raised regarding Kivy's contour theory holds for Davies too: it may well be true that stressing the analogy between music and movement (or other forms of human emotional expression) is a successful strategy for detecting expressive properties in the music. But this does not entail that the experience of

such an analogy, or the experience of human emotional expression in the music, is part of our experience of expressive music.

These observations raise the general worry that resemblance theorists may have mistaken an accessory process (the use of a heuristic device) for the essential phenomenological component of the experience of expressive music.

It will be clear how similar considerations might apply to Levinson's persona theory. Recall the discussion of Robinson's view at the start of this chapter. Her claim is that the thought of a musical persona may be part of the compositional process, and in those cases should also inform our listening. But there is no reason to posit the experience of a musical persona as essential to expressive perception. This line of reasoning by Robinson parallels my rejection of resemblance theories as monolithic accounts of musical expressiveness. If the musical persona merely functions as a heuristic device, then it is simply one possibility among many when it comes to hearing music as akin to an act of human emotional expression.

Let us now go back to the distinction between ECA polysemy and secondary polysemy traced in Chapter IV. We observed how the phenomenological basis had to be distinct, as secondary polysemy does not involve a description of music in terms of emotion-characteristics in appearance. This is a first blow to monolithic accounts of musical expressiveness, as it splits its phenomenology in two.

This chapter has further fragmented the phenomenology of expressive perception. Not only is the phenomenology underlying ECA polysemy a partial account of the way in which we experience expressive music, as well the very unity of the experience of music in terms of emotion characteristics in appearance has been challenged. Rather than a unitary characterisation, a variety of options are possible, namely all of the heuristic devices that are based on a mapping from music to human expressive behaviour.

VII. Musical Expressiveness: a Layered Account

1. A pluralist view

The idea that an account of musical expressiveness could not result in a unitary characterisation of the experience of expressive music is an old one. Matravers [2010] observes how Malcolm Budd [1985: 176] had already claimed, in his first published work on the topic, that a viable theory of musical expressiveness could not be a monolithic one. Ten years later, having presented various characterisations of expressive perception in music, Budd wrote the following.

But which of the conceptions I have outlined is the correct account of the expressive perception of music? The question is based on a mistake. These different conceptions should not be seen as competitors, amongst which we must choose the one that has the sole or best right to the title. Although some conceptions undoubtedly have a much wider application than others, nothing is gained by selecting the one as the true claimant to a title that has been so widely conferred and whose possession entails no rights.

[Budd 1995: 154]

This work is an attempt to take up the pluralist approach championed by Budd.

I have claimed that a basic characterisation of the application of psychological predicates to music has so far been ignored. According to my account of basic expressive properties, it is impossible to justify the application of some emotional properties to music in terms of resemblance, or in terms of a mapping between sensory domains. The phenomenology of basic musical expressiveness is exhausted in our perception of the music's character being aptly characterised by a particular

psychological predicate. I indicated how my account of basic expressive properties is indebted to both Wittgenstein's view of secondary sense and Budd's conjecture on the use of some aesthetic terms.

To those who will regard this disarmingly simple characterisation as being indeed too simple, I respond that a common experience invites a similar analysis: synaesthesia.¹²⁷ When we apply a word taken from one sensory domain to a different one, we are normally unable to specify the reason of such an extension of the term's use. We simply find that reference to a well-known experience in one sensory domain is well-suited to characterise an aspect of our experience of a different sensory domain.¹²⁸

But basic expressive properties only account for part of our experience of expressive music. In other cases, we are able to indicate more precisely the resemblance basis that warrants descriptions of music in emotional terms. These cases constitute the experience of expressive music that resemblance theories attempted to describe.

However, as I argued in Chapter VI, it is mistaken to think that the experience of expressive music mediated by its resemblance to human expressive behaviour could not take more than one form. I have claimed that resemblance theorists have described as alternative characterisations what in reality are merely different ways of experiencing the music's expressive character through its resemblance to human expressive behaviour.

My discussion of heuristic devices has identified another source of variation in the experience of expressive music. I have described heuristic devices as functioning at three levels: composition, performance, and listening. A match or mismatch at

¹²⁷ As indicated earlier, I use the term to refer ordinary cases of synaesthesia, rather than the condition of 'synesthetic' individuals, who might well experience perceptually, say, vowels as coloured.

¹²⁸ While I cannot do this in the present work, I submit that the analogies and differences between basic expressive properties and synesthetic phenomena are worth investigating further.

these various levels is likely to impact our experience of music. I have substantiated these considerations with a brief discussion of Harnoncourt's view regarding the performance of Early music, as well as of Robinson's contention that some Romantic music is best experienced as the expression of a musical persona.

Finally, in addition to defending a pluralist approach to the phenomenology of expressive perception in music, my account is pluralist in quite a different sense. Analytic philosophy of music has exhibited so far a preference for Western music of the classical tradition from Bach to Wagner. [Davies 2011a: 301] My discussion of heuristic devices as diachronically and cross-culturally variable suggests that a richer account of the ways in which we experience music will be possible if philosophers explore ways of composing and listening different from the Western tradition of concert-hall music.

Kathleen M. Higgins [1997] attributed this Western-centric bias to a misguided quest for objectivity, which suppressed what she terms *perspectival listening*. I am inclined to dismiss her concern for idiosyncrasy at the *individual* level, as aesthetic practices are typically shared by a community, however small. At any rate, my description of heuristic devices invites the exploration of alternative ways of music-making and listening, in line with Higgins' plea for a more inclusive approach.

2. Trivedi's pluralist view

Saam Trivedi [2017] has recently defended a pluralist account of musical expressiveness. Given the similar spirit that animates our projects, I shall briefly present his view and some reasons to prefer mine.

Trivedi describes three different kinds of experiences, all involving imagination. The first, and perhaps most common, is the experience of imagining that "the music itself is alive and possessive of mental states, that it is exuberantly joyous, and that its joy is manifested through the sounds we apprehend aurally." [Trivedi 2017: 138]

The second experience is that of an indefinite musical persona expressing herself through the music. This invites a comparison to the persona theory defended by Levinson, and I agree with Trivedi in considering Levinson's view a correct characterisation of *some* experiences of musical expressiveness. I identify Levinson's mistake in his characterisation of this experience as the only correct account of expressive perception in music.

The third way of listening involves imaginative identification. In this case, we imagine that we are ourselves the music, and that we are undergoing the emotional states the music is in.

I confess that I struggle to see how the first two ways of listening come apart. Trivedi draws the distinction in the following way. First, the musical persona is distinct from the music. Second, the experience of expressiveness mediated by the persona is "not as direct and immediate" [2017: 140] as the experience of the music itself as expressive. Third, the object that is imagined to possess emotional states is different in the two cases: the music in the first one, a musical persona in the second.

As Trivedi does not make explicit any difference between his concept of persona and that central to Levinson's theory, I will assume the two to coincide. Now, under Levinson's view, the musical persona is a rather minimal entity, "merely the agent of the expression we hear in expressive music, or the owner of the musical gesture that is the vehicle of that expression." [2006: 204] It is unclear how the first mode of imagining does not fall under this description: if we imagine music to be alive and endowed with an emotional life, then we are imagining music to be an agent engaged in some sort of expressive behaviour. And if we fail to imagine music as an agent that is expressing its emotions in some way, then we have failed to animate music in the way described by the first item in Trivedi's list.

Additionally, there may be reasons to believe that the third way of experiencing musical expressiveness presupposes the first, and is more a variation on it than it is an independent possibility. The act of imaginatively identifying with the music, and imagining that the music's expressed emotional state is our own, is

dependent on experiencing the music as expressive of that state. And doing so arguably requires, according to Trivedi's own view, the first or second mode of experience.

It would seem then that Trivedi's account is less pluralist than it looks. On the one hand, it is unclear how different the three ways of experiencing music really are. On the other hand, insofar as imagination is essentially involved in expressive perception, Trivedi's account does not move away from the monolithic characterisation of expressive perception embraced by other theorists.

But there are more decisive reasons to be suspicious of Trivedi's view. While he concedes that his list may not be exhaustive, and that there may be other ways to experience expressive music, Trivedi [2017: 142] assumes that these will also involve imagination. He does not offer a principled reason as to why *any* further way of experiencing the musical emotions must involve imagination. If we are to look for a general argument for this in Trivedi's book, we find one based on the impossibility of music literally possessing mental states.

Consider Davies's appearance emotionalism, which describes expressive properties as belonging to the music itself, and our descriptions of the music as, say, 'sad', as literal. Trivedi finds this claim puzzling, and presents against such a view the apparently unassailable claim that only beings with the appropriate mental state could be literally sad, happy, and so on. And by all accounts, music lacks mental states of any sort. Trivedi's own view solves this puzzle by claiming that music is only *imagined* to be in such psychological states, thereby avoiding the implausible commitment to the view that music is itself literally sad.

However plausible it may seem, Trivedi's strategy ignores two things. First, Davies [2011b: 32-3] is clear in saying that the music's expressive properties are response-dependent, rather than mind-independent attributes possessed by the particular sound sequences or structures. They belong to the music itself in the sense that we attribute them to the music when we listen to it, not in the sense that the music would possess them in the absence of any listener.

Second, when Davies holds that music is literally sad or happy, he is simply stating that the music can be literally predicated of the secondary sense of these terms, which refers to the behaviour typically associated with the emotion in question – the Saint Bernard is literally sad in its appearance in this sense. With these qualifications in mind, it is hard to see how Davies’s view is any less mysterious than Trivedi’s own.

Additionally, note how Trivedi supports his view through a parallel between animating the music and attending to representational content. He writes: “Animating the music is [...] very similar to what we do when we see comic strips or animation films and imagine [...] that the talking and expressive cars, trees, sun, etc. we see in them are *themselves* sad, happy, etc.” [2017: 135].

In this passage, we are offered an analogy between the way in which we animate music and the way we experience the expressive character of fictional entities in a depictive context. To be sure, this is *just* an analogy, but in order to clarify anything, an analogy between two things needs to be clear as to what is common to the things in question. With regard to the analogy offered by Trivedi, I note two problems.

First, is it clear that the animation process Trivedi is describing necessarily involves imagination? That it may do isn’t implausible, but it is also far from being uncontroversial. Trivedi considers this process as akin to the animation process Kivy appealed to in defending his contour theory.

According to Kivy, [1989: 57-58] the way we mistakenly perceive, say, a stick as a snake, responds to an evolutionary logic according to which it is better to be safe than sorry, as it were. Regardless of the empirical plausibility of the claim, there is no reason to assume that such a process involves the imagination, and indeed there are reasons to confine it to perception: what is going on is simply a perceptual bias that prompts a mistaken judgement, or perhaps a mere “fight or flight” reaction. This seems to be rather remote from, say, the experience of seeing faces in the clouds or a happy sun in a comic strip.

But let us now cast this worry aside and move to the second problem. Regardless of the plausibility of Trivedi's claims regarding the involvement of imagination in animation, a more substantial issue undermines the analogy between animating comic strips and animating music. The cases discussed by Trivedi are representational contexts. That is, unlike pure music, they represent people and objects doing something and looking in such-and-such a way. For instance, we see the car's smile and upturned front part and we imagine the car as happy. But an obvious analogue for this is not available in the musical case, for there is nothing like a clear representational context from which we can read off the music's expressive character.

We can appreciate the asymmetry if we look at the way in which we may resolve disagreement about expressive character in the two cases. The representational content in comic strips and animated movies functions as a benchmark by which to assess disputes when disagreement arises. The car has features analogous to those presented by happy human beings, and to these features we refer in arguing about the car's expressive character. What would count as such a benchmark in the musical case?

Trivedi may answer that it is the music itself, with its ebb and flow. But the situation would not be analogous to the animated movie or comic strip cases, in that there is no similar agreement about the extra-musical resemblances the music displays. In fact, I suspect there is much less agreement about these than about the music's expressive character.

If things are the way I suggest, while it may be true that animated movies engage our imagination in the way suggested by Trivedi, no similar engagement is required in the musical case. Indeed, when expressive music quite clearly *does* engage our imagination, things often go the other way around: we perceive the music's expressive character, and this may lead us to imagine the music as something that could express itself in such-and-such a way.

The asymmetry between the two cases points to a difference in their phenomenology. Resting the claim that musical expressiveness requires imagination on the analogy with representational contexts may be a problematic move, unless the ground of the analogy is specified further.

3. Meeting the desiderata

In the first chapter of this work I listed ten requirements for a theory of musical expressiveness. This chapter has the purpose of checking against those desiderata the layered account of musical expressiveness defended in the previous chapters.

3.1. Causal/phenomenological distinction.

A viable account of musical expressiveness should distinguish the causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perceptions from the experience of expressive properties in music, and clarify what relation, if any, holds between these two aspects. Additionally, the account should avoid any simplification of the phenomenology: it may be impossible to assimilate all experience of expressive music to a unitary phenomenological characterisation.

I have clarified that the experience of musical expressiveness is not phenomenologically unitary. Additionally, I have offered a characterisation of the relation between heuristic devices and the causal mechanisms they exploit. This relation was one of mere “tracking”: heuristic devices track causal mechanisms responsible for expressive perception, but they are not phenomenologically transparent as to the nature of that mechanism.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ This point is related to the critique of causal interpretation of resemblance theories I presented in Chapter II. It will be recalled how the problematic aspect of Young’s interpretation was that it conflated an investigation of the causal mechanism responsible for expressive perception in music with an account of its phenomenology, implausibly reframing Kivy and Davies’s theories as the former.

3.2. *Analogy.*

A theory of musical expressiveness should describe the attribution of expressive properties to inanimate objects in a way that maintains a relationship between the central use of emotion words and their derived application to inanimate objects. In other words, a viable account of expressive perception should avoid a *sui generis* characterisation of expressive properties as ascribed to inanimate objects. This threat emerged in its clearest form as a potential objection to the austere account of basic expressive properties. If there is no justification for the use of certain emotion words beyond the appropriateness of such a linguistic expression, how is the connection between the two uses secured? The answer I offered is that the connection is preserved in that the use of words in the secondary sense presupposes mastery of emotion words in their primary, psychological sense.

3.3. *Augmented extendibility.*

A viable theory of expressiveness in music should account for the relation between the perception of expressive properties in music and the perception of such properties in other inanimate object. Although there might a way of experiencing expressive properties that is peculiar to music in virtue of its specificity as a medium, we should expect a basic notion of expressiveness to be able to cover cases as different as expressive perception in inanimate natural objects, non-artistic humanly-made objects, and artistic objects proper.

I take it that my account of expressive properties does just this. As I have claimed, basic expressive properties are not exclusive to music, and extend to non-artistic artefacts as well as inanimate natural objects, such as colours and landscapes.

I leave open the question as to whether something akin to musical heuristic devices exists in other arts. Other performance arts would be obvious candidates, and dance in particular comes to mind. If this is the case, then it would be a further way for my account to comply with the augmented extendibility requirement.

3.4. Externality.

An account of musical expressiveness should explain our attribution of emotion terms to the music as a qualification of the music, as opposed to a description of the emotional state of the composer, performer, or listener.

The account I defend has no particular troubles in meeting this requirement, as it construes expressive properties as properties of the music, and denies any essential relation between the music's expressive character and the emotional state of the individuals involved in its production or appreciation.

3.5. Immediacy.

A viable account of expressive perception in music should avoid characterising expressive properties as something the listener arrives at through reasoning or inference. Rather, it should explain and qualify the analogy between the immediacy of ordinary perception and that of expressive perception.

I take it that the purpose of this requirement is not to exclude that one in fact may infer the music's aesthetic properties from its other properties, but rather that inferences of this sort should not be essential to expressive perception.

This requirement is clearly met by the account of basic expressive properties. At higher levels, heuristic devices are characterised by a fragmented phenomenology: while some may involve complex imaginings, other are rather straightforward cases of double-aspect perception, but none of the heuristic devices I have described would result in a characterisation of expressive properties as the result of a reasoning or inference.

3.6. Expressive scope.

A theory of musical expressiveness should determine the range of expressive properties the music may possess in a way that is in accordance with the

descriptions of music offered by competent listeners. If descriptions of music in terms of general emotion words such as 'happy' or 'sad' show a high rate of intersubjective agreement, more specific descriptions may fail to do so. An account of musical expressiveness should reflect these variations.

Resemblance theories such as appearance emotionalism can easily make sense of this situation. The more specific the description of an emotional state, the harder it would be to identify the sort of expressive behaviour associated with that emotion, and for the music to take a suitably similar appearance.

Insofar as I embrace the possibility of resemblance-based ways of listening to expressive music, through heuristic devices, I can help myself to a similar explanation, while conceding that agreement rates should be lower if there is evidence of different heuristic devices being exploited.

Additionally, my account of basic expressive properties seems to predict that listeners would agree substantially on descriptions of music other than those involving emotions endowed with distinctive expressive manifestations. Descriptions of music as 'tense', or 'nervous' should be characterised by considerable agreement, if they are basic expressive properties.

3.7. Affectivity.

A viable account of musical expressiveness should explain how it is possible for expressive music to arouse in the listener an emotional state corresponding to the one expressed by the music.

I postpone the discussion of music-induced emotions to the next two chapters. Here it will suffice to say that I regard the causal connection between music and emotions in the listener as something to be investigated by empirical research. Most available theories of musical expressiveness do not explain how music may arouse emotions. As an example, consider the resemblance theories developed by Kivy and

Davies. Despite their similarity, their proponents differ radically in their views regarding emotional contagion from music to listener.

3.8. Valuability.

An account of musical expressiveness should be able to explain how the experience of musical expressiveness contributes (at least sometimes) to the value of the music that occasions it. While I concede that my account does not possess any advantage over others in terms of how it may account for the way in which the music's expressive character may contribute to musical value, I assume that it does not fare any worse than any other account that construe expressiveness as the perception of properties *of the music*. Grasping the musical expression of emotion is part of our ability to grasp the music's properties.

3.9. Inanimation.

We often describe emotional states or expressions using words that find their primary application in the description of inanimate objects. A viable account of expressive perception should avoid characterising the basic case of expressive perception as the animation of the inanimate, as this would not make sense of the linguistic practices just described.

As I have attempted to show, the account of basic expressive properties I defend may be able to make sense of this phenomenon. While this point is of limited importance to a theory of expressiveness in music, it is relevant to the concerns expressed by the augmented extendibility requirement, which poses that a theory of expressiveness in music should be in line with a general theory of expressiveness.

3.10. Cross-cultural plausibility.

A plausible account of musical expressiveness should square with the empirical data regarding the cross-cultural transparency (or otherwise) of expressive perception. I

present here a brief summary of the available research, together with some methodological concerns, and then proceed to show how the layered account I propose is compatible with the empirical findings.

The general state of the evidence warrants an optimistic outlook.¹³⁰ By and large, human beings are able to detect the emotional quality of music from a different culture, even at their first encounter with such a musical tradition. Agreement is greater in the case of basic emotions [Laukka et al. 2013]. Basic emotions as expressed through non-verbal vocal cues are cross-culturally transparent. [Sauter et al. 2000; Scherer et al. 2001; Briant and Barrett 2008] Given these results, it has been suggested that music's capacity to express emotions across cultures should be explained in terms of a partial overlap between musical cues and prosodic cues. [Thompson and Balkwill 2010: 768]

I review here some of the methodological issues in the literature, as these are the main sources of concern when it comes to evaluating the import of these empirical findings on philosophical reflection.

One of the problems in the extant empirical literature is that some studies do not explicitly distinguish the emotions in the music from the ones it arouses in the listener. As an example, I discuss a relatively recent study on ragas. [Chordia and Rae 2007] The researchers mention as their motivation the empirical study of "responses" to ragas, which seems to suggest interest in the arousal of emotions.¹³¹ More significantly, the experiment is composed of both a free response section, and a quantitative section, and the respective focus of each seems to shift from emotions in the listener to emotions in the music. In the free response part, subjects were asked how the music "made them feel". [Chordia and Rae 2007: 2] In the quantitative

¹³⁰ Davies [2011c] and Higgins [2012] provide literature reviews focused on philosophical and methodological issues. See also [Thompson and Balkwill 2010], Patel and Demorest [2013] and Tizon Diaz [2017].

¹³¹ This interest would be in line with the traditional goal of ragas, which is that of arousing in the listener a particular mood, or *rasa*.

section, on the other hand, they were required to adjust a slider according to “how well you feel that the word applies to the *raag* you just heard.”¹³² [2007: 2]

A number of methodological issues are related to the cross-cultural transparency of emotions themselves. While there is a relative consensus around the idea that basic emotions are universal, [Ekman 1992] it is also true that different cultures might have different ways of expressing some of these emotions, or different ways to linguistically carve out the emotional space.

Imperfection in the translation of emotion terms might also cast doubts over the reliability of empirical studies. [Higgins 2012: 279; Benamou 2003: 65-69].

Moreover, different cultures may present noticeable differences in the typical expression of an emotion. Consider how anger may be expressed by sulking or by bursting out, and how the prevalence of one mode of expression over the other might affect the perception of anger in music.¹³³

Related to these concerns is the worry that received views about a culture might affect a subject’s ability to detect some emotions in that culture’s music. For instance, a number of studies have found that cross-cultural perception of anger in music is comparatively poor.¹³⁴ Susino and Schubert [2017] discuss such studies and develop the Stereotype Theory of Emotion in Music (STEM) to explain the discrepancy between the perception of anger and that of other basic emotions. The idea is that the subject’s perception of a culture’s music is filtered by stereotypes regarding that culture. A listener hears less anger in music from a culture, if she possesses a stereotype of that culture as not being prone to the manifestation of anger. The stereotype theory might constitute a more general explanation of anomalies in the detection of basic emotions in music from other cultures.

¹³² Davies [2011c: 43] observes a similar problems in other empirical studies, particularly Gregory and Varney [1996], Darrow et al. [1987], and Fritz [2009].

¹³³ For a brief discussion of cultural differences in the expression of emotions, see Mesquita and Walker [2003: 786-88].

¹³⁴ That is, while anger is better recognised than non-basic emotions, it is still not as easily recognised as other basic emotions. See Argstatter [2016] and Laukka et al [2013].

Finally, I wish to introduce a point that I believe to have been ignored or downplayed in the available literature, namely the importance of distinguishing *judgments* regarding the music's emotional character from the *experience* of it.

I will clarify this by means of two examples. Amusical individuals are congenitally incapable of fine pitch discrimination, to the extent that they are incapable of recognising and repeating simple melodies. [Peretz et al. 2002] However, they are able to recognize the emotional character of the very same melodies they cannot discriminate. [Peretz and Gagnon 1999] One of the lessons one might gather from this is that expressive perception and perceptual discrimination are separate processes.¹³⁵ But it might as well be that amusical individuals decode the emotional character of the excerpts on the basis of the music's tempo, which they perceive reliably. [Hyde and Peretz 2004] This would be in line with a second example: children around five seem to judge the music's expressive character on the bases of tempo alone, whereas older children are sensitive to both tempo and mode. [Dalla Bella et al. 2001]

The moral I wish to draw from these examples is that we are allowed to infer from agreement in ascriptions of expressiveness an identical experience of the music's expressive character. The experience of those who rely on both tempo and melodic/harmonic cues is arguably a richer experience, and it is possible that further, finer-grained judgements would reflect these differences. The upshot for cross-cultural studies should be evident: especially when subjects are presented with forced choices, relevant fine-grained differences might be ignored because of the mere matching between emotional ascriptions.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ The study just cited favours this conclusion.

¹³⁶ Again Davies makes perhaps a similar point to this when he writes: "The thesis that expression may rely on universal musical elements is supported only if the participants have an appropriate experience of the music, and not if entirely inappropriate modes of listening or categorizations of musical affect fortuitously elicit the 'correct' identification." [Davies 2011c: 43]

Having presented the available research, as well as some of the methodological limitations that affect it, we are now in a position to see whether the account I defend is compatible with it. My impression is that the layered account fits nicely with the cross-cultural data. While some basic emotional ascriptions are shared cross-culturally, and even by those who lack expertise, other are accessible only to those who are familiar with a musical style. The stratified character of my account can explain these results: while basic expressive features are cross-culturally similar, because they depend on basic perceptual configurations, the experience of musical expressiveness mediated by heuristic devices is more variable, as it depends on a culturally specific mapping of music to an extra-musical domain.

VIII. Emotions in the Listener: against Kivy's Sceptical View

Theories of musical expressiveness that deny emotional arousal a place in accounting for expressiveness need to determine how music-induced emotions are related to the music's expressive qualities, as well as whether they contribute to its value as an art form. This chapter and the following one seek to answer these questions.

In this chapter, I examine a sceptical take on the music's capacity to arouse artistically relevant emotions of the garden variety (sadness, happiness, and the like). I tackle the issue of what it is for an emotion to count as artistically relevant in the next chapter, and here I rely on intuitions regarding the artistic irrelevance of at least some music-induced emotions. The so-called "our song" phenomenon, in which music arouses emotions by bringing back the occasion of a couple's first date, is a case in point: the sweet feelings aroused by the music are irrelevant to its appreciation *qua* music, as they are the product of an idiosyncratic association that is not grounded on an understanding or assessment of the music – or at least need not be. As a first approximation, then, emotions of the garden variety aroused by music would need to meet the minimum requirement of being aroused independently from extra-musical associations prompted by the music, if they are to count as artistically relevant.

The main task of this chapter is to make a plausible case for the existence of music-induced emotions of the garden variety that meet this requirement.

I first examine Peter Kivy's sceptical view regarding the existence of artistically relevant music-induced emotions of the garden variety, and compare it to more liberal accounts, according to which music can elicit such emotions without the help of idiosyncratic extra-musical associations.

Subsequently, I examine recent psychological research in order to assess whether the issue could be settled empirically. I conclude that, while these results offer some support to the liberal view, the sceptic could still reply that these results fail to adequately exclude the possibility that emotions of the garden variety are aroused by associations prompted by the music, rather than by the music itself.

Finally, I address more directly the sceptical position by taking issue with three challenges raised by Kivy against the liberal view. I contend that none of these challenges represents a valid reason to prefer the sceptical account to the liberal one.

1. The sceptical view

Kivy believed all emotions of the garden-variety (happiness, sadness, etc.) to be aesthetically irrelevant responses to music. That is, he did not deny that such emotional responses exist; rather, he denied that they contribute to our experience of music as an experience *of music*.

Suppose I am listening to a song that reminds me of a happy period of my life. The association of the piece with cheerful personal memories could in turn make me happy, or even melancholy – if the period I am remembering is gone and its happiness unmatched in my current life. In this case, an emotion of the garden variety has been aroused by music, but only in virtue of a personal, idiosyncratic association of a life event with a particular piece. The intentional object of the emotion in question is not the music, but rather the event that the music brings to mind.

According to Kivy, the artistically relevant emotional responses to music are the ones taking the music as the object of the emotional response and falling squarely into the standard cognitivist account of emotions. This account requires an intentional object and a relevant belief regarding that object. If I am afraid of a tiger, the tiger is the intentional object of my fear, and the relevant belief is that the tiger is a dangerous and fearsome predator. How can the experience of pure music meet

these requirements? Kivy's solution to this is to suggest that the listener's emotional response is grounded in the music's beauty. Thus, when I respond emotionally to Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in D Major (BWV 850)*, the objects of my emotional state are the piece and its properties, and the corresponding belief is that the piece is worthy of appreciation, well-crafted, etc.¹³⁷

A piece's expressive properties are also among the properties that may give rise to an emotional response, insofar as a piece's expressive properties can contribute to its value as a work of music. For instance, the sadness of a piano prelude may contribute to the piece's value as an artwork. But it does not follow from this that the emotion aroused by the piece's sadness is going to be sadness. This, after all, would be an entirely irrational response, as there is nothing in the piece that the listener could be sad *about*.¹³⁸ Rather, the emotion aroused by the music's properties (expressive, formal, etc.) is a nameless emotion, albeit of a rather ordinary sort.

Lots of perfectly ordinary emotions have just that nameless character. If I am moved by a sunset, or the face of a child, or a kind or generous action, not done to me but to someone else, those emotions have no name: they are not sadness or fear, anger or gratitude.

[Kivy 1999: 5]

In this way, Kivy is able to assimilate the emotions aroused by music *qua* music to his preferred theory of emotions (the cognitive theory), while at the same time denying that pure music arouses emotions of the garden-variety.

Against this, other philosophers consider emotional responses of the garden-variety to be possible and even aesthetically relevant. Their claim is based on the

¹³⁷ A questionnaire study by Istók et al. [2009] could be interpreted as supportive of Kivy's view. In this study, subjects were asked to list adjectives appropriate to the description of music. 'Beautiful' was by far the most commonly mentioned descriptor, suggesting that its musical beauty has a central role in the experience of a piece.

¹³⁸ At least, a sad piece does not by itself warrant a sad response, though I might be sad about the piece because of how poorly written it is.

assumption that pure music could induce emotional states (or at least moods) without the need of extra-musical associations provided by the lyrics or supplied by the subject's imagination. In what follows I examine such views.

Stephen Davies considers some emotional responses to music to be a counterexample to the standard cognitive theory of emotions. While the cognitive view may be right in considering most emotions as requiring an intentional object and a corresponding belief, emotional contagion from music to listener joins forces with phobias and free-floating anxiety as a counterexample to the cognitive orthodoxy regarding the nature of emotions. The sadness aroused by sad music does not have the music as its intentional object, nor does it need a relevant belief regarding the piece in question.¹³⁹ While Davies supports these conclusions with empirical evidence, it is worth noting that he had already proposed a similar model of emotional contagion in work that predates psychological research on the topic of emotional contagion. [Davies 1980a, 1980b]

Jerrold Levinson grounds his claims on introspective evidence, rather than on empirical research. However, his conclusions are remarkably similar to Davies's. He claims that music, while able to arouse emotions of a mirroring sort, is not capable of arousing full-fledged happiness, as it lacks a cognitive component. [1990a: 314]

Jenefer Robinson agrees with Davies that expressive music is able to arouse emotional responses of a mirroring sort, but denies that this is a result of the listener's recognition of the music's expressive character. According to Robinson, [2005: 392] Davies gets things the wrong way around: cheerful music cheers us up before we realise it is cheerful, whereas according to Davies the cheering effect of music is a product of our recognition of its expressive features.¹⁴⁰ In her view, music

¹³⁹ More precisely, the music is the perceptual object of the responding subject, but not the intentional object of her emotional response, and she is not sad about the music.

¹⁴⁰ Charles O. Nussbaum expresses a similar view: "Reversing the order of dependence in Davies' claim that mirroring responses 'are founded on the recognition of the expressive character of the musical work' (1994, 315), I submit, in the spirit of William James' theory of

elicits physiological changes that are typical of emotional or mood states. As a result of such arousal, the listener may latch onto environmental cues that justify her mood. Thus, if music puts me in a state of objectless tension, I may come to think of my upcoming dentist appointment, providing the objectless mood with an intentional object.

Robinson labels this the *Jazzercise* effect. She backs her claims with empirical research: in addition to evidence that music may indeed be capable of arousing emotions, Robinson draws attention to the fact that a number of studies have shown how one's mood affects the perception of one's environment. For instance, subjects who had been put in a depressed state by sad music found ambiguously expressive faces more expressive of sadness than a control group in a more neutral emotional state. [Bouhuys et al. 1995]

Davies [2011d: 56] replies to Robinson by observing that, while he admits cases of non-attentional contagion, he believes that the central case is one of attentional contagion in which we catch a mood by consciously focusing on some expressive feature of the environment. Aside from Davies's concession regarding non-attentional contagion, Robinson's criticism seems simply grounded on a false dichotomy: there is no reason to think that Robinson's explanation, if true, should exhaustively cover all cases of contagion, excluding the possibility of attentional contagion.

Davies's reply to Robinson is not solely concerned with defending his view of musical contagion. He is also sceptical regarding Robinson's *Jazzercise* effect. According to Davies, [2011d: 58] the cases described by Robinson are not actual cases of emotional contagion from music to listener. If the music causes physiological changes, and if these in turn lead the listener to latch onto environmental cues that may account for or shape her emotional unrest, then what is happening is not a case of emotional contagion from music to listener, but either (i) a standard emotion of

emotion, that *the expressive character of the work is founded on mirroring responses.*" [Nussbaum 2007: 230]

the sort described by the cognitive theory, or (ii) a case of non-cognitive contagion from the environment to the listener – as opposed to a contagion from *music* to listener.¹⁴¹

Noël Carroll [2003] has proposed an account of music's capacity to arouse moods that is in large part in accord with Robinson's, although Carroll is explicit in stressing that he is interested in moods *qua* objectless states. According to Carroll, music may produce somatic and phenomenological states associated with a determinate mood, and the ensuing feeling state may activate the cognitive bias typical of such a mood. He writes: "The beat of the sprightly little jig induces a feeling of lightness in me that contributes to the cheerful way I scan and sort my surroundings or bring images to mind, or assess how the world in my ambit strikes me at this moment." [Carroll 2003: 547] As should be evident from this passage, the process Carroll has in mind is similar to the one described by Robinson as the Jazzercise effect: music has a disposition to evoke mood by inducing an appropriate state, which in turn leads us to perceive the environment in a certain way, or bring to mind some images or associations.

Kivy replied to Carroll's proposal by stressing that this way of responding to music, while it may be a widespread one, is not a way of responding to music *qua* music, as the images that the listener conjures in response to music are not part of the music, nor is the music responsible for the environmental features that the listener will be more prone to pick out as a result of her music listening.¹⁴² [Kivy 2006a: 278]

¹⁴¹ Robinson's contribution to the philosophical investigation of music-induced emotions is not limited to an account of how music in fact does induce emotions. She also devotes attention to the issue of how the emotions aroused by music may be important for the listener's understanding of music. I return to this in the following chapter. Robinson's view on the musical arousal of emotions is also discussed and criticised by Kivy [2006b].

¹⁴² For an assessment of the debate between Carroll and Kivy from the point point of view of a psychologist see Konečni [2013].

The question remains open then whether emotions of the garden variety could be aroused by the music in a way that is artistically relevant, and the burden of proof seems to be on those who think they could be.

2. Empirical evidence on music-induced emotions

It may be asked whether it could be possible to settle these issues empirically. If those who claim that pure music is able to arouse emotions of the garden variety are right, then we would find empirical evidence that such emotions are indeed evoked when subjects listen to music.

However, testing these claims empirically is not as simple as it may seem. It will be recalled that Kivy does not deny that music in fact does arouse emotions of the garden-variety. What he denies is the artistic relevance of such emotions. He does so because he believes these emotions to be aroused by extra-musical associations that the music may prompt in listeners. And it is doubtful that we could measure emotional arousal in a subject whilst at the same time excluding the possibility that the listener is associating some emotionally loaded content with the music, at least not without compromising ecological validity.

In this section I examine some of the most recent empirical studies on the matter, and conclude that they support a mild optimism regarding the music's capacity to evoke emotions of the garden variety.

An early study on music-induced emotions is by Carol Krumhansl [1997]. While it is my intention to focus on recent results, Krumhansl's study is worth discussing because of its importance in the literature. The aim of the study is to measure physiological changes produced by music in order to determine whether such changes match those that are typical of specific emotional states. Krumhansl concludes that, while the physiological changes elicited by music overlap only in part with those produced by full-blown emotions, her study supports the view according to which music is capable of eliciting emotional responses in listeners.

Kivy [2006b] discusses this study in a critical review of Robinson's theory of expressiveness. His general take is that Krumshansl does little more than showing how music is responsible for physiological changes – something Kivy's formalist view does not deny. Moreover, the pieces used for the study have titles referring to extra-musical reality, which may prompt associations and corresponding emotions. While these may be emotions of the garden variety, they would not count against Kivy's contention that pure music does not arouse such emotions, as the emotions in question would be a response to the extra-musical associations, or at least to the interplay between the music and such associations. Finally, Kivy notes how, by the author's own admission, Krumshansl's study features pieces that have strong cultural associations for many Americans, which again may evoke extra-musical content.¹⁴³

Vladimir Konečni [2008] reports empirical results according to which basic (i.e. garden variety) emotions aroused by music were considerably weaker than the emotions aroused in the same subjects by their recollection of past emotionally charged events. Konečni takes these results to be suggestive of a rather weak link between music and the arousal of emotions of the garden variety, at least in the absence of personal associations that mediate between the two.¹⁴⁴

Vuoskoski and Eerola [2015] have determined that, unsurprisingly, sad music accompanied by a sad narrative elicits stronger negative emotions than sad music played without any narrative. Quite interestingly, however, sad music accompanied

¹⁴³ Some of the pieces used in the study are Albinoni's and Barber's adagios, Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, and Holst's *Mars, the Bringer of War*, from *The Planets*.

¹⁴⁴ Manuel [2005] informally collected listeners' responses to the question whether sad music makes them sad. The general interpretation offered is that most listeners claim not to be saddened by sad music. Taruffi and Koelsch [2015] set up a more methodologically rigorous study, and conclude that sad music does indeed arouse sadness in listeners. However, this study has at least two issues. First, the sad pieces in question were selected by the subjects themselves. This is not ideal, as it undermines the possibility of clearly defining what counts as a sad piece – it may even be that some subjects have chosen a particular piece of music on the grounds of the piece's capacity to make them sad, as opposed to the piece's sad character. Second, the pieces in question were both instrumental and songs. The presence of lyrics may render the subjects particularly prone to idiosyncratic extra-musical associations.

by a *neutral* narrative elicits more sadness than music alone, although not quite as much as when accompanied by a sad narrative. In order to explain this finding, they hypothesise that the neutral narrative, much like the negative one, may have prompted mental imagining which, in turn, “enhanced the participants’ attention and immersion in the music and thus intensified the induction of emotion via music [...]” [Vuoskoski and Eeola 2015: 270] This hypothesis would not be welcomed by those who, like Kivy, strongly deny that conjuring mental images while listening to music could enhance one’s immersion in the *music*, rather than in one’s own music-prompted fantasies. On the other hand, philosophers who hold a liberal view with regard to music-induced emotions may interpret these findings as suggesting that extra-musical content plays a smaller role in determining the music’s capacity to arouse emotions of the garden variety than the formalist would admit.

Support for the contagion view defended by Davies can be found in a now substantive body of literature on emotional contagion, although such literature is mainly focused on human-to-human contagion, and poses therefore a problem with regard to the generalizability of explanatory mechanisms when accounting for instances of contagion from inanimate objects such as music. A landmark publication by Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues has defined emotional contagion as “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally.” [Hatfield et al. 1994: 5] As this approach emphasises the role of unintentional mimicry, its application to musical contagion would require a musical analogue for the postural and behavioural tendencies that are mimicked in cases of human-to-human contagion.

Evidence for the contagion perspective is also presented by Patrik Juslin and Daniel Västfjäll [2008: 565], although they admit that the notion of an emotional contagion from music to listener is still “speculative”. [2008: 566] Their hypothesis is that contagion from music to listener is due to the fact that we process the voice-like features of music as expressive non-verbal behaviour, or as the prosodic contour of

emotionally charged speech, and consequently come to feel the emotion the music is expressing. As far as the sort of emotions with which music may be able to infect the listener, Juslin and Västfjäll are inclined to think that basic emotions with characteristic nonverbal expressions may be aroused by music via contagion. This would include at least some of Kivy's garden variety emotions, such as happiness and sadness.

While Davies [2011d: 63] welcomes such evidence as supportive of his view of musical contagion, he does not do so without a note of caution. Particularly, he worries that these explanations may become hopelessly metaphorical once applied to the musical case, for the music has no face or muscles we could mimic. Hence the necessity for future empirical research to determine what it is exactly in the music that is processed in such a way as to elicit mirroring emotional responses.

Part of the reason why empirical studies about music-induced emotions have been unreliable is that they have often failed to discriminate between the emotions expressed by music, and those aroused by it. It is plausible to assume that listeners could attribute to themselves the emotion they are hearing in the music, thus committing a sort of inverted pathetic fallacy, and thereby invalidating the experiment.¹⁴⁵

More recently, the importance of the distinction between emotions in the music and emotions in the listener was stressed by a landmark paper by Alf Gabrielsson [2002]. While the distinction was already commonplace among the philosophers, it was less so among the psychologists. Since the publication of Gabrielsson's paper, a number of other studies have examined the relation between the two types of emotion.¹⁴⁶ Emery Schubert [2013] has analysed such output in a meta-study, from which he concludes that the main findings since Gabrielsson's paper have been two.

First, listener's ratings for the emotions the music elicited in them are typically lower than, or identical to, the ratings for the emotions perceived in the music. That

¹⁴⁵ Kivy makes this point on various occasions. See for instance [2006b: 306].

¹⁴⁶ See for instance Scherer [2004], and Kallinen and Ravaja [2006].

is, emotions aroused by the music are rarely more prominent than those expressed by the music, and often are measurably weaker.

Second, music selected by the subjects themselves, as well as music the subjects liked, resulted in a narrower gap between ratings of emotions felt and emotions perceived than music that was disliked or chosen by the experimenters.

This section suggests that the available empirical research cannot determine whether music is able to elicit emotions of the garden variety independently from idiosyncratic or culturally mediated extra-musical association. As empirical research is still inconclusive, it will not be inappropriate for me to examine some of the philosophical arguments offered against the idea that music arouses artistically relevant emotions of a mirroring sort.

3. Addressing three sceptical objections

I focus here on three objections Kivy put forward against the alternative accounts of musical emotions proposed by Davies and Levinson. These objections, which are contained in Kivy's last contribution to the debate, have not been discussed in the literature and constitute, if correct, a strong reason to prefer Kivy's view over those proposed by his rivals. In order of difficulty, the problems highlighted by Kivy are the following.

3.1 The problem of negative emotions.

Any account allowing sadness and other negative emotions as legitimate responses to music has to deal with the problem of negative emotions.¹⁴⁷ Why would we wish to listen to music if this could actually induce a sad mood in us? Note that this is a standard objection against the arousal theory of musical expressiveness. What is needed is an explanation of why we would deliberately seek out music that might

¹⁴⁷ For a book-length treatment of the topic, see Garrido [2017].

cause in us emotional states we normally try to avoid. This problem, Kivy observes, is one that his account avoids entirely, and this fact alone should count as a reason to prefer the sceptical view to the liberal one.

A response to this objection should stress how giving up descriptive accuracy to get rid of a problem is hardly what one wants from an account of emotional responses to music. That is, if there are such negative emotional responses to music, we better accept the fact and deal with it as well as we can. Of course, Kivy's observation draws its strength from the fact that it is highly controversial that such negative responses, as responses *to the music*, are there in the first place.

There are various ways in which to answer the question as to desirability of negative emotions, and a similar problem is a standard issue in accounts of emotional responses to fiction. However, the lack of propositional content makes the musical case slightly different, for what is supposed to compensate the undesirable quality of negative emotions in our experience of fictions is sometimes related to that propositional content. The responses to the problem in the musical case take a variety of approaches. A strong line, such as the one represented by Levinson, argues for the presence of rewards in terms of emotional control and self-knowledge. By responding emotionally to music, Levinson [1990a: 322-29] argues, we develop an off-line expertise in the emotional domain that is both useful and rewarding. Levinson's suggestion seems rather unrealistic, as avid listeners often fail to show a better knowledge and control of emotional states than people with no special interest in music. Moreover, this sort of explanation has the main disadvantage of construing the reward as a long-term consequence of our listening, rather than making it an integral part of it. Finally, as with all solutions of the problem of negative emotions in terms of rewards, it accepts the fundamentally negative and undesirable quality of the negative emotions in our aesthetic experience, merely allowing that other factors *compensate* this negative quality with a positively charged one. The problem with this account is that, taken at face value, it characterizes pieces of music arousing negative

emotional responses as always less desirable, *ceteris paribus*, than the ones arousing positive responses, and this seems straightforwardly false.

More plausible ways of dealing with the problem of negative emotions construe the emotional response as an essential part of an experience which is valuable in itself. This is the solution favoured by Davies, [1994: 316-17] who traces a parallel between negative emotional responses and the risk component intrinsic in other human businesses, such as certain sports or outdoor activities. Without their unpleasant components, these activities would not be what they are. More generally, sadness and other negative emotional states are part of a full life, not only because they are unavoidable, but also because they contribute to its meaning.

Derek Matravers is also interested in countering Kivy's objection, and particularly so because he believes that the music's capacity to arouse emotions is central to the phenomenon of musical expressiveness, as he defends a version of the arousal theory. Matravers [1998: 158] has two main counterarguments against Kivy's criticism. First, the fact that the experience of listening to music contains unpleasant bits does not make the whole experience unpleasant. Second, and more importantly, Kivy seems to take for granted that the general principle of our agency is something like 'avoid unpleasant experiences and pursue pleasant ones'. But this fundamentally hedonistic account of our psychological life is not only normatively unacceptable: it is also descriptively false, as much of what we ordinarily and voluntarily do entails unpleasant experiences or forces us to shun pleasant ones.

3.2 The problem of inexpressive music.

The second problem noted by Kivy is the following. Sometimes music is not expressive of any specific garden-variety emotion, and is therefore not apt, on Davies's and Levinson's accounts, to arouse an emotional response because of the expressive qualities it possesses – simply because it possesses none. But clearly this kind of music can be deeply moving; the work in question may be a Bach fugue,

however devoid of a specific emotional character it may be. To answer the problem of how inexpressive music can be moving it is thus necessary for the contagion theorist to postulate a different mechanism of emotional arousal, one which works along the lines of Kivy's cognitivist model. This is in fact what Davies grants when he claims that "Kivy is correct, of course, in holding that music is a source of many responses for which it becomes a proper object by satisfying beliefs relevant to those responses." [Davies 2006: 186] Posing such a double mechanism when one could do with only one seems to be in flagrant conflict with Occam's razor, and this is by itself a good reason to prefer Kivy's account, which explains why music moves us with a single mechanism.

There are two obvious problems with this line of argument. First, Occam's razor might not be worth applying in the first place in those cases in which the goal is to account for the richness and variety of our experience. We should not be worried about the lack of overarching explanatory mechanisms, because their absence poses no threat to the unity and plausibility of the descriptive enterprise. In fact, that such a way of proceeding should be considered ideal in the field of aesthetics is, I submit, at least arguable.

Second, explaining one process by means of two mechanisms might constitute an infraction of Occam's razor, but this is not what theorists such as Davies and Levinson are doing. For, on their account, there are *two distinct processes to explain*, one of which cannot be explained by the cognitivist account, as the music is not the proper object of the emotional response. Inasmuch Kivy's argument relies on the assumption that the process is the same, it takes the form of a *petitio principii*.

3.3 *The problem of beautifully expressive music.*

But let us concede that there is no difference between the standard cognitivist case of musical emotion and the contagion case: what happens in the latter case is that the music's beautifully expressive character moves us. The music is beautifully sad, or

beautifully happy, and the emotion it arouses in us bears the mark of this emotional quality only in the sense of being aroused by beautifully sad or happy music, not in the sense of being related to happiness or sadness of the garden-variety.

This is of course the description favoured by Kivy. This account, he argues, can deal with a distinctive characteristic of the way in which expressive music moves us. In order to stir our feelings, music has to be beautiful, well-written and well-played. A piece of music endowed with a clear expressive character but trite and predictable in its development will fail to move us. I could of course myself write a melody that is unequivocally happy, and yet I would fail to move anyone with it because I lack the skills to write a beautiful composition. This fact, Kivy argues, counts against the view according to which the emotional response to the music is a mirroring response, for it shows how the mere presence of the expressive qualities in the music is by itself insufficient to move anyone. What we need is the music's beauty: only then could the music move a listener, and it would do so in a way that falls clearly into the cognitivist framework.

We should first stress how Davies [2011d: 53] seems to reject the premise on which the argument is built. According to him even background music, however banal and predictable it might be, has the power to alter our mood (as studies of diners and shoppers have shown). It might also be argued that the music's beauty heightens our attention and involvement and favours thereby a mirroring response. At any rate, the strategy I wish to pursue is a different one.

My argument revolves around the fact that a piece of music normally needs a certain amount of *emotional profundity* if it is to stir a mirroring response, and this profundity is part of the music's beauty. I accept then Kivy's contention that bad and trite music is not moving. From this it does not follow, however, that the music's beauty is what moves us, and that the emotional response is therefore not a mirroring one. For the triggering of the mirroring response needs music with a vivid and life-like expressive character. Now, this emotional profundity is part of what we call the music's beauty. The two phenomena – mirroring responses and responses to

the music's beauty – are thus interrelated, without however being one thing. In other words, beautiful happy music has, as a part of its beauty, the fact that it constitutes a better presentation of happiness than that offered by bad happy music, as it has a more subtle and lifelike expressive character. A Mozart symphony is more vividly and more subtly happy than a happy ringtone, although we do not hesitate for a second to categorize the ringtone as 'cheerful'. The music's beauty thus enhances the possibilities of a mirroring response, without the latter being identical with a response to the former.

This answer to Kivy's objection ultimately relies on the idea according to which the music's expressive character and its capacity to arouse emotional responses are tightly related to their concrete musical realization. This view is shared by Donald Callen, who writes that

[...] music which in one way or another is insufficiently expressively dynamic, expressively weak, or lacking expressive coherence, is, so far, aesthetically deficient in one respect because it lacks the emotive power that would permit a rich, coherent, and sympathetic experience of the work. Thus, it is aesthetically important to me that I be able to feel as well as perceive the tragedy in the C-minor Symphony [by Brahms].

[Callen 1982: 391]

These considerations are important because they stress the link between the music's capacity to elicit emotional responses and the music's value. The mirroring response is facilitated by the refinement of expression, and this suggests that a criterion of artistic relevance of music-induced emotions should include those induced via emotional contagion. It will be my aim in the following chapter to develop such a criterion.

IX. Emotions in the Listener: a Criterion of Artistic Relevance¹⁴⁸

The broadest approach to the issue of music-induced emotions is to consider music as a stimulus much as any other and to describe all the different mechanisms by means of which music is able to initiate the arousal of emotion. This is of clear interest in psychological research. [Juslin and Västfjäll 2008] The philosopher of art, however, is interested in the emotions aroused by music especially if they bear some sort of relation to the piece of music as the work of art it is. For instance, the idiosyncratic association of a piece with a sad memory might result in sadness being aroused whenever the piece is played, but this fact is not artistically relevant. However intuitive this might seem, philosophers of art have not elaborated, as far as I am aware, a *general criterion* for the artistic relevance of music-induced emotions. It will be my aim in this chapter to develop such a criterion.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, I discuss some views regarding the notion of artistic relevance, and then I focus on the extant literature on the artistic relevance of music-induced emotions. Subsequently, I propose a criterion for artistic relevance, and test it by applying it to three kinds of music-induced emotions. The final part of the chapter discusses additional issues regarding emotional responses that are the product of extra-musical associations.

I should stress that I intend the criterion to apply only to pure music, as the issue of artistic relevance is both simpler (in that it involves fewer components) and more problematic (in that it is most puzzling) in the case of instrumental music.

1. Historical background (1): general interest in aesthetic/artistic relevance

While there has been, to my knowledge, no attempt to formulate a general criterion of artistic relevance for music-induced emotions, the same cannot be said in the case

¹⁴⁸ This chapter is based on Ravasio [2017a].

of *aesthetic* relevance, broadly construed. Such a general criterion for aesthetic relevance (extended to all arts, and potentially to non-artistic contexts) has been formulated by Marcia Eaton: she holds that “A statement (or gesture) is aesthetically relevant if and only if it draws attention (perception, reflection) to an aesthetic property.” [Eaton 1992]

Allen Carlson claims that the question concerning aesthetic relevance is that of “what, if anything, of that which an object does not present to the senses is relevant to its appropriate appreciation.” [Carlson 2000, 129] He develops a model for the aesthetic appreciation of nature that is focused on information about the objects of appreciation, and especially on knowledge provided by natural science. Both Eaton and Carlson focus then on *information* that is external to the object of appreciation. (Eaton mentions both statements and gestures, while Carlson focuses more on justified true beliefs.) Neither of them mentions emotions. It seems safe to assume that emotions, as states undergone by the appreciator, could be *brought about* by the object in question and, in turn, have an influence on our appreciation. This, as we shall see in the following section, is the bottom-line of Jenefer Robinson’s take on at least *some* music-induced emotions.

Unlike Eaton and Carlson, in this chapter I will speak of ‘artistic relevance’, *in lieu* of ‘aesthetic’, and I will do so for reasons that are worth clarifying. I believe that it is important to focus on musical works *as works of art*, that is, as products of a certain socio-historical context, the properties of which are tied to their position in art-historical development.

In this chapter I assume such a contextualist framework without further justification, as this seems widely agreed upon. The relevance of this point for my concerns will be evident when discussing appropriations and quotations of past music. What one can learn from accounts of aesthetic relevance such as Eaton’s and Carlson’s, however, is that, in order to qualify as aesthetically relevant to the appreciation of an object, something needs to be tied in some way to that object, either because it discloses something about the object’s properties, or because it is

capable of directing our attention to such properties. Call this the *objective condition* for aesthetic relevance. I shall assume that something similar also applies to the case of artistic relevance.

2. Historical background (2): artistic relevance of music-induced emotions.

In the literature on music-induced emotions one does not find anything like a full-fledged criterion for the artistic relevance of music-induced emotions.

Peter Kivy, [2006: 275] in response to Noël Carroll, formulates four ‘rules of engagement’, that is, “conditions that, I think, a successful account of how absolute music might arouse mood in listeners must satisfy.” Although mainly concerned with moods, he specifies that the same conditions apply in the case of full-fledged emotions. His final condition states that “the moods that the theory is concerned with must be moods relevant to our appreciation and enjoyment of absolute music as *music*; that is, as *art*.” [Kivy 2006a: 275] This leaves open what it means for a mood (or emotion) to be relevant to our appreciation of absolute music as art, and such is the question that I attempt to answer in this chapter.

Somewhat closer to a criterion of artistic relevance for music-induced emotions is the psychologist Klaus Scherer’s [2004] distinction between utilitarian and aesthetic emotions. This distinction, however, is based on a Kantian notion of *disinterested pleasure* that has fallen out of favour and that I wish to dispense with.¹⁴⁹

Finally, it should be mentioned that Jenefer Robinson has made detailed observations on the topic of music-induced emotions, showing how these help the listener to understand the music. Our emotional responses to expressive music can help our understanding of the music’s expressive properties. Similarly, emotional

¹⁴⁹ Scherer holds that “an aesthetic experience is one that is *not* triggered by concerns with the relevance of a perception to my bodily needs, my social values, or my current goals or plans, nor with how well I can cope with the situation, but one where the *appreciation of the intrinsic qualities* of a piece of visual art or a piece of music is of paramount importance”. [2004: 6] My proposed criterion will allow for *some* of the idiosyncratic responses that Scherer is here ruling out to count as artistically relevant.

responses to the music's development draw attention to the music's structure. [Robinson 2005: 349-378] Despite this, Robinson does not attempt to develop a general criterion such as the one I am after here.¹⁵⁰

3. A criterion of artistic relevance

What form should a general test for the artistic relevance of music-induced emotions take, and what requirements should it respect? As we have seen, philosophers who have examined aesthetic relevance were concerned with what I called the *objective condition*: aesthetic appreciation is directed to specific objects, and whatever enhances appreciation must be related to such an object or focus our attention on some features of it. A similar requirement will apply in the case of artistic relevance, with the added complication that the object in question is appreciated as a work of art. In addition to this, a further condition concerns emotions as a causal event: we need to rule out cases in which an emotional response merely co-occurs with the music, but is not caused by the listening process. I will call this the *causal condition*. On the basis of these two general requirements I will outline the main elements of the test for artistic relevance and sketch a tentative formulation.

A preliminary requisite seems to be what I will call *appropriate listening*, which is constituted by two further conditions: *attention* and *competence*. Appropriate listening is the *focused listening* of a listener who is at least *minimally competent* with regard to the musical style in question. While I contend that a criterion such as the one I am after need not specify what exactly counts as minimally competent listening, I will assume as valid the characterization of minimal musical literacy defended by Levinson [1997] under the name of *concatenationism*. He holds that

¹⁵⁰ It should also be noted that Jerrold Levinson [1990a: 319-320] briefly glossed over "the conditions of listening" that conduce to what he takes to be a typical strong emotional response to music. He mentions familiarity with the style, focus on the music and "emotional openness to the content of the music." Although it does not seem that Levinson is after a criterion such as the one I develop here, both his first two concerns will appear in my own proposal.

minimally competent music listening is characterized by the experience of *quasi-hearing* the development of the music after the moment that is being actually heard. Quasi-hearing is the *vivid anticipation* of the music's development on the basis of a *vivid recollection* of the preceding bit of music. On this account, a listener minimally familiar with a musical style needs only to possess some basic *discriminatory*, *recognitional* and *continuation* abilities regarding that style.

It will be clear that appropriate listening does not necessarily result in artistically relevant emotions. This way of listening could produce irrelevant emotions coming from personal associations – something that is indeed the case in almost any actual case of music listening. Appropriate listening is thus a necessary condition for artistically relevant emotions, but not a sufficient one. An additional *desideratum* for a test of artistic relevance is related to the idiosyncratic emotional responses that music critics have to certain works. While presumably all music critics competently focus on the musical substance of the piece they are listening to – rather than engaging in personal associations or flights of fancy – they respond emotionally in radically different ways to a given piece. Later I will offer examples of these cases and provide reasons to hold that these responses should be considered artistically relevant.

As a tentative formulation of the criterion I suggest the following:

A music-induced emotion is artistically relevant *iff* (1) it is caused by the listener's appropriate listening and (2) (a) it is dependent on specific features of the piece of music (or of the performance thereof) as a work of art and (b) it has the disposition to further direct our attention to such features.

A few clarifications are in order. (1) specifies the necessity of a causal connection between music listening and the aroused emotion. It meets, therefore, the causal condition. If the emotion merely co-occurs it is not artistically relevant, even if it happens to be an emotion of the sort that would be typically induced by

appropriate listening of the piece under consideration.

(2) deals with the objective condition. In (2a), the expression ‘as a work of art’ is intended to isolate properties of the music that are constitutive of the piece or performance thereof. What counts as constitutive is arguably determined by a set of conventions regarding the art form in question. This condition also entails that the piece needs to be considered in its historical situatedness as belonging to a specific tradition – how this is relevant will be shown later, when dealing with quotations and appropriations of musical pieces and themes.

(2b) is intended to characterize the capacity that artistically relevant music-induced emotions have to direct our attention to the music. Music-induced emotions of the non-relevant kind are often ‘centrifugal’: they direct our attention to things other than the music itself. Artistically relevant music-induced emotions, on the other hand, depend on features of the music as specified by (2a). Because of this, they generally have the capacity to direct our attention to the musical features responsible for them.

4. Three types of music-induced emotions

In this section, I will consider three different sorts of music-induced emotions and see how they fare with respect to the test for artistic relevance I have developed. The discussion of these emotions is particularly interesting, as they represent prominent ways in which music arouses listeners emotionally, and because we have strong intuitions as to their artistic relevance.

4.1. Kivy-emotions.¹⁵¹

These are emotions fitting into the standard cognitive model and taking the music

¹⁵¹ I follow Jenefer Robinson [2005: 350] in naming this kind of music-induced emotion after the philosopher who discussed it in greatest depth. I will do the same in the case of Meyer-emotions, and extend Robinson’s terminology to music induced by means of emotional contagion, calling these ‘Davies-emotions’ (after Stephen Davies).

(or performance thereof) as their intentional object. I can be lifted by the great compositional skills that I recognize in a piece or annoyed by a bad performance of a piece I love. Kivy believes that these emotions are the key to understanding how music can move us in an artistically relevant way. [Kivy 1990] When we stand back in awe at the beauty of the music, we are experiencing a kind of emotion that fits the standard cognitive model. Its object is the music (or some of its features) and the relevant belief is one about the outstanding character of it.

Are Kivy-emotions artistically relevant? It is relatively easy to produce cases in which the emotion induced by the music is not artistically relevant. For instance, a mother might feel pride and joy as a response to her child's performance, however lacking the performance might be. In this case, the emotion falls rather squarely into the cognitive model but there is no link to the actual features of the piece. We might describe this situation as one in which the attentiveness requirement is not respected, or more plausibly concede that the mother is listening attentively but add that her emotion has no relevant causal connection to her attentive listening, as it is rather induced by the fact that her child is playing in front of an audience.

A more complicated case is presented in the following scenario. Suppose a violin player listens to a rival musician playing a challenging piece. The rival's eloquent and polished playing makes him nervous, envious and perhaps even slightly angry. The emotions in question are strictly linked to his appreciation of the rival's performance. Yet they do not seem to qualify as artistically relevant: after all they appear to rest on vanity more than on an actual willingness to appreciate the music played. It is worth noting, however, that the emotions in question are dependent on features of the piece/performance in a way in which the mother's pride need not be.

Consider a similar example, this time involving a work of music rather than its performance. Imagine Rousseau listening to some of the French music he deemed inferior to the Italian. His emotional reactions to the piece are various and often negative. Surely they do not resemble much the average emotional response to the

pieces in question. Yet, they are linked to the very same musical features that occasion the most common responses, they respond to changes in those features and are liable to further direct the listener's attention to them.

Both these two examples represent idiosyncratic emotional responses to music that can show understanding and appreciation of it. Because of this, I submit, these responses should pass a general test of artistic relevance, and they do pass the one suggested above.

The two cases just mentioned are also apt to draw our attention to another interesting feature of the proposed criterion for artistic relevance. The work/performance duality, which is characteristic of performing arts such as music, might result in peculiar cases in which an emotional response is artistically relevant to only one of the two. The violin player's emotion is artistically relevant to his rival's performance, not to the piece he is playing. The relevance test I suggested is apt to distinguish Kivy-emotions relevant to the performance from Kivy-emotions relevant to the work. As the criterion includes reference to the features of the music, it is evident how this might happen: the musical features of a performance do not completely overlap the musical features of the work.

4.2. Meyer-emotions.

These are named after Leonard Meyer, who famously claimed that listeners familiar with a musical style, even though they may lack formal training, possess an implicit mastery of syntactic rules governing the progress of works in that style. Listeners respond emotionally to deviation from the norm, as when a long-delayed cadence resolves our restless anxiety into a soothing sense of relief. [Meyer 1956]

Meyer-emotions might at first seem to always qualify as artistically relevant: as they are related to expectations about the music's unfolding; they always track properties of the work. However, things are not so simple. We could imagine a case in which the emotional response to the development of a piece of music is occasioned by expectations that are inappropriate to the relevant style. For instance,

I might consider odd a plagal cadence (IV-I, as in "Amen" at the end of hymns) in a Renaissance piece because I would have expected a common-practice V-I cadence, and this might prompt an emotional response of the Meyer sort. But a IV-I (or iv-I) cadence is common in Renaissance music and a listener familiar with that style would not make the mistake of taking it as a non-standard feature of the piece. The suggested criterion for artistic relevance includes a reference to appropriate listening, which is in turn characterized as attentive and minimally competent listening.

The question is then whether this minimal familiarity with the style is sufficient to rule out inappropriate emotional responses of the Meyer sort. This is likely to depend on the characterization of minimal competence we opt for, but one should notice that, even if the bar is set at a relatively low level, as in the case of Levinson's concatenationism, failure to be familiar with common harmonic progressions in the style would count as a failure in basic musical understanding. It follows from this that, under my proposed criterion, the emotions evoked by, say, an unexpected iv-I cadence should not be considered artistically relevant, as they are not a result of appropriate listening.

In the case of Kivy-emotions, I have distinguished responses to the work from responses to a performance. This distinction is also appropriate in the case of Meyer-emotions, as there is one case in which these apply not to a work but to a performance: improvisation.¹⁵² Consider, as an example, an improvised solo in a jazz standard. In these cases, a listener has various expectations in relation to the musical idiom, the style of the player in question (if known), and the relation of the solo to the genre and particular piece that is being played. Thus, a nervous and hectic solo is likely to come as unexpected in a laid-back piece. Likewise, the use of an uncommon

¹⁵² I leave aside issues as to the ontological status of improvised pieces. The only assumption here is that syntactic features of a bit of improvised music, even if within a composed work, are not as fixed as the syntactic features that belong to the parts of the work that have been explicitly scored.

scale can surprise us. In both these cases, the ensuing emotional responses would all count as artistically relevant under the proposed criterion.

4.3 Davies-emotions.

These represent a case of *emotional contagion*. [Davies 2011d] Music can 'infect' us with its mood, as when we become sad by listening to sad music. It is interesting to notice that our sadness in this case is not a full-blown emotion as described by a standard cognitive theory of emotions. It lacks in fact an intentional object (we are not sad *about the music*, but merely saddened by it) and it lacks a relevant belief (there is no reason provided in the music why we should be sad). Davies distinguishes between *attentional* and *non-attentional* emotional contagion. The first one is the result of a music-focused listening.

The mirroring response of the music-focused listener is of this second variety. She is very likely to identify the music's expressiveness as the cause of her response because her reaction tracks her following of the music and recognition of its expressive character [...].

[Davies 2011d: 64]

But this is not the only case of contagion. According to Davies, who grounds his claim on psychological research, emotional contagion can occur in the absence of appropriate listening (the non-attentional case). As an example of the non-attentional case one could take that of a person relaxed by the laid-back pop music that is playing in the background in a shopping mall. This kind of emotional contagion could not qualify as artistically relevant according to my criterion – it fails to meet condition (1). In the attentional case, however, the happiness aroused in a listener when listening to happy music is artistically relevant, as it is the result of appropriate listening and it is linked to a feature of the piece, namely its happy expressive character.

A concern for my decision to exclude non-attentional contagion from the domain of artistically relevant emotions is the following.¹⁵³ Suppose that I am at a rave party. Throbbing techno music is playing loudly. I have a drink and exchange a few words with someone next to me. I do not pay particular attention to the music, nor am I familiar with the genre. However, its steady beat and sub-bass frequencies get my feet tapping, and the moment after, regardless of my unwillingness to dance, my whole body is swinging to the music. These bodily responses (perhaps along with the drink) get me in a good mood. The question arises as to whether we should consider such an emotional response as artistically relevant.

One could contend that these emotions should indeed be considered artistically (or perhaps at least aesthetically) relevant. I could force this case into the criterion I defended by considering the listening in question as focused listening, although perhaps in a different way than the one typical of the canonical concert hall listening. Alternatively I could, somewhat counterintuitively, deny that the emotions in question are aesthetically relevant. The apparent relevance of these emotions might still be salvaged by allowing that they might be relevant to rave parties in a non-aesthetic way.

My suggestion, however, differs from both of the above. I believe that music at a rave party and our reaction to it should not be considered in separation from the rave party as a whole: our emotional reaction is relevant, and our listening is *not* focused, hence the contagion is non-attentional, yet our emotional reaction is not a reaction to the music; rather, it is a reaction to the rave party, of which the music is a component. The music, hardly the object of attentive listening, plays a central role in making possible the experience (arguably not artistic, but possibly *aesthetic*) that is

¹⁵³ I owe this observation, as well as some of the points made in response to it, to Jonathan Neufeld.

characteristic of rave parties as multi-stranded experiences involving music, bodily behaviour, alcohol and perhaps psychotropic substances.¹⁵⁴

5. The issue of uniformity

A test for artistic relevance such as the one suggested already implies that a purely subjective account of emotional reactions has been discarded. What is artistically relevant in a work of art might be subject-dependent in the broad sense of requiring a subject to be appreciated, but by no means is it a projection of the experiencing subject. A usual preliminary way to defend the objective validity of aesthetic appreciation draws on the remark that there is a considerable *uniformity* in the aesthetic responses of different subjects in different times and places. It might thus be thought that, in order for us to better grant the artistic relevance of emotional responses to music, a *uniformity condition* could be added to the criterion. This condition would specify that artistically relevant music-induced emotions are typically shared by competent listeners in different historical and cultural contexts. However, the previous discussion has probably already shown why this might not be a good move, as Kivy-emotions are sometimes quite idiosyncratic and yet can possess artistic relevance.

Another, more radical issue is that such a uniformity condition is at the same time too narrow and too broad. It is *too narrow*, because it leaves out of the criterion emotional responses that depend on the recognition of non-obvious properties of the sort that might be inaccessible to the averagely competent listener. If a competent listener spots, for instance, a large-scale formal compositional feature in a complex piece of music, her emotional reaction to that feature should be considered

¹⁵⁴ An observation that is somewhat in line with this is made by Scherer: "While some kinds of music, like rock or techno, may well have the potential to induce collective affective phenomena in large groups of people at concerts, it is not clear whether the affective manifestations, including motor behaviour, actually induces bona fide emotions and if so, if these are due to the music or to the nature and behavior of the musicians. To my knowledge, there is no empirical evidence on this question." [Scherer 2004: 9]

artistically relevant. It will not, however, be a shared response, as most minimally competent listeners will fail to notice the feature in question. This fact is especially relevant if we accept a characterization of competent listening as a moment by moment understanding of the music's unfolding: in this case most induced emotions related to large-scale features would be out of reach for listeners who possess only a basic musical understanding.

The uniformity condition is also *too broad*, at least if left without further qualification. Certain common emotional responses to a piece of music might be shared by a community of competent listeners in virtue of a large-scale association of the piece in question with extra-musical events or objects. Such is the case when classical music is used as a soundtrack: responding to Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* by imagining warfare scenes from Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) is likely to produce strong emotional responses, but emotional responses resting on this kind of association are hardly to be considered artistically legitimate responses to Wagner's music as the work of art it is. This last consideration allows us to appreciate how (2a), which specifies that the response should be a response to the music as a work of art, takes into account the historical situatedness of the piece.

6. Large-scale associations exploited in musical quotations and appropriations

Once it has been established that we should not consider uniformity as a warrant of aesthetic relevance, a few more remarks on large-scale associations are in order. These are, like in the *Valkyries'* example, extra-musical or inter-musical associations shared by communities of competent listeners – intra-musical associations being those cases in which music recalls other music. In both these two cases, large-scale association can be intentionally exploited by the composer in order to achieve a particular expressive effect. Such would be the case if someone composed a symphony using one of Ennio Morricone's Spaghetti Western soundtracks, intending to exploit its association with the American West and/or with the movies'

atmosphere.¹⁵⁵ The association does not need to be to a specific piece (inter-musical), as it could rather rely on the shared associations of certain musical sounds with extra-musical objects or events. In addition to the well-known example of wind instruments used to recall a bucolic atmosphere, we might point here to the established association of the Theremin with the world of the supernatural as well as with sci-fi atmospheres.

While elaborating a typology of musical illustrations, Kivy [1984: 50] draws attention to a Bach Cantata that provides us with another good example. In the Cantata *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*, Bach uses the melody from a hymn well-known to his congregation to evoke the meaning of the text set to that tune. Here we have an example of an extra-musical association achieved through an intra-musical association.

Having pointed out the ways in which pre-existing associations could be exploited by the composer, what is left to do is to assess whether the resulting emotional response ought to be considered artistically relevant. It is obvious why we should answer in the affirmative. Being intentionally exploited by the composer, the association and the emotional response it might evoke is apt to draw our attention to the composer's use of the large-scale extra- or inter-musical association to its expressive or representational ends. Needless to say, awareness of the association and competence as to the discrimination of intentional use from mere accident are part the competent listener's expertise, although – as shown by Bach's example – this competence is strictly tied to particular historical contexts and is hard to win back once lost. A person lacking this kind of competence nowadays might attend Wagner's *The Valkyrie* and believe the composer is quoting the famous scene from *Apocalypse Now*.

¹⁵⁵ Notice how this would work even though the *musical* connections between the soundtrack and the American Old West are actually loose. In fact, Morricone largely refrained from using the instruments traditionally associated with that setting. His compositions feature anachronistic instruments such as the electric guitar and the Sicilian *marranzanu*, a sort of jaw harp.

In this chapter I have tried to develop a viable criterion for the artistic relevance of music-induced emotions. This should allow us to better understand the relationship between the emotions induced by music and its appreciation. Although the criterion is here restricted to the musical domain, I speculate that it could apply to other art forms as well. Perhaps, with suitable qualifications, a general criterion for artistically relevant emotions induced by *art in general* could be developed. However interesting, these are matters that lie outside of this work's scope.

Appendix

On Evolutionary Explanations of Musical Expressiveness¹⁵⁶

1. Introduction

Recent research on musical expressiveness has proposed a variety of evolutionary explanations to account for our propensity to hear music as expressive of emotions. In this chapter I will focus on a particular explanation first proposed by Peter Kivy. [1980: 57] I will contend that this evolutionary hypothesis should be distinguished from scientific evolutionary accounts of the mechanisms responsible for the perception of emotional expression in music. A hypothesis similar to Kivy's is accepted, in one form or another, by various contemporary philosophers of music.

However, some authors, starting with Kivy himself, have expressed skepticism as to its plausibility. I believe that these doubts are well founded. Given the importance of the proposal in the literature, it is necessary to examine more closely the problems it poses. I will outline five challenges, all of which seem difficult for Kivy's hypothesis to meet, at least at the present stage of elaboration. Although my list does not aim to be exhaustive, I believe that failing to meet these challenges is likely to represent a fatal flaw for the argument in question.

2. Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis

According to the contour theory of musical expressiveness developed by Kivy, music is expressive in virtue of its resemblance with expressive behavior, such as emotional prosody and the typical carriage and countenance of people expressing a certain emotional state. This general suggestion is not new; it is indeed as old as Plato, although Kivy [1984b] prefers to identify the Eighteenth century music theorist Johann Mattheson as a closer forerunner. Kivy's element of novelty lies in

¹⁵⁶ This chapter is based on Ravasio [2018].

the intuition that the emotional quality of the music, i.e. its expressiveness, is logically distinct from any actual emotion in the listener or in the composer. That is, although music might arouse an emotion in the listener and/or have resulted from an emotional state the composer was in when he wrote it, the expressive character of the music is independent of both the aroused emotion and the emotion felt by the composer. In this way Kivy distinguishes the contour theory from both the arousal theory of musical expressiveness and the so-called expression theory, which identify the music's expressive character with the aroused emotion and the emotion expressed by the composer, respectively. Kivy's famous example to illustrate this is the Saint Bernard's sad expression: we readily perceive the sad look of the animal in virtue of its similarity with a sad human face, and yet this expressive character is independent of the actual emotional state of the dog as well as of anyone's intention to express their emotion.

At this point, Kivy has to face two worries. First, one might argue that the experience of the resemblance in question is not ubiquitous and certainly is not always a conscious one. Although we might point out ways in which music is like people expressing emotions, we are not required to notice them when perceiving the emotions in the music. We do not normally experience music as resembling human behavior, and Kivy [1980: 57] is surely not interested in producing a prescriptive account about how we should listen to expressive music.

Second, if we decide to ground the expressiveness of music in the music's resemblance to expressive utterances and expressive behavior, we must confront the objection according to which music does not resemble cries, moans, carriages and gaits any more than it resembles many other things, such as waves' motion, the fury of the elements during a storm, or "the rise and fall of the stock market or the spirit of capitalism." [Kivy 1980: 62] But music is clearly not expressive of all these things – although it might in some cases be considered to represent some of them. An analysis resting only on resemblance might consequently miss the target, and clearly such an analysis is the one offered by Kivy so far.

The evolutionary story has the crucial task of defending the contour theory from these objections, (i) by providing reasons to believe that there need not be any conscious perception of the resemblance between music and expressive behavior and (ii) by explaining why, among the many things music resembles, emotional expression is the one we hear in it.

Kivy's suggestion is that we are hard-wired to animate inanimate objects because of evolutionary reasons. As we are likely to mistake for a snake the stick we stumble upon while walking in a wood (we see the snake in the stick in virtue of their similarity), we have an unconscious tendency to animate music and perceive emotional expressiveness in it (we hear the expressive behavior in the music in virtue of their similarity). Because of the primacy of the sense of sight, Kivy argues, the perceptual error in the case of the stick/snake takes the form of a conscious experience.

It is important to note how Kivy is crucially ambiguous as to the examples he offers for the visual case. In *The Corded Shell* he describes the experience of seeing a human figure in a spoon, or a face in a simplified drawing of a circle with horizontal traits constituting the eyes, nose and mouth. I will assume for the sake of the argument that there is no difference between these two cases, although this might be contested. However, in his *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* [2002] he offers the already mentioned example of the stick/snake, which strikes me as clearly representing a different sort of case from the other two situations. This choice of examples is hardly irrelevant, as I hope to show.

The sense of hearing, Kivy continues, is comparatively less important for us as a species, and this explains why the perception of emotions in music does not need to be conscious. Whereas we see the stick as a snake and are startled, the perception of the resemblance between music and the emotions does not need to be brought to consciousness in order for us to perceive the expressiveness in the music. It might be that things were different for our ancestors: maybe they perceived threatening or friendly utterances in sounds as much as we see a friendly or hostile gaze in the

inanimate nature around us, but the course of evolution and the primacy of sight have turned sound animation into a sort of 'vestigial relic'. [Kivy 2002: 43]

This represents, I hope, a fair outline of the evolutionary story proposed by Kivy. It is clear how it intends to defend the contour theory from the two objections suggested above: we do not need to be conscious of any resemblance between music and expressive behavior, and we do not perceive in the music everything it resembles, for our evolved nature causes us to perceive animate objects in the music rather than other things. The automatic nature of this response also justifies our lack of awareness of the relevant resemblance.

It should be stressed that, as we will see more clearly later, Kivy himself [2002: 46-47] came to doubt the plausibility of his own contour theory. The conjectural nature of the evolutionary argument is one of the reasons for this change of mind.

3. Ordinary scientific evolutionary hypotheses and the specificity of Kivy's story

I do not question that expressiveness is related to some evolved mechanism. We have good reasons to believe that the perception of expressive qualities in inanimate objects is grounded in our evolved nature, as arguably are most universally shared abilities and tendencies. Let us briefly consider two evolutionary hypotheses of this kind in order to illustrate this last point.¹⁵⁷

Norman D. Cook [2002] has proposed a suggestive ethological explanation for the expressive character of major and minor chords. It is widely known that, at least in Western tonal harmony, major chords are described as cheerful, whereas minor chord are perceived as subdued or gloomy. Cook believes that, if we look at how major and minor chords are approached from situations of musical tension, we might be able to discover the source of their expressive character. He observes, drawing on previous work by Leonard Meyer, [1956] that any triad made of equally

¹⁵⁷ There are many other evolutionary accounts of music that bear on the issue of musical expressiveness. The two I discuss here are simply meant as exemplary of how such accounts are typically silent as to the phenomenology of expressive perception in music.

spaced notes sounds tense. If we accept this narrow, technical notion of musical tension as triads composed of equidistant intervals, we can see how the resolution of the tension by means of a semitone increase or decrease in any of the notes is going to invariably produce a minor chord whenever the semitone increases, a major chord whenever it decreases. If we look at ethology, Cook continues, we see that humans share with other animals an evolutionary frequency code, according to which increases in F0 (fundamental frequency) are linked with calls of defeat and submission, whereas decreases in frequency are typical of calls communicating victory, dominance and strength. This frequency code carries over to human language – think of the rising tone of polite requests and of the descending tone of assertions and commands – and, of course, to music, where we see it operating in the expressive character of major and minor chords. I believe Cook’s theory to be implausible for a number of reasons, although it is not my concern here to address the difficulties it faces.

Another evolutionary hypothesis about musical expressiveness is the one defended by Jaak Panksepp. [1995] He proposes an evolutionary explanation for the sad/bittersweet quality of music containing features such as high-pitched crescendos or a solo instrument emerging from an orchestral background. These musical features are often associated with the sensation of chills, or musical *frissons*. Panksepp suggests that the reason for this is the similarity between the separation calls typical of various mammals and the musical features under consideration. Listening to such music could therefore activate ancient emotional circuits deputed to the regulation of emotions of paramount importance for social life.

Cook’s and Panksepp’s scientific hypotheses are neutral as to an analysis of the phenomenology of music listening. It might be that, as Young [2014: 17] seems to believe, Panksepp’s theory could be used to support a resemblance-based theory of musical expressiveness such as Kivy’s.¹⁵⁸ My point here is merely that there is a way

¹⁵⁸ I am sceptical about this, as should be evident from Chapter II.

of theorizing about the evolutionary mechanism grounding musical expressiveness that does not commit us to much in terms of assumption about the phenomenology of music listening. It is true that both Cook and Panksepp accept some basic first-person characterizations of music – for instance, that we perceive the major mode as happy and the minor as sad. However, the main goal of these theories is to describe from a third-person perspective the connection between facts related to our evolved nature and facts related to our perception of emotion in the music or to the music’s power of emotional arousal. They leave unanswered many of the questions related to the phenomenology of expressive music.

The kind of argument proposed by Kivy is of a more specific sort. The main difference resides, I submit, in the relation proposed by Kivy between evolved tendencies and the phenomenology of music listening. The phenomenology is not, as it happened in Cook and Panksepp, a mere starting point for a scientific explanation. Kivy’s claim as to the phenomenology of music listening is quite specific: our way of listening to music involves a reference to human expressive behavior, that is, to the sort of behavior that typically accompanies the occurrence of emotions in human beings. Kivy’s argument is needed by those theorists who believe that the perceptual material provided by the music constitutes the input of a mechanism, the output of which is a phenomenal experience necessarily involving human expressive behavior.

More precisely, Kivy believes that we perceive music as expressive because we perceive it – at least subliminally – as an instance of human emotional expression, bodily or vocal. It is therefore important to stress how Kivy’s hypothesis is not a mere placeholder for future empirical discoveries about the evolutionary links between musical expressiveness and the expression of emotions. It constitutes a specific claim as to how we need to interpret those empirical findings. It is, in other words, a philosophical argument that can be put into question without doubting the relevant underlying scientific facts.

4. Who needs the evolutionary hypothesis?

Needless to say, Kivy's contour theory needs the evolutionary hypothesis if it intends to answer to the two problems presented earlier. As already anticipated, Kivy is now sceptical about the viability of his contour theory, also because of the lack of support for the evolutionary hypothesis on which the theory is grounded. He observes: "What evidence, if any, is there for the claim that listeners subliminally hear the analogy, if indeed it exists, between the contour of music and human expression? And even if they do hear it, does that adequately explain our experience of hearing emotions in the music as perceptual qualities? As well, does the phenomenon of seeing things in ambiguous figures – seeing the stick as a snake, or the faces and figures in clouds – transfer to sounds and what we hear (if anything) in them?" [Kivy 2002: 46] To these doubts, some of which will be developed and amplified in my own challenges to the evolutionary hypothesis, Kivy adds more general methodological concerns about 'just-so stories' lacking experimental support.

The interest in outlining challenges for the evolutionary hypothesis comes from the fact that various other philosophers need something akin to Kivy's concept of animation in order for their theory of musical expressiveness to work. As a first approximation, we could say that all resemblance-based theories of musical expressiveness require a story about animation such as Kivy's. We shall now examine this issue in more detail.

Jerrold Levinson observes that there is no way to answer the question as to how we come to hear emotion in music, rather than something else, except by appealing to "our disposition to aurally construe the music as an instance of personal expression, perceiving the human appearances in the musical ones, in effect animating the sounds in a certain manner, to use a phrase given currency by Peter Kivy." [Levinson 2006: 197] Here we can see how a tendency to animate music is also essential to Levinson's theory of musical expressiveness – the so-called persona

theory, according to which hearing expression in music is hearing it as an instance of expression by a musical persona. Moreover, we should notice that Levinson needs a hard-wired disposition such as the one described by Kivy for the same reasons Kivy needed it. On the one hand, Levinson believes that the resemblance between music and human emotional expression has a role in our perception of musical expressiveness. However, as everything resembles everything else, he has to justify why we hear emotions in the music rather than something else. On the other hand, Levinson is inclined to stress that the listener does not need to explicitly imagine a fictional persona expressing herself musically, as this might well only occur “in a back-grounded manner”. [2006: 193] An evolved tendency to animate our perceptions could account for the subliminal character of this process, just as it did in Kivy’s case.

Stephen Davies offers a somewhat more cautious and subtle analysis of Kivy’s speculations [Davies 1994: 258]. He is inclined to think that Kivy demands from his evolutionary story more than is needed. Particularly, Kivy struggles to justify an asymmetry between the visual and auditory domain. This asymmetry is not only implausible, but also unnecessary to his argument. It is implausible because perceptual errors such as the stick/snake case happen in perfectly analogous fashion in the auditory case too – one might be inclined to mistake a click in the dark for the cocking of a gun. It is unnecessary because animation, Davies [1994: 260] argues, occurs both in visual and auditory cases in circumstances where there is no possible perceptual mistake involved. When we look at a portrait, we *animate* the portrait and say, for instance, that the portrayed person is looking to her left although we are perfectly aware of having in front of us nothing more than pigments on canvas. Note that Davies’s revision of Kivy’s argument is more detrimental to its original function than it might at first seem. From an argument that served, among other things, to distinguish expression from resemblance-based representation, we arrived here at a defense of the concept of animation that construes it exactly as a case of pictorial depiction, that is, a case of resemblance-based representation. Animation in the sense

intended by Kivy is clearly not just the *representation of things that are animate*, but rather a genuine *experience of facing a perceptual content as we face something that is animate*.

I will finally note how Davies, who believes that music is expressive in virtue of its presentation of emotion characteristics in appearance, seems to need something like Kivy's evolutionary hypothesis for the usual two reasons: (i) accounting for the fact that we perceive the music's expressive qualities without being aware of any resemblance between the music and human expressive behavior, and (ii) explaining the salient character of the resemblance between the music and human expressive comportment.

As seen in Chapter II, Young [2014: 11] has recently argued that the contour theory is obviously right and supported by both common sense and empirical research. Although I think that the theory defended by Young is further away from Kivy's than he realizes, it is worth noting that his account, at least to the extent that it actually is akin to Kivy's, needs the evolutionary hypothesis just as the original contour theory did.

Finally, the resemblance-plus-imagination account of musical expressiveness recently proposed by Saam Trivedi [2017] also appeals to a notion of musical animation.¹⁵⁹

5. Criticism of the evolutionary hypothesis

We have already seen how Kivy himself became skeptical as to the plausibility of his own evolutionary hypothesis. I shall now briefly summarize the criticism found in the existing literature, before going on to list the challenges the hypothesis should meet.

¹⁵⁹ I discuss a problem for Trivedi appeal to animation in section 2 of Chapter VII.

Anthony Newcomb [1984a] has expressed two worries. First, a notion such as that of animation does not leave any space for the composer's intention, as it describes expression as a projection of the listener.

Second, Kivy's view cannot account for all the *inanimate* properties we ascribe to the music, such as "references we commonly hear in it to water, glass, fire". [Newcomb 1984a: 618-19]

Kivy [1989: 177-80] convincingly deals with these two objections. As to the first worry, he rightly observes that the composer's intention is preserved, as the composer intentionally uses musical material that is going to provoke such-and-such an expressive animation. In this sense, the link between the perception of expressive content and the composer's choice is no more problematic than a painter's choice of a cold palette to express a desolated, downcast mood. In answer to the second problem, Kivy observes that his story about how we animate music was meant to explain how we come to hear expression in the music; it is therefore pointless to remark that it cannot account for descriptions of music in terms of fire, glass, and other inanimate substances, for these are clearly not things that music, or anything else, could possibly express.

Geoffrey Madell has argued that the evolutionary hypothesis is not compatible with Kivy's claim that some musical elements are expressive in virtue of conventional association, rather than because of their contour similarity with human expression, a case in point being the expressive character of major and minor chords. [Madell 2002: 25] He rightly observes that the notion of animation is required by Kivy to distinguish expression from mere resemblance-based representation: the music resembles many things, but our evolved tendency to animate makes its resemblance with human expression stand out, triggering the experience of expression in the music. The problem, Madell observes, is that whereas animation requires some sort of resemblance, conventional association does not require any. From Kivy's standpoint, then, it is hard to explain how we perceive the conventional expressive character of, say, major and minor harmonies just as we experience the

expressiveness resulting from the animation process. According to Kivy's own analysis, the former could not be strictly speaking a case of musical expressiveness at all.

Although I find Madell's objection quite compelling, I should note that it is dependent upon the acceptance of a theory of musical expressiveness that exploits both resemblance-based expression and expression based on conventional association. This latter aspect could be rejected and the former could be broadened to explain the cases that conventional association was meant to cover.

Derek Matravers [1998: 122] does not offer any direct criticism of the evolutionary hypothesis itself. He notes, however, how the concept of animation employed by Kivy forces him to downplay the role of resemblance in his account of musical expressiveness. If music resembles many things other than those it expresses, and if animation is necessary in order to pick out the relevant resemblances, then the experience of expressive music is not the awareness of a resemblance, but merely our own expressive animation of it. I am unconvinced by this line of reasoning, as one could reply that the evolutionary hypothesis is nothing but a causal story to explain why we are prone to notice certain similarities rather than others. Animation does not need therefore to be severed from the awareness of a resemblance.

6. Five challenges for the evolutionary argument

Rather than offering a defense or a refutation of the hypothesis, I will outline some challenges the evolutionary story about animation should be able to meet in order to be plausible. I will be mostly concerned with Kivy's characterization of the argument, as he offers the most elaborate one. However, in light of the fact that Kivy does not anymore favor resemblance theories of musical expressiveness, it will be particularly important to assess the weight of the challenges for accounts such as Davies's and Levinson's.

6.1. The phenomenological challenge.

We have already noted how Kivy specifies that, in the case of hearing, the perception of the animated content is subliminal: we do not hear the expressiveness in the music as we mistake the stick for a snake, and that is because sight has a primary adaptive importance for us – a fact that keeps the tendency at the conscious level. It seems to me that denying that the two senses behave in a similar manner is a way for Kivy to cover up the fact that he is actually dealing with two different kinds of experiences, both involving perception, but in very different ways. Things are further complicated by the fact that the examples he offers for the visual case do not fall into the same category. In fact, I believe that the cases from which, according to Kivy, the evolved animation tendency stems are of radically different kind from the ones in which we see something in something else (which is what he takes the musical animation to consist in). Let me elaborate on this.

If animating the inanimate is like seeing a snake where there is only a stick, I agree that there is a reason to think this ability might have been an advantage. However, I do not believe this is what happens in the animation of music. Consider, on the one hand, the experience of seeing a snake where there is only a stick and, on the other hand, the experience of seeing a smiling face in the front of a car, a face in the moss or sad human emotional behavior in the music. There seems to be more than a mere difference in degree between the first kind of experience and the second. In the first case we are dealing with perception, and perception is shaped by relevant values, so that we might more aptly or readily perceive something rather than something else, even to the point to commit perceptual mistakes: we thought it was a snake, but it was just a stick. I am not seeing the snake in the inanimate nature I am looking at, as when I see a figure in a moss pattern. I am simply believing that there is a snake, although the perceptual data informing that belief could be differently interpreted and lead me to the right conclusion that there is no snake.

We can further stress the difference between the two acts if we think of the issue of justification. I can make sure it is not a snake by hitting it with my walking

stick, throwing a stone at it, or by stomping on the ground to make the snake/stick go away. In the second case, there is no mistake involved, and it would not make sense to get involved in any kind of behavior in the attempt to justify our perception: this is an actual case of seeing-in, whereas the first one is not. If there is something like a warrant for the seeing-in experience, that would consist in pointing out which perceptual aspects of the object – e.g., a cloud – are relevant for the perception of the object we are seeing in it.

To sum up, in perceptual error case there is something like a proof that what one is seeing is a snake or not, whereas in the second case one is involved in a ‘double aspect’ experience, which can be more or less successfully supported by the perceptual qualities of the object under consideration.

Kivy is of course aware that we do not make any type of perceptual error when experiencing the music as expressive. He is thus aware of the distinction just proposed, although he seems to blur it by offering, as an example of animation, cases taken from both classes of acts just described. Once the difference is clouded in such a way, it is easy for him to conclude that the evolutionary tendency underlying perceptual mistakes straightforwardly applies to seeing-in experiences in which we see something animate in something inanimate.¹⁶⁰

How is all this relevant to the discussion of the evolutionary story? The crucial point is that Kivy seems to believe that it is the first kind of experience (the stick/snake) which originates the latter (hearing the sadness in the music). But the two experiences exhibit the phenomenological differences that I have presented above. It is not clear, therefore, how there could be a straightforward link between the two. By conflating the two cases, Kivy masks the fact that he is in need of an explanation of how the evolved tendency to commit certain kinds of perceptual errors rather than others has generated our seeing-in abilities. Accepting my line of reasoning does not amount to denying that the seeing-in experience could have

¹⁶⁰ Hans-Johann Glock [2016: 87] similarly claims that aspect-dawning experiences are to be contrasted to perceptual illusions.

some other evolutionary origin. Yet, Kivy's evolutionary story is incomplete as it fails to fill the gap between the two cases.

One might reject the phenomenological challenge for two reasons: (i) one could accept the phenomenological distinction between the two cases but find that the tendency to animate the inanimate could have developed in one type of situation and then, once established, work for the other situation as well, in a by-product fashion; (ii) one could reject the distinction and believe it is only a matter of degree.

It is hard know what to say about (i). The fact that Kivy offers examples of 'animation' so different from one another as the case of the stick/snake and the one of the spoon seen as a human figure might indicate that this is the strategy he would follow, if he were to defend his evolutionary story from the phenomenological challenge. We should notice that Kivy [1989: 172] later admitted and discussed the ambiguity of his own stick/snake example. He recognizes the difference between the aware case of the stick/snake and the case of music, in which there is no actual startle mechanism. He then offers further reasons to treat the aural stimulus as something that results in a subconscious animation and this because of their comparatively lower survival value – the startle mechanism is now in the background, as it were. But this clearly ignores the fact that the startle mechanism is still in place in aural perception as well (as in Davies's gun example).

Therefore, I maintain that the actual difference is not one between aware and unaware startle mechanisms, but between two different types of experiences, as suggested by the phenomenological challenge. The abilities involved in the case of perceptual errors (the one from which the tendency once plausibly arose) are different from the ones involved in the case of seeing-in/hearing-in experiences, something that should be evident from the phenomenological description of the two experiences.

Note that at least some scientific evidence points directly against (i). According to the neurologist Joseph LeDoux, [1996: 161-69] the human fear reaction system involves two different paths, a Low Road and a High Road.

The former is a fast process that bypasses the cortex, allowing us to respond to a potential danger with a reaction of fear, before we are aware of what the danger exactly is. In this case, the emotional stimulus is processed by the sensory thalamus and then activates directly the amygdala, responsible for the fear reaction.

The High Road, on the other hand, involves processing by the sensory cortex before the involvement of the amygdala. This latter system of fear reaction is based on the cognitive processing of a sensory stimulus, and may override the lower, more direct process (as when we recognize that the thing that frightened us is only a stick, after all). The sort of 'fight or flight' response mechanism described here might seem to resonate favourably with Kivy's hypothesis. LeDoux even explicitly mentions a case akin to the one discussed by Kivy:

From the point of view of survival, it is better to respond to potentially dangerous events as if they were in fact the real thing than failing to respond. The cost of treating a stick as a snake is less, in the long run, than the cost of treating a snake as a stick.

[LeDoux 1996: 165]

But it would be a mistake to consider this model of the fear reaction system as supportive of Kivy's evolutionary story. In fact, if it is true that the neural pathway associated with the startle reaction is separate from the one involving processing by the sensory cortex, we have additional evidence in support of the view that this primitive reaction has little to do with seeing-in abilities, and so could not be supported or involve a seeing-in or hearing-in experience.

6.2. *The adaptation challenge.*

If we reject the phenomenological challenge by embracing (ii), and consider the distinction between the two cases only a matter of degree, we can then question the plausibility of the idea that the tendency described by Kivy could possibly have an

adaptive value. Up to now I have offered no reason to doubt that the tendency to animate the inanimate is valuable from the evolutionary point of view.

If the two experiences are different only as to their degree, in such a way that the animation in the stick/snake case and the one in the spoon/puppet case are at opposite ends of a continuum, then there might be a problem in securing the leap from one case to the other. The stick and the snake surely resemble each other more than the front of a car and a smiling face, or a wooden spoon and a human figure. As resemblance comes in degrees, construing the differences between the two cases in such a way comes out very convenient for someone who is convinced that the cases are not qualitatively different. In the present case, however, if the tendency is reinforced by natural selection up to the point where it generates such by-products as seeing faces in the moss, then one might worry it could start to work in a direction opposite to the one which made it an evolutionary adaptation. For, if there is almost no limit to how blunt the resemblance can be between what we animate and the animation we perceive, then this kind of 'wild animation' would only result in lowering our chances of survival.

Remember that Kivy supposes that our ancestors heard emotional expression in sounds as we see snakes in sticks. But we clearly need to keep the animation under control if we want to make it useful. It is obvious that, if Kivy decided to defend his thesis by claiming that the tendency in question only works up to a certain degree of similarity, the thesis itself would lose its purpose. For, under the hypothesis according to which the difference between the stick/snake and the musical case is only to be found in degrees of similarity, music is surely a case of very blunt similarity (closer to the spoon/puppet than to the stick/snake). In other words, if the naturally selected tendency always works, we lose the tendency; if it works only in the clear cases, we lose its power to explain the musical case.

Both the phenomenological challenge and the adaptation challenge are related to the phenomenology of expressive music. Do they represent a serious source of concern for Davies's appearance emotionalism and for Levinson's persona theory?

An account such as Levinson's might be immune from such phenomenological worries, as it considers the music's resemblance to expressive behaviors as one of the *grounds* of musical expressiveness, rather than as a constituent of the phenomenology.

Davies, as we have seen, believes that Kivy's worries about the animation process and how this could arise are not justified. We animate things all the time, just as when we see a person painted on a flat surface. The problem with this kind of characterization is that it eludes the worries about the animation in the musical case by pointing at cases that are considerably different from the musical one: when we look at a picture, we are typically well aware of the depicted object, which normally is the main object of attention. Kivy's original goal was to provide an evolutionary explanation for the characteristically back-grounded, subliminal character of the experience of expressive behavior in music.

6.3. *The sense modality challenge.*

The adaptive relevance of sound animation can be such only insofar as the animated sounds keep an informational meaning in the life of an individual. It is clear how the tendency to perceive a growl instead of another sound might be relevant for the survival of the individual. Recall also Davies's example of a click in the dark perceived as the cocking of a gun. To make the parallel with the visual stick/snake case: better to run away from a stick than to grab a snake thinking it is a stick. However, what happens in many relevant musical cases is that the perceived resemblance is cross-modal: on Kivy's own account, music can resemble salient *bodily movements* of people who express certain emotions. How could such a case of cross-modal animation have an adaptive value? In order to answer this question, proponents of the evolutionary hypothesis need to provide a more elaborate explanation than the one suggested by Kivy. At the present stage, the hypothesis might be able to justify our propensity to perceive the similarity between music and

vocal emotional expression, but it does not seem to be straightforwardly capable of explaining why we perceive a resemblance between music and visual emotional correlates such as behavioral manifestations. A sound can of course suggest a movement in the sense that the movement can be related to it as a physical cause, but this is of no help for Kivy's idea.

The problem posed by this challenge could be particularly pressing for accounts such as Davies's, which stress the analogy between music and bodily behavior rather than vocal behavior.

6.4. *The obliquity challenge.*

It is commonly admitted, even by those who do not accept the cognitivist resemblance-based account of musical expressiveness, that there are legitimate descriptions of musical expressiveness stressing the resemblance between music and expressive gestures. However, too close a resemblance to expressive behavior is normally considered deleterious to the purpose of musical expressiveness. The music may well be shaken by rhythmical variations and brisk tempo changes, or leap through the tonal space. But when the instruments start to imitate expressive gestures too closely, or the singer's voice is broken by sadness or torn apart by screams of pain, it is no longer musical expressiveness that we are dealing with, but rather some sort of musical representation or theatrical device. The perception of musical expressiveness seems then to be inhibited by an extreme resemblance between music and the expressive gesture. The music's analogy with expressive gesture is thus a subtle one, and needs, as it were, to be kept concealed. I call this the *obliquity condition* of musical expressiveness.

I will passingly note that Schopenhauer seems to have been the first philosopher to notice this. His account of musical expressiveness is deeply embedded in his metaphysics of the Will: it is because of the relation of music with the Will that music acquires its capacity to embody feelings. The mystery of musical

expressiveness is represented by the unintelligible possibility of music to represent what is by definition beyond any possibility of representation, namely the noumenal essence of the world, the Will. The fundamental source of musical meaning is therefore thoroughly different from the phenomenal world, hence Schopenhauer's skepticism about the use of "painterly" tricks in music. He writes:

But the analogy discovered by the composer between these two [the music and the stirrings of the will] must have come from the immediate knowledge of the inner nature of the world unknown to his faculty of reason; it cannot be an imitation brought about with conscious intention by means of concepts, otherwise the music does not express the inner nature of the will itself, but merely imitates its phenomenon inadequately.

[Schopenhauer 1969 [1819]: 263]

It seems that this fact about how music is expressive is bound to cast a further doubt on the role of animation. Resemblance is no foe to animation; it is actually its greatest ally.¹⁶¹ The animation of the stick, which becomes to our eyes a dangerous

¹⁶¹ A similar idea had been previously expressed by Charles Avison in his *Essay on Musical Expression*, first published in 1752. Avison writes: "And, as Dissonance and shocking Sounds cannot be called Musical Expression; so neither do I think, can mere Imitation of several other Things be entitled to this Name, which, however, among the Generality of Mankind, hath often obtained it. Thus the gradual rising or falling of the Notes in a long Succession, is often used to denote Ascent or Descent, broken Intervals, to denote an interrupted Motion, a Number of quick Divisions, to describe Swiftmess or Flying, Sounds resembling Laughter, to describe Laughter; with a Number of other contrivances of a parallel Kind, which it is here needless to mention. Now all these I should chuse to stile Imitation, rather than Expression; because, it seems to me, that their Tendency is rather to fix the Hearers Attention on the Similitude between the Sounds and the Things which they describe, and thereby to excite a reflex Act of the Understanding, than to affect the Heart and raise the Passions of the Soul." [Avison et al. 2004: 24] Notice how in this passage there seems to be, *in nuce*, a criticism of a cognitivist perspective on musical expressiveness, such as resemblance theories. The perception of a resemblance is only an "act of the Understanding", and expression is taken by Avison to require something more – or something different. A few pages later, Addison makes a similar point: "The power of Music is, in this respect, parallel to the power of Eloquence: if it works at all, it must work in a secret and unsuspected Manner." [Avison et al. 2004: 28].

snake, is ultimately more vivid and convincing than the animation of the spoon/puppet, and this is because a stick has a considerable number of visual features in common with a snake. However, the obliquity condition implies that resemblance in the musical case has to be kept within precise limits if we are to avoid the risk of transforming music in the kind of expressive pantomime that seems to be at odds with musical expressiveness. A central feature of animation, namely the role resemblance plays in it, does not seem to fit well with the role resemblance has in musical expressiveness. This constitutes a further reason to doubt that animation plays a role in musical expressiveness, at least in the sense outlined by Kivy.

Davies's and Levinson's account, to the extent at which they do not qualify the sort of resemblance that is supposed to ground the experience of expressive music, are liable to be challenged in a similar way to Kivy's contour theory.

6.5. *The style challenge.*

An evolutionary hypothesis such as Kivy's stresses the role of the automatic animation of the musical contour. The hard-wired mechanism to which Kivy resorts would seem to predict a strong agreement among listeners from different musical cultures as to the expressive character of a given piece of music. However, Kivy warns us that thing might be more complicated than that. He takes as an example the Indian tradition of ragas. Each raga is associated with a specific *rasa*, that is, an emotional state that the raga is supposed to evoke. Kivy has doubts about the expressive transparency of this style. He goes as far as to say that "To the uninitiated ear, every *rāga* presents about the same mood: a kind of exotic stupor." [Kivy 1989: 89] Recent psychological results seem to show that he was wrong: untrained Western listeners are rather good at identifying the emotion a raga is supposed to express and arouse. [Balkwill and Thompson 1999: 43-64]

Because of his pessimistic view about the cross-cultural transparency of expressive music, Kivy needs to explain how the hard-wired response could fail to produce common responses in human beings sharing the same evolved traits. His solution to this issue is ingenious: animating a musical contour might well be an automatic response, but the perception of the musical contour is not, as it requires experience with the musical system in question. Kivy suggests an elegant analogy with the visual domain:

We cannot expect the Western ear to hear, *ab initio*, the expressive contour in Indian music, any more than we can expect an Australian aborigine to see expression in Rembrandt's sketch of a face – not because he fails to read the expressive conventions, but because, to begin with, he fails to read the pictorial ones.

[Kivy 1989: 91]

The problem with this solution is that it increases even more the distance between the hard-wired case of the stick/snake and the musical case. Not only is the animation of the inanimate something different than the startle mechanism at work in the case of perceptual mistakes: it is also something that needs training to become operational.

I am not aware of any discussion devoted by Levinson to the issue of the cross-cultural transparency of musical expressiveness. Davies, [2011c] on the other hand, has devoted considerable attention to the issue, suggesting that the expression of emotions is cross-culturally consistent to an extent that encourages a mild optimism as to its transparency, at least while we wait for further empirical research.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that there are two main kinds of evolutionary arguments that may be offered in order to explain musical expressiveness. The first

kind, which has not been my concern here, is represented by scientific hypotheses about the relationship between music as a perceptual object and the widespread human tendency to describe it as expressive as well as, in some cases, to be moved by it. The hypothesis considered in this chapter is of a different sort, as it entails some constraints as to the phenomenology of music listening. Kivy, who originally proposed it, is himself skeptical about its plausibility. However, it is important to assess its value, as the hypothesis surfaces in various ways in recent literature on musical expressiveness.

I hope to have pointed to some challenges that the argument must meet if it is to work as a cornerstone for any theory of musical expressiveness. My list does not aim at exhaustiveness. I take it, however, that an evolutionary hypothesis such as the one considered here would have serious chances of being successful if it could meet all of the challenges I have presented.

Musical Atmospheres: between Expression and Representation

1. Introduction

Lingua Aesthetica is an online database, developed by Dr. Daniel Wilson, collecting terms used to describe artworks and aesthetic experiences.¹⁶² Under the category 'characterisation of content', we find the category 'atmospheric terms'. This subcategory was created in order to accommodate a number of terms that are often used to describe artworks, and especially works of music, but that do not fall squarely in the domain of musical expressiveness or musical representation. As an example, consider the following adjectives (all taken from *Lingua Aesthetica*): 'dreamy', 'eerie', 'exotic', 'fey', 'ghostly', 'idyllic', 'mysterious', 'other-worldly', 'medieval', 'Irish'. Other adjectives could easily be added: 'futuristic', 'oriental', 'pastoral', etc.

To be sure, some of these terms might be interpreted in a strictly technical sense, or as more or less metaphorical expressions that intend to convey something as to the musical stuff of the piece one is listening to, or about its origin or art-historical classification. For instance, one might call a musical piece 'medieval' in order to indicate the time at which the piece was written, and the word 'Irish' to indicate its geographical origin. This straightforward interpretation of these adjectives is not the one I am interested in.

Consider, for instance, how the adjective 'dreamy' is often associated with modal pieces in the Lydian mode. Notable uses of this mode in contemporary music include instrumental electric guitar pieces by musicians Joe Satriani and Steve Vai, as in the former's *Flying in a Blue Dream* (1989). Although the dreamy quality of this piece is directly connected with the nature of the Lydian scale, and more specifically with the particular position of the augmented fourth interval in it, the description of the music as 'dreamy' does not function as a shortcut for a technical description any

¹⁶² <http://linguaaesthetica.com>.

more than the description of a major third as 'happy' does. For another example, listen to Doc Watson's version of the popular American song *Shady Grove*. One of the adjectives that listeners use to describe this version of the song is 'Irish' or 'Celtic'. Although it is true that the origins of this tune can be traced back to England, or perhaps Scotland, it is also arguably true that very few of the musicians who performed it were aware of its historical origin, or had any specific intention of producing a song that sounded 'Irish'.

The moral of this is that there is a sense in which the terms above are applied to music in order to describe a quality of the music itself, rather than to convey some information as to its origin in time and space or describing some of its technical features. In other words, music, just as it sounds sad or happy, can sound futuristic, mysterious, oriental, eerie, or medieval. These terms refer to the peculiar atmosphere the music is able to bring to mind, independently of its historical origin and of the composer's or performer's intention to evoke such an atmosphere.

The reality of musical atmospheres is testified by everyday talk about music, as well as by writings by professional music critics. John Swenson, in reviewing John Lee Hooker's album *Boom Boom* (1992), writes about "the *sepulchral, dreamlike* 'Thought I Heard', which is punctuated by the *eerie* walls of Charlie Musselwhite's harmonica." [*Rolling Stone*, 29th April 1993; emphasis added] Nick Kent describes the riff of The Rolling Stones's song *Dancing with Mr D.* as "ominous and deadly". [*New Musical Express*, 8th September 1973] Finally, Martin Aston begins a review of Felt's 1984 album *The Strange Idols Pattern and Other Short Stories* with the following remark: "There is a singular atmosphere to Felt's music. Their *dreamy* guitar excursions are a pure extension of *mood*, not intent, and as such have no message." [*Melody Maker*, 3rd November 1984; emphasis added]

My aim in this chapter is to offer an overview of the main philosophical issues related to musical atmospheres. Before doing this, however, it is instructive to say something about the scant literature on this subject.

2. Historical antecedents

In a series of posthumously published lecture notes, the German musicologist Kurt Huber [1954: 192] discusses what he terms *Sphären-Erlebnis*, literally “Spheres-experience.” He tracks this sort of experience through a class of descriptions one could offer of music, such as ‘ecclesiastical’ (*kirchlich*) or ‘heroic’ (*heldenhaft*), and others. Other examples he offers of such concepts include: ‘Middle-ages’ (*Mittelalter*), ‘spring’ (*Frühling*), and musical terms such as ‘adagio’, ‘chorale’ and ‘minuet’. [Huber 1954: 195] Even in these latter cases, Huber claims, [1954: 193] the technical terms are not applied to the piece in question as would happen at the end of a formal analysis of it. ‘Minuet’, in the sense he has in mind, is more than musicological jargon, as it encompasses a variety of extra-musical connotations.¹⁶³

According to Huber, these concepts possess both an expressive and a representational content. He writes:

What distinguishes those [Sphere-experiences] from a character-experience or mood-experience, is that they are constituted by an unanalysable aggregate of mood and representation. The experience of the sphere is situated, as it were, in between mood-experience (or character-experience) and the depiction of a state of affairs (a representational picture).¹⁶⁴

[Huber 1954: 196]

Huber is suggesting that there are cases in which the music calls to mind both emotional states and extra-musical contexts or objects, yet it could not count as a

¹⁶³ I am not sure whether Huber’s characterization of these technical terms could count as atmospheric terms as I describe them, and I will therefore ignore these cases in what follows.

¹⁶⁴ [Original text: “Was sie vom Charakter- und Stimmungserlebnis wesentlich unterscheidet, ist dies: sie bilden einen eigentlich unanalysierbaren Stimmungs- und Vorstellungskomplex. Das Erlebnis der Sphäre steht gewissermaßen in der Mitte zwischen Stimmung- (Character-) Erlebnis und Situationsbild (Vorstellungsbild).” (my translation)]

representation of any distinct extra-musical object or state of affairs, nor could it be reduced to expressive properties. Later in this chapter, I will particularly focus on Huber's intuition that atmospheres, although irreducible to a feeling state or to a representational content, contain elements of both.

I will now briefly comment on some remarks by two main figures in contemporary philosophy of music, Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies. Although the problem of musical meaning has been mainly developed by analytic philosophers as the problem of how music could be expressive of emotions, both these authors admit that music may be reminiscent or suggestive of other extra-musical objects and situations, mainly in virtue of the conventional use of musical material.

In *Sound and Semblance*, Kivy [1984a: 51] calls "representations by conventional association" the cases in which music represents, refers or alludes to something extra-musical in virtue of associations it has acquired over time. The example he offers is that of the Hymn of the Marines being used to call to mind the Marines in a movie soundtrack. Bach's use of chorale melodies to refer to the text associated to those melodies is also treated by Kivy as an example of such conventional association.

While arguably instructive, Kivy's remarks do not quite target the range of descriptions I am considering in this chapter, for at least two reasons. First, the pieces mentioned by Kivy are 'allusive' of an extra-musical object (or 'refer' to such an object) in virtue of a conventional association with such an object. This may well be true of some of the atmospheric terms I consider in this chapter, but it is arguably false for terms such as 'dreamy', 'mysterious' or 'eerie'. While conventions and the repeated use of some musical clichés in certain contexts may contribute to strengthening the atmospheric effect of a certain musical feature, there is a limit to the malleability inherent to the musical material one is using.

To go back to the example of the 'dreamy' Lydian mode, it would seem that, even in the absence of a constant conventional conjunction between this mode and a given extra-musical situation, the mere sound of the Lydian scale is capable of

evoking a dreamy atmosphere. Second, Kivy focuses on examples that imply an intentional use of the conventional connection between musical material and extra-musical object or context in order to allude or refer to such object or context. As I anticipated, the sort of atmospheric terms I am interested in are not dependent on the intentions of the composer or performer. Much like expressive properties, they “come with the territory”, to use Kivy’s own expression. [Kivy 1990: 183]

Stephen Davies, [1994: 34] in classifying different types of musical meaning, treats the use of instruments or of a musical idiom to evoke a particular country, landscape or social setting as an example of what he calls ‘Meaning D’, that is, “stipulated or given solely by conventions”. He cites as an example the case of Stravinsky, who “conjures from the orchestra in *Petrushka* the sound of an organ, such as would be heard on the streets, in creating the atmosphere of the Shrovetide fair.” [Davies 1994: 42-43] Much like what happened in Kivy’s case, Davies limits himself to considering cases of intentional use. Moreover, Davies’s classification of musical meaning does not capture atmospheric terms under a single category, as many examples of musical atmospheres seem to rely more on what he calls ‘Meaning C’, that is, “systematized, intentional use of natural elements”. [Davies 1994: 32]

Davies also mentions the issue at the outset of a recent defence of his theory of musical expressiveness. He observes how certain melodies, styles, idioms and instruments recall “particular social events, geocultural regions, historical periods, ideas, and sensibilities, and in this way can hook up with affective life-experiences.” [Davies 2006: 179] He contends, however, that these cases are of no particular philosophical interest, as they are not particularly puzzling. While I agree with Davies that musical atmospheres are not as mysterious a phenomenon as musical expressiveness, I argue that this topic is worth some philosophical attention.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Tonino Griffero [2014] has recently devoted to “atmospherology”, that is, the study of atmospheric qualities in artistic and everyday objects, the monograph *Atmospheres: Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces*. At least some of the characteristics he attributes to atmospheres overlap

Finally, it is worth mentioning that recent studies have shown that listeners perceive atmospheric qualities of the music even when not listening in the canonical, focused way, and that the perception of such atmospheric qualities is capable of influencing behaviour. Adrian C. North and his colleagues have found that customers in a supermarket tend to buy more French or German wine according to the type of music playing: typically French accordion music increased considerably the sale of French wines, whereas German wines outsold the French ones when *Bierkeller* background music was playing. [North et al. 1999]

3. Musical atmospheres: between expression and representation

In what follows I wish to elaborate on the previously cited remark by Huber, who described *Sphären-Erlebnisse* as being something between feeling and representation. There are two obvious ways to interpret this remark.

The first is to conjecture that musical atmospheres consist in the exploitation of certain representational qualities of the music in order to endow it with certain expressive qualities. For instance, Daniel Bukvich's *Symphony No.1 ("In Memoriam Dresden, 1945")* (1978) represents the bombing of Dresden and the subsequent firestorm. The extra-musical reference of the piece heightens the sense of foreboding that characterises the first three movements, as well as the fearful and anguished character of the last one.

The second is that certain expressive properties of the music are intentionally put to the service of a representative purpose. In Vivaldi's violin Concerto *L'Estate* (1725), for instance, the composer represents a summer storm through the angry and menacing character of the music.

with the ones I attribute here to musical atmospheres, most notably the absence of an intentionality requirement (atmospheres "come with the territory"), and the attribution of atmospheric properties to the objects they are predicated of, as opposed to an interpretation that treats them as referring to psychological states of an experiencing subject.

Both these interpretive strategies, however, are off the mark. Musical atmospheres are akin to expressive properties in that they do not require a (successfully realized) intention, although an atmosphere may be intentionally evoked by a composer, just as a she could intentionally set out to write sad or happy music. As both of the two strategies outlined above require an adequate successful intention, neither of them is going to shed light on the nature of musical atmospheres. An atmosphere, one might want to say, is called to mind by the music as it can be by a spice.

The parallel with expressive properties I just offered should not lead us to think that atmospheres are expressive properties of a peculiar sort. On the one hand, they do not belong to the sort of psychological predicates required in order to talk of 'expression', which are normally confined to emotional terms. On the other hand, even when musical atmospheres are described using adjectives that could also refer to a psychological state ('dreamy', 'mystical', 'nocturnal', etc.), and perhaps even reliably linked to some expressive properties (e.g., the melancholic quality of a nocturnal piece, or the misgiving quality of an eerie tune), they seem to be irreducible to such expressive predicates.

Moreover, the perception of musical atmospheres depends on enculturation, whereas standard musical expressiveness is, at least in its crudest form, a fact about the way we perceive music. Correspondingly, one finds a relatively significant amount of agreement in the cross-cultural perception of expressive properties of music, whereas the music's capacity to evoke an atmosphere is more strictly tied to the historical situatedness of the listener. We can hear the futuristic quality of the songs from Kraftwerk's 1978 album *The Man-Machine*. Rather than futuristic, however, that music would simply sound otherworldly to a Renaissance person. Likewise, the Renaissance instrumental pieces bearing the indication 'alla spagnola' in the title might well have sounded 'Spanish' in an atmospheric sense to the Renaissance listener, yet for us their 'Spanish' character is at best a mere stylistic label. These observations do not threaten the objectivity and relevance of

atmospheric descriptions. They indicate, however, how atmospheres contribute in a less universally accessible way to the properties of a work of music than do, for instance, standard expressive properties or the abstract formal structure of a piece.

I have denied that atmospheric properties could be reduced to expressive or representational properties, or to an interaction of such properties. The obvious conclusion from this is that they deserve to be treated as a separate kind of property. Atmospheric properties may possess affective/psychological connotations and allude to extra-musical objects or states of affairs, but they are essentially different from both expressive properties and musical depictions or representations.

One may wonder, however, whether it is possible to trace a distinction between terms such as 'dreamy', 'eerie', and the like, and those like 'futuristic', 'oriental', 'Irish', etc. For it would seem that the latter class depends more than the former on the constant association between certain musical features and a particular extra-musical context. Additionally, the former set of descriptors appears to be closer to expressive properties than the latter, as the terms included in that set may be interpreted as descriptions of a psychological state (e.g. a 'dreamy' state of mind, or an 'eerie' feeling), whereas the latter class is closer to representational terms – we could easily imagine how an oriental atmosphere may be used to produce a musical representation of, say, a Middle-Eastern landscape.

Despite this, I am not sure that marking these differences by distinguishing between two classes of atmospheric properties would be of any use. One could say that atmospheric properties are distributed on a spectrum that goes from quasi-expressive properties to quasi-representational properties, where the latter are the ones that rely the most on association.

4. Musical atmospheres and musical understanding

I will now turn to the relation between atmospheres and musical understanding. With this term I indicate the listener's analytical skills with respect to the music's

structure and development. Expectations as to the possible ways in which, within a certain musical style, a variation might change the original theme are an example of musical understanding, as are the listener's identification of the instruments, techniques, scales, compositional processes, work structure, etc. The way in which musical atmospheres interact with musical understanding can be subdivided into various categories.

4.1. Expectations (1): musical development.

Musical atmospheres might influence musical expectations concerning the musical development of a piece. For instance, an oriental atmosphere makes it less surprising when an augmented second creeps in, even if the atmosphere was created by means other than the use of scales that contain such an interval. In this sense, the influence of atmospheres on expectations regarding musical development is not of the sort famously described by Leonard Meyer, [1956] as it does not need to depend on syntactical features, but might rely only on the presence of a particular instrument or combination of instruments.

4.2. Expectations (2): instrumentation.

Timbres belonging to different instruments contribute to the evocation of musical atmospheres. As Aniruddh D. Patel remarks, "Instrumental music does not exist in a vacuum. Different types of instrumental music (e.g., "classical" music vs. bluegrass) are associated with different cultures, contexts, and classes of people. Music can bring these associations to mind [...]". [Patel 2007: 322] The accordion may create a distinctive 'French' atmosphere, whereas instruments such as the hurdy-gurdy produce a medieval atmosphere. The influence on musical expectations, however, is not only exercised by instruments on atmospheres, but also by atmosphere on instruments: a certain atmosphere may produce expectations as to the instruments that could be used in the piece. For instance, the French atmosphere created by an

accordion is going to make the subsequent entrance of a classical guitar more likely than that of an acoustic guitar.

4.3. *Formal divisions.*

It has been observed how expressive properties have the capacity to bring out, and sometimes even *create*, formal divisions in the music. [Kivy 1990: 182] For instance, the standard ABA Sonata form is marked by shifts in the expressive character of the piece. Something similar happens in the case of musical atmospheres. Consider the description Robert Walser gives of the 1981 Rainbow instrumental piece *Difficult to Cure*, written by guitarist Ritchie Blackmore around Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* theme.

Blackmore begins with a distorted version of Beethoven's instrumental recitative, which he transforms into a sitar-like modal flurry over a pedal; the band then moves into the theme of the "Ode" itself. Initially, Blackmore simply repeats the melody without developing or embellishing it, while the band modulates to different keys to freshen the repetitions. The musicians eventually alter the progression for the solos, which are a blend of a boogie blues rhythmic feel with the Orientalist modality of the beginning.

[Walser 1993: 66]

As apparent from Walser's remarks, the structure of the piece is marked by changes that can be described both in musical and atmospheric terms. The elated diatonic major of Beethoven's theme is in deep contrast with the brooding oriental atmospheres that characterise the introduction and some of the interludes between the various repetitions of the 'Ode' theme.

5. Musical atmospheres and musical topics

Contemporary musicologists have described the way in which composers in the classical period used *musical topics* in their compositions. These are melodic, harmonic or rhythmic figures that carry a particular conventional meaning. Musicologist Kofi Agawu writes:

Topics are musical signs. They consist of a signifier (a certain disposition of musical dimensions) and a signified (a conventional stylistic unit, often but not always referential in quality). Signifiers are identified as a relational unit within the dimension of melody, harmony, meter, rhythm, and so on, while the signified is designated by conventional labels drawn mostly from eighteenth-century historiography (*Sturm und Drang*, fanfare, learned style, sensibility, and so on).

[Agawu 1991: 49-50]

Topical analysis aims first at the identification of the topics that occur in a composition, and is then followed by an interpretation of their meaning and of the role they play in the work. [Agawu 2009: 44] Topics acquire their meaning through the connection to social settings such as the hunt, the court, worship, etc. The topic of the hunt, for instance, consists in a signifier modelled on the calls of the hunting horn. Depending on the context, its signified may be the nobility, courage and virtue associated with the hunt, the morning (as hunting started at dawn), or the fall (the best season for hunting). [Monelle 2006: 59-61]

It might be asked whether musical atmospheres, as I have described them, bear any relation to musical topics. Just like atmospheres, topics may have a formal function, [Caplin 2005] and they sometimes contribute to a piece's expressiveness through the associations with everyday life situations they prompt in the listener. [Martin 1995] At least one study has shown that topics have an influence on musical expectations, or rather, on the experience of their disruption: a different topical

context was reliably matched by a difference in the description of the feeling associated with a musical pause. [Margulis 2014]

Despite these similarities, the quasi-linguistic nature of topics precludes their identification with atmospheric properties. Topics are musical units utilized by composers to convey extra-musical meaning, whereas atmospheres, as described in this chapter, do not have a specific musical realization and do not need to be part of a compositional plan. Hence, although topics may well contribute to the atmospheric quality of a piece, they are not identical to atmospheric properties as described in this chapter.

6. On the ambiguity of atmospheric terms

Because I do not provide a positive account of atmospheric properties, but rather limit myself to pointing out how some descriptions of music seem not to fit standard categories such as expressive or representational properties, my characterisation of atmospheres is open to an objection. It may be thought that atmospheric properties, as I describe them in this chapter, are an untenably vague class of terms. More precisely, their vagueness seems to be twofold.

On the one hand, there is *taxonomic* vagueness: how are a piece's dreaminess or eerie quality different from its wistfulness (which is arguably an expressive property)? And are 'sublime' or 'humorous' also atmospheric terms?

On the other hand, there is *descriptive* vagueness: it is not altogether clear that informed listeners would produce similar atmospheric descriptions of the same piece. If so, one could question that atmospheric properties could ever aspire to the same degree of intersubjective validity as expressive properties.

Starting with taxonomic vagueness, it seems to me that a *tu quoque* reply could be enough to assuage the objection. Accounts of other important classes of musical properties, such as expressive properties, are far from being unambiguous regarding what sort of properties qualify as members of the class. While the most prominent

theorists have some kind of agreement around the fact that music strictly speaking only expresses psychological states (sometimes restricted to emotional states), other accounts of expressiveness are more inclusive. For instance, Paul Noordhof [2008] develops an account of expressive properties that explains how works of art could be expressive of 'Jazz' (Mondrian's 1942-43 *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*) or 'the hit of heroin' (Velvet Underground's 1967 song *Heroin*), while Jenefer Robinson [2005: 302] passingly questions Kivy's claim that the 'pomposity' of a piece could count as an expressive property, as 'pompous' could not be the description of a psychological state.

As is apparent from these examples, expressive properties are no less ambiguously identified than atmospheric ones. Because of this, I suggest that particularly slippery terms, caught as it were in-between the atmospheric and the expressive (or the representational), are not enough to question the existence of atmospheric properties as a whole.

Regarding descriptive vagueness, it may be thought that another *tu quoque* reply could partly assuage potential concerns. After all, competent listeners do not always agree when it comes to emotional descriptions of music. Once one abandons very general descriptions ('sad', 'happy', and the like), it is hard to find uniform linguistic descriptions of the music. Moreover, even if atmospheric properties show even less uniformity than expressive ones (is the start of Satriani's track dreamy, spaced-out, mystical, or what else?), it may just be a matter of degree. But I think that this reply would not do: while it may well work in the case of atmospheric descriptions that are the closest to mood descriptions ('dreamy', 'eerie', etc.), it is bound to fail in the case of atmospheres that are essentially related to contextual elements in the listener's experience. Balinese music cannot sound exotic to a Balinese, nor could Medieval music sound medieval to someone who has no idea about the European Middle Ages.

I do not think, however, that this sort of context-sensitivity is enough to question the critical reality and descriptive usefulness of atmospheric properties.

Quite to the contrary, if atmospheric properties are indeed context-sensitive in a way that expressive and representational properties are not, this counts as a further element in favour of a distinction between these two classes and musical atmospheres.

I conclude by indicating a final worry. The vicinity of some atmospheric properties to expressive ones may suggest that, once we are in possession of an appropriately inclusive account of musical expressiveness, most (if not all) atmospheric terms will be re-classified as expressive. To this I respond that, even if true, it is impossible for current mainstream accounts of musical expressiveness to account for atmospheric properties as I have described them.

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