## 1. Music as an Embodied Experience

**MUSIC AND LANGUAGE AS AURAL ART FORMS**

In order to gain an understanding of the mechanisms that govern the relationships between humans and works of art, it is first and foremost necessary to understand the nature of these works. And, in some cases, this apparently simple operation can hide many traitorous details that turn our understanding of a certain medium on its head. The aspect, in particular, that this works concerns itself with is that of temporal relationships between a product and its spectator. A good example of the false assumptions that need to be stripped away from our understanding of artistic cognition, (for example- repetition), concerns visual arts. One might be tempted to say that the temporal element is of no relevance to most of this field - the work is presented to us in its entirety, and we see it as one solid block, and process it as a single unit of information, made up of many, smaller units of information, which we separate from the whole of the art work. In reality, however, this is not the case.

A visual art work - regardless of its size - is never processed as a whole. Our eyes travel, so to speak, through the two or three dimensional space allocated to the piece, and pick up single bits of discrete information, one by one. Regardless of wether we are looking onto a painting of fairly modest size - such as the Mona Lisa - or one of enormous proportions - like, for example, Picasso's Guernica - we will always be drawn to a particular detail first - the eyes of the Mona Lisa, the flames in Guernica, and so on and so forth. Visual artists, then, can use this knowledge, this understanding of the human eye (gaining this insight either through purposeful study or through blind, so to speak, experimentation), in order to craft compositions that autonomously guide the spectator through space, obtaining exactly the outcome desired by the artist. It is possible to say, then, that visual art, too, has a temporal element - the time it takes its beholder to assimilate all the elements of the painting, installation, or construction, along with the order in which he does so and the associations that he forms along the way. The visual arts, however, still have one property that sets them apart from most other artistic fields - in that they're immediate.

There is no presupposed aural process, and the passing of time (on a macroscopic scale) does not reveal any new elements of the work. The spectator is free to look over the same painting over and over again, never expecting it to change (although, of course, he may himself change in the process of doing so). The same cannot be said for certain types of installations and architectures, which themselves implement a temporal element and adopt it into their artistic field, layering the macroscopic temporal scale of the work's "self presentation" on top of the microscopic temporal scale of the public's assimilation of the work. However, to other realms of the arts, this temporal "evolutionary" element is innate and essential. Both music and literature fit into this category, and they do so, surprisingly, largely in the same way.

The origins of these artistic fields, possibly predating those of human experience itself, can obviously only be speculated upon. It is however only reasonable to place the seeds of both in a context of aural nature. Stories and mythologies, possibly the first examples of literary endeavours, we have reason to believe, were only recorded in writing after an ample aural tradition was established, and even then, the aural tradition, we believe, still prevailed on the written one, as it is reasonable to assume that, regardless of the level of literacy that a culture might have enjoyed, story-telling still fulfilled a social function, and as physical supports for reading and writing (clay tablets, parchment and even written paper) were harder to come by than human memory, a great deal of tradition still centred around aurality - the mere complications entailed by the act of copying a book, scroll, or tablet are enough to suggest so. Another observation, then, is that the social functions of storytelling often coincided with those of music-making, and there are, therefore, many links between musical and literary practice, as the two are constantly intertwined throughout ancient as well as modern history.

Just like in the case of story-telling, it is impossible to pinpoint the origin of music on a timeline - although the tools used for human singing and telling stories are exactly the same (namely vocal chords) - and although comparative ethnomusicology is able to make some extremely believable suppositions, which fit together almost perfectly, we are still uncertain about the history of most western music, at least until the Greek civilisation, which produced the earliest notation systems that we are aware of. Furthermore, even in Greek society music and literature were often closely related, especially through theatrical works. Modern notation, however, is mostly closely related to Christianity, and the efforts made in Christian communities to codify religious chants into a somewhat fixed repertoire (an operation that would ultimately be achieved under Pope Gregorio Magno). Like is the case for the spoken word, even in its origin, musical writing was nothing but an extension of the aural tradition, which still held an incredibly important place in musical practice, and will keep doing so for centuries to come. In Baroque musical practice, for example, the executive praxis was often incredibly distant from the written score, with certain traditions consistently and fundamentally changing elements such as rhythm (as is the case for the French, who, for example, sometimes played two subsequent quavers as a pointed quaver and a semiquaver), and melody, mostly through the use of improvised embellishments. The apex of this tradition, of course, is figured bass, a notation system very distant from the modern musical praxis, which only indicated the fundamental of the chord to be played, and presupposed an understanding of the contemporary practices of harmony and voice leading for its realisation. Even in regards to written sheet music, then, aurality can be said to prevail. The same can be said (although maybe less obviously) for works that rely on the spoken word, particularly in regards to poetry: due to the evolution of languages and their progressive departure from their original form, many words differ in pronunciation and orthography (in some cases it's even hard to establish what a language's orthography has consisted of in the past, with many words appearing with entirely different spellings throughout a language's history), the written word can sometimes tell us surprisingly little on the very outcome the author desired his work to have. Even languages still alive today, such as English, suffer from (or, rather, enjoy) dramatic shifts in linguistic practice over the centuries - it is safe to say that, if modern English had always been in place, many authors would have chosen different words to compose the same works. This process, of course, takes place in a much larger time frame in literature than it does in music, but still holds true nonetheless. The reason why the full comprehension of a work of art is possible only through its immersion into the musical or linguistic practice contemporary to it, then, is the consequence of this very aspect: the change in aural (and musical) cultures and traditions throughout time.

#todo add sources - Surian, Mellace, EDT.... and expand

Aside from these pseudo-historic ruminations, however, there is a great deal to be said about the medium through which both literature and music operate. Since, for previously outlined reasons, the written sign should be, in most cases, considered of no consequence to the artistic product itself (as the meanings and effects it entails can shift greatly over time), it can safely be said that both forms of artistic expression exclusively rely on actual performance. What seems like a self-evident truth for music, however, seems extremely counter-intuitive when it comes to literature, and even more so when one solely considers prose. We are, as a society, accustomed to silently reading to ourselves a great deal more than we are to having someone read (or, to make the scenario even more dissonant, perform) to us, after all. The contradiction between the claim that all literature only consists, essentially, of its performance, and the reality of "silently reading to ourselves", however, is but an apparent one. The \*crux\* of this conflict resides, obviously enough, in the language that we use to describe the act of reading itself. There is no such thing as reading "silently" (and even if there were, it would strip the written word of a large part of its beauty and meaning). "Reading silently" only means echoing the written word ("sounding it out", so to speak) in our mind's ear. Cognitively speaking, ( #todo cite sources ), the mental processes employed in reading and both listening and speaking are not far from one another, as can be somewhat instinctively deduced on some occasions - for example when observing someone else profoundly immersing themselves in reading and mouthing a few words along, as well or, even better, when learning a new language, and needing to sound each written word out before moving onto the next one. The way in which we process written word is an essentially aural one.

For the sake of completeness, incidentally, the musically literate reserve the same treatment to sheet music as the linguistically literate do to the written word - meaning that just like when observing a row of letters they make sense of them and understand their artistic as well as linguistic meaning through internal hearing, so too do they understand the relationship between individual notes and musical phrases, in monophony as well as polyphony, effectively "reading" written music. When confronted with this fact, however, most people would still not call this practice "listening" to music - further underlying the fact that literature and music, as they're constructed and perceived in much the same way, are both dependent on the aural phenomenon as well as sound itself.

The consequence of these observations, then, is that both art forms only depend on the vibration of air (or its intellectualisation) as their one and only, purest medium. The way in which we, the spectators, then, interpret these vibrations gives way to an immense host of meanings. This process, this decodification of vibrational events itself, although it obviously differs in its specifics between the literature and music, can be said to unite the two artistic forms deeply and, in both cases, can be said to derive from the (not so) mundane way in which living beings interact with the world itself. If we look back, against all scientific possibility, to the origins of life itself, we'll find that the identification and interpretation of changes in air pressure has always been essential to the development of most life forms - humans included. And this act of understanding the environment, then, is what is sublimated and made beautiful in the process of creating art which, incidentally, can be seen as a non strictly human prerogative. After all, the only difference, between the works of Shakespeare and the song of a lark is the amount of level of abstractions that their creator executed from the social (and, thus, essentially animalistic) function that alone stands at the core of all artistic production. #todo thousand plateaux?

Because of this fundamental truth - that the primary medium, the \*conditio sine qua non\* of both literature and music is that of sound - these art forms should be regarded as essentially ephemeral, since they can only exist through a medium which is, itself, ephemeral and temporary in nature, both in its most literal and physical form and in its intellectualisation (i.e. the use of our 'mind's ear', for lack of a better term). This characteristic, together with the afore mentioned gradual unfolding of the work of art in front of the spectators' eye (or, in this case, ears), puts these two artistic fields in a most peculiar position. First and foremost, they both take on the identity of \*performative\* arts, meaning that the artistic result, regardless of its reliance on a starkly written and unchangeable text, is first and foremost the product of the reading (as well as the type of reading) it receives. One performance of Mahler's second symphony may differ incredibly on all planes (both conceptually and essentially as well as accidentally) from another performance of the same symphony, even if the directors and the individual members of its huge ensamble do not themselves change (which is an incredibly unlikely condition to meet on its own, already), just the same way that one performance of Shakespeare's twentieth sonnet may differ incredibly from another reading by the same person. This, of course, applies to our own lonely 'silent readings', as well - a number of things may affect the very way in which we read each word, let alone how we decide to interpret them! Secondly, the action that works of this type exercise on the spectator's psyche is the fruit of the progressive unveiling of the complete work. The continuous interaction between memory and expectation, largely discussed in the previous chapter, constitutes the primary way in which authors guide their spectators through their work, as if through a winding path in the \*fictional woods\*. Lastly, and perhaps most interestingly, these art forms can only exist during the time in which they are performed. Once the orchestra stops playing, once the actor stops performing, all that is left of the work is the impressions that it made on our psyche itself. There is no possible way of experiencing the same work in the same way ever again (even in the event of a recording, all one can do is recall what the actual performance felt like). The awareness, however faint, that we hold of this fact, then, I argue, sets the ground for a number of cognitive operations that impact primarily the idea we have of art as a whole and secondarily, in a way that is far more relevant to the scopes of this work, the idea we hold of they who composed and executed the work of art that we have just been made privy to.