

Grotesque as an Alternative Aesthetic Mode in Madrilenian
Chamber Music during the Second Part of the Eighteenth
Century

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: *Grotesque* as an Alternative Aesthetic Mode in Madrilenian Chamber Music during the Second Part of the Eighteenth Century

Although the term, “grotesque,” did not appear until the late fifteenth century, this aesthetic category has been recognized in the visual arts since classical Antiquity, in literature by the first part of the sixteenth century, and is currently found in every artistic discipline. In music, scholars identify the grotesque beginning in the nineteenth century. Studies concerning the grotesque prior to this period are scarce. My dissertation challenges current musicological narratives by identifying the existence of the musical grotesque and noting its relationship to eighteenth-century literary and visual trends in compositions produced for the Spanish royal court in Madrid during the reigns of Charles III and IV (1759 to 1808). I focus on composers Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) and Gaetano Brunetti (1744-1798), whose compositional techniques depart from neoclassic aesthetic conventions and display musical elements that parallel the grotesque in other artistic fields.

The creative force of the grotesque, its subversive character and ability to rupture conventions of beauty and classicism, was utilized by authors, painters, and performers in Spanish literature, iconography, and theater during the second half of the eighteenth century. By identifying its appearance in contemporaneous musical compositions and demonstrating the relationships among these compositions and the grotesque in other art forms, I challenge current music historiographies that situate the emergence of the grotesque in the later nineteenth century. Instead, I argue that musical expressions of the

grotesque during this period– like their artistic counterparts – must also be situated within the complex intellectual, political, and cultural climate of the Spanish Enlightenment.

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Para mis padres.
Para Louis, Olivia, y Mathis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although the term grotesque appeared relatively late – with the rediscovery of Nero’s *Domus Aurea* decorations at the end of the fifteenth century – this aesthetic category has been recognized in the visual arts since classical Antiquity: Vitruvius (first century BCE) already mentions this type of decoration that later on was designated as grotesque in his *De Architectura*. In literature it appears since at least the first part of the sixteenth century, with François Rabelais (c.1490-1553) as one of its main exponents,¹ and it is nowadays acknowledged and accepted as a descriptive term in every artistic discipline (architecture, painting, film, photography, drama, etc.). In music, numerous studies point at grotesque characteristics in compositions from the nineteenth century onwards, but scholarship recognizing the musical grotesque before the nineteenth century is scarce and neither very deep nor broad. Apart from Elizabeth Le Guin’s convincing analysis of Luigi Boccherini’s (1743-1805) music as grotesque² and Anette Richards chapter on Haydn’s grotesque, research efforts in this direction are either superficial, or approach the concept of the grotesque as an aesthetic category only tangentially.

This dissertation begins with three main questions that arise naturally from this historiographical situation: do grotesque aesthetics pertain to eighteenth-century musical practices? If so, what did they look like? And finally, if eighteenth-century musical

¹ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

² Elizabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body: an Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press: 2006); “‘One says one Weeps, but One Does Not Weep’: Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini’s Chamber Music,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 2 (2002): 207–54.

grotesque existed, what are the reasons of it being so widely ignored or set aside? A certain familiarity with Boccherini's work, as well as with a few similarly bizarre musical compositions from this period arising from Spanish culture – either created in Spain, or inspired by Spanish culture – suggest that, at the very least, a handful of these compositions in this environment openly defy the principles of classical composition prevailing in the European context at the time. Also, a long-lasting but sketchy knowledge of grotesque instances in Spanish art and culture supports the idea of an artistic context rich in grotesque manifestations. The importance of jesters in Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velazquez's (1599-1660) paintings, Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes' (1746-1828) nightmarish sketches, and more recently, Salvador Dali's (1904-1989) extravagances; eighteenth-century accentuated taste for *majismo* (i.e., social class travestism) and popular theater; or the weight anti-classical characters hold in Spanish literature from Fernando de Rojas' (c.1465-1541) *Celestina* to Diego de Torres Villarroel (1693-1770) and José Francisco de Isla's (1703-1781) improbable characters, or in Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) nineteenth-century incongruous *esperpentos*³ point to the important role played historically by the anti-classical in Spanish aesthetics. Looking even further, this was not specific to the Spanish cultural sphere, as grotesque manifestations occurred also outside the Spanish context during Boccherini's lifetime: gardens with fountains and sculptures inspired by irregular, exaggerated, hybrid monsters in contorted postures – like Wilhemine

³ Literary genre created by Ramón María del Valle Inclán towards 1920. It uses grotesque techniques to present a distorted reality.

of Prussia's (1709-1758) gardens *Sanspareil* and *Hermitage* in Bayreuth – Viennese grotesque dancers and Parisian boulevard theaters,⁴ grotesque decorations... etc.

All in all, grotesque aesthetics besieged elite musical practices from every artistic corner in Europe and still, the topic has only been treated partially in academic literature or in a few recent musical studies. Either the confirmation or the dismissal of the existence of such a category has important repercussions in our understanding of a repertoire that is already undergoing a process of reevaluation. A comprehensive assessment of the influence of grotesque aesthetics on this repertoire revealing indeed such a trend in elite musical circles can provide valuable hints for future research, while contributing to illuminate parts of the repertoire that are still obscure. The dismissal of grotesque influences in this repertoire would reveal a significant resistance from elite environments and confirm a strong adherence of this environment to neoclassic poetics.

Because of the scarcity of sources referencing the musical grotesque during this period, a theoretical construction of such a category must be done mainly through the analysis of sources dedicated to adjacent fields: the history of grotesque aesthetics and studies of the grotesque in literature, theater, dance, and visual arts: seminal studies in the field of grotesque aesthetics like Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, Mijhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his world*, and Frances K. Barasch's *The Grottesque: A Study in Meanings*, along with more recent publications like those by Isabel García Adánez and Robert S. Hatten, among others. They offer the foundation for drafting the main features that define the grotesque in different artistic fields. Literature discussing Spanish

⁴ As described in Elizabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press: 2006), 139.

artistic, musical, social, and political life during that period serves to outline the artistic environment surrounding the composers and the musical output under consideration. Helmut C. Jacobs, Alberto Escalante Varona, Paul Illie, John James Iffland, and Miguel Ángel Marin, have been essential references in my work of contextualization. Finally, much of the repertoire analyzed, apart from Boccherini's music, has only recently attracted attention from scholars and performers. Most of the chamber music compositions by Spanish composers from this period has only very recently been edited, and important efforts are being done to make the rest of what has been uncovered so far available to researchers and performers. It is my intention to contribute to further contextualizing these pieces.

Despite being a musicological study, an important part of this project is dedicated to deciphering historiographical, semantic, literary, theatrical, and various other artistic realities. Delving into the world of grotesque is to a great extent dealing with an unstable and ever-changing term and attached concepts developed through centuries and reflecting on the relationship between the classic canon and its aesthetic antipode. In order to outline features of the musical grotesque applicable to pre-romantic repertoires, preliminary work aims to identify the objective, immutable elements behind the concept as they appeared during this period. This process provides the necessary theoretical frame to delineate the main characteristics of its musical counterpart as they appear in selected works non-compliant with the neoclassical canon.⁵

⁵ Note: I use classical and neoclassical indistinctly to refer to the sets of regulations guiding artistic creation during this period inspired by a specific reading of classical antiquity that privileges symmetry, proportion, balance, restrain, and naturality.

In addition to gaining a deeper knowledge about the role played by grotesque aesthetics in the eighteenth century, it is my goal to expand on Elizabeth Le Guin's analysis of eighteenth-century music as grotesque and by doing so, to answer the questions at the source of this dissertation.

In the introduction to her edited book *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, Frances S. Conelly states that, "The romantic period marked the entrance of the grotesque into the mainstream of modern expression, as a means to explore alternative modes of experience and expression and to challenge the presumed universals of classical beauty."⁶ While it is true that specific forms of grotesqueness experienced a breakthrough as a means of expression during the romantic period, statements of this sort tend to dismiss the presence and significance of a wider spectrum of grotesque manifestations prior to the turn of the century. And still, since its resurgence at the end of the sixteenth century, the grotesque in its numerous manifestations has not ceased to challenge the conventional classical canon, maintaining its transgressive nature, and serving as a pretext to explore alternative means of expression.

The prevalence of narratives that claim the triumph of grotesque aesthetics as a phenomenon exclusive to the nineteenth century is only understandable if we consider the profound changes the concept experienced at the end of the previous century. A transformation of its playful nature into something much more somber, along with the loss of much of the richness of meanings it had cumulated by then, placed most of the previous grotesque manifestations in an aesthetic limbo that ignored the weight of its artistic and

⁶ Frances S. Conelly, "Introduction" in *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, ed. Frances S. Conelly, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

teleological background. The academic manufacture of an official artistic canon during the following two centuries according to specific aesthetic ideals – that for the most part rejected the idea of the grotesque in its core – came up to reinforce this tendency. Scholars working in disciplines marginal to this classic canon, such as comedy, grotesque dance, folklore, oral traditions, and the like, complain about this situation and defend the significant contributions of non-canonical trends to historical artistic practice and in the construction of the official discourse. However, this aesthetic category and its transformative potential have been acknowledged since classical Antiquity.

Because of the changing nature of the concept and the multiple transformations it went through in time, the study of any grotesque manifestation requires a deep understanding of its meaning adjusted to its precise period and geographical region. At first, the grotesque is always defined by what it is not: it is opposed to the tasteful and goes directly against the classical canon, ignoring artistic conventions as they were established by intellectual elites. A preliminary outline of late eighteenth-century Spanish grotesque will then necessarily depart from a thorough comprehension of enlightened Spanish poetics as they are reflected in surviving written documents. Chapter two examines the most influential aesthetic writings from Benito Jerónimo Feijoo (1676-1764), Ignacio de Luzán (1702-1754), and Tomás de Iriarte (1750-1791), and delineates the academic foundations of Spanish enlightened aesthetics with a special focus on musical thinking.

Yet the idea of the grotesque, as that of beauty, is also defined in positive terms and forged by its own grotesque tradition. The richness and complexity of meanings and forms attained by the term at the turn of the nineteenth century can only be explained by the overlay of mutations the idea underwent in the first three centuries after its appearance. A

preliminary working definition encompasses among its essential and necessary characteristics outstanding exaggeration, the coexistence of irreconcilable elements, a transgressive nature, and a satiric, parodic, or caricatural intention. From that point on, each new development, transformation, and migration from one artistic field to another – ornamentation to literature, theater, popular folklore, visual arts, dance, and music – contributed with its own subtleties and fluctuations. Chapter three explores these changes and sets the stage for the outlining of the musical grotesque, examining adjacent disciplines that profoundly contributed to the construction of the idea of the grotesque in the performative arts during the eighteenth century: theater, literature, visual arts, caricature, *Commedia dell'arte* and grotesque dance. A preliminary outlining of the musical grotesque before the arrival of the uncanniness, somberness, and alienation that transformed it in the romantic period is still necessary. Although numerous studies point at grotesque characteristics in compositions and works of art from the nineteenth century onwards, studies recognizing the musical grotesque before the nineteenth century are scarce and not comprehensive. The musical grotesque has not been conferred the category of a consistent aesthetic mode during this period and I consider that exploring this path to either confirm or deny its veracity is necessary to build an accurate, encompassing depiction of late eighteenth-century musical practices.

The grotesque mode has already been hinted at by several scholars in relation to specific composers, although this approach remains minimal. It also still lacks the consideration of it being a practice potentially held in common by several authors and thus likely also possessing specific generational traits. Analyses of Haydn's music as containing humor are probably the most well known outside the specific field of grotesque studies.

Franz-Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) is, along with Luigi Boccherini, the most significant composer before the nineteenth century whose music has been analyzed through the lens of the grotesque, as a concept closely linked to musical humor. The subversion of *galant* features, the mixing of high- and low-brow elements, the composer's links to burlesque theater, and the appearance of burlesque elements in Haydn's works can be interpreted as characteristics of the grotesque. Tom Beghin and Sander M. Goldberg's edited book *Haydn and the performance of Rhetoric*⁷ considers the existence of a cultural context with a strong presence of grotesque aesthetics during the second part of the eighteenth century, even pointing at the possibility that it permeated musical life.⁸

More relevant to this dissertation are the investigations of Ellen Eris Amsterdam and Elizabeth Le Guin.⁹ Amsterdam's pioneer work on Boccherini's quintets already hinted at many of the compositional techniques that have later been described as grotesque: timbre, instrumentation, and form are thoroughly analyzed in Amsterdam's dissertation and reveal some of the peculiarities that lead later scholars to investigate the grotesque in Boccherini's music. Elizabeth Le Guin's carnal musicology is without doubt the strongest referent in my own study of the grotesque. Although the approach is different from the outset, the description of the musical grotesque provided in chapter five and Le Guin's analysis of Boccherini's music as grotesque inevitably fall in common ground. *Commedia*

⁷ Tom Beghin and Sander M. Goldberg, eds. *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁸ In chapter ten "Haydn's London Trios and the Rhetoric of the Grotesque," Annette Richards considers the links between baroque practices and late eighteenth-century musical grotesque focusing on this specific set of trios, discussing some of the elements examined throughout this dissertation. However, the specificity of its object of study and its penchant towards somberness and the "monstrous sublime" in the interpretation of grotesque separate Richards' study from the present analysis.

⁹ Ellis Iris Amsterdam, "The String Quintets of Luigi Boccherini" (PhD. Diss., University of California, 1968).

dell'Arte, grotesque dance, theatricality, and the musical translation of the performer's gestures suggested by Le Guin are also essential to the musical discourse analyzed in chapter five. What I propose is a further contextualization of this grotesqueness, with a deeper analysis of the tradition of the European artistic grotesque in the eighteenth century along with a study centered on the specificities of its emergence in the Spanish context. In addition, I propose a dialogue between Boccherini's work and that of other artists working in the Madrilenian environment, considering the "eccentricities" of the composer as part of a wider aesthetic fabric. The analysis of these sources, along with other sources concerned with the grotesque as it appeared in other artistic disciplines in enlightened Spain, points to the potential existence of alternative goals and modes of expression in part of this period's musical repertoire that contravene the neoclassical principles put forward by official narratives.

I briefly explore the links behind broader cultural and political/social trends and the appearance of the grotesque mode in art during this period in and around the royal court in Madrid. To this end, Chapter four examines the late eighteenth-century Madrilenian cultural environment putting the light on cultural products that do not conform with neoclassical poetics, exploring social trends and possible motivations behind them.

The political situation in Spain in the eighteenth century, especially during the second part of the century, is one of strong structural transformations and powerful reactionary movements. Moreover, at the end of the century the consequences of the French Revolution and the growing tensions that led to the French invasion of Spain provoked a social crisis that was manifested in the art of one of the main international exponents of the grotesque, Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. It was also in this period that Luigi Boccherini

and Gaetano Brunetti (1744-1798) wrote some of the few compositions that have been considered to be examples of grotesque. They usually appear as fascinating isolated phenomena amidst an essentially tedious and conforming environment. However, behind these most famous examples of nonconformity several other less-known authors and composers kept producing texts, paintings, and musical compositions that do not fit with the clear-cut idea of balanced and proportioned beauty characteristic of this period. Literary scholars recognize a strong presence of grotesque elements in Spanish literature and theater during this century. Painter Luis Paret y Alcázar's (1746-1799) uniqueness comes from the same salons inhabited by Goya's genius, and composer padre Antonio Soler (1729-1783) worked for the same royal family as did Luigi Boccherini. Neoclassic reforms struggled to conquer Madrilenian theaters (if they ever did) and for the most part of the eighteenth century, these reforms faced instead the steadfast taste of its audiences for the popular, spectacular, and baroque. Moreover, the dichotomy between European-cosmopolitan versus Spanish-traditional in the arts as in politics played an important role in the development of unique artistic trends during this period. As Paul Illie suggests,¹⁰ as a reaction to the strong establishment of conventions and norms grotesque manifestations thrived, something characteristic in moments of crisis and standardization of canonic norms, as happened during classic-neoclassic period.

Nowadays, Spanish eighteenth-century chamber music experiences an exciting resurgence thanks to the work of such scholars as Miguel Ángel Marín, Raúl Angulo Díaz, or Antonio Pons Seguí, who are engaged with the restoration of this repertoire and its

¹⁰ Paul Illie, "Concepts of the Grotesque before Goya," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 5, no. 1 (1976): 189-191.

environment. A prime example of such efforts is the crucial work developed by the editorial *Ars Hispana*, created in 2007, that continuously adds new titles to their catalogue dedicated to the recovery of Spanish and Hispano-American repertoires, working in collaboration with scholars, performers, and ensembles to bring forgotten Hispanic composers back to life. Works for string ensemble by Gaetano Brunetti, José Teixidor y Barceló (c.1752-c.1811-1814), José María Reynoso (c.1740-1802), José Castel (1737-1807), and Pedro Anselmo Marchal (c.1758-1821) are already edited and are available. This situation makes the study of this repertoire possible for scholars all over the globe for the first time. At the same time, chamber music is particularly appropriate for the study of grotesque aesthetics. As opposed to the unlikelihood of these transgressions being accepted in religious settings (the Catholic church being an especially powerful and conservative institution in Spain), the immediacy of the aristocratic salon seems more welcoming for the playful and for all things experimental. The intimate character of this environment, and the fact that grotesque elements in music would have needed a particularly cultivated audience to be understood – an audience familiar with elite and popular musical traits and implications – increase the chances of finding departures from the neoclassical norm in this type of repertoire. There was also a strong permeability of popular elements into Spanish aristocratic culture at this moment (as the phenomenon of *majismo* illustrates), so channels for grotesque elements, more characteristic of the popular, were available. Finally, some aristocratic houses are notorious for having maintained artists that cultivated the full aesthetic spectrum during this period, from the most pure neoclassic to the most transgressive grotesque. Luis Antonio Jaime de Borbón y Farnesio (Infante Don Luis de Borbón, Charles III's brother, 1727-1785), Maria Josefa de la Soledad Alfonso Pimentel y Téllez-Girón (twelfth

Countess-duchess of Benavente and Osuna, 1752-1834), and María del Pilar Teresa Cayetana de Silva Álvarez de Toledo (twelfth Duchess de Alba, 1762-1802) are the most influential aristocratic patrons around the Spanish royal court during this period. Ramón de la Cruz (1731-1794), Maria del Rosario Fernández “La Tirana” (1755-1803), Luigi Boccherini, and Francisco de Goya are among the personalities that populated their salons, thriving in the interconnection of popular and elitist artistic characteristics. The question of the popular versus elite art is as fundamental to my dissertation as it is to the study of the grotesque, and the exploration of the relation between both runs necessarily parallel to the unraveling of the grotesque enlightened landscape.

All these things considered, I propose a model to analyze musical examples from this period that do not entirely adhere to neoclassical principles and present features comparable to those found in grotesque expressions in other disciplines. After providing the necessary context in chapters two, three, and four, in chapter four I establish three main categories of the eighteenth-century grotesque whose main features are present in the Madrilénian cultural environment: the ornamental grotesque, the popular-carnavalesque Bakhtinian grotesque, and the grotesque in performative arts like *Commedia dell’Arte* and grotesque dance. Some of the constitutive elements present in these categories – repeated movements, asymmetrical ornamentation, exaggerated gestures and descriptions, blurred body contours, prevalence of popular themes, and the like – find musical parallels in similar uses of formal, rhythmic, melodic and harmonic musical elements in part of this repertory.

I analyze the production of several musicians working in proximity to each other, considering their musical and cultural environment in order to find common threads. The approach is interdisciplinary, focusing mainly on interconnections between literature,

theatre arts, and music. This musical analysis will discuss contemporary string quartets and quintets produced primarily in the Spanish capital during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. The string quartet and quintet, at the time new genres in the process of establishing themselves, were cultivated in Madrid by foreign and by Spanish composers, and the Spanish production runs parallel to that of central and north-western European production centers. The significance of Spanish authors in this field just now begins to be gradually recognized, and along the consolidated reputation of Gaetano Brunetti and Luigi Boccherini, the names of Manuel Canales (1747-1786), Enrique Ataide y Portugal, José María Reynoso, José Teixidor y Barceló, or Francesco Corselli (1705-1778) emerge as also being considered for study and performance.

This dissertation contributes to the ongoing exploration of the original cultural framework in which some of these compositions – created according to aesthetic modes that differ from more general European aesthetic trends – were conceived, performed, and received. In doing so, I also intend to rehabilitate musical compositions that, departing from the norm, have often been considered inferior compositions and set aside from the stage. Recognizing the expressive purpose and intentionality in musical manifestations that deviate from the norm during the eighteenth century – something that already happens in non-musical artistic disciplines – will give these pieces a different status in the eyes of performers, musicologists, and audiences. Spanish music has too often been described and appreciated in relation to its degree of conformity with foreign trends: in the case of string quartets and quintets, the Viennese tradition has been the aesthetic ideal against which late eighteenth-century composers have been judged, dismissing other traditions like the

French or Italian.¹¹ I advocate here for expanding the lens we use to analyze this repertoire in order to illuminate some of its features that, if measured according to classical standards, are inevitably condemned to obscurity. Also, apart from some older scholars who have often considered the *empfindsamer Stil* to be some sort of “proto-Romanticism,” musicology traditionally considers that Romanticism is a rupture with the previous musical period and a reaction to the *galant* style and Classicism. I propose that some departures from eighteenth-century musical conventions motivated by aesthetics related to the grotesque field could at the same time have been the result of the maintenance of some baroque and earlier traditions and acted as the roots of nineteenth-century innovations.

Whether eighteenth-century composers created grotesque works intentionally or not, by aligning with the burlesque, comical, caricatural, popular, or traditional, a definition of the grotesque that considers its state of development at the time and highlights its anti-classical and playful nature would justify such categorization. The grotesque lens transforms musical analysis by emphasizing the role of a different set of musical elements and by avoiding the eternal definition by opposition to the Viennese tradition. Using this lens also facilitates holding these compositions accountable to principles and customs more in accordance with their original milieu.

A change of perspective in the consideration of such works will have consequences in the way we consider pre-nineteenth-century musical aesthetics, and it will also have an impact on performance practices of Spanish repertory of the late eighteenth century.

¹¹ Miguel Ángel Marín, “Joseph Haydn y el Clasicismo vienés en España: influencia: el Clasicismo vienés en España,” in *Historia de la Música en España e Hispanoamérica*, vol. 4, ed. José Máximo Leza (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2014), 497, 500.

Considering the possibility of musical alternative aesthetics that, as they happen in other arts during this period, pursue goals different from the sublime and the beautiful, will open the path for new technical approaches, the exploration of different timbres, and a different understanding of the aesthetic and philosophical background of this repertoire. It will also have an effect on the way the audience perceives music from this period and allow for the consideration of elements as sense of humor, the potential for parody, criticism, and satire in this music.

Finally, as there is still no comprehensive study of the musical grotesque in the eighteenth century, finding a method to explore this aesthetic category as it manifested in music during a short span of time and in a specific location lays the ground for further investigation in time and place. My hypothesis is that grotesque aesthetics had (and still have) a regenerative power, that its transgressive element has a potential for pushing boundaries, exploit fantasy and creativity, and function as a critical tool that helps us better understand specific cultural contexts. Particularly during this neoclassical period (in the visual arts and architecture), as it stands in opposition to everything that the Classicism represents, the grotesque mode acted as a transformative force in the technical and aesthetic spheres. Acknowledging aesthetic categories beyond beauty and the sublime during this period will have an impact on performance and reception, and can only expand our understanding of the expressive potential of this music.

CHAPTER II

AESTHETIC THOUGHT IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MADRID

In the last thirty years, scholars in arts and letters of eighteenth-century Spain have succeeded in their challenge of the established narrative that classic and neoclassical ideals of beauty dominated Spanish culture, while deviations from these norms were virtually non-existent.¹² Indeed, recent studies reveal a broad spectrum of aesthetic considerations, ranging from the slightest poetic licenses to the most extravagant examples of the grotesque. These studies show, moreover, a myriad of artistic expressions stimulated by national traditions, individual artistic impulses, and, in the case of Madrid, a specific cultural idiosyncrasy that differed from other national realities. Despite multi- and interdisciplinary reevaluations of aesthetics in eighteenth-century Spain, musicological studies have lagged behind, still dominated by the musical classic conventions connected to Vienna or Salzburg, or Enlightenment values expressed in musical centers in France, England, Prussia, or the Italian peninsula. Yet the musical evidence of eighteenth-century Spain makes clear that aesthetic principals in operation there were not necessarily always (neo)-classical ones found elsewhere. Thus, the primary aim of this chapter is to locate and explore the influential writers on eighteenth-century aesthetic thinking in Spain.

¹² Miguel Angel Marin, “Escuchar la música: la academia, el concierto y sus públicos,” in *Historia de la Música en España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. José Máximo Leza (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica de España, 2014), 497-500; Other studies that focus on artistic realities traditionally considered marginal are Paul Illie, *The Grotesque Aesthetic in Spanish Literature: From the Golden Age to Modernism* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic Monographs, 2009); Alberto Escalante Varona, *La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y autores del teatro popular en el Madrid Ilustrado*, (Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura Opera Prima, 2020); Fernando Doménech Rico, “La compañía de los Trufaldines y el primer teatro de los Caños del Peral” (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2005).

With respect to conventional and unconventional artistic expressions, the grotesque is situated on the most extreme margins of this aesthetic spectrum. The rise of grotesque literary manifestations during the second part of the century is a well-developed area of study in Spanish literary scholarship about the eighteenth century, and provides an exceptional point of departure for reflection on the nature of its musical counterparts. An analysis of the official aesthetic discourse in Enlightened Spain and a consideration of the connections between poetics and musical aesthetics during this period allows for further comparative analysis between grotesque literary and musical examples, while providing a richer background to interpret such complex artistic artifacts.¹³

In Spain, the eighteenth century is considered the century of poetics, focused on the regulation of aesthetic principles, especially in literature. Poetics and writings on aesthetics during this period, especially during the second half of the century, reveal an overwhelming primacy of neoclassical ideals of beauty, summarized by Paul Illie as a “fortress built upon the foundations of geometrical proportion, rational order, good taste, and the sublime.”¹⁴ Even so, it would be a mistake to believe that the eighteenth-century literary, visual, and musical panorama was free from baroque tendencies and artistic behaviors traditionally linked to the romantic period such as individualism, artistic freedom, inspiration, and rupture of conventions. In the introduction to his thesis “Edición crítica de *Le Rivoluzioni del Teatro Musicale Italiano* de Esteban de Arteaga,” Fernando Molina Castillo states that “asociar el clasicismo a las reglas poéticas, por una parte, y romanticismo a inspiración por

¹³ I will also refer to some examples from the visual arts, although the dissertation is primarily focused on the analysis of literary, theatrical, and performance arts.

¹⁴ Paul Illie, “Concepts of the Grotesque before Goya,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 5, (1976): 191. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sec.1976.0014>.

otra, es – además de, posiblemente, el mito romántico más difundido – una empobrecedora simplificación.”¹⁵ In fact, the idea of classicism as a period that generated (or continued as) an attraction to the irrational due to its excessive attention to normativity and rationality is shared by several authors in the field of the literary studies, Paul Illie among them.

The eighteenth-century cultural critics and philosophers Benito Jerónimo Feijóo and Ignacio de Luzán encapsulate the aesthetic tensions that developed in Spain during this period. Both Feijóo (1676-1764) and Ignacio de Luzán (1702-1754) wrote their most influential works during the first part of the century, and are still considered today essential interpreters of enlightenment ideals and interlocutors of eighteenth-century aesthetic thought. In what follows, I provide an overview on their respective aesthetic philosophies, and offer, too, examples of how their ideas were received and explored by other important cultural voices in Spain. I then turn to discussions on musical aesthetics and practices in Spain, and explore how aesthetic thinking illustrates the state of the question in the academic circles in eighteenth-century Madrid. I conclude the chapter with a synthesis of a distinctly Spanish artistic outlook vis-à-vis music and the grotesque, and propose a system for classification specific to music of late eighteenth-century Spain.

The Aesthetics of Feijoo and Luzán

Benito Jerónimo Feijoo is considered the most influential promoter of the Spanish Enlightenment, initiated there during the last decades of the seventeenth century. His work

¹⁵ Fernando Molina Castillo, “Edición crítica de Le Rivoluzioni del Teatro Musicale Italiano de Esteban de Arteaga” (PhD diss., Universidad de Sevilla, 1998), 22.

would not have been possible without a propitious intellectual environment and the support of the newly instituted Bourbon monarchy. Arguably he, more than anyone, influenced Spanish thought during the eighteenth century.¹⁶ Born in 1676 into a noble, well-to-do family from Ourense, he spent his life far from the courtly environment, dismissing several offers to work in Madrid and spending his academic and religious career in the Benedictine order. Feijoo performed his role as abbot and theology professor at the University of Oviedo, where he conceived his most famous encyclopedic works: *Teatro Crítico Universal* (1726-1740) and *Cartas Eruditas y Curiosas* (1742-1760). Though he eschewed the court and cosmopolitan environment of Madrid, his monastic affiliation did not prevent him from being in contact with the latest intellectual trends, Spanish and European, as his library and his own writings indicate. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of his publications. He enjoyed the favor of a broad audience (his primary intended readers), among whom we also find members of the royal family and important personalities in Spanish society. He was not free from detractors, however, and his tremendous popularity, along with his critical and reformist spirit, often put him at the center of polemics. A good example of this is the polemic caused by the musical essay “La Música en los Templos,”¹⁷ written in 1726, but still being discussed at the end of the century. The exceptional

¹⁶ It is necessary to also recognize the role of a small group of pre-enlightened intellectuals (known as the *Novatores*) working between 1675 and 1725 in the Spanish environment who shared similar interests and adopted similar attitudes (opposition to scholasticism, interest in and support of scientific developments, empiricism and rationalism): Francisco Gutiérrez de los Ríos, sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Juan del Valle Caviedes, Diego de Villarroel Bernardino Rebolledo, Crisóstomo Martínez, or Antonio Enríquez Gómez, among others. For more information, see Antonio Mestre Sanchis, “Los Novatores como etapa histórica,” *Studia historica. Historia moderna* 14 (1996); Alain Bègue and Jean Corizat-Viallet, eds., “La literatura Española en tiempos de los novatores (1675-1726),” *Críticón* 103-104, (2008), <https://doi.org/10.4000/criticon.11219>.

¹⁷ “Music in the Temples”

dissemination of his work in and outside Spain has no precedents for any Spanish author.¹⁸

In his *Letters concerning the stage of Spain written in Madrid during the years 1760 and 1761*,¹⁹ Edward Daniel Clarke (1769-1822), an English traveler, said about Feijoo: “Él solo ha hecho más para formar el gusto de los españoles y para enseñarles a pensar que todos sus predecesores.”²⁰

More than a century after his death, Feijoo’s writings were still resonating in some scholarly corners. In his book *Historia de las Ideas Estéticas en España*²¹ (1883), the philologist, literary critic, and historian Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo (1856-1912) characterizes Feijoo’s discourse as either “romantic” (an assessment not shared by later scholars),²² or one indebted to doctrines of literary freedom circulating in seventeenth-century Spain, alluding to Feijoo’s staunch defense of artistic freedom. Menéndez Pelayo sees artistic and spiritual connections between Spanish aesthetics in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries,²³ and claims that Feijoo’s insubordination to contemporary regulatory trends and “anticipated romanticism” are the “último fruto de la antigua crítica Española,

¹⁸ “Biografía de Benito Jerónimo Feijoo,” Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, accessed February 20, 2024, https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/benito_jeronimo_feijoo/autor_biografia/: the extraordinary dissemination of his works is, according to this source, unique in the editorial history of essay books. *Teatro Crítico*, *Cartas eruditas*, *Ilustración Apologética* and *Justa repulsa de inicuas acusaciones*, as well as the 12-volume collection gathering all of them (1765), were reprinted regularly. Always according to this source, at least 189 editions appeared between 1726 and 1787, and a total of 300.000 copies. This count does not consider clandestine copies, or those appeared in separated installments, or grouped in compilations. For more information, see Benito Jerónimo Feijoo’s biography in www.cervantesvirtual.com, “Vida y Obra.”

¹⁹ Edward Clarke, *Letters Concerning the Spanish Nation: Written at Madrid during the Years 1760 and 1761* (1763) (Londres, 1763).

²⁰ “He alone has made more to form the taste of the Spanish and to teach them how to think than all his predecessors,” cited in https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/benito_jeronimo_feijoo/autor_biografia/

²¹ *History of Aesthetic Ideas in Spain*.

²² Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las Teorías de las Artes en la Literatura Española del Siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 153-154.

²³ A spirit of defense of artistic freedom that links the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

tan bizarra y tan resuelta siempre,”²⁴ linking his work to that of earlier Spanish authors like Lluís Vives (1492-1540) or López Pinciano (1547-1627).²⁵ To Menéndez Pelayo, Feijoo was not singular in his response to and interpretation of Enlightenment aesthetics, rather over the century he was joined by other authors who similarly refused the wholesale adoption of neoclassic regulatory stiffness, opposed “todas las tentativas de reglamentación poética al gusto transpirenaico,”²⁶ and maintained “un romanticismo latente, que empalma dos épocas de la literatura Española, el siglo xvii y el xix, entre los cuales nunca se dio una verdadera solución de continuidad.”²⁷ Menéndez Pelayo alludes to José Antonio Porcel (1715-1794), with classic tendencies but similar ideas, in the *Academia del Buen Gusto*,²⁸ “nacida para reformarle el sentido de los Luzanes y los Montianos.”²⁹

Later authors provide a different interpretation about the origins of Feijoo’s defense of artistic freedom, considering it as the legacy of past aesthetic ideologies rather than an aesthetic related to later romantic impulses. For instance, Helmut C. Jacobs critiques the characterization of Feijoo as romantic precursor, problematizing Menéndez Pelayo’s read of romantic concepts in Feijoo’s writings, and instead locates the so-called proto-romantic tendencies in earlier rather than later traditions. Yet irrespective of how we view Feijoo’s interest in aesthetic freedom and individuality – as manifestation of ongoing baroque impulses (Jacobs) or as a prefiguration of future romantic developments (Menéndez

²⁴ “The last fruit of the old Spanish critic, so bizarre and so determined,” Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España: siglo XVIII* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2008), 114. Digital edition from *Edición nacional de las obras completas de Menéndez Pelayo*. Vol. 2 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1940).

²⁵ Ibid, 114.

²⁶ “all the attempts to poetic regulation in the taste from beyond the Pyrenees.” Ibid, 115.

²⁷ “a latent romanticism, that connects two periods of Spanish literature, the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, between which there was never a real continuity.” Ibid, 115.

²⁸ *Good Taste’s Academy*

²⁹ “born to reform the taste to the Luzanes and the Montianos,” Ibid, 115.

Pelayo), Feijoo's provision for the rupturing of artistic rules is what matters. Thus, regardless of how we situate Feijoo's views on beauty in the history of aesthetic thinking, either way his precepts provide justification for artistic creation working both inside and outside of the frames of neoclassic conventions during this century.³⁰

Benito Jerónimo Feijoo has gone down in history as an innovator because of his defense of a Spanish opening to foreign sciences and ideas, his fight against ignorance and superstition, and a rupture with the predominant scholastic thinking. However, Menéndez Pelayo stresses the fact that he inherits much more than what is apparent from the Spanish tradition. When doing so, he is referring to Feijoo's defense of aesthetic freedom, at odds with neoclassic regulatory ideals: he reclaims, in the name of a superior aesthetic law, an absolute freedom of style that Menéndez Pelayo identifies as a "romantic" trend in Spanish eighteenth-century literature.³¹ Feijoo revendicates the rights of genius against the tyranny "no de las inmutables leyes estéticas, sino de aquel cúmulo de reglillas mecánicas que realmente esterilizan [el verdadero genio]."³² Opposed to the constraint of having to strictly follow practical rules however, he recognizes the existence of those "inmutables leyes estéticas,"³³ similar in its essence to those defended by Luzán, but less constricted.

³⁰ Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 153-154. Jacobs puts Menéndez Pelayo's characterization of Feijoo as an anticipated romantic into context, problematizes the application of Romantic concepts to Feijoo's essay, and finds the ideas that seem to point out to a proto-romanticism rather linked with earlier traditions. Whether or not we consider Feijoo's defense of aesthetic freedom and individuality as connected to nineteenth century aesthetic features, it is a compelling idea to consider the connection between eighteenth-century ruptures of artistic rules, previous baroque impulses, and future romantic developments. As stated above, several authors point to this possibility in the literary field.

³¹ Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España: siglo XVIII* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2008), digital edition from *Edición nacional de las obras completas de Menéndez Pelayo*. Vol. 2 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1940): 114-115.

³² "not of the immutable aesthetic laws, but those heaps of little mechanic rules that sterilize [the real genius]." Ibid, 113.

³³ "Immutable aesthetic rules."

Proportion is a fundamental element to both authors when discussing beauty, and also a constant in aesthetic writings from this period. To Feijoo, proportion plays an essential role in the composition of compound objects and in the relation between the artistic object and the observer. Compound objects cause pleasure even if their parts do not have anything special, as long as these maintain proportion. Proportion has a role in perception as well: in addition to balanced relations between each of these parts, it must exist also between the object and the subject.

Another fundamental concept in Feijoo's aesthetic theories that distinguish him from Luzán's approach is the "no se qué."³⁴ The apparent presence or absence of proportion between the observer and the aesthetic object explain why some things, even having that special "no se qué," can be found pleasurable for some, and not for others. The "no se qué" is something that escapes rationality and provokes sympathy, a proportion that arouses beauty even if the limited rules created by human's narrow understanding do not still intellectually grasp it. Feijoo's defense of artistic freedom, his acknowledgement of aesthetic elements that escape rationality, and his opposition to the harness of Luzán's artistic regulations are present in part of the Spanish critics during the century.³⁵

The other fundamental author to understand Spanish neoclassic aesthetics, Ignacio de Luzán de Suelves y Gurrea (1702-1754),³⁷ stands in some respects in stark opposition to Feijoo's ideas. He spent his youth in Italy, returning to Spain in 1733 and becoming an influential figure in the Spanish capital's intellectual life. He entered the Real Academia

³⁴ "I don't know what."

³⁵ Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 136-165.

³⁷ Ignacio Luzán was an author, historian, and main representative of the literary neoclassical trend in Spain.

de la Lengua³⁸ in 1751³⁹ and held the posts of superintendent of the Casa de la Moneda and treasurer of the Biblioteca Real⁴⁰ after a short stay in Paris as secretary of the Embassy. Luzán represents the principle of order and the adaptation of principles generally admitted abroad, particularly those of Jean-Pierre Crousaz (1663-1750) and Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750).⁴¹ His theories also connect with Enlightenment thought in their moral connotations. In his most influential work, his *Poética*⁴² (1737), Luzán reflects on the concept of beauty from a literary perspective. Following Muratori, he subscribes to the idea of a close relationship between the concepts of beauty, good and truth, even equating beauty and truth. To Luzán, beauty is objective, the result of characteristics that are present in the object. It is perceived rationally, and only addresses reason (*el entendimiento*). It is sweetness (*dulzura*), a different phenomenon, that affects the receptor's emotions. Beauty in general (not poetic beauty) is a combination of variety, unity, regularity, order, and proportion. Poetic beauty is made by "la verdad acompañada y hermoseedada con esas cinco circunstancias o calidades."⁴³ Following Crousaz, Luzán considers three other characteristics able to increase an object's beauty: *grandeza, novedad y diversidad*.⁴⁴ Luzán's ideas about beauty emphasize its rational and objective nature, although he acknowledges a variety of tastes, predispositions, education, etc., that can affect the

³⁸ Royal Academy of Language.

³⁹ He had been previously linked to the Academia since the early 1740s, as honorary member in 1741, and as supernumerario in 1746. He was also member of the Academia de la Historia, Buenas Letras de Barcelona and Bellas Artes de San Fernando.

⁴⁰ Royal Library.

⁴¹ Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España: siglo XVIII* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2008), 115.

⁴² *Poetics*.

⁴³ "truth accompanied and beautified by these five circumstances or qualities," cited in Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 90.

⁴⁴ *Greatness, novelty, and diversity*.

capacity of a subject to experience pleasure from objective beauty (given the fact that beauty affects only reason). According to Jacobs, Luzán's theories remained influential until the 1780s. Antonio Burriel (1727-1798; *Compendio de Arte Poética*,⁴⁵ 1757), Francisco Javier María de Munibe e Idiáquez, count of Peñaflorida (1729-1785; *Del buen gusto en la literatura*,⁴⁶ 1766), and Andrés Piquer y Arrufat (1704-1772; *Lógica Moderna, o Arte de hallar la verdad, y perficionar la razón*,⁴⁷ 1747) are among the authors cited by Jacobs who base their ideas of beauty on Luzán's, re-stating its objective nature, rational reception, and necessity of order and proportion between its components. In the 1780s, some years before the second edition of his *Poética* in 1789, Luzán's ideas were still in force. Its moral implications were emphasized and played an important role in the renovation efforts that affected literature and theater.⁴⁸

Feijoo and Luzán, both advocates for a cultural renovation during the first part of the eighteenth century and seminal in the development of later Spanish aesthetics, represent in some respects two opposing poles in the aesthetic conversation of the Spanish Enlightenment. Feijoo remains a paradoxical and extremely individualist figure, at the same time one of the first and main promoters of the Enlightenment in Spain, and still profoundly baroque (or even romantic?) in his aesthetic beliefs. He was at the same time committed to the intellectual advances of the *Ilustración*,⁴⁹ cosmopolitan in his support of science and his rejection of scholasticism, deeply rational in his condemnation of ignorance and superstition, and baroque in his defense of emotion, imagination, and stylistic freedom.

⁴⁵ *Poetic Art's Compendium*

⁴⁶ *About Good Taste in Literature*

⁴⁷ *Modern Logic, or the Art of Finding the Truth, and Perfect Reason*

⁴⁸ Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 92.

⁴⁹ Spanish Enlightenment

On the contrary, Luzán is the standard bearer of Neoclassicism in Spanish poetics and the ultimate reference in discussions about beauty throughout the century. José Checa Beltrán, working on poetics, states that “Estudiar el concepto de belleza en las poéticas españolas del setecientos se reduce prácticamente a analizar las páginas que a esta cuestión dedica el tratado de Luzán,”⁵⁰ and in a footnote, he adds “Tampoco abundan los estudios sobre la belleza en el resto del panorama editorial español de esta centuria,”⁵¹ mentioning Esteban de Arteaga’s (1747-1799; *Investigaciones filosóficas sobre la belleza ideal considerada como objeto de las artes de imitación*,⁵²1789), José Nicolás de Azara y Perera’s (1730-1804; *Obras de D. Antonio Rafael Mengs, primer pintor de cámara del Rey*, 1780⁵³), and Pedro José Márquez’s (1741-1720; *Sobre lo Bello en General*, 1801) as the most important.⁵⁴ As an example of the prevalence of Luzán’s ideas of beauty, in 1790 Juan Pablo Forner y Segarra (1756-1797; *Rudimentos del Buen Gusto en la Literatura*, 1790)⁵⁵ describes beauty as an objective and immutable quality, perceptible through reason, and directly disagrees with those who think that beauty is “una cosa puramente de gusto y de puro sentimiento.”⁵⁶

⁵⁰ “To study the concept of beauty in Spanish poetics from the eighteenth century is virtually reduced to analyze the pages that Luzán’s treatise dedicates to this topic.” José Checa Beltrán, *Razones Del Buen Gusto: Poética Española Del Neoclasicismo* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998),121.

⁵¹ “Studies on beauty are not abundant in the remaining Spanish editorial landscape from this century”

⁵² *Philosophical Research about Ideal Beauty Considered as Object of Imitative Arts*

⁵³ *Works by D. Antonio Rafael Mengs, King’s First Chamber Painter*, edited by José Nicolás de Azara y Perera.

⁵⁴ José Checa Beltrán, *Razones Del Buen Gusto: Poética Española Del Neoclasicismo* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998),121.

⁵⁵ *Rudiments of Good Taste in Literature*

⁵⁶ “Something just about taste and pure feeling.” Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 118.

Out of the realm of poetics, Helmut Jacobs provides an overview of Spanish theories on the essence of beauty during the second part of the eighteenth century: the proportion among its parts and beauty's pleasurable effects remains a constant. All the theories published during the 1760s and 1770s refer to beauty as being objective, and proportions remain a definite criterion.⁵⁷ In *Arte de pintar*⁵⁸ (1776) Gregorio Mayans y Siscar (1699-1781; Royal librarian, jurist, and historian considered, along with Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, one of the main representatives of the earlier Spanish Enlightenment) echoes Luzán and states that perfect beauty is made of variety, unity, disposition and composition.⁵⁹ Antonio Xavier Pérez y López (1736-1792; jurist, philosopher, and professor) distinguishes and at the same time connects perfection and beauty, and places beauty in the realm of aesthetic perception. Perfection comes from good order and harmony between the parts, all of which share the same goal. Beauty surges from the act of perceiving perfect objects:

“lo que está bien ordenado es perfecto en su linea, porque no siendo otra cosa la perfección que el convenio y armonia de varias partes, o atributos entre si, que se dirigen a un fin y concuerdan en él...qualquiera cosa ordenada es perfecta... de esta [perfección] nace la hermosura, que es el agrado que causa a la vista el conocimiento de una cosa perfecta”⁶⁰

There are other recurrent threads and ideas that arise from writings on aesthetics during this period: authors establish strong connections between beauty and morals (or even religion), emphasize the importance of simplicity and the close relationship between

⁵⁷ Ibid, 96.

⁵⁸ *Art of Painting*

⁵⁹ Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 98.

⁶⁰ “what is well ordered is perfect in its outline, because being perfection nothing but agreement and harmony among various parts, or attributes, moving towards one goal and agreeing on it... any ordered thing is perfect... from this [perfection] beauty arises, that is the pleasure that knowledge of a perfect thing causes to the sense of sight.” Ibid, 111.

beauty and nature, and endorse the limitation of the role of invention. Another constant in aesthetic thought is the pleasurable and positive effect of beauty.

Comments that connect aesthetic concepts with morality and religion identify or associate beauty with social or divine good. Some theorists establish relationships between beauty and virtue (Francisco Mariano Nipho, 1719-1803, journalist), beauty and usefulness (Felix María Samaniego, 1745-1801, writer), or between an objective and inalterable beauty and God (Fray Fernando Cevallos y Mier, 1732-1802, writer, law specialist, catholic priest, 1775).⁶¹ Rafael Mengs (1728-1779, neoclassic painter and theorist) also described a metaphysical conception of beauty: perfect beauty exists only in God,⁶² and beauty in general is a reflection of godly perfection perceived by the senses. In the above-mentioned Antonio Xavier Perez y Lopez's theory of beauty perfection, happiness and beauty are closely interrelated.⁶³

In a letter directed to Antonio Ponz Piquer (1725-1792, historian and painter) and published in 1776, Rafael Mengs described the five main painting styles, that imply different levels of beauty.⁶⁴ In doing so, he makes an important point about the importance of simplicity. The "sublime style" must be "simple, sencillo y austero; a lo menos, grande y grave."⁶⁵ The "style of beauty" is simple and it is limited to the essential. The "gracious style" is "fácil, variado, suave, pero sin menudencias."⁶⁶ The "meaningful or expressive style" is guided by expression, and its example is Rafael. Finally, the "natural style" is that

⁶¹ Dates indicate when they did publish the works supporting this idea.

⁶² Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 101.

⁶³ Ibid, 111.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 104-105.

⁶⁵ "Simple, plain and austere: at least, grand and grave."

⁶⁶ "Easy, varied, soft, but without trivialities."

of the moderns, that do not take the most beautiful from nature anymore, but reflect objects as they are in nature, as in Velázquez. In his choice of examples, Mengs reflects a clear preference for classic styles and emphasizes the essential role of simplicity in the construction of beauty.

Another constant in conversations around beauty is its relationship with nature, something that will be echoed in conversations about musical aesthetics: Antonio de Capmany Surís y de Montpalau (1742-1813, soldier, philosopher, historian, economist, and politician), as well as Luzán, conceives artistic beauty as the result of the imitation and perfection of nature, made of proportions (*Filosofía de la Elocuencia*,⁶⁷ 1777). Mengs also shares this view. According to him, artists take what is most beautiful in nature and combine it in their artistic work, that improves upon nature. This relationship between beauty and nature appears also in other conversations around the idea of natural beauty in the 1780s and 1790s: Mengs mentions that ideal beauty is not to be found in nature, but that ideality would result from the election of the beautiful parts of nature.⁶⁸ To Cándido Melchor María Trigueros Díaz de Lara y Luján (1736-1798, author and playwright), ideal beauty is to be found in nature (as a whole, not in individual beings), and poets attain ideal beauty when they imitate nature in a special way, discovering its secrets.⁶⁹ An anonymous letter published in the *Diario de Madrid*⁷⁰ in 1788 describes the “excellence of ideal beauty” as the election of the best in nature. This anonymous author differentiates between painters that imitates nature as it is, and therefore only appeal to the senses, and those who

⁶⁷ *Philosophy of Eloquence*

⁶⁸ Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 112.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 115.

⁷⁰ *Madrid's newspaper*

treat nature through the lens of ideal beauty: these use reason and *entendimiento* (again, superiority of reason upon senses).⁷¹ Guillermo Lameyra (author of *Disertación sobre la belleza ideal de la pintura*, 1790),⁷² supporter of Meng's ideas, also defines ideal beauty as a selection of perfect elements in nature that the artist puts together to create a perfect work of art.

There seems to be a tendency, at least in Trigueros and Juan Pablo Forner y Segarra (1756-1797, writer), to limit the role of invention or imagination in artistic creation. Trigueros states that invention is to be found not in the individual parts of the compositions, but in the whole of the text. Forner (*Los Gramáticos*, 1782) severely narrows the definition of fiction when he discusses “esas ficciones verosímiles, que saca el Poeta del Tesoro de su imaginación.”⁷³

Finally, as proportion, another idea that makes the unanimity of all authors is that the effect of beauty is always something pleasurable and positive: to Rafael Mengs, the observation of beauty is stimulating to men:

“La belleza tiene una fuerza que arrebatada y encanta: y como es cosa que se percibe por el espíritu, mueve más nuestras almas, aumenta, por decirlo así, sus fuerzas, y hace de suerte que se olviden por un instante de que están encerradas en el estrecho ámbito de los cuerpos.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Diario de Madrid*⁷¹ in 1788 describes the “excellence of ideal beauty” as the election of the best in nature. This anonymous author differentiates between painters that imitates nature as it is, and therefore only appeal to the senses, and those who treat nature through the lens of ideal beauty: these use reason and *entendimiento* (again, superiority of reason upon senses), 116.

⁷² *Dissertation on the ideal beauty in painting*. There is no biographical information about this author.

⁷³ “Those plausible fictions, that the Poet takes from the Treasure of his imagination.” Cited in Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 115.

⁷⁴ “Beauty has a strength that captivates and enchants: and because it is something perceived by the spirit, move more our souls, increases, to put it somehow, its strength, and acts in a way that make them forget for a moment that they are enclosed in the narrow space of their bodies.” Cited in *ibid*, 102.

Beauty has a spiritual component, and the more an object rises in the scale of beauty, the more spiritual it is, and the more spiritual, the more beautiful. As Helmut C. Jacobs signals, this is still a rationalistic conception of beauty: it is objective, perceived by the intellect through the senses, and results in pleasure to the soul. Emotions are subordinate to reason.

An overview of the aesthetic panorama of eighteenth-century Spain, especially during the second half, confirms the strength of the neoclassical foundations supporting Spanish literature – at least as far as the official narrative indicates. Geometrical proportion and rational order have been addressed in the writings of the main actors participating in the aesthetic discussion during the neoclassical period – most of them, if not all, fervent defenders of this enlightened style.

Yet, the same survey reveals “cracks in the stronghold of ideal beauty” according to Paul Illie – fault lines that left room for the appearance of grotesque literary specimens.⁷⁵ The ability to recognize these cracks strengthens our understanding of the eighteenth-century concept of beauty in Spain. It emphasizes important nuances that expand our perception of those examples that inhabited the opposite side of the aesthetic spectrum: the ugly, the monstrous, the grotesque, and the tacky (i.e., lacking good taste). The lack of simplicity and a strong relation to nature in artworks aimed to attain an ideal aesthetic perfection, displaying exaggerated fantasy and invention, and breaking the rules of the neoclassic fortress, led to negative effects and had adverse moral connotations, as far as the official neoclassical narrative was concerned.

⁷⁵ Paul Illie, “Concepts of the grotesque before Goya,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 5 (1976): 191, 195.

Poetics and Musical Aesthetics.

Recent scholarship that engages directly with poetic aesthetics in eighteenth-century Spanish literature complicates this apparently simple scene. Here, scholars allude to lingering baroque tendencies (characterized by formal fragmentation, contrast, exaggeration, asymmetry, spectacularity, lack of naturalness, and the use of bombastic language) and other eighteenth-century literary elements unconnected to this primary aesthetic trend as factors that call into question traditional narratives of and hegemonic neoclassic end of the century. In the same line, Miguel Angel Marin also questions traditional musicological narratives that understand that classic Viennese style was *the* European style during the last third of the eighteenth century, ignoring other musical trends and musical centers (Paris, Mannheim, Berlin, Naples, etc.) and determining the value of alternative repertoires in function of its similitude with this model.⁷⁶

The connection between poetics and musical aesthetics, as well as between other arts, was already explored by some eighteenth-century authors and is especially emphasized in several texts. As Helmut C. Jacobs states, some Spanish authors explored the limits between different arts, and in some cases these boundaries disappear, and the same terminology started to be applied to different fields:

⁷⁶ Miguel Angel Marin, "Joseph Haydn y el Clasicismo vienés en España: influencia: el Clasicismo vienés en España," in *Historia de la Música en España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. José Máximo Leza (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica de España, 2014, 497. In this chapter, Marin also questions the supposed perfection and homogeneity of the so-called viennese Classicism, and historiographic narratives that consider every manifestation that do not conform with the ideals of balance, order, and symmetry as deviations or failed attempts.

“Muchos tratados dedicados a un arte concreto incluyeron reflexiones sobre otras artes y así se llevó a cabo una amplia discusión sobre asuntos y problemas estéticos en la que se traspasaban los límites de las determinadas disciplinas.”⁷⁷

In *La Música en los Templos*, Feijoo establishes clear parallels between the musical decadence he denounces in contemporary musicians and the situation of Spanish poetry:

“¿dónde se encuentra, entre tantas coplas como salen a la luz, una sola, que (dejando otras muchas calidades) sea juntamente natural, y sublime, dulce, y eficaz, ingeniosa, y clara, brillante sin afectación, sonora sin turgencia, armoniosa sin impropiedad, corriente sin tropiezo, delicada sin melindre, valiente sin dureza, hermosa sin afeite, noble sin presunción, conceptuosa sin obscuridad? Casi osaré decir, que quien quisiere hallar un Poeta que haga versos de este modo, le busque en la Región donde habita el Fénix. Por lo menos en España, según todas las apariencias, hoy no hay que buscarle, porque está la Poesía en un estado lastimoso.”⁷⁸

Here, Feijoo denounces the absence of balance, propriety and naturalness, corrupted by affected ornaments that obscure the concept, hide natural beauty, and spoil the text’s persuasive power and its rhetorical organization. These remarks are the same he uses to criticize untasteful contemporary musical practices. Tomás de Iriarte (1750-1791) and Gaspar de Molina y Zaldívar, third Marquis of Ureña, are also examples of this fluidity between different arts as it was displayed in eighteenth-century Spanish critics.

This aesthetic thread (works that challenge these ideals of natural beauty, excessive ornamentation, balance...) is to be found in works of art in different genres. Although

⁷⁷ “Many treatises dedicated to a specific art included reflections on other arts and this way, a wide discussion about aesthetic issues and problems took place in which the boundaries of specific disciplines were trespassed.” Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 73.

⁷⁸ “where can you find, among all the *coplas* (poems) that come to light, just one, that (leaving aside many other qualities) is at the same time natural, sublime, sweet, efficient, ingenious, clear, brilliant without affectation, resounding without turgidity, harmonious without impropriety, common without tumble, delicate without affected scrupulousness, brave without harness, beautiful without ornaments, noble without conceit, witty without obscurity? I will dare to say to anyone that wants to find a Poet writing in this way to look for it in the region where the Phoenix lives. At least in Spain, as it seems, today you shouldn’t look for him, because Poetry is in a piteous state.”; Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, “La Música de los Templos,” in *Teatro crítico universal, tomo primero* (1726; reis., Dueñas, Palencia: El Parnasillo, Simancas Ediciones, 2005), 44-45.

excursions outside of the realm of the *galant* and tasteful may seem unique in the musical panorama of this time, dominated by the neoclassic return to classical and Renaissance ideals of beauty, they are not so shocking as part of the cultural environment of mid and late eighteenth-century Madrid.⁷⁹ Painters like Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1728) and Luis Paret y Alcázar (1746-1799), such authors as Diego de Torres Villarroel (1694-1770), Father José Francisco de Isla (1703-1781), and José Cadalso (1741-1782), Ramón de la Cruz's *sainetes*, *tonadilla* artists, composers Cayetano (1744-1798) and Francisco Brunetti (1765-1834), and popular entertainments like the *figurones*, are all at some point suspicious of breaking the rules of the dominant European taste of their time. Transgressive, parodic, absurd, or extravagant artistic expressions were part of the landscape of the city already during the previous century, especially in literary works. These unconventional literary manifestations proliferated after 1700 and increased exponentially towards the end of the century, coexisting with the rise and establishment of enlightened thought and neoclassic aesthetics. However strong these neoclassical conventions were, or even as a response to their rigidity, they did not prevent the occasional appearance of transgressive manifestations that gradually crippled the stronghold (image taken from Paul Illie) of neoclassic aesthetic principles about beauty and good taste. According to Paul Illie and other authors,⁸⁰ this proliferation of deformed and deviant forms was to some extent induced by the same theorists that condemned them.

“Theorists legitimized its existence [the existence of deformations that kept appearing erratically in literary practice] by recognizing it to be a subject of discussion...they called attention to these errors [ugliness, incongruity] with a

⁷⁹ Boccherini's unique musical style and unconventional traits cannot be attributed exclusively (or even primarily) to the Spanish environment., but rather to the combination of this with his Italian upbringing and his European experiences as a violoncellist.

⁸⁰ Fernando Molina Castillo, Meyer. H. Abrams.

consistency that will become apparent. Had they ignored the ugly or reduced its visibility, public awareness of deviant forms might have been weak.”⁸¹

A closer look into Spanish literary aesthetic dynamics during this period reveals a constant tension between baroque values and innovating neoclassic impulses, and complicates traditional, clear-cut narratives about the classic/neoclassic period. It also sheds light to our understanding of artistic creations that fall out of conventional categories. In his book *Razones del Buen Gusto: Poética Española del neoclasicismo*,⁸² José Checa Beltrán describes the situation of literary production in Spain at the beginning of the century as pathetic and lacking quality, as a result of a sterile continuation of baroque taste that lacked originality and brilliance. Consequently, two opposed factions appeared: the *neoclásicos*, in favor of restoring the classical taste, and the *tradicionalistas* or *casticistas*, in favor of continuing baroque aesthetics. This opposition between tradition and novelty, exalted patriotism and cosmopolitanism, bad taste and good taste, *novatores* and traditionalists, etc.,⁸³ will be present during the entire century but is most pronounced during the first part. Checa Beltrán states that:

“la poética neoclásica española, al tiempo que es heredera de la tradición clasicista de todos los tiempos, se diseña también como reacción contra el ‘mal gusto’ barroco de su tiempo.”⁸⁴

The consolidation of Enlightenment ideologies in the Spanish government during the second part of the century entails the progressive consolidation of neoclassic aesthetics.

⁸¹ Paul Illie, *The Grotesque Aesthetic in Spanish Literature: from the Golden Age to Modernism* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic monographs, 2009), 77.

⁸² José Checa Beltrán, *Razones del Buen Gusto: Poética Española del neoclasicismo* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Filología, 1998), 31.

⁸³ Ibid, 16. Checa Beltrán rejects the characterization of all cosmopolitan stances as antipatriotic and adds nuances to this basic classification.

⁸⁴ “Spanish neoclassical poetics, along with being heir to the classicist tradition of all times, are also designed as a reaction against the baroque “bad taste” of its time.” Ibid, 15.

At the end of the century, the neoclassic trend triumphs, but it also opens up and accepts some of the baroque elements and values. This situation is quite paradoxical, as Checa notes: modernity means for the neoclassics a return to Classicism, Antiquity, and Spanish Renaissance models. On the other hand, traditionalists support baroque taste (a relatively new movement), individualist stances, and isolationist views. Luzán, archetype of neoclassic poetics, appeals to Aristotle as an authority, and the “razón natural”⁸⁵ to legitimize his views, and Mayans accuse defenders of baroque taste of novelty, “odiosa en las artes ya establecidas”⁸⁶ This perception of the continuation of baroque elements into the age of Neoclassicism as a novelty (desirable or not) is somehow corresponding to Menendez Pidal’s characterization of Feijoo as at the same time romantic and heir to earlier Spanish traditions.

Although these opposed aesthetic stances develop during the second part of the century and baroque taste loses terrain faced with the vitality of the enlightened/neoclassic reforming project, this dialectic still underlies and influences many artistic phenomena during the reigns of Charles III and Charles IV (1759-1808). A deeper knowledge of Madrid’s cultural context during this period, almost exactly coinciding with Boccherini’s stay in the Spanish capital city (1769-1805), reveals striking parallels between musical traits in some of his works, contemporary aesthetic polemics, and literary trends at the time. Boccherini’s music contains traits from both stances and reflects the tensions between the two factions among Spanish polemicists: the balance, symmetry, and proportion of neoclassicism (*galant* or classic features) coexists in his music with the capricious

⁸⁵ “Natural reason.” Cited in *ibid*, 35.

⁸⁶ “Odious in already established arts.” Cited in *ibid*, 35.

ornamentation of the baroque, a marked individualism, and a deep emotional inclination more akin to baroque aesthetics and values. The use of two and three movements instead of four, the melancholy, the asymmetry, and the many thematic materials break conventions of traditional sonata form.⁸⁷

Spanish sources during this period reveal how musical and poetic aesthetics run parallel to each other, in some respects. We also observe an increase in the number of texts dedicated to music, mainly treatises and texts derived from the many musical polemics that mark this century, and a continuous tension between conservative and innovative impulses that characterize both the literary and musical panorama in Enlightened Spain. However, conservative and innovative stances took different shapes for musical and literary aesthetes. Also, conservative musical critics are almost restricted to religious music. While neoclassic ideals share most elements in music and literature, conservative musical positions defended a rather rigid observation of seventeenth-century counterpoint against the Italianization/verticalization of music that justified the corruption of some traditional rules, and eventually led to the new *galant*, *empfindsamer*, and classic conventions. In literature, conservative tendencies that endorse a continuation of baroque taste embrace a greater freedom in form and content and oppose regulations that limit the use of ornamental artifacts, fantastic arguments, and virtuosic uses of language. These are the elements that the main musical aesthetes of the period (Feijoo and Iriarte) condemn in contemporary musical practices: a lack of balance and proportion, the abuse in the use of ornaments, and virtuosic displays.

⁸⁷ Some of the ways Boccherini breaks with classic ideas in his quartets and quintets are well described in Marín's program notes: Miguel Ángel Marín, "En torno a la Tirana," program notes for Cuarteto Quiroga, *Cuartetos y Retratos, Boccherini y Goya*, February 10, Fundación Juan March, Madrid: 18.

Musical polemics during the first part of the century revolve mainly around the observance of counterpoint rules and are led by *maestros de capilla*. The questions that underly this period's musical discussions revolve around the necessity (or not) of following the rules of art, and the associated questioning about the goal of music (should it be governed by reason or by the senses?). These topics are not unconnected from the discussions around musical aesthetics in the rest of Europe. In any case, the goal for both conservatives and "progressive" musicians was almost invariably to attain a good harmony, a pleasurable sound, a gratifying experience. In sum, although the aesthetic models of conservative thought differed in the musical and literary fields (musical conservatives did not defend artistic freedom in the same way as literary conservatives did), both disciplines experienced the tension and coexistence between old and new tendencies. Also, official discourses and the most disseminated authors that engaged with musical aesthetics during the eighteenth century (especially when referring to secular music) although mainly sharing the aesthetic ideals of neoclassic poetics, leave also room for a certain degree of artistic freedom and describe musical realities that deviate from the most rigid interpretations of neoclassic regulations.

Three authors act as aesthetic landmarks during the eighteenth century and encompass the main musical aesthetic ideals present during the Spanish enlightenment in the second part of the century: Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, Tomás de Iriarte, and Esteban de Arteaga (1747-1799). My reading of these authors focuses on their understanding of aesthetic conventions as much as in their descriptions of unconventional musical manifestations.

Benito Jerónimo Feijoo's longstanding engagement with music in his writings demonstrates a solid musical knowledge, awareness of contemporary music practices, and the preeminent role he attributed to this among other artistic disciplines. In 1753 he states that:

“la Música, pero que juntamente entre todas las Artes es la más noble, más excelente, la más conforme a la naturaleza racional, y la más apta a hermanarse con la virtud.”⁸⁸

This perspective, particularly the moral character he attributed to music, illustrates his conservative position, accentuated in his earlier works. Antonio Martín Moreno attributes his extraordinary influence among Spanish musicians to his outstanding position as the main intellectual figure during the first part of the century, as well as to his positive relationship with the monarchy.⁸⁹

Feijoo's most comprehensive and influential discourses were written in 1726, 1734 and 1753, in separate volumes of his *Teatro Crítico Universal*⁹⁰ and *Cartas Eruditas y Curiosas*,⁹¹ encyclopedic enterprises in which he discusses the most various topics and presented his sometimes polemic opinions. These discourses combine conservative elements regarding the preeminence of older musical Spanish traditions and the moral function of music (especially in 1726) with more advanced positions that coincide with his stance in other fields, defending artistic freedom and aligned with more advanced aesthetic trends. However, it is difficult to know which were the limits of this artistic freedom for

⁸⁸ “Music, among all the arts is the most noble, the most excellent, the most in accordance to rational nature, and the most apt to couple with virtue.” Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, “El Deleite de la Música acompañado de la virtud, hace en la tierra el noviciado del Cielo,” in *Cartas Eruditas y Curiosas, IV*: (1753), 3. <https://filosofia.org/bjf/bjfc401.htm>.

⁸⁹ Antonio Martín Moreno, *Historia de la Música Española 4: siglo XVIII*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2006), 419.

⁹⁰ *Critic Universal Theater*

⁹¹ *Erudite and Curious Letters*

Feijoo, as his models are still conservative musicians, and he refers mainly to religious music. According to Antonio Moreno, *Musica en los Templos* is the one conservative discourse and later he changed this perspective. In my opinion, there are hints to his defense of artistic freedom already in 1726, and his 1753 discourse is also very conservative, as he defends the use of music in the private sphere essentially only for veneration purposes.

His most reactionary discourse, *Música en los Templos*, appeared in 1726 in the first volume of his *Teatro Crítico Universal*. Traditionally, this discourse has gone down in history as a bitter critique against the introduction of Italian styles and secular instruments and genres in religious music, and in general as a critique regarding what he saw as the decadence of Spanish music during this period. This discourse was part of an ongoing polemic regarding the modernization of religious music,⁹² and there were both musicians that supported Feijoo's comments and those who reacted to his negative comments arguing in favor of variety and the preeminence of the senses (the ear) over reason (the rules) in questions related to music.

Beyond Feijoo's preference for counterpoint and seventeenth-century music and his disapproval of chromaticism, instruments, and theatrical music, it is worthwhile for the consideration of unconventional musical expressions to highlight other statements that offer further details about his aesthetic ideas.

At the beginning of *La Música en los Templos* Feijoo not only criticizes the introduction of theatrical music in religious services, but he also establishes a clear moral

⁹² Antonio Martín Moreno, "Historia de la Música Española 4: siglo XVIII, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2006), 420-421. Martín Moreno explains how, previous to Feijoo's "La Música en los Templos," Pedro Paris y Royo wrote a memorial to the king asking for the exclusion of "las Arietas, Recitados, Cantinelas, Violines y Clarines" from religious chant (canto eclesiástico).

hierarchy between religious and theatrical music and condemns secular music for its ability to arouse passions: “antes era la Música obsequio de las Deidades; luego se hizo lisonja de las pasiones.”⁹³

Feijoo is particularly hard with theatrical music and concerned by its heightened efficiency in moving the audience’s passions:

“Y como si no bastara para apear las almas ver en la Comedia pintado el atractivo del deleite con los más finos colores de la Retórica, y con los más ajustados números de la Poesía, por hacer más activo el veneno, se confeccionaron la Retórica, y la Poesía con la Música.”⁹⁴

He also notes that different modes, that move different passions, are used in church and in theater. His concern throughout this discourse is one mainly of moral and not aesthetic connotations:

“pues de los dos males en que puede caer la Música Eclesiástica, menos inconveniente es que sea escándalo de las orejas, que el que sea incentivo de los vicios.”⁹⁵

This opinion had changed drastically by 1753.

But what musical aspects, specifically, is Feijoo signaling as morally dangerous, and what is his description of non-threatening and good music? Are these aspects contained only on the music itself, or is he also addressing performance practices? How translatable or influential can Feijoo’s statements be to chamber and instrumental music? Although this specific text addresses only religious music, its repercussions were such that it is reasonable

⁹³ “...in the past, music was a present to the Gods; later on it became flattery of passions.” Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, “La Música de los Templos,” in *Teatro Crítico Universal, Tomo primero* (1726; reis., Dueñas, Palencia: El Parnasillo, Simancas Ediciones, 2005), 24.

⁹⁴ “as if it was not enough with stinking the souls to see in Comedy the attractive of delight painted with the finest colors of Rhetoric and the most adjusted numbers of Poetry, to make more active the poison, Rhetoric came together with Music.” Ibid, 24-25.

⁹⁵ “among the wrongs that Ecclesiastic Music can commit, it is less inconvenient to be scandal to the ears, than to be an encouragement to vices.” Ibid, 33.

to surmise that they affected a wider spectrum of audience, composers and performers, and that music outside the religious sphere could also have been somehow shaped by Feijoo's understanding of musical taste as reflected in *La Música en los Templos*. As Martín Moreno puts it:

“La influencia del polémico discurso no quedó sólo en la controversia que originó en las mismas fechas de su publicación, sino que prácticamente todos los escritos musicales posteriores que aparecen a lo largo del siglo aluden de una forma más o menos velada al mismo.”⁹⁶

For Feijoo, good music should be:

“gustosísima, y juntamente noble, majestuosa, grave, que excite a los oyentes a afectos de respeto, y devoción. O por mejor decir, la Música más alegre, y deliciosa de todas, es aquella que induce una tranquilidad dulce en la alma, recogiéndola en sí misma, y elevándola, digámoslo así, con un género de raptó extático sobre su propio cuerpo, para que pueda tomar vuelo el pensamiento hacia las cosas divinas.”⁹⁷

Music written for the church should move only those affects that benefit spiritual devotion, displaying majesty and decorum. It should express noble affects, be natural, and escape from affectation. Feijoo misses the “old Spanish gravity,” corrupted by the new Italian style.

He denounces the use of chromaticism for its harmful effect in the listener's spirits, but at the same time he reveals his resolute commitment with artistic freedom and his trust in some kind of genius capable of producing a good effect even when using it:

⁹⁶ “The influence of this polemic discourse was not limited to the controversy it originated in the same dates of its publication, practically all later musical writings throughout this century allude in a more or less veiled way to it.” Antonio Martín Moreno, *Historia de la Música Española 4: siglo XVIII*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2006), 423.

⁹⁷ “...very pleasant and at the same time noble, majestic, grave, music that excites the listener's to affects of respect and devotion. Or to say it better, the most joyful and delicious music of them all is the one that induces a sweet calm in the soul, folding it in itself, and elevating it, to say it somehow, with a genre of ecstatic rapture above its own body, so thoughts can fly towards divine things.” Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, “La Música de los Templos,” in *Teatro crítico universal, tomo primero* (1726; reis., Dueñas, Palencia: El Parnassillo, Simancas Ediciones, 2005), 32-33.

“No hay duda que estos tránsitos, manejados con sobriedad, arte, y genio, producen un efecto admirable, porque pintan las afecciones de la letra con mucho mayor viveza, y alma que las progresiones del diatónico puro, y resulta una Música mucho más expresiva, y delicada. Pero son poquísimos los Compositores cabales en esta parte, y esos poquísimos echan a perder a infinitos, que, queriendo imitarlos, y no acertando con ello, forman con los extraños que introducen, una Música ridícula...”⁹⁸

This belief in the ability of a reduced number of artists to break the rules and still deliver products in compliance with the higher aesthetic standards remains a constant throughout his career and is emphasized in later publications.

Far from keeping the discussion in a strictly philosophical level, Feijoo points out to very specific concerns in the way music from his time is composed and performed. He criticizes the use of inappropriate and violent ornaments, an increase in speed (the use of *tricorcheas* and *cuatricorcheas*, that he considers hyperbolic and that hinder the comprehension of harmony, creating confusion), the inclusion of extravagant leaps, excessive complexity in the composition of sonatas (“y en las mismas manos, en que una sonata de fácil ejecución suena con suavidad, y dulzura, la que es de arduo manejo, sólo parece greguería.”),⁹⁹ the abandonment of counterpoint and the excessive freedom and fantasy in the introduction of new ideas,¹⁰⁰ the introduction of an excessive number of affects in a piece (he criticizes Sebastian Duron for this), and those who compose for

⁹⁸ “Surely those movements, managed with sobriety, art, and genius, produce an admirable effect, because they paint the affections of the lyrics more vividly and with more soul than the progressions of the pure diatonic, and the result is a much more pure and delicate music. But just a few composers are reasonable in this part, and they corrupt infinite others that, wanting to imitate them, and not getting it right, make with the accidental they introduce a ridiculous music...” Ibid, 29.

⁹⁹ “And in the same hands, in which a sonata of easy execution sounds softly and with sweetness, the one that is of complicated handling, seems only turmoil.” Ibid, 36.

¹⁰⁰ “La tercera distinción está en la libertad que hoy se toman los Compositores para ir metiendo en la Música todas aquellas modulaciones, que les van ocurriendo a la fantasía, sin ligarse a imitación, o tema.” (“The third difference lays in the freedom that nowadays Composers take to introduce in the Music all modulations, that occur to their fantasy, without tying to imitation, or theme.”) Ibid, 37-38.

excessively high ranges in the violin, as it moves “una viveza como pueril en nuestros espíritus,”¹⁰¹ something inappropriate in religious music.

Feijoo also addresses inappropriate performance practices among singers and instrumentalists: the use of voice inflections characteristic of theatrical spectacles, specifically the use of glissandos, and the habit of playing faster than what the piece demands, and in a way that is not adequate for the affect. Accuracy in cleanness is an essential element to a satisfactory performance:

“¿Qué oídos bien condicionados podrán sufrir en canciones sagradas aquellos quiebro amatorios, aquellas inflexiones lascivas, que contra las reglas de la decencia, y aun de la Música, enseñó el demonio a las Comediantas, y estas a los demás Cantores? Hablo de aquellos leves desvíos, que con estudio hace la voz del punto señalado; de aquellas caídas desmayadas de un punto a otro, pasando, no sólo por el semitono, mas también por todas las comas intermedias: tránsitos, que ni caben en el Arte, ni los admite la naturaleza.”¹⁰²

Eight years after *La Música en los Templos* Feijoo published a discourse that signifies a drastic turn in the author’s aesthetic stance. *El no sé qué* came out in 1734, in the sixth volume of *Teatro Crítico Universal*. It is a powerful statement in defense not only of artistic freedom, but also of the irrational nature of taste. Helmut Jacobs asserts that, because of its wide dissemination, it helped to revive the discussion about this concept in the eighteenth century.¹⁰³ The essay reflects on the reasons why in some cases we find

¹⁰¹ “Some kind of childish liveliness in our spirits.” Ibid, 37.

¹⁰² “What able ears could suffer in sacred songs those amatory ornaments, those lascivious inflections, that against the rules of decency, and even of Music, the devil taught to the comedic Actresses, and these to the rest of Cantors? I am talking about those slight drifts (or detours?) that the voice makes purposely away from the stipulated note; about those fainted falls from one note to the other, passing not only through the semitone, but also through all the intermediate comas: transitions, that do not have any room in Art, nor are they admitted by Nature either.” Ibid, 28.

¹⁰³ Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 133-134. As explained by Jacobs, the concept of the *no sé qué* is present since Latin antiquity in the forms of *nescio quid* and *gratia*, and appears in Spanish sources as early as 1499, being treated subsequently by several Spanish authors (Baltasar Gracián in the seventeenth century, José Francisco de Isla, the count of Peñaflorida, Guillermo Lameyra and Antonio Acislo Palomino in the eighteenth century, among others.)

more pleasure in objects that do not conform with beauty ideals than those that are adorned with all the perfections of beauty. This *no se qué*, present in every art, is called *manera* in painting. It is described as “una gracia oculta, indefinible, que no está sujeta a regla alguna, y sólo depende del particular genio del artífice.”¹⁰⁴

Feijoo begins by explaining *what* constitutes the essence of aesthetic pleasure and continues by discussing the more intricate topic of *why* aesthetic pleasure can be found in some objects that do not conform to aesthetic conventions. Three elements explain what specifically is found as pleasurable in a voice: *el descanso de la voz*,¹⁰⁵ explained as the grace of singing effortlessly, *sin afán ni fatiga alguna*;¹⁰⁶ good tuning and good ornamentation that fits the music and the text (*gorgeos*).¹⁰⁷

El *no se qué* is defined as a satisfactory proportion between the aesthetic object and the recipient's senses.¹⁰⁸ It is here that Feijoo's defense of the artist's independence from aesthetic conventions comes into play: symmetry and proportion are still considered essential to beauty, but he admits the possibility of a wider range of accepted ideals of proportion that have not been considered by conventional beauty standards. Talented artists are able, according to Feijoo, to create artistic objects that defying aesthetic standards of beauty, are still able to create beauty and provoke aesthetic pleasure.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ “a hidden grace, indefinable, not bound to any rule, and only depends on the particular genius of the artist.” Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, “El no sé qué,” in *Teatro crítico universal, tomo primero* (1726; reis., Dueñas, Palencia: El Parnasillo, Simancas Ediciones, 2005), 153.

¹⁰⁵ *The voice's rest*

¹⁰⁶ *Without any effort or fatigue*

¹⁰⁷ (*Gurgling*)

¹⁰⁸ “a la facultad perceptiva, o al temple de su órgano” (“to the perceptive ability, or to his organ's tune”). Helmut C. Jacobs, *Belleza y Buen Gusto: las teorías de las artes en la literatura española del siglo XVIII*, trans. Beatriz Galán (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2001), 158.

¹⁰⁹ “la simetría y recta disposición de las partes hace la principal, a veces la única hermosura de los objetos. Por consiguiente, ésta no es aquella gracia misteriosa a quien por ignorancia o falta de penetración se aplica el no sé qué. Respondo que aunque los hombres entienden esto en alguna manera, lo entienden con notable limitación, porque sólo llegan a percibir una proporción determinada, comprendida en angostísimos límites

“Y este no sé qué, digo yo, que es una determinada proporción de las partes en que ellos no habían pensado, y distinta de aquélla que tienen por única, para el efecto de hacer el rostro grato a los ojos...¿En que ignoraba esos preceptos el artífice que le ideó? Nada menos. Antes bien en que sabía más y era de más alta idea que los artífices ordinarios. Todo lo hizo según regla; pero según una regla superior, que existe en su mente, distinta de aquellas comunes, que la escuela enseña. Proporción, y grande, simetría, y ajustadísima, hay en las partes de esa obra; pero no es aquella simetría que regularmente se estudia, sino otra más elevada, a donde arribó por su valentía la sublime idea del arquitecto.”¹¹⁰

The idea of the *no se qué* is particularly well suited to music. Feijoo claims that the body of musical rules is incomplete and minuscule. Only highly talented composers understand the limitations of this system and bypass it, creating harmonious and pleasurable music in spite of these limitations. To be considered good, music must be pleasant to the ear. That is the supreme rule to judge musical compositions.¹¹¹

o reglas; siendo así, que hay otras innumerables proporciones distintas de aquélla que perciben.” (“Symmetry and the correct disposition of parts make the main, sometimes the only beauty of objects. Therefore, this is not that mysterious grace to whom by ignorance or lack of penetration we apply the *no se qué*. I respond that even if men understand this somehow, they do understand it with notable limitation, because they only get to perceive a specific proportion, comprised between the very narrow limits or rules; being that there are other innumerable proportions different to the one they perceive.”). Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, “El no sé qué,” in *Teatro crítico universal, tomo primero* (1726; reis., Dueñas, Palencia: El Parnasillo, Simancas Ediciones, 2005), 160.

¹¹⁰ “And this *no sé qué*, I say, that is a specific proportion between the different parts they had not thought about, and different from the one they have as the only one, to make the face pleasant to the eyes... How did the maker who conceived it ignored those precepts? Nothing less than that. Rather he knew more and was more intelligent than the ordinary makers. He did everything according to rule; but according to a greater rule, that exists in his mind, different from the common ones, that school teaches. There is proportion, and great, and symmetry, very adjusted, in the parts of that work; but it is not the symmetry that we usually study, but a superior one, where the sublime idea of the architect arrived because of his bravery.” Ibid, 160.

¹¹¹ “En nada se hace tan perceptible esta máxima como en las composiciones músicas. Tiene la música un sistema formado de varias reglas que miran como completo los profesores; de tal suerte, que en violando alguna de ellas, condenan la composición por defectuosa. Sin embargo, se encuentra una u otra composición que falta a esta o aquella regla, y que agrada infinito aun en aquel pasaje donde falta a la regla. ¿En qué consiste esto? En que el sistema de reglas, que los músicos han admitido como completo, no es tal; antes muy incompleto y diminuto. Pero esta imperfección del sistema, sólo la comprenden los compositores de alto numen, los cuales alcanzan que se pueden dispensar aquellos preceptos en tales o tales circunstancias, o hallan modo de circunstanciar la música de suerte, que, aun faltando aquellos preceptos, sea sumamente armoniosa y grata. Entre tanto, los compositores de clase inferior claman que aquello es una herejía; pero clamen lo que quisieren, que el juez supremo y único de la música es el oído. Si la música agrada al oído y agrada mucho, es buena y bonísima, y siendo bonísima, no puede ser absolutamente contra las reglas, sino contra unas reglas limitadas y mal entendidas. Dirán que está contra arte; mas, con todo, tiene un *no sé qué* que la hace parecer bien. Y yo digo, que ese *no sé qué* no es otra cosa que estar hecha según arte, pero según un arte superior al suyo. Cuando empezaron a introducirse las *falsas* en la música,

In the last of his discourses discussed here, Feijoo returns to a moral conception of music that shapes his musical ideas. “El Deleite de la Música acompañado de la virtud, hace en la tierra el noviciado del Cielo”¹¹² appeared in 1753 in the fourth volume of *Cartas Eruditas y Curiosas*. This text is dedicated to justifying the spiritual virtues of practicing music in a private environment. Most of the ideas contained in this discourse had already been stated in previous essays. The moral consideration of music is stated at the beginning of the discourse, when the author manifests his preference for music among the other arts because of its highest nobility, its greater correspondence with human nature, and its greatest honesty or moral utility.

This essay shows strong links with older traditions that separate music into allegorical or philosophical music, made by God and dedicated just to His veneration, and music created by the senses. I will only discuss this last type of music, although it is worth to point at the conservative tone that tinges some of Feijoo’s comments, and at the same time the more progressive position he takes at other moments, more in line with

yo sé que, aun cubriéndolas oportunamente, clamaría la mayor parte de los compositores, que eran contra arte; hoy ya todos las consideran según arte; porque el arte que antes estaba diminutísimo, se dilató con este descubrimiento.” (“There is no other thing where this principle is so perceptible as in musical compositions. Music has a system made with various rules that professors observe as complete; in such way, that if one of them is violated, they condemn the composition as defective. However, there are compositions that miss this or that rule, and that pleases even in the passage where the rule is missing. Why does this happen? Because the system of rules, that musicians have admitted as complete, is in fact not complete; it is rather very incomplete and minuscule. But this imperfection of the system, only very talented composers understand it, and they understand that those precepts can be omitted in some circumstances, or they find the way to examine the music in a way that, even lacking those precepts, it is very harmonious and pleasant. Meanwhile, inferior composers call out that it is a heresy; but they can scream as much as they want, music’s supreme and only judge is the ear. If music pleases the ear and pleases very much, it is good and very good, and being very good, it cannot be absolutely against the rules, but against limited and badly understood rules. They will say it goes against art; but, even that way, it has a *no se qué* that makes it look good. And I say, that that *no se qué* is just being made according to some art, according to an art that is superior to their. When *falsas* (dissonances) started to be introduced, I know that, even covering them correctly, most composers would claim, that it is against art; today everyone consider those according to art; because the art that was minuscule, was expanded with this discovery.”) Ibid, 161-162.

¹¹² “Music’s Delight Accompanied by Virtue, build in Earth Heaven’s Novitiate”

contemporary aesthetic trends as seen in Luzán and other neoclassical authors. Something that, although not at all an idea new to the eighteenth century, links this discourse strongly to the mood and musical theories of his time and also to those of the second part of the century, is this emphasis on the correspondence between body and soul. These ideas are in accordance with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theories of the affects and especially valid in Boccherini's environment, as explained by Elizabeth Le Guin.¹¹³ Feijoo discusses the healing powers of music and concludes that "lo que no se le puede negar, que es su conocida actividad contra el humor melancólico."¹¹⁴

A new aesthetic idea that lines up with the taste trends that appear during the first part of the century and oppose baroque aesthetics is the importance he concedes to naturalness:

"Lo natural siempre va delante de lo que no lo es, y lo más natural delante de lo que es menos: lo que se verifica en lo perteneciente al gusto, como en todas las demás cosas."¹¹⁵

However, older ideas are still present in this discourse. Twenty-seven years after *La Música en los Templos*, Feijoo insists on the main goal of music being to attain virtue

¹¹³ Elizabeth Le Guin, "A Melancholy Anatomy," in *Boccherini's Body: an Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press, 2005), 160-207.

¹¹⁴ "What can't be denied, is Music's renowned activity against the melancholic humor." Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, "El Deleite de la Musica acompañado de la Virtud, hace de la Tierra el Noviciado del Cielo," en *Cartas Eruditas, y Curiosas...* Tomo IV, Carta Primera, párrafo 38: 21. <https://filosofia.org/bjf/bjfc401.htm>.

¹¹⁵ "En aquella primera edad del mundo reinaba el gusto más conforme a la inspiración de la naturaleza; porque aún no le habían alterado la preocupación, el capricho, el fastidio de lo mejor, o el mal ejemplo del gusto extravagante de quien ocupase algún alto puesto: sucediendo en la infancia del mundo lo que en la infancia del hombre, en la cual el apetito movido sólo del impulso natural se va a aquel alimento más proporcionado a la complexión, y el gusto al más dulce; hasta que en las siguientes edades la saciedad, el fastidio de lo que es en sí más gustoso, o el contagio de la ajena extravagancia, conducen a lo agrio, a lo amargo, a lo austero, a lo picante." ("In that first age of the world a taste more in accordance to the inspiration of nature governed; because worry, caprice, boredom of the best, or the bad example set by the extravagant taste of someone in a high position had not yet altered it: happening in the infance of the world as in men's infancy, when the appetite moved only by natural impulses is drawn to the nourishment that is more proportioned, and taste to the sweetest; until in later ages satiety, annoyance with what is more delicious, or contagion from else's extravagance, lead to what is sour, bitter, austere, spicy.") Ibid, paragraph 22.

by removing the passions (rage, lust, ambition, greed, arrogance). Music should bring the soul to a sweet temperance that corrects the negativity of strong passions. This idea also stands in stark opposition with one of the key principles of baroque artistic expression: to move the affects. For Feijoo, music's ideal is to neutralize the passions that Baroque music tries to arouse and agitate to the extreme.

Feijoo is in agreement with the next author I need to discuss extensively here, Tomás de Iriarte, and displays his more enlightened side when referring to the moral utility of music: this sweetness of music softens the character of men and persuades them to live honestly and rationally, and at the same time moves them to come together and promotes conviviality.¹¹⁶

Feijoo still awards a fundamental role to performance in the consideration of the qualities of music:

“los mayores, o menores efectos de la Música, no sólo penden de la mayor, o menor excelencia del arte, mas también de la mayor, o menor destreza del Artífice: no sólo de la calidad de la composición, mas también del modo de la ejecución.”¹¹⁷

His remarks are not as specific as in *La Música en los Templos*, and it seems like he is alluding, in a veiled way, to concepts like the *no se qué* or grace:

“Se ve muchas veces, como yo lo he visto, que un mismo tañido, y en el mismo instrumento, ejecutado por una mano, hechiza: y ejecutado por otra, desagrada. En el modo de herir la cuerda hay una latitud inmensa entre el más perfecto, y el más

¹¹⁶ “suavizando los genios de unos hombres agrestes, de brutales inclinaciones, y costumbres, los había atraído a un modo de vivir honesto, propio de racionales; y el segundo, usando del mismo medio, a esos mismos hombres, que antes, disociados unos de otros, vivían en las cavernas de los montes como fieras, había movido a unirse amigablemente en las poblaciones.” (“softening the temper of rough men, with savage tendencies, and habits, had drawn them to an honest lifestyle, appropriate to rational men; and the second, using the same means, had moved those same men that prior, dissociated ones from the others, lived in the mountain's caverns like beasts, to join friendly in villages.”). Ibid, paragraph 29.

¹¹⁷ “Music's greater or smaller effects do not only depend on the greater or smaller excellence of art, but also on the greater or smaller dexterity of the Performer; not only on the quality of the composition, but also on the manner of execution.”). Ibid, paragraph 41.

imperfecto, aunque toda esa latitud consta de unas diferencias como indivisibles, cuya recíproca distinción no perciben la vista, ni el oído, ni el entendimiento. Asimismo, observar, o no observar aquel tiempo preciso, y como momentáneo, que es el justo de la pulsación, da, o quita la gracia a la Música.”¹¹⁸

Finally, Feijoo seems to have overcome the aversion to modern music he proclaims in 1726, and considers the quality of music to be determined by its ability to move the affects towards the desirable ones:

“Acaso, bien considerado todo, quedarán iguales las dos Músicas, o por lo menos no se hallará alguna importante prueba de superioridad de la una respecto de la otra, ni en la perfección del Arte, ni en la destreza de los Artífices: pues si bien que por los antiguos se hace mucho ruido con sus admirables efectos, no hallo difícil mostrar, que ni aun por esa parte hay motivo para concederles alguna ventaja sobre los modernos, por consiguiente podré sin temeridad pretender dejar anivelados unos con otros.”¹¹⁹

Despite all the changes that this essay, as well as *El no se qué*, reveal about Feijoo’s musical ideas, his ultimate definition of good music remains unchanged:

“Allana el camino a las pías inspiraciones, apartando de él los tropiezos, que son los afectos viciosos. Despierta la razón, y adormece el apetito. Pone al alma en un estado algo semejante a aquel que tendrá separada del cuerpo. Eleva el espíritu a una región adonde no alcanzan los groseros vapores de la materia. Ejercita la parte racional, dejando como insensible la sensible.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ “It is often seen, as I have seen, that the same play, and in the same instrument, executed by one hand, captivates: and executed by other, displeases. In the way of playing the string there is a great gap between the most perfect, and the most imperfect, although all that gap is made by differences as indivisible, of which mutual distinction cannot be perceived by sight, ear, or reason. Likewise, observing or not that precise, and like momentary tempo that is the exact of the beat gives, or takes, grace to the music.”). Ibid.

¹¹⁹ “Maybe, taking all into consideration, will both musics stay the same, or at least we will not find any substantial evidence of superiority of one over the other, in the perfection of the Art, nor in the dexterity of the Performers; because even if we make a lot of noise about the ancients with their admirable effects, I do not find difficult to demonstrate, that not even for that part there is a reason to grant them any advantage over the moderns, and therefore I will be able of, without any fear, claim to leave both balanced at the same level.”). Ibid, paragraph 45.

¹²⁰ “Flattens the path to pious inspirations, pushing aside the setbacks, that are the vicious affects. Awakes reason and numbs appetite. Takes the soul to a state similar to the one it will enjoy when separated from the body. Elevates the spirit to a region where the rude vapors of matter do not reach. Exercises the rational part, leaving like insensitive the sensitive.”). Ibid, 56.

This idea finds a secular parallel in the civil usefulness so revered by Enlightenment thought, also to be found in musical performances in late eighteenth century salons and *academias*.

It is difficult to know to what extent Feijoo's ideas refer to music outside the religious sphere, public or private, and therefore to know his real opinion, or even the extent of his knowledge, about contemporary chamber music. However, his treatises remained extremely influential to audiences and musicians during the eighteenth century. His moral conception of music, his allusions to proportion, naturalness, and symmetry, his rejection of virtuoso displays and extravagant ornamentation, and his critics to excessive complexity in musical composition are at the core of the main aesthetic trends that dominate eighteenth-century musical discourse. On the other hand, his defense of artistic freedom and his fluid understanding of aesthetic conventions were also equally influential, and according to Antonio Martín Moreno, his progressive ideas served as a justification to innovative composers.¹²¹

Another essential benchmark to understand musical aesthetics during this period, Tomás de Iriarte, writes like Feijoo from a position favored by the royal environment. At the beginning of his poem *La Música* he explains how this project, originally meant to remain in the private sphere, was published thanks to the encouragement of “un Personage que baxo el inmediato patrocinio de nuestro augusto monarca se complace en fomentar à los estudiosos...”¹²² Although the preface never mentions who this figure is, it is widely

¹²¹ Antonio Martín Moreno, *Historia de la Música Española 4: siglo XVIII*, (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2006), 425.

¹²² “A personality who under the direct patronage of our august monarch takes pleasure in encouraging scholars...”. Tomás de Iriarte, “La Música,” in *Colección de obras en verso y prosa de D. Tomás de Iriarte. Tomo I*, (Madrid: Imp. Real, 1805), 129. <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-musica-poema--2/html/>.

assumed that this illustrious personality was the José Moñino y Redondo, first count of Floridablanca, secretary of the State from 1777 to 1792. *La Música* is aimed at an amateur audience of music lovers and intends to fill in the gap in comprehensive texts that explain this art's principles and doctrine.¹²³ The cosmopolitan character/intention of the poem is also stated at the beginning, when Iriarte declares his intention to avoid national inclinations and to describe the general principles of Music.

La Música is divided into five cantos describing music's elements (melody, harmony, and rhythm), how should music be used to move the passions, and the peculiarities of music in different environments: temple (church), theater, private society, and music to be used by men in loneliness. Iriarte represents the neoclassic aesthetics in this canto, but at the same time he says that he admires Antonio da Correggio, Raphael, Titian, Velazquez, Pusino. Bramante, Paladio y Herrera, Taso, Milton, Boileau, Garcilaso. Zarlino, Salinas, Tartini, Rameau, Cerone, Kircher, and Martini.¹²⁴ Some of them fit well with his aesthetic ideals, but some of them do not. For the musicians, he seems to admire theorists of any period, but how do baroque painters and poets fit into his thinking? Unfortunately, he does not explain much more.

The general principles outlined in the first *canto* reflect general aesthetic principles valid during this period for other arts. In the first place, art imitates beauty in nature choosing the most gracious examples and offering a beautified version of the model. Music,

¹²³ Ibid, 136. Iriarte refers to father Lefevre and his poem *Musica* (1704), the abate du Bos *Reflexiones sobre la poesia y la pintura*, and Cariasco de Figueroa as previous writings in music, none of them comprehensive enough. “Entiendo, pues, que en nuestra lengua no se ha publicado poema alguno compuesto de propósito sobre la Música.” (“I understand, then, that in our language no poem composed specifically about music has been published.”).

¹²⁴ Tomás de Iriarte, *La Música* (1789), 170. https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-musica-poema--2/html/002ea82c-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_45.html.

according to Iriarte, follows the same principle. Musicians must observe nature and choose “lo más precioso, lo más florido y grato, y no pintarla tosca, sino bella, dándole gracia, novedad y ornato.”¹²⁵ Iriarte stresses the importance of art’s regulations when he states that musicians must create following “un plan, norma, ó sistema único, regular y consiguiente.”¹²⁶

Regularity, order, balance and proportion, uniqueness, and variety are also the qualities required in music and the essentials discussed in poetics and visual arts. Proportion is found at the root of the essential musical elements, harmony and rhythm. This first *canto* criticizes the disproportion in the use of unbalanced or extreme ranges,

“pues todo lo que excede en muchos tonos al agudo pito, o al más profundo son del contrabajo, por la desproporción de lo alto, ú baxo, ni discernirse claramente puede, con el oído humano, ni menos entonarlo se concede, á las voces, al soplo, o á la mano... Resta, pues, que el total de los sonidos, á moderada suma reducidos, se sujete á la norma de tres claves, que hagan a distinción clara y segura, de los altos, los medios, y los graves...cada suerte de voz y de instrumento tiene clave especial que la compete; y a cada cual con esta se señala, un punto fixo a que arreglar su escala.”¹²⁷

A well-understood diversity in the use of rhythm and the management of silences (Iriarte might be referring here also to articulations) is also desirable. It results in a variety and grace in the use of tempo and provides sound with “poise and efficacy.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ “The most precious, the most florid and pleasant, and do not paint it crude, but beautiful, providing it with grace, novelty and ornament.” Ibid, 159.

¹²⁶ “A plan, norm, or system that is unique, regular, and solid.” Ibid.

¹²⁷ “because all that surpasses by many tones the high-pitched (piercing?) whistle, or the deepest sound of the double bass, by the disproportion of the high, or low, cannot even be adequately discerned with the human ear, and even less can be intoned by the voices, by blow, or by hand... Remains, then, that the whole of sounds, reduced to a moderate number, adhere to the norm of the three clefs, which make clear and reliable distinction of the high, middle, and low... each type of voice and instrument has a special clef that concerns it; and to each one with this [clef] it is signaled, a fixed point to accord its scale.” Ibid, 162.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 176. Far from advocating for a rigid understanding of rhythm and tempo, slight tempo inflections are desired, giving the musical discourse a more natural cadence. Iriarte also points out that singing is modeled in declamation.

At the beginning of the second *canto* Iriarte demonstrates his awareness of the expressive power of timbre. He dislikes those timbres considered rustic and declares that both tone and accent express affects and emotions independently of other musical parameters.¹²⁹

To a large extent Iriarte's poem addresses musical expression of different passions. In *La Música*, these are divided in two groups: those that provoke pleasure, and those that provoke pain. Iriarte defines the musical expression of each passion (joy, calm, sorrow...) by the use of mode, measure, tempo, tone, dynamics, and harmony. The description of pleasurable passions does not entail any rupture of conventional aesthetics. Joy, calm, and martial affects are expressed using regular scales, moderate dynamics, and uncomplicated harmonies. To the expression of pain and sorrow correspond obscure tones, minor modes, slow tempos, the use of chromaticism and the use of legato. Rupture of the principles of regularity, balance, order, proportion, and variety appears to support the expression of extreme affects. Iriarte does not condemn these ruptures and describes them with the same, if not more, engagement and respect as the moderate ones. The reading of *La Música* does not reflect any judgement to these exaggerated musical expressions, nor does it imply any hierarchy on the value of the described musical expressive techniques. Extreme sorrow, rage, and terror are expressed by a rupture of the norm, sudden changes in dynamics, range, mode, measure, harmony, and dissonances that do not seem to follow a pre-established plan:

¹²⁹ "Perficiona después, y dulcifica, sus rabeles groseros, albogues, cornamusas y trompetas, humildes caramillos y panderos, chirimías, dulzainas y cornetas." ("Perfects then, and softens, its coarse rabels, rustic flutes, bagpipes and trumpets, humble panpipes and tambourines, hornpipes and shawms.") Ibid, 182.

“quando a lo excesivo de una pena, corresponde agitado movimiento, nótese cómo el canto desordena su natural compás... los intervalos de su escala altera...”¹³⁰

Rage is represented by violent leaps, extreme ranges, sudden changes in the tone, odd modulations that represent the instability and excess of this emotional state:¹³¹

“extraña melodía de un gran contraste armónico, mezclando diatónico y cromático, intercala debil y fuerte, agudo y grave...voces lentas y oscuras, que alternan con las rápidas y claras, discordantes posturas, modulaciones contrapuestas, raras, suma desigualdad de movimiento, medios son con los que el músico talento nos retrata la ira...”¹³²

However, the most astonishing descriptions are reserved to the “emphatic and active” style used to express terror, characterized by Iriarte as the most sublime degree of musical art. The minor mode employed to represent sadness becomes fear, horror and freeze when the music is transposed to lower ranges (“a un diapasón más grave”).

“El aire universal debe ser lento, como de cada nota el movimiento, siempre que alguna causa inesperada nuevos motivos de terror no añada, que requieran un impulso más violento. Ni se ha de señalar con demasía el golpe del compás, porque no es justo observar estudiada simetría en la turbada agitación del susto. Bien al contrario, el caprichoso gusto contratiempos emplea, y suspensiones, haciendo que alternadas se subsigan figuras de diversas duraciones, que sin orden se sueltan, o se ligan. La voz, por otra parte, a los disones del género cromático recurre; y usa a menudo entonación profunda: la orquesta en bajos igualmente abunda; jamás en glosas frívolas incurre: solo el trino, el trémulo mordente, para expresar la conmoción, consiente.”¹³³

¹³⁰ “When to the excessiveness of a sorrow, corresponds an agitated movement, not how singing jumbles its natural beat... the intervals of its natural scale disrupts...” Ibid, 194.

¹³¹ Ibid, 196-197.

¹³² “Strange melody of a great harmonic contrast, mixing diatonic and chromatic, alternates weak and strong, high and low... slow and obscure voices, which alternate with others fast and clear, discordant postures, opposing modulations, weird, extreme inequality in its movement, are means the talented musician employs to portrait rage...” Ibid, 197.

¹³³ “The general feel must be slow, as the movement of each note, whenever an unexpected reason does not add new motives for terror, which ask for a more violent impulse. The beat must not be excessively emphasized because it is not right to observe a calculated symmetry amid the disturbed agitation of fright. On the contrary, capricious taste uses offbeats and suspensions, making notes of different durations follow each other alternately, which appear detached or slurred with no order. Voice, on the other hand, adopts the chromatic genre’s dissonances; and often uses a deep intonation: the orchestra is also abundant in basses; it never commits frivolous ornaments; only consents the trill, flutter mordent, to express shock.” Ibid, 198-200.

To conclude, Iriarte enumerates painful and violent passions (dread, remorse, boredom of life, death) that inspire talented musicians' different expressive styles "que agradar saben con el mismo espanto."¹³⁴ This section acknowledges and endorses the breakup of general aesthetic conventions to express extreme feelings. The firmness utilized in the previous *canto* to establish the principles of order, regularity, balance, proportion, and variety as essential to musical beauty provide unusual musical expressions with its powerful expressive potential, that please the audience precisely because of their unorthodox nature. Iriarte considers these excursions out of the realm of conventional beauty as the highest degree of sublime art.

After addressing religious and theatrical music in *cantos* three and four, the *fifth* is dedicated to music to be enjoyed in private society. Iriarte, as Feijoo, considers the first goal of music in this environment to socialize, soften manners and customs, and provide useless and noble entertainment.¹³⁵ Here, he praises Italian and German music and manifests a special consideration towards Haydn's work and his ability to create artful combinations of high and low, fast and slow voices.¹³⁶

Iriarte reiterates his own and Feijoo's ideas he already mentioned : he criticizes the excess in ornamentation and overcomplicated compositional techniques, superfluous virtuosic displays, lack of organization in the musical composition, and composers not respecting the specific characteristics of each instrument. Once again, he emphasizes the importance of finding variety inside the norm (alternance of tempos through movements,

¹³⁴ "Who know how to please with the same fright." Ibid, 200.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 253.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 263.

use of a variety of voices and compositional styles) and the importance of balance, organization, symmetry, simplicity, and proportion.

He considers the performance of sonatas and concertos to be inappropriate of music in the private environment, as they are superficial in its “arraigado abuso de querer superar dificultades.”¹³⁷ Thanks to a better proportion between their voices, duets are preferable to sonatas and concertos, and quartets are the most appreciated:

“En ellos las posturas son cabales. Es el claro y oscuro mas sensible, señalados los bajos radicales, y la modulación varia y flexible.”¹³⁸

In sum, an overview of general and musical aesthetics in late eighteenth-century Spain brings to light a situation that differs significantly from the traditional image transmitted of this period as one dominated by neoclassical ideals. In fact, the coexistence of diverse aesthetics is characteristic of eighteenth-century Western European art and also occurred in the Spanish environment.

Deviations from rigid neoclassic regulations were not only accepted, but in some cases encouraged in Spanish aesthetic theories during this period. Although the ideals of beauty were consistent among the most influential authors, regardless of their degree of commitment with neoclassic stances – order, balance, proportion, harmony, simplicity, naturalness, variety, and unity were agreed upon as fundamental attributes of beauty – these simultaneously left room in many cases for some artistic freedom and for the rupture of neoclassical regulation. While this fact does not automatically imply that grotesque aesthetics (at the opposite extreme of the classical canon) were accepted, it indicates that a

¹³⁷ “rooted abuse of wanting to surpass obstacles.” Ibid, 258.

¹³⁸ “In those [duets] the positions are reasonable. The clear and dark are more noticeable, the radical basses are signaled, and modulation is varied and flexible.” Ibid, 269.

certain latitude in the implementation of neoclassic ideals of beauty was, at least, sanctioned by some influential thinkers of Spanish Enlightenment.

The scarce surviving musical discussions from this period coincide with these positions. Benito Jerónimo Feijoo encouraged artistic freedom in several of his publications, he recognized the existence of an irrational component in the creation and apprehension of aesthetic products, and considered musical regulations imperfect and overly coercive. Tomás de Iriarte – determined supporter of neoclassicism – described with respect the musical techniques that fall out of the spectrum of the classic canon in his poem *La Música*. The extent to which the endorsement of these artistic licenses was a residue of baroque artistic impulses or the prequel to future romantic attitudes is not agreed upon in discussions by later authors. Regardless, we can say that at a theoretical level neoclassic poetics shared the late eighteenth-century cultural space with aesthetic solutions that differed substantially from its inherent rigor, and the musical scene was no exception in this regard.

The comparison of neoclassic poetics and musical aesthetic writings during the Spanish Enlightenment reveals solid parallels beyond the recognition of unconventional solutions. Both were strongly driven by the tension between traditional (baroque) and innovative (neoclassic), patriotic and cosmopolitan tendencies, between those that insisted on aesthetic regulations and those defending artistic freedom, between the enthusiasm for the rational and the fascination with the irrational sides of human intellect. Aesthetic texts from this period also convey a strong connection between beauty and religion and/or morals throughout the century. In religious and civic contexts beauty was identified with truth and a higher good, it was considered something pleasurable and a source of happiness,

and a desirable goal that fostered appropriate spiritual and civic behaviors, so essential to enlightened thought. On the other hand, the ugly and grotesque embodied such negative qualities as deceit, and served to convey extreme negative passions. Besides, these types of deformed demonstrations augmented in respect to the seventeenth century.

Finally, the reading of Feijoo and Tomás de Iriarte's essays concerned with musical matters provides specific ideas to start outlining what musical behaviors (in performance and composition) were considered as ugly and grotesque in late eighteenth-century music, although they were not necessarily condemned. Excess, affectation, and exaggeration are at the core of these aesthetics, and will be addressed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

THE GROTESQUE IN LITERATURE AND MUSIC

Framing the Grotesque

The grotesque as an aesthetic category is a slippery term that has been redefined as many times as it has been identified and still appears with blurred contours in the mind of many of us, paving the way for misunderstandings and superficial treatments of the topic. It can be colorful, naughty, and intriguing as in Hieronymus Bosch's "The Garden of Earthly Delights," but it can also hit us hard with all its darkness in Goya's *Caprichos*, to name two of the most renowned examples of art works generally acknowledged as being grotesque. This wide spectrum of grotesque manifestations, so varied and sometimes even apparently antagonistic, is the reason why virtually every study dealing with the aesthetics of the grotesque includes a more or less detailed introductory section devoted to record the numerous semantic developments of the term since its origins at the end of the Italian *Quattrocento*.¹³⁹ Consequently, delving into the history of the grotesque involves a fair amount of reading and re-reading the historic feats of a term in constant evolution that still today appears to be elusive and inevitably ill defined. As Wolfgang Kayser puts it, "no matter how often we hear and use the word "grotesque" – and we hear it ever more frequently, since it seems to be one of those quickly cheapened terms which are used to express a considerable degree of emotional involvement without providing a qualitative

¹³⁹ See Frances Barasch, *The Grotesque: a Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971.) ; Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963.) ; Philip J. Thomson, *The Grotesque* (Methuen, 1972); Ralf Remshardt, *Staging the Savage God: the Grotesque in Performance* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.)

distinction beyond the rather vague terms “strange,” “incredible,” “unbelievable” – it is certainly not a well-defined category of scientific thinking.”¹⁴⁰

It is not my intention to provide here a detailed account of the history of the term, for that would be a futile effort to repeat what has been already so brilliantly done by Thomas Wright (1875), Wolfgang Kayser (1933), Arthur Clayborough (1967), and Frances K. Barasch (1971), among others.¹⁴¹ However, in order to frame the following discussion about the grotesque, to prevent misunderstandings and come to terms with the rich nuances of the term, a customary historical-semantic introduction is mandatory. This introduction has as a main goal to gauge some of the pejorative connotations that the term accumulated during the nineteenth and especially twentieth centuries, and to restore a maximum of the semantic richness it still retained in the second part of the eighteenth century. It will also try to provide a more nuanced view on the actual weight of grotesque artistic expressions during the eighteenth century, as it might have been more significant (and influential) than what traditional narratives suggest. Actually, according to Frances K. Barasch, the word grotesque only acquired its negative connotations when France and Italy’s overload of grotesque manifestations fostered the development of classical criticism.¹⁴²

I will start by briefly defining, as much as is viable, the meaning currently ascribed to the word ‘grotesque’ in Spain, and then go back to identify some of the nuances the term lost after the Romantic period that would much better define grotesque manifestations during the late Spanish Enlightenment.

¹⁴⁰ Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in art and literature* (Gloucester Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 17.

¹⁴¹ Kayser, Barasch, ... More briefly, but very effectively (and recently) first chapter of Michelle Osterfeld Li, *Ambiguous bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setswa Tales* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 14-52.

¹⁴² Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 24.

At present, the RAE (Real Academia Española),¹⁴³ highest authority regarding the Spanish language, provides the following definitions for the entry ‘grotesco’:

- “Del it. Grottesco, der. de *grotta* ‘gruta’, por alus. a las pinturas murales de la Domus Aurea de Nerón, cuyas cámaras, descubiertas bajo tierra en el s.XV, recibieron el nombre de *grotte* ‘grutas’. 1. Adj. Ridículo y extravagante.
2. Adj. Irregular, grosero y de mal gusto.
3. Adj. Perteneciente o relativo a la gruta artificial.
4. Adj. Arq. y Pint. Grutesco (dicho de un adorno).”¹⁴⁴

The entry “grutesco” mentions ornamentations made from “bichos, sabandijas, quimeras y follajes,”¹⁴⁵ expanding our understanding of the word, and providing a hint to the origin of more complex connotations attributed to ‘grotesque’ during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

After objectively disclosing the origins of the word, the first two definitions display predominantly negative connotations (ridiculous, extravagant, irregular,¹⁴⁶ vulgar, and in bad taste), while the third and fourth are rarely encountered in the common usage of the word, at least in the Spanish (Iberian) context. A quick look into the most common uses of the word in the written press in these past years reveals this undeniable pejorative charge of the word, as well as the relatively narrow sense in which it is used to refer to embarrassing, unacceptable, nonsensical, and absurd instances of ridiculousness, be it referred to actions or individuals. Three examples serve to illustrate this idea: “The last trip

¹⁴³ The Royal Spanish Academy is the Spanish institution in charge of defining the meaning of words in the Hispanic environment. Among its goals, to supervise and include changes experienced by this language as a result of its natural adaptation to its user’s needs. It is the responsible for defining and communicating the propriety and correctness guidelines, as stated in its webpage: <https://www.rae.es/la-institucion>. Founded in 1713, it is the highest authority regarding the Spanish language.

¹⁴⁴ “From the Italian *Grottesco*, derived from grotto “cave,” by allusion to the mural paintings from the Domus Aurea of Nero, whose chambers, discovered underground in the fifteenth century, got the name of *grotte* ‘caves’. 1. Ridiculous and extravagant. 2. Irregular, vulgar, and bad taste. 3. Pertaining or relative to the artificial cave. 4. *Grutesco* (said about an ornament).” <https://dle.rae.es/grotesco>.

¹⁴⁵ “bugs, vermin, chimeras and foliages.”

¹⁴⁶ Although “extravagant” and “irregular” are not necessarily negative considered out of context, they are regarded as so by mainstream social conventions, and under the classical aesthetic lens.

of the emeritus king to Spain has been grotesque”¹⁴⁷; “ERC praises the unity of the Catalan press and considers ‘grotesque’ to interpret it as a pressure measure”¹⁴⁸; “In shirt sleeves, extravagant look for a TV host. The grotesque show of Marc Sala in TVE: sudden change of image to fulfill Sanchez’s wishes.”¹⁴⁹ The word is used to express exaggerated cases of impertinence in the first case, absurdity in the second, and lack of decorum in the third.¹⁵⁰

While it is true that the word still retains some of its past meanings in the academic and artistic worlds, as it is used to designate the work of certain literary and artistic creations and retaining more of the positive nuances accepted in the past, even in these fields the interpretation of the term still needs to be rethought and redefined every time we encounter it, because the use of the word, at least in the Spanish-speaking context, is today heavily tainted by these recent pejorative leanings. The exercise of once again recapitulating, even if briefly, the richness of the word’s overlapping meanings by the end

¹⁴⁷ Pilar Eyre, “El último viaje del rey emérito a España ha sido grotesco,” interview by Cristina Martínez, *El Cultural* (10 Junio 2022), <https://www.epe.es/es/cultura/20220610/pilar-cyre-ultimo-viaje-rey-13821639>.

¹⁴⁸ Europa Press, “ERC elogia “la unidad” de la prensa catalana y ve “grotesco” que se entienda como medida de presión,” *Europa Press Nacional*, November 26, 2009, <https://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-erc-elogia-unidad-prensa-catalana-ve-grotesco-entienda-medida-presion-20091126114758.html>

¹⁴⁹ José Pablo González, “El grotesco show de Marc Sala en TVE: subito cambio de imagen para cumplir los deseos de Sánchez,” *Periodista Digital*, 4 Agosto 2022, <https://www.periodistadigital.com/periodismo/tv/20220804/terrible-show-marc-sala-tve-subito-cambio-imagen-cumplir-deseos-sanchez-noticia-689404736445/>

¹⁵⁰ The first quote refers to the emeritus king Juan Carlos I: after being accused of corruption and pressed/pushed to leave the country to avoid more damage to the royal institution’s image, the ex-king came back for some leisure on vacation. The second quote’s context is political: in November 2009 the Spanish Partido Popular (conservative and anti-independentist) appealed the 2006 Catalan Autonomy statute, endorsed by the 2006 referendum celebrated in Catalunya that same year and not recognized by the Spanish government. In response to that appeal, twelve Catalan journals agreed to publish the same editorial entitled “La Dignidad de Catalunya” (“The Dignity of Catalunya”). The spokesperson of the main Catalan pro-independent party in the Congress, Joan Ridao, answered in that way to those who considered this gesture from the press as a pressure measure to condition the court decision. The third quote has also a political background. In this case, the TV host Marc Sala was being criticized for not wearing a jacket (not following the media conventions), suggesting that he was trying to please the Spanish socialist President, Pedro Sanchez (traditionally, and even more after the entrance of more leftist parties in the political scene, left politicians are characterized for a more relaxed style, frequently criticized by right-wing supporters).

of the eighteenth century allows for a necessary restoration of the positive assessments that the term had accumulated since its origins in the Renaissance period. These appear as much more appropriate for the analysis of music in the neoclassical period than the more restricted and sinister ones result of nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments.

According to Frances K. Barasch,

“These meanings [the different meanings adopted by the word historically] ... did not remain static, for new perceptions and conceptions of the grotesque occurred with every new generation of artists and critics; each created its own grotesque art, understood the past in its own way, and invested the word with its own meanings.”¹⁵¹

It is therefore necessary to attempt a historical reconstruction of the semantic richness acquired at the time in the European context before focusing on the specific grotesque manifestations in the narrower context of eighteenth-century Spain.

Finally, ‘grotesque’ in the context of this dissertation will serve as a lens to analyze artistic manifestations that fall out of the conventional frame of Classicism and occupy a wide spectrum of unorthodox aesthetics. These excursions out of the realm of neoclassical taste took different forms that can be, in some cases, justified by and connected to different grotesque traditions (the early fantastic ornamentations, the seventeenth-century burlesque-low comedy, the Rabelaisian carnivalesque, the eighteenth-century caricature and performing grotesque arts, etc.). This lens of the grotesque uncovers aspects of this musical repertory that have been frequently overseen by traditional musicological narratives, centered around the hegemony of Viennese Classicism, by paying attention to a variety of *hors-norme* manifestations of alternative aesthetics that weaken the traditional image of a homogeneous musical *fin-de-siècle*. The grotesque lens also serves as a pretext

¹⁵¹ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 152.

to momentarily divert the attention from traditional analysis and include or emphasize relatively new parameters (timbre, melodic gesture, texture, physical sensations as those studied by Elizabeth Le Guin, among others), by paying attention to the practical side of music-making and to alternative repertoires that privileged the audience enjoyment in a frame different from, but still aware of, Central-European classical trends.

Brief History of the Grotesque

In his history of ugliness, Umberto Eco poses a question about the nature of the ugly:

“Il brutto potrà allora semplicemente definirsi come il contrario del bello, sia pure un contrario che cambia col mutare dell’idea del suo opposto? Una storia della bruttezza si pone come contraltare simmetrico di una storia della bellezza?”¹⁵²

Grotesque art, as part of the broad realm of the ugly (or at least, not part of beauty), always represents a conscious rebellion against the norms of classic art and ideal beauty. However, while classical norms demarcate the borders of what is considered aesthetically appropriate for each historical period with relative firmness, they also leave ample room for deviations that acquire a multitude of different forms. Again, in the words of Eco,

”Ma è proprio quando passa dalle definizioni astratte a una fenomenologia delle varie incarnazioni del brutto che egli ci fa intravedere una sorta di ‘autonomia del brutto’, che lo rende qualcosa di ben più ricco e complesso che non una serie di semplici negazioni delle varie forme di bellezza.”¹⁵³

¹⁵² “Can ugliness then be defined as just the opposite of beauty, being just a contrary that changes when the idea of its opposite changes? Is a history of ugliness a symmetric counterbalance of a history of beauty?” Umberto Eco, *Storia della Bruttezza* (Milano: Bompiani, 2007), 16.

¹⁵³ “But it is exactly what happens when you go from the abstract definitions to a phenomenology of the various incarnations of ugliness that a certain “autonomy of ugliness” starts to appear, that turns it into something much richer and complex than a series of simple negations of the various forms of beauty.” Umberto Eco commenting on Karl Rosenkranz’s 1853 *Estética de lo feo*. Ibid, 16.

Classical norms, independently of the different shapes they may take throughout history, are invariably based on the imitation and/or idealization of nature, and derive from classic aesthetic principles of order, proportion, harmony, and balance, as they appear in Vitruvius' *De Architectura*. This treatise, the only surviving from Antiquity and considered since the Renaissance period as the major source of information on classical architectural aesthetic canons, already illustrates the opposition between classical aesthetic ideals and the earliest forms of what was later named grotesque. Already in the first century B.C.E., Vitruvius criticized what he considered the "new barbarian manner: monstrous forms instead of images of the familiar world, nonsensical, not veridic."¹⁵⁴ This antagonistic relation between classic aesthetics and the grotesque is at the origin of many of the realities surrounding the concept: its definition, its reception, and its depreciated status in the traditional artistic canon, whatever the discipline, at least until the end of the eighteenth century.

In her 1981 article "La Forme In-Formante: a Reconsideration of the Grotesque,"¹⁵⁵ Sylvie Debevec Hennings summarizes the principal laws of classical canons¹⁵⁶ overthrown by the grotesque paintings discovered at the Baths of Titus: art should represent simple forms present in the real world, or pertaining to real history, either as faithfully as possible or in a perfected form. The universe (and therefore, art's ideal model) is governed by the rules of harmony and its perfect geometric form reflects the image of divine reason; the universe is organized hierarchically, forms and phenomena have strict limits and are seen

¹⁵⁴ As cited in Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 20.

¹⁵⁵ Sylvie Debevec Henning, "La Forme In-Formante: a Reconsideration of the Grotesque," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* Vol. 14, no.4 (Fall 1981): 108.

¹⁵⁶ According to Vitruvius (*De Architectura*) and the Renaissance humanist Leon Battista Alberti (*De re aedificatoria, Della Pittura*).

as finished and completed.¹⁵⁷ Grotesque ornamentation was based on intricate designs, fruit of the artist's imagination rather than real models. Its designs, far from reflecting any trace of divine reason, broke out of any geometric rule, consistently avoided symmetry and presented its motives right way up and upside down. Its patterns overflowed the margins, pouring out of its designated spaces and spilling all over the frames. The discovery of these paintings, the first official "grotesque" artworks, laid the groundwork for the revival of this fanciful tradition of ornamentation and for its development and ramification into various artistic fields in the following centuries.

As Umberto Eco suggests, opposition to the classic canon appears in a wide variety of shapes, and the grotesque cannot be thought of as a fixed set of aesthetic rules applying to all artistic manifestations, not even when applied to limited geographic and chronological spaces. It appears as a wide spectrum of expressions always oscillating between the playful, imaginative, cheerful, comic, and frivolous and the sinister, the dark, the monstrous. An emphasis on an exaggerated fantasy that overflows aesthetic conventions (in a hyperbolic way), the apparently incongruous coexistence of antagonistic opposites, and a focus on the senses above reason are a constant in grotesque manifestations. As a response to this multifarious reality, the study of the grotesque traditionally attaches an especial importance to the study of individual artistic expressions over the general configuration of the grotesque at any given period. As Kayser puts it, there is a "concern with individual expressions of the grotesque as well as with its historical occurrences."¹⁵⁸ This interest in individualized study and the prioritization of artistic

¹⁵⁷ Sylvie Debevec Henning, "La Forme In-Formante: a Reconsideration of the Grotesque," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* Vol. 14, no.4 (Fall 1981): 108.

¹⁵⁸ Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 10.

distinctiveness over a traditional standardizing tendency in art history studies complicates the creation of clear-cut accounts, but at the same time it may be closer to offering more accurate (and still imperfect) narratives of our aesthetic past.

Grotesque Before the Word Grotesque.

Although the term did not appear until quite late (late fifteenth century) – and that is usually the starting point for theories of the grotesque – manifestations that fit into some of the multiple later definitions of grotesque were already present in ancient art,¹⁵⁹ and were relatively common in the Middle Ages, appearing in Romanesque architectural ornamentation, especially tympana, and Gothic gargoyles, manuscript miniatures, and in some literary sources. In *The Grotesque: a Study in Meanings*, Frances K. Barasch analyzes the importance of grotesque humor in the figure of comic demons that populated medieval literature and art, and its direct impact on Renaissance and Elizabethan English drama, with its characteristic blending of the comical and horror, of dignity and absurdity, that will integrate the essence of the grotesque in later periods. However, grotesque demons, on the contrary of other grotesques from later periods, still emphasized the comical over the horrific, acting as the humorous counterpoint to the dark reality of death. There is a parallel between this Gothic grotesque and what Bakhtin called the new or Romantic grotesque. According to this author, the difference between both was in the spirit of laughter in each case: laughter is still powerful and beats the evil in medieval grotesque, but it is “cut down

¹⁵⁹ Some theories even speculate about the existence of grotesque art and rituals in prehistoric cultures: Geoffrey Galt Harpman in *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature*, as cited in Michelle Osterfeld Li, *Ambiguous Bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setsuwa Tales* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 30.

to cold humor, irony, sarcasm”¹⁶⁰ in Romantic grotesque. However, this change would not take place until the last part of the eighteenth century and until then, grotesque accumulated a variety of less obscure and more playful meanings.

Grotesque in the Sixteenth Century

The history of the term ‘grotesque’ and the origin of the theories of the grotesque begins with the discovery, at the end of the fifteenth century, of some frescoes and stuccoes in Nero’s palace, the *Domus Aurea*.¹⁶¹ This style, new to Renaissance observers but popular in Rome around 100 B.C.E, was the one despised by early Roman architect Vitruvius (first century B.C.E.) for its monstrosity, its abandonment of real models, the mixing of human, animal and vegetal elements, its inherent contradictions, its undefinition, its fluidity, and its irrationality.¹⁶² It was, from the very beginning, pitched against the golden rules of Classicism.

Despite its critics, the original grotesque enjoyed the public’s approval and even counted some supporters among intellectuals. Horace (65-8 B.C.E.) praises these hybrid visual creations in *The Art of Poetry*,¹⁶³ and Vitruvius regrets how people do not condemn, but enjoy the bizarre style.¹⁶⁴ Some of the dynamics at play in ancient Rome will remain a constant in the history of the grotesque: the attacks to its unruly imagination and

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 35.

¹⁶¹ First in Rome and after in various other parts of Italy. Kayser points out to the fact that it was not an ornamental style native to the Romans: Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 19.

¹⁶² Vitruvius, *De Architectura*.

¹⁶³ “If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a lack and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favoured with a private view, refrain from laughing.” Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, as cited in Osterfeld Li (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 31.

¹⁶⁴ “Yet when people view these falsehoods, they approve rather than condemn.” Ibid, 32.

unconventionality, the public's support, and the concurrence of intellectual supporters and critics.

After the discovery, the “new” style, also found supporters among intellectuals and artists: Vasari, Raphael, Pinturicchio, or Michelangelo, among many other Renaissance artists and artisans, found its heightened fantasy most refreshing. The ornamental style spread over the Alps in the second quarter of the sixteenth century and became pervasive as decoration in the sixteenth century. Despite its success, it kept facing opposition to its excessive fantasy, lack of regulation, and extravagance. It was not only considered irrational and immoral by those partaking in Vitruvian views, but also a demonstration of bad taste.

By the end of the sixteenth century two important developments occurred: the first application of “grotesque” to a field different from the visual arts, and a clear association of it with the monstrous. The first direct application of the term in literature occurs in the essays of Montaigne's (1580),¹⁶⁵ who directly translated the ornamental grotesque's characteristics to his own work, defined by himself as “fantastic monsters.” Montaigne's grotesque monsters, as the frescoes in Nero's palace, were characterized by their strangeness, disorder, hybridity, and lack of proportion and organization. This association of the term grotesque with monsters and monstrosity seems to have been already established in France and Germany by the third quarter of the sixteenth century. In

¹⁶⁵ “Considerant la conduite de la besongne d'un peintre que j'ay, il m'a pris envie de l'ensuivre. Il choisit le plus bel endroit et milieu de chaque paroy, pour y loger un tableau élaboré de toute sa suffisance ; et le vuide tout au tour, il le remplit de crottesques : qui sont peintures fantasques, n'ayans grace qu'en la varieté et estrangeté. Que sont-ce icy aussi à la verité que crottesques et corps monstrueux, rappez de divers membres, sans certaine figure, n'ayants ordre, suite, ny proportion que fortuite?” Michel de Montaigne, “De l'amitié” in *Essays* I/28 (Bordeaux: Simon Millanges, 1580), 3. As cited in Guild, Elizabeth, *Unsettling Montaigne: Poetics, Ethics and Affect in the Essais and Other Writings* (Reino Unido: D.S. Brewer, 2014), 243.

Germany, the most characteristic feature of the grotesque was the monstrous fusion of human and nonhuman elements. Grotesque is at this point also qualified as “ridiculous, silly, and often frightful monstrosities.”¹⁶⁶ In its sixteenth-century translation to literature – as seen in Montaigne’s essays or in grotesque poetry¹⁶⁷ – as well as in its identification with the monstrous, the mixture of different and incongruous elements in a fantastic way is emphasized. This appreciation of the grotesque coexists with the attributes given to the original ornamental grotesque.

Grotesque in the Seventeenth Century

To Kayser, the transformations of the word during this century suppose “a loss of” substance and a tendency to equate it with the burlesque and humorous, as appears in pictorial and poetic examples from that period (Jacques Callot, Miguel de Cervantes...). It referred, in figurative speech, to the silly, bizarre, extravagant, fantastic, and capricious. It was also frequently defined as a synonym of *ridicule*, *comique*, and *burlesque*. The Richelet *Dictionnaire* (1680) defines it in a pleasant way, as something agreeably ridiculous. This nonchalant and amusement-directed character – opposed to the most rational and edifying distinctive of “serious” – could be seen in seventeenth-century French verbal fantasies associated with the grotesque that were created “for the sake of forced and comic rhymes and sheer nonsense.”¹⁶⁸ German developments of the word follow the same direction as their French counterparts.

¹⁶⁶ Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 27.

¹⁶⁷ As mentioned in Frances K. Barasch in relation to Horace’s mermaid. Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 37.

¹⁶⁸ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

Boileau partakes in a more negative view of the grotesque in *L'art poétique* (1674).¹⁶⁹ Here, he assimilates the word grotesque to “low burlesque,” “artless poetry,” and “false wit,”¹⁷⁰ using it with a mocking or ridiculing connotation. Boileau and other authors associated ‘grotesque’ with low-quality literature, vulgar and only useful for the superficial entertainment of the non-educated. In the field of literary criticism, “grotesque” was at this time assimilated with “gothic,” used for medieval and Renaissance poetry and alluding to its “unruliness and crudeness, indecorous use of an unvaried low style ... and for not following the rules.”¹⁷¹

In the French context, “grotesque” was utilized in a pejorative sense as a category of poetry applied to works that did not followed classical rules for the first time in 1692 by André Dacier. He attacked late seventeenth-century fashion for Italian operas (*tragédies en musique*) for its non-adherence to ancient rules of poetry, signaling the lack of decorum of the mixture music-tragedy:

“car les Opéra, sont, si je l’oze dire, les grotesques de la Poesie, et Grotesques d’autant plus insupportables, qu’on prétende faire passer pour des ouvrages reguliers. Aristote nous auroit donc bien obligez de nous marquer comment la musique a pu etre jugée necessaire à la Tragedie.”¹⁷²

In the following decades, other authors in the English context also attributed to opera features usually used to describe grotesque expressions: immoral, monstrous, nonsensical, ridiculous.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Nicolas Boileau, *L'Art Poétique*, 1674.

¹⁷⁰ Cited in Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 119.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 121.

¹⁷² “because operas are, if I dare say, Poetry’s grotesques, and Grotesques even more unbearable, because people try to make them pass for regular works. Aristotle should have showed us how music could possibly have been judged to be necessary to Tragedy.” As cited in Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 119.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

Finally, the English seventeenth-century idea of the grotesque emphasized the role of fantasy. The original meaning as ornamental style in imitation of the ancients, fantastic and delightful, nonsensical but aimed to sensual pleasure coexisted with the idea of an unnatural and monstrous grotesque. ‘Grotesque’ was applied to fantastic characters from English masque literature, and it also had connotations of fearsome and horrid, although its main goal was still to elicit laugh.

The Grotesque in the Eighteenth Century

The arrival of Neoclassicism with its emphasis on classic aesthetics entailed a change of attitude toward unconventional artistic expressions. A renovated emphasis on condemning grotesque manifestations, common to all geographic areas studied,¹⁷⁴ may have ended up reinforcing the attention on the expressive possibilities outside the classical canon.¹⁷⁵

Johann Christoph Gottsched’s (1700-1766) assessments regarding contemporary artistic attitudes¹⁷⁶:

“to imagine something without sufficient reason is to dream or to indulge in fantasies... Still, clumsy painters, poets and composers frequently resort to this method, which results in the creation of sheer monstrosities, which might be called

¹⁷⁴ Kayser in Germany, Barasch in England, Illie in Spain...

¹⁷⁵ Paul Illie, José Checa Beltrán, Frances K. Barasch. [Barasch points out that during the second part of the century “the attempts of the critics and censors to stamp out libel, caricature, and low comedy succeeded only in effecting newer forms of grotesquerie, for the taste of the age was more ‘Gothic and grotesque’ than ever. At least it began to be accepted more widely that human nature demanded comic relief and that such relief had always been manifested in low comic forms.” Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 144-145.

¹⁷⁶ German philosopher, author and critic of the Enlightenment. Cited in Wolfgang Kayser.

daydreams. The pictorial grotesques and the incoherent fables of the poets offer cogent examples of this procedures.”¹⁷⁷

In any case, whether it was because of an intensification of criticism or just as a natural development of a longstanding aesthetic trend, several artistic areas experienced a new blooming of the grotesque during the eighteenth century: literature, the visual arts (especially with the popularity of caricature), and theatre (*Commedia dell’Arte* and grotesque dance) are currently the most studied. Furthermore, during the last third of the eighteenth century, there was an opening to other aesthetics, and more formal (written) reactions against neo-classical criteria can be observed.¹⁷⁸ Gregorio Lambranzi’s dance treatise and Justus Moser’s *Harlequin’s* defenses of *Commedia dell’Arte*, and Maurice Morgan’s preface to *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1764) are just some examples of this new attitude towards neoclassic restrictions and grotesque aesthetics.

Although early eighteenth-century attempts to outline the meaning of the grotesque as an aesthetic category exist,¹⁷⁹ it is at the end of the century that efforts to further delineate and define the nature of grotesque aesthetics became more consistent. Wolfgang Kayser connects these efforts with the favorable aesthetic status enjoyed by the art of caricature during this period. The fact that caricature, dedicated to replicate and exaggerate distorted and ugly reality, overemphasizing disproportion instead of imitating and idealizing beauty,

¹⁷⁷ As cited in Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 25. This is also one of the rare examples that connects the aesthetic of the grotesque in music before the arrival of the nineteenth century.

¹⁷⁸ As mentioned in José Checa Beltrán. *Razones Del Buen Gusto: Poética Española Del Neoclasicismo* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998), 15-22.

¹⁷⁹ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 144. Barasch mentions Fielding’s preface to Joseph Andrews (1742) and Hogarth’s *Anecdotes* (c.1750) as providing “tentative distinctions among the subject categories”.

was given a place as a legitimate and meaningful art, necessarily shook the basis of neoclassical aesthetics centered around classical principles of balance and proportion.¹⁸⁰

As soon as 1757, Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* discussed the attraction of the grotesque, opposed to eighteenth-century aesthetic inclination toward balance and restraint. In 1761, Justus Möser (German jurist and social theorist) published *Harlekin oder Vertheidigung des Groteske-komischen*.¹⁸¹ As its title anticipates, *Harlekin* is a defense of earlier eighteenth-century art identified as grotesque. Justus Möser's book is essentially a defense of imagination against the attacks of rationalism. This defense of the grotesque is based on its "psychic and physical effects" and the demonstrated power of grotesque to provide pleasure.¹⁸² According to Barasch, Möser interprets the grotesque as the antithesis of the beautiful, as it turns inside out classic attempts to attain the most idealized beauty in its exaggeration of the opposite: affectations, imperfections, vices, incongruities.¹⁸³ In his defense of the grotesque Möser also understood the existence and persistence of these aesthetics as a longstanding manifestation of the taste of humanity's natural inclinations. In a more recent study Sandy Kébir stresses how Möser's discussion of the *Commedia dell'arte* world treats the grotesque as an essentially comical phenomenon, as it relates to the unique aesthetic world of the *commedia*.¹⁸⁴ Also during the third quarter of the century,

¹⁸⁰Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 30-31.

¹⁸¹ Justus Möser, *Harlequin: Or, a Defence of Grotesque Comic Performances*, trans. Joach. Andr. Fred. Warnecke, LL.C. (London: printed and sold by W. Nicoll; T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt; and Mr. Drybutter, 1766).

¹⁸² Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 145-146.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 146.

¹⁸⁴ Sandy Kébir, *The Concept of the Grotesque from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century: Critical Study* (Munich: Grin Verlag, 2016), 6.

Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), German poet and writer and representative of the late Enlightenment, contributed to the definition of the grotesque through his categorization of the caricature types. The grotesque caricature was, according to Wieland, the result of a “wild imagination” concerned with the supernatural and the absurd. A turn towards the horrific in the consideration of the grotesque is noticeable in his analysis of the reception of the grotesque. Wieland was already moving towards what Bakhtin will call the new or Romantic grotesque. These wild portraits, for him, were aimed at arousing laughter, disgust, and surprise,¹⁸⁵ and the recipient of the grotesque caricature was affected by feelings of anxiety in the face of the irrational distortion of the world’s natural order.¹⁸⁶ Wieland’s contemporaries, according to Barasch and Michelle Osterfeld Li, would not have agreed with his analysis.¹⁸⁷ This view still coexisted with a perception of the grotesque as the “comically ugly” during the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁸ This conception of the grotesque is more characteristic of nineteenth-century appreciations of the grotesque, but it should be noticed that the beginning of this change was happening already in Wieland’s work.

Another important attempt to define the nature of the grotesque appeared in 1788, when Karl Floegel wrote the first history of the grotesque: *Geschichte des groteskekomischen*.¹⁸⁹ Floegel’s approach, in line with other German thinkers, defended

¹⁸⁵ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 148; Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 30.

¹⁸⁶ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 148.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 148; Osterfeld Li, Michelle, *Ambiguous bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setswa Tales*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 39.

¹⁸⁸ Osterfeld Li, Michelle, *Ambiguous bodies: Reading the Grotesque in Japanese Setswa Tales*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.)

¹⁸⁹ Karl Floegel, *Geschichte des groteskekomischen* (Leipzig: Adolph Werf, 1861). <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb10573863?page=5>.

the grotesque as a valuable source of the comic, rather than a representation of the vulgar. Close to Möser's ideas, Floegel also considered it as "an expression of man's essential need for crude forms of pleasure," a comic escape mechanism from the monotony of a life governed by rules."¹⁹⁰ To Floegel (as for most of his predecessors), grotesque was a longstanding phenomenon in human history and meant "caricature," "low farce," and "exaggerated comedy."¹⁹¹

In spite the predominance of neoclassical aesthetics and its detractors, the grotesque was present and even enjoyed a favored place throughout the century. Virginia E. Swain describes how the grotesque was a prevailing trend in French literary and visual arts for most of the century, and Barasch indicates that in England, taste experienced a pronounced turn towards the burlesque and comedy became the leading genre. Although humor could take different forms, in essence it was constructed around the ridiculous, the unnatural, and the incongruous.¹⁹² Barasch, as well as Menedez Pelayo and other authors, identifies a "Romantic thread" in the eighteenth century connecting two periods with similar romantic tendencies: referring to the English context, Barasch states that:

"The eighteenth century was certainly a period of polished wit and refined taste, and native Gothic tendencies were eschewed to make way for Palladian grandeur, Horatian decorum, and Longinian sublimity. But this era was also a way-station between two romantic periods, and the native English appetite for forms that were "unregulated" and "unnatural" to handful of critics, survived in popular taste as a kind of underground railroad running from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century."¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Sylvie Debevec Henning, "La Forme In-Formante: a Reconsideration of the Grotesque," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* Vol. 14, no.4 (Fall 1981): 111.

¹⁹¹ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 148-149.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

Grotesque manifestations during the eighteenth century represent the most extreme end of this continuing taste for the gothic, the baroque, the unregulated, and the unnatural, and they appeared in an array of different forms across artistic disciplines. In its Renaissance appearance as a purely ornamental style, it still had a strong presence in the eighteenth century, becoming essentially French during this period, but now being labeled as “arabesque.” The term “grotesque” was reserved for other areas in French arts and literature. During the last quarter of the century, it also became a leading decorative style in luxurious English home interiors.

Examples of grotesque literature were common in England, Germany, France, and Spain. These coexisted with caricature, grotesque dance, *Commedia dell’Arte* and akin performing art forms cultivated in England, France, and Germany. Behaviors could be labeled as grotesque (attending opera was one of them), as well as garments from past periods.¹⁹⁴

Eighteenth-century aesthetic treatises, especially in Germany, understood and defined the grotesque mainly as a special category of the comic, the low, the burlesque.¹⁹⁵ The term also broadened its semantic field in France, as in Germany, to identify “low-comedy.” Although the comic and more specifically the burlesque was at first considered to be less valuable, it has already been mentioned how some late eighteenth-century German critics defended it as a necessary inclination of human taste, a rightful form of art,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 98-99.

¹⁹⁵ Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 17.

and a “vital source of laughter.”¹⁹⁶ During this neoclassical period, the term “grotesque” was also applied in literary contexts to irregular forms of drama (and other arts).¹⁹⁷

In French, the word still preserved those carefree, sinister-free overtones developed in the seventeenth century: odd, bizarre, funny, ridiculous, extravagant, or fanciful is how dictionaries defined “grotesque” throughout the century. English authors sometimes used “grotesque” with the same connotations of barbarous and ornate they attached to “Gothic”¹⁹⁸ and during the second part of the century it also developed the meaning of “pleasing although irregular.”¹⁹⁹ In the beginning of the eighteenth century Arthur Clayborough describes how the term gradually acquired a more general sense, getting to signify “ridiculous, distorted, unnatural” when used as an adjective, and “an absurdity, a distortion of nature” when used as a noun.²⁰⁰ Gradually, the most generic sense of the word drifted apart from its origins and was used not only as a technical term in art or in the arts, but also in different contexts to describe excessive and reprehensible behaviors, concepts, ideas, etc. However, negative connotations coexisted with more positive meanings.

Eighteenth-Century Grotesque Entertainment: Caricature, Commedia dell’Arte and Grotesque Dance in the Age of Enlightenment

According to Arthur Clayborough, one of the main ways in which the meaning of the term ‘grotesque’ was expanded during the eighteenth century without involving

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Frances K. Barasch, *The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 118.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 113-114.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 117.

²⁰⁰ Arthur Clayborough, *The Grotesque in English Literature*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 6.

pejorative connotations was through association with other arts. These associations departed from the traditional connections with ornamental styles and the gothic devilish farce, and took the grotesque in a different direction, one that would end up being considerably successful in the aristocratic and high-class entertainment market. The sphere of caricature, *Commedia dell'Arte*, grotesque dance, and burlesque comedy (further explored in the next chapter in connection with the Madrilenian theatrical scene) established complex relationships with the realm of the grotesque and fostered the development of the term's meaning during this period. Borders between genres and styles were faint, as the linkages between these spheres were numerous and multidirectional. This porosity increased the ambiguity of the term while boosting its already wide semantic scope. The examination of these connections reveals an intricate, multifaceted image of what this word could evoke in the age of the Enlightenment and how its manifestations could be perceived by eighteenth-century artists, theorists, and general audiences. This permeability engages several aspects of this period's artistic life and exposes a reality that stands far from the rational, compartmentalized spirit of the time as it is usually transmitted by traditional historiography. Rich and fruitful connections between different artistic areas, a frequent infiltration of the folkloric into the academic, more fluid and malleable relationships between different social classes, and a strong presence of the comic into the elite art scene are some of the characteristics of the second part of the eighteenth-century artistic and social scene.

This fluidity and permeability of grotesque forms (caricature, *Commedia*, grotesque dance, farce) was reflected in the development of the term along the eighteenth century, and it was also present in contemporary discourse as well as in comic artistic life.

“Grotesque” was for some time used as a synonym of “caricature.” Some of Callot’s most renowned etchings, named “grotesques” at the time, are those depicting the world of *Commedia* or displaying deformed depictions of musicians. In his essay *De la poésie dramatique*, while discussing the physical distortion as a method typical of farce, Diderot marries caricature, grotesque, and farce (or *Commedia dell’Arte*?) in the following way:

“Cependant une farce excellente n’est pas l’ouvrage d’un homme ordinaire. Elle suppose une gaieté originale; les caractères sont comme des grotesques de Calot, où les principaux traits de la figure humaine sont conservés. Il n’est pas donné à tout le monde d’estropier ainsi.”²⁰¹

Ballerini Grotteschi, embodied characters of the *Commedia dell’Arte*, as opposed to *ballerini seri* or *di mezzo carattere*, were employed for heroic or comic characters. While there is a shared undergoing set of characteristics that link all these phenomena, each of them also provides unique nuances that enrich the term and concept of grotesque: the caricature’s comic use of exaggeration serves as an umbrella that covers all other manifestations, *commedia* representation of stock characters with distinctive gestures and an apparently nonsensical language, and the *ballerini*’s grand gestures and exceptional mastery of virtuosic skills, are all valuable referents in the reconstruction of the eighteenth-

²⁰¹ “Yet an excellent farse is not the work of an ordinary man. It requires an original playfulness; characters are like Callot’s grotesques, where the main traits of the human figure are conserved. Not everyone can mangle in such way.” This article also refers to Diderot’s taste for *Comédie Italienne*, its freedom, fantasy, and potential for entertainment: “Dans les pièces italiennes, nos comédiens italiens jouent avec plus de liberté que nos comédiens français; ils font moins de cas du spectateur. Il y a cent moments où il en est tout à fait oublié. On trouve dans leur action, je ne sais quoi d’original et d’aisé, qui me plaît et qui plairait à tout le monde, sans les insipides discours et l’intrigue absurde qui le défigurent. A travers leur folie, je vois de gens en gaieté qui cherchent à s’amuser, et s’abandonnent à toute la fougue de leur imagination; et j’aime mieux cette ivresse, que le roide, le pesant et l’empesé.” (as cited on p.48). (“In the Italian pieces, Italian actors play with more freedom than our French actors; they pay less attention to the spectators. There are a hundred moments when they are absolutely forgotten. We find in their acting an original and easy *je ne sais quoi* that I like and that would be liked by everyone, without the bland discourse and the absurd intrigue that disfigure it. Through their folly, I see playful people who want to have fun, and they abandon themselves to all the ardor of their imagination; and I prefer this inebriation to the steep, the heavy and the stiff.”) As cited in Jane Rush, “Diderot, Socrate, et l’Esthétique de la farce dans *Le Neveu de Rameau*,” *Eighteenth-century Fiction* 6, no.1 (October 1993): 48-49.

century musical grotesque. The comparison with performing arts – music, dance, and drama – is particularly valuable in the construction of a valid musical definition as well as in the analysis of the social dynamics that favored the rise of grotesque aesthetics in the eighteenth-century entertainment market. The same complex and strong interconnections that expanded the meaning of the term justify the establishment of objective parallels between caricature, *Commedia*, grotesque, or dance and other grotesque disciplines with music, facilitating the process of defining an analytical process and a more detailed definition of the eighteenth-century musical grotesque.

Grotesque in Eighteenth-Century Comic Art Forms

Unlike in precedent (and future) situations, when the term “grotesque” was applied to comic art during this period it was devoid of negative connotations. As Frances K. Barasch explains in the Introduction to Thomas Wright *A History of Caricature and Grotesque: In Literature and Art*,²⁰² in this context the term acquires a purely descriptive function and there is no criticism involved. Caricature, *Commedia dell’Arte*, farce, and grotesque dance are supposed to be grotesque. Moreover, during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century the terms “grotesque,” “burlesque,” and “caricature” were still not clearly distinguished.²⁰³

This absence of judgment does not mean that these disciplines were regarded as sharing the same status with other forms of art. All of them have in common a similar dismissive treatment by contemporary theoretical literature and critique, and a history of

²⁰² Thomas Wright, *A History of Caricature and Grotesque: In Literature and Art* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., [1865] 1968).

²⁰³ Ibid, 36.

historiographical undervaluing and subsequent oblivion. In its own time, all of these were accepted and appreciated by the audience, but still considered low forms of art by critics and theorists.

Scholars from different areas denounce this situation regarding the study of art forms related to the comic and grotesque. Nancy L. D'Antuono observes an imbalance between the presence of comedy in graduate and undergraduate studies – and its weight in literary studies – and the actual presence (number of plays performed) and popularity of comedy (especially Spanish *comedia* in the context of her studies) in Spain and Italy during the Spanish Golden Age. More Spanish authors repeat the same claim for the eighteenth-century theatre scene. D'Antuono makes another relevant claim related to the quality of these comic pieces, questioning whether it is even possible that the quality of these pieces was so mediocre when they enjoyed such a success in Spanish and Italian stages (as *rifacimenti* or “*Commedia* scenarios”), given the fact that so few of them have been considered masterpieces, invariably reserving the podium to dramatic works. This situation of underrepresentation and discredit of unconventional and comic artworks is even more pronounced in the case of visual arts, music, and theater considered as grotesque. From the beginning of the introduction of *The Grotesque Dance*, Rebecca Harris-Warrick makes clear one of the greatest historiographical paradoxes surrounding the eighteenth-century grotesque world.²⁰⁴ Grotesque dance was, despite its popularity all over Europe, hardly treated in contemporary dance manuals. Maybe because of this lack of primary sources that complicate its reconstruction, or due to the continuation of a general theoretical attitude that

²⁰⁴ Rebecca Harris-Warrick, and Bruce Alan Brown, *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

traditionally privileges “serious” forms of art over comic ones, or even as a combination of both of these situations, there has been a traditional historiographical narrative that emphasizes the primacy of French dancing, ignoring the importance of eighteenth-century Italian theatrical dancing in its own time as well as in the development of nineteenth-century ballet.

This “aerial style,” as Harris-Warrick calls it, was “one of the hallmarks of Italian theatrical ballet,”²⁰⁵ and coexisted closely with serious ballet. Ballet had a tremendous importance on the Italian scene, being typical since the late seventeenth century to perform at least two independent ballets between the acts of an *opera seria* or play.²⁰⁶ *Grotteschi* and serious ballets were usually performed in the same evening. In 1770, Mozart’s opera *Mitridate* featured a heroic pantomime ballet, a divertissement ballet, and a short ballet at the end, all of them choreographed by the *ballerino grotteso*, Francesco Caselli.²⁰⁷ Another example from the 1773-74 season in Naples featured a tragic ballet choreographed by Noverre between the acts 1 and 2, and a comic ballet by Magri between acts 2 and 3.

In the second chapter of *The Grotesque Dancer*, Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell analyzes the conditions that helped maintain the prominent place of the *grotteschi* despite the attacks by Noverre’s (and French ballet) supporters in the 1770s. There was, in fact, a growing success of theatrical ballets in Italy, especially from around mid-century, and primarily in the 1770s. The consolidation of *opera seria* (begun at the turn of the century, and fully in place by the second decade of the eighteenth century), with the subsequent elimination of “marvelous” and comic scenes, led to the definite separation of dance

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 10.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 16

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

episodes. The main types of ballets remained the same (exotic, fantastic, character, and comic scenes). Although Kuzmick Hansel downplays the importance of the comic intermezzo, she states that after its decline in the 1730s more resources were allocated for theatrical ballets, experiencing an exceptional growth.

Although contemporary testimonies demonstrate the popularity of ballets, the prominence of the *grottesco* style, and the rise of its importance during the second part of the eighteenth century, this did not stop criticism, particularly from the French-ballet supporters, who qualified it as superficial and inappropriate. Angiolini wrote in 1765:

“I believe that the [grotesque] genre is the lowest of all. It can only arouse in spectators astonishment mixed with fear, as they see their fellows in danger of death at any moment.”²⁰⁸

At the same time, it enjoyed a tremendous popularity from the audience. Francesco Milizia wrote in 1771:

“Such a beautiful opera is cut up by two ballets, to which all the spectators remain most attentive and silent, as though they had to see it with their ears; and the performer who leaps more, who contorts his feet and torso more, wins the greater applause.”²⁰⁹

In 1777 John Moore, an English traveler observed that:

“In this city [Florence]...little attention is paid to the music...But the dancers command a general attention...the excellence of Italian dancing seems to consist in feats of strength, and a kind of jerking ability, more than in graceful movement.” (Once again, it highlights the acrobatic style and use of gesture).²¹⁰

Despite its success among audiences and its tremendous influence in the development of nineteenth-century ballet, as Harris-Warrick denounces, it seems like

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 11.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 21.

²¹⁰ John Moore in 1777, as cited in Ibid, 22.

contemporary detractors ended up prevailing, as eighteenth-century grotesque dance has gone practically unnoticed in traditional accounts.

The following study of caricature, *Commedia dell'Arte*, and grotesque dance has two main goals. First, to get a better picture of the understanding of the term grotesque and the social dynamics that fostered and shaped its development during the eighteenth century, right before the change that happened at the end of the century; and second, to analyze objective parameters of the grotesque that contribute to create a musical definition of the eighteenth-century grotesque, its different types, and its specific traditions and characteristics.

Caricature and the Grotesque

Caricature and grotesque are two terms inextricably united, yet not equivalent. Its semantic relationship is and has always been complex, especially since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Thomas Wright describes these terms as representing two ideas aesthetically related but still having different meanings.²¹¹ Caricature necessarily involves the presence of the ridicule, and its exaggeration of features has unquestionably burlesque or satirical purposes. But not all works involving exaggeration are caricatures. According to Kayser, although the grotesque can appear in caricatural, humoristic, or satiric contexts, it is different from these genres (satire and caricature).²¹² Depending on the context, time, and author, these terms have been treated as synonyms, as subtypes of one another, or as distantly related with each other. Given the weight that caricature has in the history of the

²¹¹ Frances K. Barasch, "Introduction: the Meaning of the Grotesque," in *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., [1865] 1968), iv-lvi.

²¹² Wolfgang Kayser, *Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, [1957] 1968), 37.

grotesque (and the importance it still has nowadays in its conceptualization), exploring the underlying aesthetic connections mentioned by Thomas Wright and defining its shared core features seems unavoidable to define eighteenth-century understandings of grotesque aesthetics.

Although it took a special importance during the eighteenth century, caricature was not new to this period. The most renowned Renaissance and early Baroque examples, Leonardo da Vinci and Annibale Carracci's caricature-like portraits (from the 1490s and 1590s, respectively), already display some of the defining characteristics of caricature in later periods.²¹³ All these representations of distorted heads and faces emphasize specific features through exaggeration to capture particular affects, personality traits, or physical peculiarities. A comic intention is not always apparent, but rather the representation of someone's defining characteristics through the exaggeration of her or his physical traits.

The seventeenth century saw the appearance of one of the most important figures for the history of caricature, and a crucial link in its longstanding association with the grotesque world and specially with *Comedia dell'Arte*: Jacques Callot (1592-1635). His career focused on graphic arts (considered as second-level art?), and he has come down to history mainly as a caricaturist.²¹⁴ Callot's connections with and interest in *Commedia dell'Arte*, the theatrical and musical word, and the burlesque, are unmistakable in his series of prints *Balli di Sfessania* (1622), or his 1615 satirical prints of musicians. His engravings

²¹³ In the 1490s Leonardo da Vinci created his series of "grotesque heads," whose models appear to possess or to be intentionally represented with extreme features (a widely open mouth, a swollen lingering low lip, a particularly prominent low jaw, all transmitting magnified attitudes of perversion, despair, and somberness). These same magnified features are also characteristic of the 1590s Annibale Carracci's caricatures.

²¹⁴ Parallels with Goya: later in his career he came back to France, and he documented the horrors of the Thirty Years in his "Miseries of War" series.

feature multiple characters, from beggars to musicians to courtiers, giving a special prominence to characters that otherwise are not usually at the center of the seventeenth-century artistic scene²¹⁵: *Commedia dell'Arte* stock characters, low-type personages, the deformed, comic, popular, disgraceful, and the outsider will continue to be at the center of burlesque theater and comedy, grotesque dance, and caricature, all strongly related to the world of the grotesque, for the rest of the century.

As mentioned earlier and illustrated by Diderot's passage,²¹⁶ at the beginning of the eighteenth century the term 'grotesque' was applied to Callot's works. Frances K. Barasch exposes in the introduction to Thomas Wright's *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* how during the first decades of the eighteenth century the word "grotesque" was applied to satirical portraits that would be considered caricatures nowadays. These "modern" grotesques, however, introduced a new element in the understanding of grotesque, according to Barasch. While seventeenth-century grotesques referred to chimeras, "allegorical" or "wonderful" grotesques that contained an important element of fantasy, these new "grotesques" indeed utilized exaggeration and distortion – particularly for vulgar or immoral types – but were now based in reality, rather than in the previous combination of parts from different species characteristic of the fantastic techniques employed in burlesque works. Caricature and grotesque utilized, then, the same expressive techniques of exaggeration and distortion, but caricature incorporated a reality element that was not characteristic of pre-eighteenth-century grotesques. In the same introduction, Barasch explains how at the beginning of the eighteenth century techniques

²¹⁵ He started his career in the 1620s in Florence, working for the Medici court as a visual chronicler of entertainments (fairs, festivals, etc.).

²¹⁶ Page 95.

typical of the grotesque were used in what he calls “the new popular art form,” caricature.²¹⁷ Satirical portraits based on real social types or specific individuals, lacking any fantastical element, appeared in different forms as prints or essays and were generally called “grotesques.”²¹⁸ Although Barasch’s research is more oriented to the English context, similar elements to those already mentioned are also present in the French *Encyclopédie*’s entry for “caricature,” issued at the beginning of the 1750s:

CARICATURE, s. f. (*Peinture*.) Ce mot est francisé, de l’Italien *caricatura* ; & c’est ce qu’on appelle autrement *charge*. Il s’applique principalement aux figures grotesques & extrêmement disproportionnées soit dans le tout, soit dans les parties qu’un Peintre, un Sculpteur ou un Graveur fait exprès pour s’amuser, & pour faire rire. Calot a excellé dans ce genre. Mais il en est du burlesque en Peinture comme en Poésie; c’est une espece de libertinage d’imagination qu’il ne faut se permettre tout au plus que par délassement.²¹⁹

This definition contains some of the elements previously mentioned: its link with grotesque and disproportion, its comic intent, the prominence of Callot as a main figure in the genre. It also mentions, along with the reference to caricature applied to the visual world – painting, sculpture, engraving – its existence in the form of literature: “it is burlesque in painting and in poetry.” In fact, in England caricature had also become enormously important in the eighteenth century and not only as a pictorial art, but also in caricatural poems, and satirical portraits were also already popular in Spain.

²¹⁷ Barasch in Thomas Wright, *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., [1865] 1968), xliii.

²¹⁸ Ibid, xliii.

²¹⁹ “Caricature, (painting) This word is Frenchified, from the Italian *caricatura*: and it’s what we call differently *charge*. It is applied mainly to grotesque and extremely disproportionated figures either in its entirety, or in its parts that a Painter, Sculptor, or an Engraver makes intentionally to have fun, and to provoke laughter. Calot excelled at this genre. But it is Burlesque in Painting and in Poetry: it’s some kind of libertinism of the imagination that we can just allow ourselves only for relaxation.” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonnée des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres*, s.v.

“Caricature,” accessed May 27, 2024, <https://archive.org/details/EncyclopeYdieouIIDide/page/683/mode/1up>.

Finally, the *Encyclopédie* alludes to fantasy – “une espece de libertinage d’imagination qu’il ne faut se permettre tout au plus que par délassement” – a constant in the grotesque world since its origins. This excess of fantasy could also be translated as a reluctance, resistance, or unwillingness to follow the established conventions, and as D’Alembert signals in his entry, automatically disqualifies to be considered as a meaningful endeavor.

The Spanish term *caricatura* did not appear in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* issued by the *Real Academia Española* between 1726 and 1739, nor in the bilingual *A Dictionary, Spanish and English, and English and Spanish* by Hipólito San José Giral del Pino and Andrew Millar, published in London in 1763.²²⁰

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the connotations attached to the term grotesque began to change, giving way to a more obscure array of significations that still today influence the way we conceive it. Anxiety, fear, monstrosity, disgust, and similar negative concepts gradually gained weight from the end of the century on, exacerbating the fearsome and terrific in detriment of the comically distorted. As mentioned, Christoph Martin Wieland’s contribution to the conceptualization of caricature and the grotesque illustrates this change and demonstrates a turn towards a greater interest in the reception aspect of grotesque phenomena.

²²⁰ Giral del Pino, Hipólito San José, and Andrew Millar, *A Dictionary, Spanish and English, and English and Spanish*...eds. John Nourse and Paul Vaillant (London: printed for A.Millar, J. Nourse, and P.Vaillant, in the Strand, 1763).

Eighteenth-century Performative Arts and Grotesque Gesture: Grotesque Dance and
Commedia dell'Arte

Commedia dell'Arte, also indissolubly linked to the realm of the grotesque, is originally and primarily a folk art, well-rooted in Italian popular theater history,²²¹ and extremely successful and influential outside Italy wherever it landed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Avner Eisenberg points out,²²² a deeper look into the history and significance of *Commedia dell'Arte* quickly reveals a rich background that the static image transmitted by Callot's etchings or Watteau's depictions of Italian comedians does not get to transmit. There is whole dimension that Eisenberg defines as the "bawdy and raucous, alive and immediate" aspect of *Commedia* that Callot and Watteau's glimpses at its *comici*, with its contortions and fantastic attire, could not possibly capture. This aspect is often downplayed in academic studies and accounts, probably because most of it belonged to the old art of improvisation. Also, an overemphasis on its folk character and popular aspect tends to eclipse its cross-social collaborative origins, that brought together the efforts of an educated aristocratic and mercantile high class with lower-class performers at the end of the sixteenth century, as Olly Crick describes in his contribution to *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell'Arte*.²²³ The *Commedia*'s undeniable roving, carny, jarring side coexisted then – with some necessary adjustments – the interest from neoclassicist circles and occasional aristocratic connections and patronage. Not only

²²¹ For more information about the origins of *Commedia dell'Arte*: Kate Meehan provides a well-documented history of Italy and entertainment forms in 'The Rise of Commedia dell'Arte in Italy', in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell'Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2014), 207-212.

²²² Avner Eisenberg, "Introduction," in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell'Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2014), xiii.

²²³ Olly Crick, "The Coming Together," in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2014), 221, 223.

are both narratives compatible, but surely many more existed simultaneously, as the *Commedia* traveled and adapted to different environments. It would be naive to believe that from its origins to the late eighteenth-century the *Commedia* maintained the same characteristics across countries and performance spaces. As a folk, improvisatory, interactive, and migrating performative art with early connections with the aristocratic medium, the *Commedia* existed along a wide spectrum in between the popular and the highbrow, and reminds us of the existence of underlying connections between the artistic spheres of the amateur and the professional, the popular and the learned, the comic and the tragic, the beautiful and the grotesque. A brief exploration of its historical development serves to illustrate its mixed origins and early connections with the realm of the grotesque, and its later development within eighteenth-century aristocratic and high-class artistic environments, comparable to those existing in Enlightened Madrid.

While elements of *Commedia dell'Arte* were already in place throughout the sixteenth century, the *Commedia* – as a European theatrical genre based on stock characters and improvisation – reaches its definitive form, with its main characteristics already in place, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.²²⁴ Olly Crick cites among its sources not only carnival and folk theatre – certainly essential elements of *Commedia dell'Arte* – but also to the humanist impulse and specific economic and social circumstances that guided Renaissance artistic revolution, and the occasional collaboration between low-class performers and “educated” members of the aristocratic and mercantile classes.²²⁵ The fruit of this collaboration combined a neoclassical interest in Roman and Greek comic

²²⁴ Ibid, 221.

²²⁵ Ibid.

playwrights – inspiration for the creation of the genre’s structures – with an older performative tradition that thrived on improvisation, one of the main landmarks of the genre. Improvisation allowed for a quick adaptation to different contexts, it was effective at establishing a connection with the public, and convenient for eluding censorship, allowing, as opposed to written theatre, for more adventurous ruptures of social and artistic conventions. It is, then, at the crossroads between the learned and the popular that the *Commedia* finally emerges, in the unique environment of the Venetian confraternities where young rich men organized amateur entertainments, giving theatre in a prominent place.

The relation between *Commedia dell’Arte* and the elite early seventeenth-century artistic environment can also be seen in the connections between early opera and *Commedia dell’Arte*, as discussed by Roger Savage.²²⁶ Around the time when *Commedia* came to be established, an environment similar to the one that originated it and the same neoclassical enthusiasm for ancient theatre was also at the origin of opera. Opera’s special emphasis on a “faithful” revival of ancient performance practices differed from the *Commedia*’s main desire to provide more uncomplicated popular entertainment. This circumstance led to different products, but as Savage mentions, the connections between both were still multifarious. Probably one of the most obvious expressions of the proximity of both genres is the fact that some performers could participate in both, as happened in 1608 at the premiere of *L’Arianna*, when Virginina Ramponi (Florinda, from the exclusive

²²⁶ Roger Savage, “Meeting on Naxos: Opera and *Commedia dell’Arte*,” in *The Routledge Companion* (Routledge, 2014), 268-276. See also Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, “Dalla ‘Finta Pazza alla Veremonda’: Storie di Febiarmonici,” *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 10 (1975), 379-454, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24317923>; Paolo Giovanni Maione, “Giulia de Caro ‘Seu Ciulla’ da Commediante a Cantarina: Osservazioni sulla Condizione degli ‘Armonici’ nella Seconda Metà del Seicento,” *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 32, n0.1 (1997), 61-80.

troupe *I Fedeli*) substituted the late Caterina Martinelli. This was only possible thanks to the existing connection between especially sophisticated *Commedia* troupes like *I Fedeli* with aristocratic patrons, in this case the Gonzaga court. This connection kept both “young music theatre phenomena” (opera and *Commedia*, as *Commedia* also included incidental music) close for at least the first three decades of the century,²²⁷ as *Commedia* was less tied to the court environment, but also often relied on aristocratic patronage.

Composers of court music acknowledged, and sometimes admired *Commedia* performers. References to *Commedia* can be found in Orlando di Lasso, Giovanni Croce, Orazio Vecchi, and Adriano Banchieri, some of whose works would have “featured vivid musical snapshots of *Commedia* in performance.”²²⁸ *Commedia* characters and plots could inspire opera librettos, and comedy scenes were sometimes included in operas. Even if with the arrival of the eighteenth century the separation between serious opera music and *Commedia* became more pronounced, *Intermezzi* and opera buffa still retained some of the early connections.²²⁹ This is still significant in Mozart’s operas, as the many studies dedicated to this topic maintain.²³⁰ The acknowledgement was mutual, though, for while opera retained in different ways a link with *Commedia* – even through their eighteenth-

²²⁷ Roger Savage, “Meeting on Naxos: Opera and *Commedia dell’Arte*,” in *The Routledge Companion* (Routledge, 2014), 269.

²²⁸ Ibid, 269; also see Margret A. Katritzky, “Orlando di Lasso and the *commedia dell’arte*,” in Schmid, Bernhold ed. *Orlando di Lasso in der Musikgeschichte*. Bericht über das Symposium der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften München, 4-6. Juli 1994. Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Abhandlungen, Neue Folge (111). München, Germany: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften / C. H. Beck Verlag: 133–155.

²²⁹ For more examples, look at Roger Savage, “Meeting on Naxos: Opera and *Commedia dell’Arte*,” in *The Routledge Companion* (Routledge, 2014): 268-276.

²³⁰ Roger Moseley, “Mozart’s Harlequinade: Musical Improvisation *alla Commedia Dell’arte*,” in *Common Knowledge* 17, no.2 (Spring 2011): 335-347, <https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-1188013>; Andrea Fabiano, “From Mozart to Henze,” in *Commedia Dell’Arte in Context*, edited by Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello, (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 177–85.

century divorce and despite opera's general critical attitude towards *Commedia* – *Commedia* also developed a strain that criticized and ridiculed opera.

Traditional *Commedia dell'Arte*'s most characteristic features, and those that set it apart from serious opera and classical theatre and relocate it in the grotesque sphere, are connected to the use of stock characters (some masked and some unmasked), the presence of their characteristic language (*gromellot*), and the essential role of gesture and movement over a written text. In each of these aspects, as well as in the extraordinary weight of improvisation, *Commedia* diverges from classical theatrical standards. Its comic intent, the diverse and caricature-like nature of its characters, the exploration and exaggeration of the mundane, the hybridity of the cast of masked and unmasked characters... all these features place *Commedia* at the center of the grotesque phenomenon as it was understood by eighteenth-century audiences.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, *Commedia dell'Arte* experienced a fundamental change that pushed it into a new direction, pushing it once again into the aristocratic sphere. The analysis of this transformation speaks about the aesthetic reality of the aristocratic art medium and about the essence of eighteenth-century grotesque in *Commedia*. Domenico Pietropaolo, specialist in drama and Italian literature and author of *The Commedia dell'Arte* – a study with a special focus on the genre's development during the Enlightenment – sees in the progressive exhaustion of the genre since the beginning of the century the main motivation for its adaptation into other artistic domains, scenic dance among them, and the subsequent origin of grotesque dance. By relocating some of the elements of the original *Commedia* into the aristocratic environment of scenic dance, grotesque ballet and its *Commedia* elements continued to thrive under the umbrella of the

comic grotesque.²³¹ This change, according to Pietropaolo, came together with a new focus on the virtuosic skills of the performer and entailed the start of a new phase for the genre,.

Pietropaolo's main claim is that in its move towards an elite artistic environment the grotesque element of *Commedia* had to be "tamed" to thrive in the aristocratic market of theatrical dance.²³² Rather than an elimination of the grotesque element, certainly attractive to the upper-class audience, the unrefined essence of the *Commedia* tradition was polished as needed to reappear as the stylized grotesque of an extremely virtuosic type of theatrical dance. This metamorphosis of the grotesque provided an aesthetically acceptable version of the genre, what Pietropaolo calls a "gentrified view of the *Commedia dell'Arte*," appropriately trained and muffled and devoid of its most confrontational side.²³³ This adaptation was necessary for the grotesque performer to fulfill the decorum demands of the new context, where the original, humble, folk, and even anti-establishment attributes of *Commedia* did not fulfill the new audience's aesthetic expectations.

Pietropaolo's analysis focuses on three axes: the opposition and at the same time dependence between grotesque and serious dance; the necessary adaptation of the performer's skills to the new environment; and the audience's performance literacy, fundamental to the emergence of the grotesque message. His technical and social-oriented approach provides a valuable lens to further analyze the existence of stylized grotesque musical manifestations in the eighteenth-century chamber musical scene, because of the

²³¹ Domenico Pietropaolo, "Commedia dell'Arte as Grotesque dance: Decline or evolution?," in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte* (Routledge, 2014), 338.

²³² *Ibid*, 339.

²³³ *Ibid*.

similarity of the performance context, a shared audience, a similar focus on virtuosity, and the obvious parallels between music and dance.

Grotesque dance came to be defined in opposition, and at the same time in relation to serious dance, two different sides of eighteenth-century narrative dance.²³⁴ The choice of characters and themes, as well as the way they were presented to the audience – with decorum and verisimilitude in the case of serious dance, the opposite in grotesque dance – differed, but the “fantasy” of grotesque dance needed to maintain a link with the “reality” of serious dance to obtain and communicate its meaning. While the way of addressing the audience in serious dance should evoke dignity, the grotesque dancer’s performance – as other comic entertainments – was aimed to demystify, mock, and even debunk that dignity. While serious dancers chase an ideal of grace, naturalness, balance, and beauty, grotesque characters were “unnatural, gesticulate without regard for social norms, and use primarily the physical vocabulary of the old *Commedia* tradition.”²³⁵ Still, they maintain a strong link with the serious sphere, as their physical language is essentially an artful distortion of conventional gestures: grotesque dance utilizes anti-classical techniques of exaggeration and unbalance to transform the stylized countenance of the serious into the distorted grimace of the ridiculous grotesque, but its basis is always serious dance. Grotesque dance remained meaningful and suitable for the aristocratic environment because it retained an aesthetic link with the artistic skills and grace of serious dance. Would it have gone too far in its departure from accepted aesthetic conventions, and it would not have been able to thrive in the elite artistic market. In this environment, the grotesque must find a balance to

²³⁴According to John Weaver, as cited in Pietropaolo, “Commedia dell’Arte as Grotesque dance: Decline or evolution?,” in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell’Arte* (Routledge, 2014), 340.

²³⁵*Ibid*, 341.

communicate “social and physical degradation without ever leaving the plane of their own artistic elegance.”²³⁶

Another basic pillar in the adaptation of *Commedia* to the aristocratic sphere was the development of a high degree of virtuosity. The grotesque dancer was distinguished by a high level of technical requirements, higher than those expected from the serious dancer. Its virtuosity arises from the unnaturalness of grotesque movements, demanding a degree of physical disequilibrium that pulls the dancer’s body away of its natural tendencies.²³⁷ While the beauty of serious dance rests in the stylization of natural movements, grotesque dance is based on an artistic distortion of these, requiring for this reason a higher level of virtuosity.²³⁸ This virtuosity also played a role in the acceptance of the discipline and of grotesque dancers as praiseworthy and adequate as elite artworks. The grotesque dancer’s mastery of the required skills placed him at the eyes of the audience in a position of respect, clearly placing the dance as the comic subject, and not himself.

The last facet of this technical-social analysis explores the audience’s role in the success of grotesque aesthetics: if the grotesque character is the result of a distortion of an original model, the audience must recognize this original model for the grotesque effect to appear and be understood. It is then essential for the performer (and the scholar) to consider this performance literacy and the artistic-aesthetic environment in which the grotesque takes place for a successful analysis of these manifestations. It is then essential to recall the fundamental principle of grotesque dance: the starting point of the grotesque is always the conventional, serious, and real model, and grotesque language must necessarily recall its

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid, 342.

original model, otherwise grotesque distortion would result unintelligible. The more we acknowledge these models, the more capable we are to acknowledge their grotesque counterparts.

In 1716, Gregorio Lambranzi suggested that the character's movements should reflect the features of each character as they are known to the audience of other geographical areas.²³⁹ There was, then, an important work of adaptation of the grotesque to different regional artistic idiosyncrasies to acquire its meaning. But at the same time these regional artistic expressions occurred in the specific environment of the aristocratic and upper-class performing stage, in the middle of a new eighteenth-century artistic and intellectual cosmopolitanism.

This eighteenth-century artistic cosmopolitanism, described by William Weber as the existence of an international aesthetic authority, allows to establish parallels between distant European elite performance scenes. However, it still requires considering the domestic cultural roots of artistic manifestations, especially when analyzing potentially grotesque objects. Weber describes eighteenth-century dynamics between artistic cosmopolitanism and the domestic as defined by negotiation, politically influenced, and dependent on regional idiosyncrasies. Lastly, in the analysis of musical works and other performing arts' products intended for the intimate space of private aristocratic entertainment it is necessary to consider the audience's expectations, the possibility of a closer and more immediate communication between the performer and the audience, and the frequent close collaboration between patrons and authors/performers – both also

²³⁹ Gregorio Lambranzi, *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing* (Dover Publications: [1716] 2002).

characteristic of the original academies that gave birth to *Commedia dell'Arte* – as potentially susceptible of molding the artistic product. Some of these social-artistic dynamics remain still obscure, as the private performance environment, and especially its comic aspect, remain still relatively unknown.

In conclusion, two main ideas emerge from the study of the grotesque in the eighteenth-century cultural scene that are particularly relevant for the consideration of musical parallels in the same period's aristocratic environment. First, that although the association to pejorative meanings – ridiculous, laughable, absurd, chaotic – had been present since the introduction of the term, the definitive turn of the grotesque to the dark and monstrous began at the end of the eighteenth century. Even then, these meanings coexisted with more positive understandings of the grotesque aesthetics. The positive conception, its jolly and nonchalant connotations, still outweighed the negative at this time and these manifestations were more common than what had been transmitted by traditional narratives with a neoclassical leaning. Second, that the grotesque did have popular roots, but it also had a place in the aristocratic sphere. The entangled origins of *Commedia dell'Arte* and opera and the participation of the Venetian aristocracy in its initial stages evidence how *Commedia* – and with it, some form of grotesquerie – thrived at some point in popular and elite contexts. The taste for the grotesque blossomed again during the second part of the eighteenth century in aristocratic circles via the stylized anticlassicism of virtuosic grotesque dancers.

In sum, since the late sixteenth century the taste for grotesque aesthetics spread from ornamental techniques to literature, theater, visual arts, and dance. The rediscovery of the grotesque gave a name to artistic trends that emphasized the fantastic, incongruent,

playful, cheerful, silly, extravagant, nonchalant, and comical before the takeover of the sinister and the monstrous grotesque in the nineteenth century. Before that, in the absurd blending of horror and humor, humor usually won.

This is not to say that attitudes towards the grotesque were at any point unnuanced. All along these centuries, support (mostly by audiences and progressive artists) and criticism (mostly by canonic intellectuals) coexisted. The taste for Neoclassicism in the eighteenth century entailed a change of attitude towards excursions outside the classical canon, considered from the neoclassical perspective as artless, vulgar, superficial, and only apt for non-educated audiences. On the other side, paradoxically, there was a rise of these manifestations outside the canon and in some countries the grotesque constituted a prevailing trend in literary and visual arts.

The journey of the *Commedia*'s grotesque features back to eighteenth-century aristocratic circles projects an image of enlightened entertainment shaped in many aspects by the fluidity between different artistic areas, classes, and modes of representation. The study of these features unveils a dense web of connections between grotesque examples from different disciplines: exaggeration, disproportion, disorder, and the use of marginal, popular, or comic characters among them. It also serves as a base to start the reconstructing of possible musical parallels. In this regard, the principles that govern the functioning of grotesque dance in aristocratic circles provide especially adequate guidelines for the observation of the musical grotesque: a focus on virtuosity, the appearance of watered-down grotesque elements, a non-confrontational character, a relation of opposition and dependence on its serious counterpart, and the adaptation to the performance literacy of

specific audiences are signs that point to the existence of a musical grotesque in the elite enlightened cultural space.

CHAPTER IV

GROTESQUE AESTHETICS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MADRID

“El Madrid de los Borbones: de los majos y petimetres, de los funcionarios a dedo y por mérito, de los campesinos y artesanos; de los eruditos y los vulgares, de los hombres y las mujeres de Letras, de los cómicos de legua y las compañías de los teatros; de los pliegos de cordel y los primeros periódicos de noticias y opinión. El Madrid de los “chorizos” y los “polacos”: de los dos coliseos (el teatro del Príncipe y el de la Cruz) y un teatro musical culto (el de los Caños del Peral) en los que el pueblo se veía en escena, con sus virtudes y defectos...Madrid, que con fascinación acudía a los espectáculos callejeros de marionetas, autómatas y sombras, y con devoción llenaba las plazas en procesiones y novenas...”²⁴⁰

The grotesque event, just like the beautiful, is malleable and emerges naturally at different times and places. Anytime and everywhere, it maintains its immutable core of anticlassicism – unbalanced, asymmetric, exaggerated, excessive, disproportionate and provocative – and reimagines its surfaces time and again, caricaturizing and contesting the dominant aesthetic conventions that regulate artistic creation. This chapter explores the cultural context that nurtured the artistic taste of composers working for the Madrilenian royalty and nobility during the second part of the eighteenth century, with a special focus on the presence of grotesque elements. This will subsequently facilitate the identification of the specifically Madrilenian musical grotesque and its reconsideration as a respectable aesthetic alternative, issued from the distinctive character of the city.

²⁴⁰ “Bourbon Madrid: with its *majos* and *petimetres*, with its public servants, by chance or by merit, with its peasants and artisans; with its scholars and its vulgar, with its men and women of Letters, with its *cómicos de legua* (itinerant comedian) and its theatre companies; with its *pliegos de cordel* and the first news and opinion periodical publications. The Madrid of “chorizos” and “polacos”: with its two coliseums (the theatre of the Prince and the theatre of the Cross) and a highbrow musical theatre (that of the Caños del Peral) where the people looked at themselves on stage, with their virtues and their defaults... Madrid, who fascinated attended the puppet, automaton and shadows street shows, and filled the squares in processions and novenas with devotion...”; Alberto Escalante Varona, *La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado* (Cáceres: Ópera Prima, 2020), 25-26.

Avant-garde European trends and Spanish tradition existed side by side in eighteenth-century Madrilenian society, arts, and politics. Tensions between conservative and progressive (enlightened) movements along with a deep unease about the presence of foreign elements determined the cultural identity of the second part of the eighteenth century in the Spanish capital. Both tendencies clashed in 1766 in the riot of Esquilache, exposing a profound traditionalist and anti-Enlightenment tendency deeply ingrained in part of the Madrilenian nobility. Patriotic feelings increased during the decade of the 1780s and to a certain extent, they collaborated in shaping the Madrilenian cultural scene. They boosted the success of Cruz's *sainetes*, the rise of heroic comedies, and the fashion for *majos* and *majas* portraits, all related to patriotic feelings and alien to the foreign influences that had gradually become more present in Spanish culture. The impact of this patriotic wave and its relationship with musical practices in the Madrilenian aristocratic environment during this period is still to be examined thoroughly, but I suggest that it is one decisive factor in the appearance of the musical grotesque, according to classic standards.

The phenomenon of *majismo*, a combination of exalted patriotism and proud traditionalism, was a particularly influential trend in the cultural sphere. *Majismo* arose during the second part of the century and celebrated popular aesthetics of urban low classes – especially Madrilenian – as a form of rejection to the increase of foreign influence and the advancement of Enlightened reforms. In literature and in the visual arts – the areas where artistic *majismo* is currently most documented – traditional *majos*²⁴¹ appear in

²⁴¹ Urban low-class types, especially inspired in Madrilenian low class aesthetics and manners.

opposition to embodiments of the foreign, the *petimetre* and *petimetra*,²⁴² to highlight its role as a model for a supposed pure “Spanishness.” According to Zara Zanardi, *majos*’ and *majas*’ clothing and customs were appropriated by elites, “obscuring class divisions and undermining expected aristocratic behavior.”²⁴³ *Majismo*, the most flamboyant expression of eighteenth-century Spanish traditionalism, also played a role in the aristocratic musical scene. Its inherent theatrical and excessive nature lends itself easily for the appearance of grotesque elements in its musical expression, and the “undermining [of] expected aristocratic behavior” could also facilitate the emergence of grotesqueness by lack of decorum, the incongruity of presenting rustic products in refined environments.

Actually, a gradual relaxation of the boundaries that separated social classes also contributed to shape the Madrilenian cultural panorama. In Madrid as in other European capitals popular, bourgeois, and elite classes started to share more spaces and interactions became more fluid, transforming social dynamics and having an impact in cultural products; low and high bourgeoisie increasingly started to attend public theater performances while salons of nobility reunited intellectuals, artists, and aristocracy in a relaxed environment that favored exchange. In Spain, zarzuela, originally a royal entertainment, went beyond the walls of the palace and became a public spectacle during the second part of the century. Theater was experienced as an open social event in public venues – frequently organized and financed by members of nobility – but it was restricted

²⁴² *Petimetre* and *petimetra* are adaptations from the French expressions *petit maître* (little master) and *petite maîtresse* (female little master) to the Spanish pronunciation. They were disdainful terms that mocked the affectation of those who as a mode adopted foreign (especially French) manners.

²⁴³ Zara Zanardi, *Framing Majismo: Art and Royal Identity in Eighteenth-Century Spain* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), location 240/7651. <https://www.psupress.org/books/titles/978-0-271-06724-7.html>.

to aristocratic circles when nobles accommodated private performances in their residences. Boundaries were constantly being pushed and in Madrid as probably in no other European capital, popular classes held a special weight in cultural life.

In examining the Madrilenian cultural background, I will pay special attention to literature and popular folklore as these had a substantial weight in defining aesthetic taste in late eighteenth-century Madrid. As Alberto Escalante Varona depicts in this chapter's opening quote, Madrid's ethos was profoundly marked by theater, popular poetry, and the appearance of the first periodicals, and Madrilenians were fascinated with street performances of all sorts. In late eighteenth-century Madrid *el pueblo*²⁴⁴ played a crucial role in shaping artistic initiatives, both in the popular *coliseos* and in the aristocratic salons of a Spanish royalty and nobility that struggled to find their "Spanishness." Literary trends that departed from classic models and the aesthetics of Madrilenian lower classes played an influential role in the cultural space that shaped the artistic grotesque in the Spanish capital. An approximation to unorthodox literary and visual artistic examples – that will frequently refer us back to the endurance of baroque aesthetics, the importance of folklore and the popular, and the taste for the spectacular and flamboyant – illustrates how grotesque and other elements that do not conform to classic standards manifested themselves in music during the Madrilenian Enlightenment. Interdisciplinary work not only confirms the existence of such deviations from the ideals defined by classic norms, but also the reality of a propitious environment that supported and celebrated alternative aesthetics.

²⁴⁴ *El pueblo* in this context refers to Madrid's non royal or aristocratic population, especially those from lower classes.

Another reason to thoroughly address the course of literary aesthetics during this period is the high prevalence of contemporary written documents regarding this subject in comparison with extant written discussions focused on music and even visual arts. The few documented academic discussions around music in Spain during this period very rarely refer to instrumental music. While in other European countries it was a topic often discussed by leading intellectuals, Spain's most influential thinkers did not dedicate as much space to reflect about the nature, role, and aesthetics of music of their time. Erudite musical ideas in this context came from more general aesthetic writings like those of Feijoo and Luzán, translations of foreign essays, or institutional documents,²⁴⁵ but music was rarely directly targeted in enlightened discussions. On the other hand, literature, because of its strong presence in Madrilenian society and its important status as a treasured tool for enlightened reformers, has a much more important presence in written accounts from this period.

Contemporary documents discussing literature, especially theater, speak about the aesthetic criteria that erudite people utilized to separate the conventional and acceptable

²⁴⁵ “El contexto culto del XVIII quedaría configurado por los escritos estéticos de Ignacio de Luzán y Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, así como por el impacto de las traducciones de los textos de Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Riflessioni sopra il buon gusto nelle scienze e nelle arti* (1708; 1715) y de Charles Batteux, *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe* (1746). Asimismo, podrían incluirse, en este contexto culto, obras políticas como el *Plan de estudios para la Universidad de Sevilla* (1768) de Pablo de Olavide y *Elogio de las bellas artes* (1781), así como “Oración sobre la necesidad de unir el estudio de la literatura al de las ciencias” (1797) de Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos.” (“The eighteenth-century learned context was shaped by the aesthetic writings of Ignacio de Luzán and Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, as well as by the impact of translations of the texts of Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Riflessioni sopra il buon gusto nelle scienze e nelle arti* (1708;1715) and Charles Batteux, *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe* (1746). Additionally, in this learned context, politic works like the *Plan de Estudios para la Universidad de Sevilla* (1768) by Pablo de Olavide and *Praise of Fine Arts* (1781), as the “Oración about the necessity to join the study of literature to the study of the sciences” by Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos could be included.”) Salmerón Infante also adds Tomás de Iriarte's work *La Música* (1799) to this list. Miguel Salmerón Infante, “Estéticas Académica, Mundana y Popular del Teatro Musical Español en la segunda mitad del Dieciocho,” in *Estudios Musicales del Clasicismo*, 4: *Estética del Teatro Musical* (Barcelona: Editorial Arpeggio, 2019), 4.

from the inappropriate in this neoclassic period. These criteria, although discussed in relation to dramatic works, saw a similar development in all artistic areas. For that reason, they provide a valid theoretical background for the analysis of secular musical works in this specific artistic environment. Furthermore, the strong connections between the Madrilenian stage (public theater) and aristocratic circles,²⁴⁶ and the numerous bridges established between the theatrical and musical scene – authors and composers working for both environments, abundant use of music in theatrical genres, shared patrons, common aesthetic trends – justify considering aesthetic ideas and attitudes from theatre for the aesthetic analysis of chamber music.²⁴⁷

Finally, the study of aesthetics in literature is relevant to the analysis of secular music in this context because aesthetic approaches found in literary discussions can be traced in musical examples and in the few extant records addressing musical matters.²⁴⁸ In

²⁴⁶ In his Doctoral dissertation *El mecenazgo musical de las Casas de Osuna y Benavente (1733-1744): Un estudio sobre el papel de la música en la alta nobleza Española*, Juan Pablo Fernández González provides information about the involvement of the Houses of Osuna and Benavente with public opera in Madrid during the second part of the century (pp.409-474), musical theatre in the House of Benavente's palaces from 1744 to 1787 (481-507), and about their participation and sponsorship of theatrical enterprises and protection of comedians, playwrights, and musicians linked to the theater (pp.87-90); the strong connection between musicians working for the Royal Ensembles (Royal Chapel and Royal Chamber) and Madrid's theatrical scene is explored in the dissertation "La música en la Corte de Carlos III y Carlos IV (1759-1808: de la Real Capilla a la Real Cámara", by Judith Ortega Rodríguez, p.119 and 227-229; the connection between comedians working for the Royal family and at the same time having an important presence in public theaters during the eighteenth century is explored in the dissertation "La Compañía de los Trufaldines y el primer teatro de los Caños del Peral," by Fernando Doménech Rico, in Chapter 7.

²⁴⁷ This close relationship between commercial and court theatre, between religious villancico and cantata is illustrated by José de Cañizares (1676-1750). One of the main theatrical authors of Spanish eighteenth century, very successful in Madrilenian public theatres, also wrote texts for villancicos for the royal chapel since 1707, was literary adviser in the first Italian opera productions held in court in 1738. Other literary figures were not necessarily placed exclusively in one or the other side. Connection between popular and aristocratic environments is also evident in the production of *follas reales*, in Cruz's simultaneous success in popular theater and in his work for the administration and noble families or the royal family. Cruz is, in fact, an example of the permeability between the popular and the aristocratic in this environment.

²⁴⁸ Tomás de Iriarte, "La Musica, poema," in *Colección de obras en verso y prosa de D. Tomás de Yriarte. Tomo I* (Madrid: Imp. Real, 1805), 127-328. https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-musica-poema--2/html/002ea82c-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_31.html; Antonio Eximeno, *Dell'origine e delle regole della Musica, colla storia del suo progresso, decadenza, e rinnovazione* (Roma: Michelangelo Barbiellini, 1774).

the recapitulation of his book *La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado*,²⁴⁹ Alberto Escalante Varona describes two different aesthetic approaches that shaped the Madrilenian popular theatrical scene during the second part of the eighteenth century and can also be identified in musical examples from this period. Faced with a need for renewal resulting from the exhaustion of baroque models, and with challenging new aesthetic proposals coming from abroad, most contributors to Spanish popular theater developed one of the following two antagonistic attitudes: some repudiated traditional (baroque) models – disorganized, corrupted, inappropriate for neoclassic standards – and defended a return to classic poetics, while others continued to support formulas derived from seventeenth-century Spanish dramatic tradition.²⁵⁰ However, the latter had to adapt these formulas to the new taste and to the technical developments that took place in theatres and theatrical companies in the 1700s.²⁵¹ These two approaches can also be identified in the Madrilenian chamber musical scene. Here, some composers adhered more tightly to neoclassical models, featuring restraint, symmetry, and balance in formal and melodic designs. It is among practitioners of the second approach, freer and more experimental, where some grotesque elements can be identified.

²⁴⁹ Alberto Escalante Varona, “La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado,” (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020).

²⁵⁰ More focused on the Spanish reality and tradition and what audiences enjoyed and demanded, reworking genres from baroque theater (*entremés*, *autos sacramentales*, *comedia*, *comedia romanesca*...), and emphasizing formal freedom, variety and lack of realism.

²⁵¹ Alberto Escalante Varona, “La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado,” (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 158.

Literary Aesthetics and the Development of the Neoclassical Taste in Madrilenian Theatre

The second part of the eighteenth century was a period of conceptual transformation with consequences in all spheres of Spanish society that fostered the emergence of new solutions in science, politics and art. Spanish theater scholars acknowledge the preponderance of a popular and conservative culture over the novelties of enlightened thinking during this century.²⁵² However, there was also a gradual change of mindset and values towards rationalism and empiricism that was reflected in dramatic texts and affected all artistic representations, creating new discourses and shaping aesthetic narratives.

Traditional narratives in different artistic disciplines reinforced the idea of two irreconcilable, unnuanced contrasting aesthetic postures pitted against each other during this period: supporters of the rigidity of neoclassic regulations on one side and those in favor of creative freedom and the continuation of previous artistic trends on the other. However, a closer look into this reality reveals a different picture. The same fluidity that blurred the boundaries and enabled coexistence between different social classes, the popular and learned, or the Spanish and the foreign also favored a fruitful interrelationship between these apparently irreconcilable aesthetic views. Both stances coexisted with naturalness within the same contexts and even within the work of the same artists.

²⁵² “Como señala Aguilar Piñal, a lo largo del siglo XVIII conviven en España diferentes culturas, siendo minoritaria la nacida ‘al calor del pensamiento ilustrado,’ pues ‘hubo de convivir con una cultura popular más extendida, anclada con firmeza en el pasado nacional, conservador, clasista y contrarreformista.’” (“As signaled by Aguilar Piñal, throughout the eighteenth century different cultures coexist in Spain, being minority the one born ‘in the heat of enlightened thinking,’ because ‘it had to coexist with a more extended popular culture, firmly rooted in the national, conservative, classist and counterreformatist past.’”) Manuel F. Vieites, “Ilustración, educación y teatro en España a finales del siglo XVIII. Algunas claves,” *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* Vol.6, no.1 (2019), 26.

In reality, although erudite and popular cultural environments – often also identified with neoclassic and traditional approaches – were clearly defined, it was possible and frequent for authors to live and create works midway between the neoclassic precepts and popular aesthetics.²⁵³ The generation of popular authors that succeeded on the Madrilenian stages in the last decades of the eighteenth century, like Francisco Comella, did so mixing novelty and tradition, tragedy and comedy, verse and music, to create entertainment and spectacle.²⁵⁴ These were the works criticized by the most severe neoclassic thinkers as distorted, monstrous and vulgar because of their disorderly and capricious nature.²⁵⁵ Dramatic authors, painters, and composers would create grotesque moments either by

²⁵³ Alberto Escalante Varona sustains that in fact, antagonistic and hermetic categorizations that separate neoclassic and popular theater during this period are not an accurate depiction of reality.

²⁵⁴ The most prominent authors of popular theater during this period José de Cañizares (1676-1750) and Antonio de Zamora (1660-1727) during the first part of the century, and Luciano Francisco Comella (1751-1812), Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor (1737-1820), and Gaspar Zavala y Zamora (1762-c.1825) during the second part. These authors wrote *comedias de espectáculo* characterized by a focus on spectacular sceneries (*comedias de magia, de santos, heróicas y militares*), like *Marta la Romarantina* (José de Cañizares, 1771) or *La Judith Castellana* (Luciano Francisco Comella, 1791). As *comedias de espectáculo*, these focused on the image, employing lavish sceneries and using a simple dramatic structure based on the succession of astonishing and marvelous scenes, all lacking the realism and formal structure required by neoclassic poetics and indulging in verbal and dramatic excesses. *Comedias de figurón* like Antonio de Zamora's *El hechizado por fuerza* (Sevilla, 1758?) were also disliked by neoclassic criticism. Despite sharing the same costumbrist character and critic spirit, they were however criticized by their unordered succession of events and excessive, easy comic nature that targeted the wide public's tasteless criterion.

²⁵⁵ In the prologue to the second volume of his *Obras Completas*, Leandro Fernández de Moratín comments on the state of the theatrical scene at the end Aranda's presidency that summarizes the nature of the neoclassic critiques to popular theater: "Nunca se había visto más monstruosa confusion de vejezes y novedades, de aciertos y locuras. Las musas de Lope, Montalban, Calderon, Moreto, Rojas, Solís, Zamora y Cañizares; las de Bazo, Regnard, Laviano, Corneille, Moncin, Metastasio, Cuadrado, Moliere, Valladares, Racine, Concha, Goldoni, Nifo y Voltaire, todas alternaban en disorde union; y de estos contrarios elementos se componía el repertorio de ambos teatros." ("A more monstrous confusion of old age and novelties, of wise choices and nonsense, had never been seen. Lope, Montalban, Calderon, Moreto, Rojas, Solís, Zamora y Cañizares' muses; those of Bazo, Regnard, Laviano, Corneille, Moncin, Metastasio, Cuadrado, Moliere, Valladares, Racine, Concha, Goldoni, Nifo y Voltaire, all of them alternated in discordant union; and the repertoire in both theaters was made from these contrary elements.") Leandro Fernandez de Moratín, "Prólogo," in *Obras de D. Leandro Fernandez de Moratin, Volumen 2*. (Madrid: Aguado, 1830), xxxviii. On the other side of the aesthetic spectrum, the works of Leandro Fernández Moratín (*El sí de las niñas*, 1805), Cándido María Trigueros (*El precipitado*, 1785), or Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (*El delincuente honrado*, 1787), strive to adjust to the rules of time, space, and action that foster clarity in the development of the drama, have a strong moral and didactic element, more sober and realistic language, and verisimilitude.

placing themselves midway between one world and the other, combining elements from opposite aesthetics that resulted in incongruous “monstrosities,”²⁵⁶ or by using exaggeration and distortion of the classic canon as a creative way of expression.

This dialogue between neoclassic on the one hand and popular or baroque aesthetics on the other was already present by mid-century. Since 1749 the *Academia del Buen Gusto*²⁵⁷ gathered poets, intellectuals, and aristocrats at the palace of the marquess of Sarria to discuss literary topics, with special attention to theatrical and poetic matters. Agustín de Montiano y Luyando, Alonso Verdugo y Castilla (Count of Torrepalma), Blas Antonio Nasarre, José Villarroel, José Porcel and Ignacio Luzán, some of the most prominent intellectuals of the period, were among the academics of this pluralistic group that laid the groundwork for a new poetic based on the balance between the rigidity of neoclassic rules and the artistic freedom more typical of previous generations.²⁵⁸ Both stances were represented in this group, and although the *Academia del Buen Gusto* was short-lived (it only existed from 1749 to 1751) the fruits of the mutual influence among its members bloomed around the decade of the 1770s, when the tertulia of the *Fonda de San Sebastian*, the recently created royal academies,²⁵⁹ and the *Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del Pais* took over their activities. Although these promoted mainly a return to neoclassic

²⁵⁶ Monstrosities by neoclassic standards, that search a more refined and simple style. It proposes a clear division between common and elevated, noble and popular, respect of the three units of time, place and action, differentiation between educated and ordinary content.

²⁵⁷ Proceedings from 23 sessions from between December 1749 and April 1751 are preserved at the *Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid* (m. 18.476), although the *Academia* was inaugurated in January 1749, according to José Miguel Caso Gonzalez, *La Academia del Buen Gusto y la Poesía de la época* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2022), 384. Documented sessions were always led by Dña. Josefa de Zúñiga y Castro, marquess of Sarria. Caso Gonzalez considers the *Academia del Buen Gusto* as a reflection of the Spanish poetry scene at the time.

²⁵⁸ José Miguel Caso González attributes to this group the birth of the Spanish rococo poetics, characterized by the balance between both aesthetic stances. Ibid, 413.

²⁵⁹ *Real Academia Española* was funded in 1713, *Real Academia de la Historia* was funded in 1738, and the *Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* was funded in 1752.

aesthetics, José Miguel Caso González attributes to the *Academia del Buen Gusto* the birth of the Spanish rococo poetics, characterized by the balance between both aesthetic stances.²⁶⁰

The aesthetic discussions carried on by aristocrats and intellectuals, more inclined to neoclassic stances, coexisted with an eighteenth-century popular theater programming that continued to utilize baroque formulas²⁶¹ throughout the century. These were successful, although contrary to the new neoclassic aesthetics: the main drama was divided into three parts and interspersed with short pieces, the use of dances and music was frequent, as well as the use of verse.²⁶² It was more centered around Spanish topics and spectacular effects, and a principle of variety drove not only the internal structure of the pieces, but also the conception of the whole theatrical spectacle. Popular theater was still being criticized at the end of the century, accused of traditionally baroque features – disorder, untidiness, pomposity, extreme passions, exaggerated reactions²⁶³ – and considered the decadent continuation of baroque theater, only supported because of the audience's bad taste. The persistence of these critics and the successive bans implemented to eradicate this type of theater²⁶⁴ bring to light the enduring success enjoyed on stage by this type of aesthetics.

However, in the new enlightened context this type of theater necessarily needed to adjust: it not only faced the strong opposition of the most ardent supporters of

²⁶⁰ José Miguel Caso González, *La Academia del Buen Gusto y la Poesía de la época* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2022), 413.

²⁶¹ firmly rooted in Spanish dramatic tradition.

²⁶² Alberto Excalante Varona, "La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado," (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 64.

²⁶³ Ibid, 121.

²⁶⁴ bans of *autos sacramentales* in 1765 and old *entremeses* at the beginning of the 1780s.

neoclassicism, but even the loyal support of the most traditionalist segments of society gradually diminished during the second half of the century, making change unavoidable. From the two opposite sides of the aesthetic spectrum hybrid solutions started to emerge. While popular authors incorporated some neoclassic elements to accommodate the audience's changing taste²⁶⁵ – always maintaining a popular aesthetic core inclined to the spectacular and bombastic so criticized by Leandro Fernandez de Moratín in *La Comedia Nueva* – some neoclassic supporters also relied on baroque traditions to introduce neoclassic novelties by not only translating foreign neoclassic works but also adapting baroque works to better meet neoclassic standards.²⁶⁶ The endurance of baroque elements, the resistance to the introduction of neoclassic poetics, and the hybrid aesthetic solutions emerged during this period in the Madrilenian stage can also be found in some examples of visual arts and music.²⁶⁷

The 1760s witnessed some changes that would end up transforming the future of the Madrilenian, and therefore the Spanish theatrical scene. The arrival of Charles III in 1759²⁶⁸ started a period of changes that affected the cultural sphere and had also consequences for the development of theatrical aesthetics. The ban of *autos sacramentales* in 1765 marked the beginning of several institutional attempts to transform a scene that was deemed too corrupted and inappropriate by enlightened intellectuals. During this decade Ramon de la Cruz's popularity rocketed and this generation's authors of popular

²⁶⁵ Sentimental comedy, changes in language.

²⁶⁶ Aranda's reform entailed different initiatives aimed to improve the quality of representations. For more information, see Jesús Rubio Jiménez, "El Conde Aranda y el Teatro: los bailes de mascarar en la polémica sobre la licitud del Teatro," in *Alazet: Revista de filología* 6 (1994), 175-202.

²⁶⁷ Luis Paret, Boccherini.

²⁶⁸ More information in Alberto Excalante Varona, *La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado*, (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 42-43.

theatre,²⁶⁹ directly confronted with neoclassic criticism, started their careers. The following decades will witness several polemics between both postures – neoclassic and popular, with Nicolás Fernandez de Moratín and Ramon de la Cruz as the main exponents of these opposite stances – and the struggle of neoclassic aesthetics to conquer the Madrilenian stage, even with the help of authorities.

Whichever the conversations that took place in the academic setting were, the truth is that changes towards more classicist aesthetic approaches came to the Madrilenian stage slowly, required the impulse of various governmental reforms of enlightened inspiration, and the change of taste in the audience was never complete during this century. The ambitions of enlightened intellectuals for artistic endeavors that played a didactic and edifying role clashed head-on with the desire for amusement of the Madrilenian audience. Aesthetic enjoyment and uncomplicated entertainment were confronted in public theaters for the most part of the second part of the eighteenth century, and popular theater enjoyed the audience's support until the end of this period.

As already stated, until very late in the century Spanish drama continued some old traditions that were directly opposite to neoclassic principles: formal fragmentation and a penchant for spectacular effects are two of the characteristics of popular theater mostly attacked by neoclassic criticism. At the beginning of the second part of the century audiences still enjoyed being surprised by the spectacular qualities of magic comedies and

²⁶⁹ Not “erudite” or “neoclassic”. This distinction appears already in the eighteenth century and was recognized by Ignacio de Luzán in his 1737 *Poética*. Here, he distinguishes between popular and erudite drama: “La dramática española se divide en dos clases: una popular, libre, sin sujeción a las reglas de los antiguos, que nació, echó raíces, creció y se propagó increíblemente entre nosotros; y otra que se puede llamar erudita, porque sólo tuvo aceptación entre los hombres instruidos”. As cited in María Angulo Egea, *Luciano Francisco Comella, 1751-1812: otra Cara del Teatro de la Ilustración*, (Alicante: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Alicante, 2006), 21. Other authors of popular theater during this period are Francisco Comella, Gaspar Zavala y Zamora, José de Cañizares.

autos sacramentales that flooded the scene during the first part of the century. The ban on *autos sacramentales* in 1765 because of their irregularity, vulgarity, deformity, lack of moral purpose, and excessive use of effects – all characteristics of grotesque aesthetics – exposes the audience's tenacious taste for these kinds of spectacles.²⁷⁰ According to Escalante Varona, this ban marked the beginning of a new period for Spanish theatre in which miracles and excessive artifice were still present, but a more rational taste gradually permeated the scene. However, although by the 1770s neoclassic aesthetics had been established in theory and the first poetic texts had already been produced, public authorities had to intervene several times to promote its introduction in the Madrilenian stage in the following years, and neoclassic plays were not accepted by Madrilenian audiences until the end of the century.²⁷¹ After the ban of *autos sacramentales* in 1765, Aranda's reforms promoting the performance of neoclassic works or adaptation of baroque works only started to settle down in Madrilenian theaters a decade later, in the 1780s. The bans of *comedias de magia* in 1780 and the *Plan de Reformas de los Teatros Públicos* in 1797 are some of the institutional initiatives that bear witness to the resistance of the Spanish stage to neoclassic works. Neoclassic aesthetic ideals got established progressively, boosted by institutional reforms, censure, and bans that aimed to bring order, propriety, morality and good taste to the scene.

²⁷⁰ María Angulo Egea, "El Teatro Popular del Siglo XVIII," in *Dicenda: Estudios de Lengua y Literatura Españolas* 17(1999), 335-338. Referring to René Andioc's study of the polemics on the ban of *autos sacramentales* in *Teatro y Sociedad* (ed. Castalia, 1988), mentions also a drop in the audience's interest in this type of theater. But the fact that they were still being performed, and that some of the characteristics criticized in these works still lives in other genres and is still being criticized until the end of the century, supports the argument.

²⁷¹ Reforms and bans: Aranda's reforms starting in the late 1760s, ban of *autos sacramentales*, ban of *entremeses antiguos* at the beginning of the 1780s, *Junta de Teatros* in 1797.

At the very end of 1790, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos finished his *Memoria para el arreglo de la policía de los espectáculos y diversiones públicas y sobre su origen en España*.²⁷² The most remarkable concern is the state of the theater because of the despicable lineup of comical theatrical works and sceneries presented in the three Madrilenian *corrales de comedias*.²⁷³ In this document and given the state of theater he ponders whether it would not be a good idea to eliminate a genre so inclined to corruption and vulgarity, and along with it, all the

“títeres y matachines, los payasos, arlequines y graciosos de baile de cuerda, las linternas mágicas y totilimundis, y otras invenciones que, aunque inocentes en sí, están depravadas y corrompidas por sus torpes accidentes. Porque, de qué serviría que en el teatro se oigan solo ejemplos y documentos de virtud y honestidad si entre tanto, levantando su púlpito en medio de una plaza, predica don Cristóbal de Polichinela su lúbrica doctrina a un pueblo entero que con la boca abierta oye sus indecentes groserías.”²⁷⁴

By the 1770s, the years of Boccherini’s arrival in Madrid, signs of this transformation started to affect erudite and popular theater. Spanish neoclassicism was already configured and had some effect on the stage, though mostly after Aranda’s reform. Although popular theater still enjoyed much more success on the Madrilenian stage, traditional works were slowly being replaced by reworkings of baroque plays in a neoclassic taste. During this decade, the gap between what was being promoted in erudite

²⁷² *Report for the arrangement of the spectacles and public entertainments’ police and about its origin in Spain.*

²⁷³ Comedy theater, open-air coliseum for public performances.

²⁷⁴ “puppets and troublemakers, clowns, harlequins and *baile de cuerda* fools, magic lanterns and *per se*, are perverted and corrupted by their clumsy accidents. Because, how would it be useful if at the theater we only saw examples and documents of virtue and honesty if meanwhile, building their pulpit in the middle of a square, Mister Cristobal of Polichinela preaches his lascivious doctrine to a whole town who with their mouths wide open listens to his indecent profanities.” Cited in José Manuel Cruz Valdovinos, “Goya, Los Cuadros de Gabinete de 1793 y La Comedia Nueva,” *Anales Del Instituto de Estudios Madrileño* no.55 (2015): 193-194.

circles and what was being performed in theaters for a wider audience was still wide.²⁷⁵ The poetics promoted by these erudite circles reached a wider audience in the next decade because they were being now disseminated by the incipient press and they were being applied more consistently to dramatic texts.²⁷⁶ According to Escalante Varona, the periodical *Memorial literario, instructivo y curioso de la Corte de Madrid*,²⁷⁷ begun in 1784, institutionalized a model of classicist theatrical critique – based on reason, regularity, good taste, and sentiment, and excluding magic and heroic comedies – that guided audiences and authors.²⁷⁸ At the end of the 1780s neoclassic supporters also reached power positions and obtained direct contact with the administration, gaining additional influence on the cultural activities programmed in the city.²⁷⁹ The audience's taste continued to become gradually more positive towards forms, genres, and formulas coming from neoclassic poetics through the end of the century.

Despite the gradual decline in the interest for baroque works and the fact that neoclassic aesthetics reached a wider audience (not only aristocracy) since the 1770s, audiences continued to be attracted to popular genres and the spectacular until the end of the century.²⁸⁰ Exaggeration was standard and successful, and audiences enjoyed noise and marvelous effects more than they did refined taste and balanced elegance. Plays in the 1780s displayed a more obvious mix of genres and tones, combining elevated themes with

²⁷⁵ Alberto Escalante Varona, “La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado,” (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 71.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 101.

²⁷⁷ “Literary, instructive, and curious report of the Madrid's Court,” active in the years 1784-1791; 1793-1797; continuing in the nineteenth century.

²⁷⁸ Alberto Escalante Varona, “La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado,” (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 99.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 114.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 106. Short genres and *sainetes* were preferred in the seventies, and although neoclassic comedies started to consolidate on stage at the end of the eighties, *comedias de espectáculo* were still successful.

tasteless staging – vulgar effects and excessive scenic apparatus – and exaggeration with solemnity. Audiences never supported reforms and neoclassic taste entirely, and during the 1790s works considered “monstrous” were still being performed and heroic comedies rich in special effects came back, saving theaters’ finances with their profits.

Ramon de la Cruz is an essential figure to understand the transformations this period’s theater underwent: he played a fundamental role in the development of popular genres – some of them prone to the emergence of grotesque elements – and perfectly embodies the fluid relation between the popular and the elite cultural spheres. He also exerted an influential role, inspiring a whole generation of popular authors.²⁸¹ His rise to popularity in the 1760s is interpreted by Escalante Varona as a reaction of popular poetry to the neoclassicist effort to reform texts and companies, and to eliminate the vulgar disorder that supposedly dominated the theatrical scene.²⁸²

Ramon de la Cruz set the tone of this period’s popular comic theater when he renovated and popularized *sainetes*,²⁸³ one of the most successful products of eighteenth-century theater. Cruz equipped it with some elements similar to those found in grotesque visual arts and eighteenth-century performative disciplines predisposed to the grotesque

²⁸¹ The authors that have been called the “School of Comella” were, stylistically and in the way they managed their careers, heavily influenced by Ramón de la Cruz: Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor (*El mágico Mogol*, 1782; *La Cándida*, 1781; *Boda a la moda*, 1782); Luis Moncín, especially relevant for the *sainete* repertoire (*Casarse con su enemigo*, 1777; *El engaño descubierto*, 1791), Manuel Fermín de Laviano (*La afrenta del Cid vengada*, 1779). Luciano Francisco Comella (*La Cecilia*, 1786; *El violeto universal o El café*, 1793), and Gaspar de Zavala y Zamora (*Triunfos de valor y ardid. Carlos XII, rey de Suecia*, 1786), were stylistically opposed to neoclassic authors from the same period as Juan Pablo Forner, Nicolás Fernández de Moratín, Leandro Fernández de Moratín, Pedro Estala, and others.

²⁸² “theater’s vulgar disorder”; Alberto Escalante Varona, “La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado,” (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 42.

²⁸³ Spanish dramatic genre derived from seventeenth century *entremés*, characterized by its emphasis on comicalness and the burlesque. *Sainetes* are short and comic plays in one act, performed during the intermission or at the end of a dramatic play. Gradually they increase the duration and start being performed independently. They were frequently accompanied by music and dance and are especially characterized by its *costumbrismo*.

such as the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Cruz's *sainetes* are characterized by its histrionic humor (exaggerated, theatrical, affected) close to pantomime, and rely on the expressive capacities of actors and actresses to achieve its full potential. As in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, characters are parodic archetypes of social groups, only Cruz took his inspiration from Madrid's people.²⁸⁴ Although its comic tone and its coarseness provoked the criticism of erudite and neoclassic critics, Cruz did not completely reject enlightened referents.²⁸⁵ In fact, he used his knowledge of classic poetics to break them and expose them in his *sainetes*. *Manolo* and *Los Bandos de Lavapiés* are written with a burlesque/grotesque tone, created by the contrast between the environment (e.g. low-class taverns and streets, low-class characters) and the affected solemnity of their discourse, its explicit violence, and the grotesque caricatures of everyday characters.²⁸⁶

In the Madrilenian environment, Cruz, as the most successful author of popular theater, it did not prevent him from being considered a prestigious author and respected in select circles. He is mainly known today as author for the Madrilenian public theater, but he also wrote private plays for royal and noble circles and was supported by the city's authorities. He was an enlightened theorist, restorer of Zarzuela, and author of some Neoclassic texts. Although Cruz's *sainetes* were criticized by the strictest neoclassicists as vulgar, his moderation in interpreting neoclassic poetics, his respect for the audiences' taste, his *costumbrismo* – that aligned with certain patriotic views – and his position

²⁸⁴ Alberto Excalante Varona, "La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado," (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 45.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 66-67.

halfway between the popular and elite circles²⁸⁷ gained him the favor of more moderate critics.

Ramon de la Cruz's career illustrates the easiness with which some theatrical authors changed registers and blended elements from different aesthetics to please their audiences. Another example of this practice can be found in Garcia de la Huerta, also an influential figure in popular and erudite spheres that based his formal neoclassic formal novelties in traditional content, so important for the Spanish public.²⁸⁸ Given his command of different poetic languages, his role as an innovator, and his success in different cultural circles, we can also establish some parallels between Ramon de la Cruz's career and some composers from the period like Rodriguez de Hita, Pablo Esteve, or José Palomino. The hybridity between popular and learned musical languages, and between baroque and classical elements can also be found in the music of some other composers working for the aristocratic environment such as Antonio Soler or Luigi Boccherini, but I will come back to these composers in greater detail in the next chapter.

Some general ideas can be inferred from the study of theatrical aesthetics during this period that can be useful for the musical analysis of chamber musical works with a penchant for grotesque elements. First, authors were attentive to their audience's reactions and responded to them. Popular drama changed through the decades in the Madrilenian stage primarily to adjust to the audience's taste, proving the weight acquired by the public in the artistic creative process. Second, cosmopolitan enlightened and neoclassic ideals

²⁸⁷ Ramón de la Cruz received commissions from the city's authorities, noble families, and the Royal family. He wrote for the weddings of the infanta Maria Luisa and the Archduke of Austria, and for Carlos IV and Maria Luisa de Parma. He was a protégé of the duke of Alba from 1760 to 1767, and for the duchess widow of Benavente from 1767 on.

²⁸⁸ Alberto Excalante Varona, "La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado," (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 60-61.

found resistance in all fields of Spanish thought and, although supported by an elite minority, they were not widely part of the city's cultural landscape until the end of the century. Even then, they shared their popularity with popular works (*tonadilla*, zarzuela, and musical short genres like *melólogos*) in the musical sphere.²⁸⁹ Another important element in late eighteenth-century Madrid was the high degree of hybridity between popular-traditional, and elite-innovative elements that can be found in the theater and music. Characteristic of popular theater in this period is the reworking of traditional works with neoclassic rules, and musical elements with a baroque flavor remain also in the work of some composers until late in the century. Spanish authors and composers were familiarized with cosmopolitan models, consumed primarily by the elite, but they also relied on specifically Spanish elements to accommodate their works to their environment. In musical examples this could take the form of stylized autochthonous dances, melodic contours, or characteristic instruments. The most privileged audiences enjoyed prestigious works and authors, but there was no frontier preventing these from working for popular audiences. The classification of the artistic output in self-contained areas is a later construction.

It is essential to recall that the power of constructing an official aesthetic account belonged in both cases, music and drama, to intellectuals, usually supported by academies and the administration. In the case of music, this aesthetic discourse was created during this period by such enlightened thinkers as Tomas de Iriarte or Antonio Eximeno, and Leandro Fernández de Moratín is to a great extent responsible for traditional takes on

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 84.

eighteenth-century theater aesthetics forged in the nineteenth century.²⁹⁰ Works and authors displaying aesthetic tendencies contrary to this official discourse felt of the western European canon despite their success: Boccherini is a great example. Considering unorthodox aesthetic contributions from other artistic disciplines is essential to cast light on the role of the musical grotesque in relation to the neoclassical discourse during this period.

Grotesque Cultural Landscape

Literary and musical historiography have traditionally limited the list of authors and composers representative of this period to a few main artists, consistently highlighting the neoclassic output and accentuating the image of a balanced, cold, clean, didactic, non-entertainment-directed and almost dark period that went nearly unnoticed between the Golden Age and Spanish Romanticism. This long-established narrative has created an image that ignores artistic manifestations that do not conform with the official aesthetic pursued by enlightened and neoclassicist reformists endorsed by power structures – or at the very least considers them merely as exotic or substandard products. In her chapter “Commedia dell’Arte and the Spanish Golden Age of Theatre,”²⁹¹ Nancy L. D’Antuono complains about the little importance given to Spanish *comedia* in the canon of literary studies, especially considering its historical success. In the conclusions of his dissertation, Fernando Doménech Rico regrets how traditional histories of Spanish theater consistently

²⁹⁰ Alberto Excalante Varona, *La Escuela de Cruz: Textos y Autores del Teatro Popular en el Madrid Ilustrado* (Cáceres: Opera Prima, 2020), 14-17.

²⁹¹ Nancy L. D’Antuono, “Commedia dell’Arte and the Spanish Golden Age Theatre,” in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (Routledge: 2015), 238.

neglected the contribution of the *Commedia dell'Arte* company *Los Trufaldines* to the development of Spanish eighteenth-century theater.²⁹² Luis Paret's important role in Spanish painting from this period is just starting to be restored, and Miguel Angel Marin has repeatedly claimed the lack of awareness that still exists in relation to Spanish composers of chamber music from this period. This situation has only recently started to be amended by scholars like Raul Angulo Díaz and the interest in recovering the works of lesser-known composers demonstrated by initiatives coming from universities, editorials and musicians. This digging in (and digging into) is revealing a reality much more diverse than the one transmitted by neoclassical-focused narratives.

Numerous literary and visual manifestations from this period expose the cracks of what Paul Illie called the 'neoclassic stronghold.' Torres Villarroel's portraits, Ramon de la Cruz's *sainetes*, and Goya's *caprichos* are only the most visible expressions of this environment that promoted neoclassic aesthetics as the embodiment of enlightened ideals but also welcomed artistic freedom and in some cases, even eccentric endeavors. This late eighteenth-century cultural landscape accommodated different aesthetic alternatives with great naturalness: the neoclassical and the baroque, the popular and the learned, the European and the *castizo* coexisted in streets of Madrid, in coliseums, and private salons of royalty and aristocracy. The *infante* don Luis, the most long-lasting of Boccherini's patrons, supported the referent of neoclassic painting Rafael Mengs and commissioned one of the most important neoclassical architectural referents –Ventura Rodríguez's palace in

²⁹² Opposed to traditional narratives that depict an exhausted panorama incapable of stop repeating the same baroque models and topics, his analysis unveils a fluid dialogue between Italian and Spanish dramatic traditions that fostered the creativity of Spanish drama moving it forward in a different direction. Fernando Doménech Rico, "La Compañía de los Trufaldines y el Primer Teatro de Los Caños Del Peral." PhD diss., (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2005), 456.

Boadilla del Monte – and at the same time was responsible for commissioning unconventional works from Luis Paret and Francisco de Goya, both also authors of exquisite paintings in the purest neoclassical style. The Countess-Duchess of Benavente treasured the last European novelties by Franz-Joseph Haydn and Ignaz Pleyel and at the same time acquired music by Boccherini, Brunetti and less well-known Spanish composers. Modern neoclassical theatrical enterprises shared the stage with baroque and popular plays. Zarzuela mixed Italian opera buffa with traditional Spanish elements. Old and new, popular and learned, conventional and unconventional coexisted in the same environments and were part of the potential tool palette of every painter, writer, and composer. A closer look at literary and visual arts developed in eighteenth-century Madrid unveils many connections with unorthodox and grotesque aesthetics. The output of theater, literature, folklore, and visual arts created in the Madrid these composers inhabited, show a certain degree of aesthetic laxity, exposing different areas neoclassicist aesthetics did not regulate.

Theater was the most substantial artistic area where grotesque expressions emerged, especially in short genres and comedy. *Commedia dell'Arte* had an important role in shaping Spanish comedy at the end of the sixteenth century.²⁹⁴ Nancy d'Antuono has studied the influence of *Commedia* in shaping structural features in Spanish comedy, such as the division in three acts or the creation of plots and characterizations, and the development of the *gracioso*, a typically Spanish character, as features that Spanish Golden

²⁹⁴ For more information on *Commedia dell'Arte* in the Iberian Peninsula, look at Nancy L. D'Antuono, "Commedia dell'Arte and the Spanish Golden Age of Theatre" in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte* (Routledge, 2014), 238-246 and Maria del Valle Ojeda Calvo, "The Iberian Peninsula," in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 89-96.

Age authors received from *Commedia*.²⁹⁵ The influence of *Commedia dell'Arte* in the quintessential Golden Age author Lope de Vega's work is widely acknowledged in theater studies, and particularly documented is the role played by the *comico* Alberto Naselli (Zan Ganassa).²⁹⁶ According to Maria del Valle Ojeda Calvo, at the end of the sixteenth century he and his company had an essential role in the modification of Spanish *corrales* to accommodate special effects, and in the rise of popularity of *Commedia dell'Arte* in several Spanish cities where Italian comedians developed part of their careers. These performances of the *comici* are still not well studied in Spain,²⁹⁷ but we know that in Italy, in public and private performances, they included some elements that we can also identify in later Spanish theatrical popular genres: the use of music and dances and the incorporation of *intermedi* and machinery to spice up their performances were essential elements in *Commedia* performances. Italian *comici dell'Arte* enjoyed a new wave of success in Spain in the eighteenth century with the arrival of the company *Los Trufaldines*. In his 2005 dissertation Fernando Doménech Rico has documented the influence of this company on the development of eighteenth-century Spanish comedy. He mentions their role in remodeling theaters to accommodate new changes in scenography, stage machinery, visual effects and more, and reviews their involvement in the performance and development of Spanish *comedia*, short theater genres, and *tarascas*. According to this author, the widely

²⁹⁵ Nancy d'Antuono, "Commedia dell'Arte and the Spanish Golden Age of Theater," in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell'Arte*, (Routledge, 2014), 238-246.

²⁹⁶ Maria del Valle Ojeda, *Stefanello Bottarga e Zan Ganassa vol. 1 - Scenari e zibaldoni di comici italiani nella Spagna del Cinquecento* (Bulzoni, 2007); "Nuevas Aportaciones al Estudio de La Commedia Dell'Arte En España: El Zibaldone de Stefanello Bottarga." *El Crítico* 63, 1995: 119-138.

Other scholars discussing Stefanello Bottarga are Ana Isabel Fernández Valbuena, Laurence Senelick. ²⁹⁷ Ojeda Calvo states that some of the plays performed at Mantua were also performed in Madrid, though. Maria del Valle Ojeda Calvo, "The Iberian Peninsula," in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 93-94.

successful eighteenth-century *comedias de magia* derive from Italian farce and are the result of a recast of baroque theater and *Commedia dell'arte* elements. Doménech Rico also signals the influence this company's practices had in shaping the public's taste and how their gestural technique was criticized by neoclassic and enlightened critics.²⁹⁸

Finally, some elements already identified as characteristic of the grotesque aesthetic are essential to theatrical genres widely successful in the eighteenth-century Madrilenian theatrical scene, both in public and in private environments: *sainetes*, *follias*, *tonadillas*, *mogigangas* and *entremeses* – some of them with important musical contributions – displayed in their use of structural elements and performance practices a tendency towards the disordered and exaggerated.

In his book, *The Grotesque Aesthetic in Spanish Literature: from the Golden Age to Modernism*,²⁹⁹ Paul Ilie observes a rise of the grotesque during the eighteenth century and considered the grotesque – understood as the deliberate use of distortion that results in stylistic or thematic incongruities – as a prominent feature of this period's literary output.³⁰⁰ Ilie analyzes artistic and cultural manifestations that display a tendency towards the use of grotesque elements and establishes that eighteenth-century Spanish literature showcased a wide range of manifestations that went against neoclassic aesthetics, from the "pure grotesque" to the "mildly phantasmagorical romantic." He also notes that while capricious and grotesque elements were probably not officially respected in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were nevertheless practiced and esteemed, as the popularity

²⁹⁸ Fernando Doménech Rico, "La compañía de los Trufaldines y el Primer Teatro de los Caños del Peral," Phd diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2005: 454-456.

²⁹⁹ Paul Ilie, *The Grotesque Aesthetic in Spanish Literature: from the Golden Age to Modernism* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta Hispanic monographs, 2009).

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 80.

enjoyed during this period by authors like Bosch or Quevedo proves.³⁰¹ However, during this period neoclassical beauty was seen as the norm, and deviations were attacked as monsters, not necessarily considered grotesque, but certainly a part of a “forbidden area of creativity.”³⁰²

Illie defines four spheres of cultural activities that did not conform to neoclassical regulations, exhibited some degree of deformation, and provoked commentators of the period to censure them with derogatory qualifiers like *monstruoso*, *extravagante*, *delirante*, *quimérico*, *disparate*, *demencia*, *disonancia*, and so on.³⁰³ He groups these four categories according to the different degrees of distortion they display: works of mass entertainment inspired by folkloric manifestations, moralistic caricature, language that encapsulates all the impact of grotesque deformation – words and sentences that convey the unease of distorted realities – and other elements that are not specifically grotesque but still contravene the rules of moderation and order established by neoclassic taste.

The first and second categories expand on the connection already discussed between the emergence of the grotesque and the merge between the popular and the elite environments. The first category is directly inspired by what Illie calls “semi-folkloric creations of mass entertainment.”³⁰⁴ For him, *gigantones* and *máscaras* found in street parades were replicated in low comedy and burlesque ballads in characters like the *figurones*, harlequins, and satirical figures and in phrases appearing in prose and poetry

³⁰¹ Ibid, 81.

³⁰² Ibid, 82.

³⁰³ Ibid, 73.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

literary works.³⁰⁵ This "popular substratum"³⁰⁶ was utilized by artists working in refined environments to create products that, although they still retained some of their original naiveté, were adapted to please the expectations of a different type of audience. This would be the case of some works by Goya. Illie mentions Goya's use of masked figures, but we could also consider the appearance of popular types, characters, and traditions in his paintings as part of the same group. A similar process has already been discussed in relation to eighteenth-century grotesque dance. The naive, jolly character of these popular materials was lost in the hands of Romantic authors like Espronceda or Bécquer (for Illie), and a similar transformation from the playful and naive grotesque to the sinister grotesque is characteristic of musical manifestations in the works of such later composers as Hector Berlioz and Igor Stravinsky, icons of the musical grotesque.³⁰⁷



Fig.1: Nanos y Geants en la Puerta del Ayuntamiento, 1944 (Gigantes y Cabezudos at the city hall's entrance, 1944). Colección fotográfica Francisco Fernández. Archivo Municipal del Ayuntamiento de Alicante, Alicante.

³⁰⁵ "in such works as Luis Salazar y Castro's *Palacio de Momo*, or Francisco Botello's *Historia de las cuevas de Salamanca*, or even some of the poems of Gerardo Lobo." Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Paul Illie, "Concepts of the Grotesque before Goya," in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 5, no. 1 (1976), 187.

³⁰⁷ Popular activities with the inclusion of grotesque elements: *gigantones, máscaras, tarascas*, Carnival...



Fig.2: Francisco de Goya, Máscaras Cruels. 1794-97. Fundación Goya en Aragón, Zaragoza.

Moralistic caricature was abundant in eighteenth-century Spanish literature and conforms to the second category of grotesque techniques described by Illie. Those appear in Torres Villarroel's *Visiones y Visitas* and José Francisco de Isla's *Historia del famoso predicador Fray Gerundio de Campazas, alias Zotes*. They are probably the most well-known in this category, and certainly are some of the most important pieces in the Spanish eighteenth-century literary canon. Moralistic caricature used popular types as the base to create extreme descriptions that criticize ethical or religious defects. The process of distortion is taken even further than in the first category of grotesque activities. Here,

external features considered negative are exaggerated to create unnatural, monstrous representations and provoke the public's rejection.³⁰⁸ The same process of distortion, taken to a greater or lesser degree, can be used to create different degrees of distorted portraits (literary, visual, or musical) with different purposes. Moral critique is just one of these purposes, but it was surely highly popular in eighteenth-century enlightened Spain.

In the third and fourth categories of literary activities related to the grotesque the distortive process is less intense. Nevertheless, Illie considers them as part of the aesthetic spectrum relevant to the study of the grotesque. First, the use of specific words, expressions, or phrases can by itself conjure all or some of the effects of grotesque distortion: *monstruo horrendo, mico, enano, bufón, or sombras, visiones, fantasmas* are some of these devices mentioned by Illie.³⁰⁹ The last category cannot be called properly grotesque, but it partakes in the same antagonistic spirit regarding the principles of moderation and order essential to neoclassic aesthetics. Exaggeration and structural disharmony are examples of this last category and can be found, according to Illie, in the narrative epic poems of Botello and Solís – the combination of Virgilian episodes with

³⁰⁸ José Francisco de Isla, *Fray Gerundio de Campazas*, ed. Russell P. Sebold (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1960), I, 117. Cited in Paul Illie, "Concepts of the Grotesque before Goya," in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 5, no. 1 (1976), 188. "Como la Buena de la Catanla abrió tanto la boca para pronunciar su *a*, y naturaleza liberal la había proveído de este órgano abundantemente, siendo mujer de un bocado se engullía una pera de donguindo hasta el pezón, quiso su desgracia que se la desencajó la mandíbula inferior tan descompasadamente, que se quedó hecha un mascarón de retablo, viéndosela toda la entrada del esófago y de la traquiarteria, con los conductos salivales, tan clara y distintamente, que el barbero dijo descubría hasta los vasos linfáticos, donde excretaba la respiración." ("Because the Good Catanla opened her mouth so much to pronounce her *a*, and liberal nature had provided her abundantly with this organ, being a woman in one bite she ate a *donguindo* pear to the nipple, in her misfortune her inferior jaw disarranged so disharmoniously, that she became an altarpiece figurehead, leaving all the entrance to her esophagus and *traquiarteria* (trachea's artery) in sight, with the salivary ducts, so neat and clearly, that the barber said unveiled even the lymphatic vessels, where breath excreted.")

³⁰⁹ Paul Illie, "Concepts of the Grotesque before Goya," in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 5, no. 1 (1976), 189.

sinister and monstrous elements – or in certain prose fiction examples also imbued with sinister and horrid connotations.³¹⁰

So far, the catalog of elements related to the study of grotesque aesthetics in the theatrical and literary Madrilenian scene points to the relevance of such artistic taste in this field: grotesque was on the rise and took many different forms. The influence of *Commedia dell'Arte* in the genesis of eighteenth-century Spanish *comedia* is still traceable in structural elements of popular eighteenth-century theater: the use of music and dance, inclusion of *intermedi*, and a strong taste for the spectacular are, according to some scholars, a result of the dialogue between Italian and Spanish dramatists. The grotesque was especially present in popular genres and came up in different ways and with different degrees of intensity. Capricious, grotesque, monstrous, distorted, exaggerated, structurally dissonant... all made part of eighteenth-century Spanish dramatic language that enjoyed a good share of popularity.

Individuality and occasional defiance of neoclassic rules was not exclusive to literature, and other artistic media also welcomed experimentation and alternative aesthetics in works of art. A brief look into the work of the two most important painters from this period evidences the unique ways both found to navigate the changing aesthetic scene of their period. Luis Paret y Alcázar and Francisco de Goya (both born in 1746) stand out for the originality, versatility, and technical excellence of their artistic output. They produced works that range from the most extreme grotesque of Goya's *caprichos* to the discreet unorthodoxy of portraits like "La Familia del Infante don Luis" (Goya) or "Una

³¹⁰ Ibid, 188-189.

Celestina y los enamorados” (Paret). The respect both artists enjoyed during their lifetime bear witness to a heterogeneous and broadminded cultural context with room for the appearance of grotesque elements if accompanied by technical and artistic excellence. The royal and aristocratic circles in relation to which both painters developed their careers were the same circles that supported Luigi Boccherini, Gaetano Brunetti, Manuel Canales, and other composers of chamber music during this period. All of them gravitated towards the royal family and the most important aristocratic circles in the city, the houses of Alba and the house of Benavente.

Although his output is barely known to the wide public today, Luis Paret y Alcázar was considered one of the most prestigious painters in Spain during his lifetime. He is primarily linked to the Infante don Luis, but he also received commissions from the royal family, especially before his exile in 1775,³¹¹ and was respected in the environment of the Academia despite his departures from neoclassic aesthetics.³¹² He was named *Académico de Mérito* in 1780 and *Vicesecretario* in 1792.³¹³

³¹¹ 1775-1778: exile in Puerto Rico. 1778-1789: Bilbao. *Las parejas Reales* (1770), *Carlos III comiendo ante su corte* (1771-1772), *Carlos de Borbón, Príncipe de Asturias* (1767-1770).

³¹² In 1780, still from the exile in Bilbao, he sent a painting to the *Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* to be considered as *Académico de Mérito*. The review of this painting - *La circunspección de Diógenes*- in the webpage of the Academia defines it as a ”strange and refined picture” that stands out in the painter’s output: its ”brilliant, meticulous style featuring a multitude of small figures and strange light effects,” along with the fact that the main figure is placed at the extreme” are part of his personal painting style and go against the rules of neoclassic painting. Paret got the title of *Académico de Mérito* by majority, something remarkable considering the neoclassic orientation of the institution and the neoclassical taste of its secretary, don Antonio Ponz. Goya got the same title by unanimity the same year with a Christ in the Cross inspired by Mengs. This would prove the Academia’s tolerance and respect for original works outside the frame of neoclassic conventions, but also the preference for neoclassic aesthetics. <https://www.academiacoleccion.com/pinturas/inventario.php?id=0713>.

³¹³ He came back to Madrid in 1789 and was named *Vicesecretario de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* in 1792. At this time, he made part of the commission to reform education in the *Academia* and he displayed a much more restrained position, far from the originality of his origins.

Luis Paret, as Goya, also mastered a variety of styles and is known for his originality and versatility.³¹⁴ His output reveals his interest in unusual topics and in popular characters – these characters were frequently featured in this period’s artistic scene and are more prone to the emergence of grotesque elements – as well as exceptional compositional solutions, some degree of hybridity, a rare use of light and color, and the appearance of great numbers of tiny figures. All these characteristics are features of his personal style that challenged the rules of neoclassic painting prevailing in the official discourse during his career. *Escena de tocador* (1772-1773), *La tienda de Geniani* (1772), *Parejas reales* (1770) and *Carlos III comiendo ante su corte* (1771-1772)³¹⁵ are illustrative of Paret’s interest in popular and unusual topics as well as his success in the royal environment before his exile.

His *Baile en máscara* (1767) depicts one of the first masked balls organized after the ban of these entertainments was lifted in 1767.³¹⁶ This painting sums up most of the unique features characteristic of Paret’s personal style, particularly at the beginning of his career. It is filled with little figures that crowd the space from the floor to the ceiling. The overall sensation is one of a delicate, light disorder that bends the rules of classic balance while maintaining an elegant taste. The number and distribution of these figures recalls baroque ornamentation and Renaissance grotesque ornamentation, slightly overflowing the

³¹⁴ However, the identification of his work with the rococo style championed by Watteau in the first half of the century and the eternal comparison with Francisco de Goya have given him the role of the “second most important painter of the period” in historical accounts, and only now his figure is starting to be recovered with the publication of academic works and the organization of exhibitions dedicated to his work.

³¹⁵ Paret has also paintings with a unique subject in the history of Spanish painting *La aparición de san Miguel a Carlos III de Francia y San Francisco de Paula* is particularly rare in this respect, as it is a unique subject in the history of Spanish painting.

³¹⁶ These were allowed for a short period of time, between 1767 and 1773.

architectural frames with their minuscule bodies displayed in discreet asymmetry. The composition also presents an unbalanced structure similar to the one analyzed in Goya's *Capricho 4* by Helmut C. Jacobs as the central column appears slightly displaced from the center, emphasizing the sensation of unbalance. The horizontal axis is also displaced and reinforced by the difference between the lower part of the painting – painted with meticulous detail and a more consistent use of color – and the rest of the painting, at least three quarters of the surface, that presents blurring contours and a lighter gamut of colors.



Fig. 3: Baile en mascara. Luis Paret. 1767. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

The fundamental role played by characters from *Commedia dell'Arte* – a hunchbacked *Pulcinella*, *Dottore*, *Pagliaccio*, and *Harlequin* stand at the forefront, taking an important role in the composition – testifies to the popularity of such characters among the audience attending this sort of entertainments. Also striking is the number of forbidden acts depicted by Paret, especially in such a strongly regulated environment.³¹⁷ Music takes a central role as well, as the musicians playing in the central balcony (a string ensemble) quickly attract the attention of the viewer.³¹⁸ *Baile en máscara*'s popularity was long lasting, judging by the fact that Juan Antonio Salvador Carmona reproduced it in 1778, in the etching named *Variedad de Trages Españoles y Estráangeros*.³¹⁹

These features appeared to a higher or lesser extent in later paintings. *Carlos III comiendo ante su corte* also addresses an original topic and displays an unbalanced composition, presenting a wide empty space and many small figures. *La cebra* is an outstanding work created by Paret for the *Gabinete de Historia Natural* of the infante don Luis. The hybridity of this painting, merging together a quasi-scientific realism with an environment of classic inspiration and refined beauty make it stand out as a unique specimen. *Nigromante* and *La Celestina y los enamorados* deal with obscure topics removed from typical neoclassic thematic, as they pertain to the world of superstition, so

³¹⁷ Two women stand with forbidden attire, a child that was not supposed to be there appears in the forefront, as well as a forbidden iron stick.

³¹⁸ El Prado's review of this painting emphasizes the contradiction of presenting such an amount on infractions in this regulated environment and interprets it as a denounce of the gap between enlightened ideas and human condition.

³¹⁹ <https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/baile-en-mascara/953d7bcf-e531-486f-bc70-f85a1d5e0010>.

despised by Enlightenment thinking. *La Celestina* is also one of those popular Spanish characters so frequent in Paret's paintings and so typical during this period.



Fig. 4: Luis Paret. Una cebra. 1774. Museo Nacional El Prado. Madrid.

Overall, his original technique – use of colors, chaotic-almost baroque layout of figures, bizarre use of light and sometimes composition – and his choice of topics make him extremely original among his peers.

Although Francisco de Goya is not even mentioned in some of the essential studies about the grotesque³²⁰ his engagement with these aesthetics is at the center of numerous books,³²¹ articles,³²² seminars,³²³ and exhibitions³²⁴ that present him as a main figure in the history of the grotesque, side by side with François Rabelais and Hieronymus Bosch. These usually focus on works created towards the end of the century and later, but Goya's engagement with the unconventional and anticlassicist predates those works.

His royal portraits are a good example of how Goya broke the rules of tradition to create unorthodox examples of established genres for the most select circles of the Madrilenian society. Goya stretched out the genre's boundaries in the portrait of the family of the infante don Luis in 1784. *El Retrato de la familia del Infante* illustrates Goya's atypical approach to royal portraits earlier in his career and at the same time provides a glimpse into the Infante's closest environment. It stands out as an original piece in the Spanish artistic landscape: it represents royal and non-royal members of the Infante's house

³²⁰ Helmut C. Jacobs, "Lo Grotesco como programa de la Ilustración en el *Capricho 4* de Francisco de Goya," *Acta Artis:Estudis d'Art Modern*, no. 2 (2014), 70-71. Goya is not mentioned by Heinrich Schneegans, Mijail Bajtín, Peter Fuss.

³²¹ To name a few: Kristin Ann Ziech, "Goya and the Grotesque: A Study of Themes of Witchcraft and Monstrous Bodies"; Herwig Todts: "Goya Redon Ensor: Grotesque Paintings and Drawings" (from the Antwerpen exhibition).

³²² Lydia Vázquez, "Goya's monsters: Grotesque figurations of a childlike imaginary," in *Littérature* Issue 1, (2013), 102-109; Helmut C.Jacobs, "Lo Grotesco como programa de la Ilustración en el *Capricho 4* de Francisco de Goya," *Acta Artis:Estudis d'Art Modern*, no. 2 (2014), 69-95.

³²³ Goya: grotesco/coleccionismo, noviembre 2023, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

³²⁴ *Lo trágico y lo grotesco: Goya en la Guerra Civil* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, junio-agosto 2013); *Francisco de Goya, la conciencia retratada* (Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Sala de Calcografía Nacional, septiembre-octubre 2001); *Grotesque: the Diabolical and Fantastic in Art* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, December 4-May 5).

together, immortalizing reality and daily routine instead of a dramatized rendering of an utopian family. The solemnity required for an official royal portrait is completely absent. Some scholars like Valverde, Peña, Coli, Biagioni or Tortella propose that one of the figures is Boccherini, but this is not confirmed. Its unbalanced composition, muffled colors, its similarity with Giambattista Tiepolo's *La educación de Luis Antonio Jacobo, Infante de España*, its subject, and its protagonists make this painting into an unconventional specimen in this period's Spanish artistic scene.³²⁵ The incongruity, hybridity, and unconventionality of the endeavor can be interpreted as a type of eighteenth-century grotesque.³²⁶



Fig.5. Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. El infante don Luis de Borbón su familia y Goya. 1783-1784. Fundación Magnani-Rocca. Parma.

³²⁵ Juan Manuel López Marinas, *El infante don Luis de Borbón su familia y Goya* (Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2011), 281-312.

³²⁶ His painting *La familia de Carlos IV* (1800) is also, unlike other conventional royal portraits in the European context, deprived of any idealism, and all the essential elements in this type of portrait have disappeared. <https://www.museodelprado.es/aprende/enciclopedia/voz/familia-de-carlos-iv-la-goya/401bda16-78ac-4931-829d-be77093e8554>.

Early in the 1790s, as a result of the impact of the French Revolution and also of his own personal circumstances – mostly the disease that left him deaf – Goya's personal works took a turn that openly announced the romantic somberness of the nineteenth-century grotesque, in essence departing from the eighteenth-century "naiveté" of the grotesque.³²⁷ During the last decade of the eighteenth century, Goya presented two series of paintings particularly relevant to the history of the visual grotesque: his cabinet pictures from 1793, entitled *Diversiones Nacionales*³²⁸ by Isidoro Bosarte (secretary of the Academia) and the *Caprichos* for the house of Osuna from 1798.

The less well-known series *Diversiones Nacionales*, foreshadow all the despair and gloominess that blossomed six years later in the *Caprichos*. In his article, "Goya: los cuadros de Gabinete de 1793 y la *Comedia Nueva*," José Manuel Cruz Valdovinos suggests that these paintings participated of the same enlightened spirit of critique that in 1792 led Moratín to write the successful parody *La Comedia Nueva o el Café*, where he mocks the

³²⁷ Goya's testimonies during this period also show his confidence on the artists' individuality and creative freedom as artistic guide, in opposition to the strong regulation of neoclassicism. In 1792, discussing the Academia's educational program in a letter to don Bernardo de Iriarte –Viceprotector de la Academia – he defended an abandonment of the rigid regulation of the neoclassic curriculum in favor of a more individualized approach that respected the students' unique personal progression. He recommended to introduce new models to the students -not only traditional classic models that were being copied- and praised the great masters of the Italian baroque, especially Annibale Carracci. His faith on creative freedom and support of the students' individuality was clear: "No hay reglas en la Pintura ... La obligación servil de hacer estudiar o seguir a todos por un mismo camino es grande impedimento a los jóvenes que profesan arte tan difícil." His beliefs regarding artistic education differed from most of his colleagues' and professors' in the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, but the fact that he only left his role as professor at the Academia in 1797 - by his own decision, deeply regretted by other members of the Academia- and that he was named Director Honorario as late as 1804 demonstrates the openmindedness of one of the strongest bastions of neoclassic aesthetics in Madrid.
<https://www.realacademiabellasartessanfernando.com/goya/la-academia-y-goya/>.

³²⁸ *Diversiones Nacionales* is the name given to a series of small dimension works, painted in 1793-1794 in metal sheets: *Los cómicos ambulantes* (with characters from Commedia dell'Arte), *Bandidos asaltando una diligencia*, *Nafragio e Incendio*, *Corral de locos*, *Interior de prisión*, *Despeje de plaza*, *Lance de capa*, *Suerte de matar*, *Las mulillas*, *Toro enmaromado*, *Banderillas en el campo*, *Muerte de un picador*, *Apartado de toros of Toros en la dehesa*.

dramatic excesses of typical dramas popular at the time.³³⁰ Goya's *Diversiones Nacionales* and Moratín's *Comedia Nueva* were inspired, according to Cruz, by the bad taste and the vulgar excesses typical of the corrupted late baroque tendencies that dominated the Madrilenian scene.



Fig.6: Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. Los cómicos ambulantes, *Diversiones Nacionales*. 1793. Museo Nacional del Prado. Madrid.

³³⁰ José Manuel Cruz Valdovinos, "Goya: los cuadros de Gabinete de 1793 y la Comedia Nueva," *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileño*, no.55 (2015): 177-213.

Whether Goya's intention was aligned with Moratín's or not, such tasteless models certainly spurred on Goya's creativity to push the boundaries of neoclassical models, and he was well aware of it. In a letter to Bernardo de Iriarte dated January 1794, in which he introduced his cabinet paintings to him, Goya wrote he had "managed to make observations usually not possible in the works by request and where caprice and invention could not be extended ('no tienen ensanches')." ³³¹ Goya knew that these paintings were new and that they were potentially polemical. He expressed his concern about his colleagues' reaction in the same letter, because these paintings did not conform to the standards prevailing at the *Academia* and could potentially be considered unsuitable for the institution. He presented this work with a similar attitude to that of Boccherini when he offered his *Musica Notturna de la Strada di Madrid* to his Parisian editor, pledging to provide more "respectable" compositions along these ones to make up for the shortcomings of these pieces. Boccherini accompanied his quintet with an additional symphony because he esteemed that outside the Madrilenian environment, it could result "useless" and even "ridiculous." ³³²

³³¹ As cited in José Manuel Cruz Valdovinos, "Goya: los cuadros de Gabinete de 1793 y la Comedia Nueva," *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños*, no.55 (2015): 179, footnote 2: "La carta del 4 de enero de 1794 dice: "Yllmº Sr. Para ocupar la imaginación mortificada en la consideración de mis males y para resarcir en parte los grandes dispendios que me an ocasionado me dediqué a pintar un juego de quadros de gabinete, en que he logrado hacer observaciones a que regularmente no dan lugar las obras encargadas y en que el capricho y la invención no tienen ensanches. He pensado remitirlos a la Academia para todos los fines que V.S.I conoce que yo puedo prometerme en exponer esta obra a la censura de los profesores; pero, para asegurarme en estos mismos fines, he tenido por conveniente remitir antes a V.S.I los cuadros..." (B.M., Egerton 585.74)

³³² "Ne l'opera 30, quintettini, troverete che uno ha per titolo La musica notturna dell estrade di Madrid. Questo pezzo é totalmente inutile, ed anche ridicolo fuori di Spagna, poiché non possono gli uditori giammai comprendere il significato, né gli esecutori sonarlo come deve essere suonato: per il che, in suo logo, vi mando una sinfonis..." ("In Op.30, with *quintetinos*, you will find one entitled Nighttime Music of the Streets of Madrid. This piece is completely useless, and even ridiculous outside Spain, because listeners will never understand its meaning, and neither the performers will be able to play it as it should be played. This is the reason why I am sending you in its place a symphony..."). Boccherini's letter to Ignaz Pleyel. Madrid, July 10th, 1797. Morlanwelz (Belgium), Musée Royal de Mariemont, 1090/2. In Luigi Boccherini, *Epistolario*, ed. Marco Magnani (Madrid: Asociación Luigi Boccherini: 2011), 77-79.

Cruz Valdovinos' article lays out another question fundamental to the understanding of late eighteenth-century Madrilenian grotesque: how to reconcile the somber and sinister character of some of these paintings: the *Corral de locos*, with the jolly title of *Diversiones Nacionales* (National entertainments). The answer is to be found, according to Cruz Valdovinos, in the same heroic comedies so despised by Leandro Fernandez de Moratín. Here, terrible scenes were considered amusing according to the period's sensibility: duels, battles, tempests, funerals, fires, executions, dances, and histrionic lachrymose scenes delighted an audience deprived of any sense of taste, according to the neoclassicists.³³³ These dramatic resources, usually bordering and sometimes entirely committed to the grotesque,³³⁴ were part of the cultural panorama and aesthetic discussions of the time and whether they had a judgmental nature or not, they were the source of inspiration for aesthetically unconventional works of art.

³³³ José Manuel Cruz Valdovinos, "Goya: los cuadros de Gabinete de 1793 y la Comedia Nueva," *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileño*, no.55 (2015), 195.

³³⁴ Evangelina Rodríguez, introduction to the digital edition of Gaspar Zavala y Zamora's 1878's *La destrucción de Sagunto*: "patetismo que bordea lo grotesco." Cited in José Manuel Cruz Valdovinos, "Goya: los cuadros de Gabinete de 1793 y la Comedia Nueva," *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileño*, no.55 (2015): 80.



Fig. 7: Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. Corral de locos. 1794. Meadows Museum, Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

We now begin to understand how these elite paintings derived from popular aesthetics³³⁵ and grotesque manifestations appeared in literature and painting thanks to the work of the scholars already mentioned. However, there still is much to be further investigated concerning if and how they *sounded* in the musical assemblies of the

³³⁵ The 1793 and the 1798 series of paintings (*Diversiones Nacionales* and *Caprichos*) containing works inspired directly from scenes appeared in dramatic works and chronicles from the Inquisition, both instances of the literary grotesque.

Madrilenean nobility. The formal excesses and thematic incongruities found in these dramatic works were new to Spanish painting and fostered the artistic exploration that fascinated Goya so much. They probably also participated in widening the sonic palette of composers working in the same environment, and chances are that they also pleased the same enlightened patrons and friends for whom these artists operated.

To sum up, the second half of the eighteenth century was for artists working in Madrid a time of experimentation characterized by the concurrence of opposite trends and a genuine eclecticism. Avant-garde, cosmopolitan, and enlightened impulses coexisted with a reinforced traditionalism and conservatism that increased and uplifted the presence of popular aesthetics in part of this period's artistic production. Popular theater and folklore had considerable weight in the Madrilenean artistic scene and both retained some elements common to baroque and grotesque aesthetics: disorder, exaggeration, untidiness, formal fragmentation, irregularity, vulgarity, deformity, and histrionics – all together or separately – are characteristic of some the most popular Madrilenean entertainments during this century: *sainetes*, *follas*, *tonadillas*, *mogigangas*, *entremeses*, but also literary and pictorial trends, as examined in this chapter.

The baroque, grotesque, and vulgar were in principle characteristic of popular genres and alien to neoclassic endeavors, but in fact both aesthetics coexisted with naturalness and were balanced in different degrees in the work of artists active in this environment. Ramón de la Cruz, Luis Paret, Francisco de Goya, or Torres Villarroel are some of the most famous examples of this eclecticism. There was a fundamental misalignment between what neoclassic intellectuals proclaimed in close circles and what the Madrilenean audience – fond of enjoying simple, carefree entertainments – demanded,

resulting in a long-lasting endurance of baroque and popular aesthetics, a tenacious resistance to neoclassic novelties, and the emergence of hybrid solutions.

The primary goal of this study is to recognize specific, audible musical moments that defy the classic ideals of balance, restraint, and proportion to a point that can be identified with the grotesque in any degree, what Paul Illie denominates in literature the “imaginistic phenomenon of deformation.”³³⁶ The analysis of the cultural background that precedes this musical discussion leads inevitably to two recurring underlying topics that encourage grotesque deformation and are also protagonists in the musical grotesque: mimicking the popular and stretching out the possibilities of baroque elements were the two poles towards which musical eighteenth-century Spanish grotesque gravitated, and will be especially present in the following chapter, dedicated to musical analysis of quartets and quintets composed in this context.

³³⁶ Paul Illie, “Concepts of the Grotesque before Goya,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 5, no. 1 (1976):186.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL DEFINITION OF THE EIGHTEENTH-
CENTURY MUSICAL GROTESQUE

“This transition from measured walking to dance and from dance to measured walking is as necessary for this spectacle as the transition from recitative to aria and from aria to recitative is in opera.”³³⁷

While notions about beauty evolve in a way that tends to substitute and exclude earlier models from the canon, developments in the understanding of grotesque aesthetics do not necessarily push aside previous interpretations. Instead, various concepts of the grotesque from different periods usually coexist and overlap, creating a melting pot of unorthodox expressions that are generally related to each other by a variety of different means. This was the case during the second part of the eighteenth century in Western Europe, when Renaissance and Baroque understandings of the grotesque existed side by side with new readings as products of a new social and cultural reality. In this study, the analysis of the Renaissance fantastic ornamental style, the carnivalesque-Rabelaisian idea of the grotesque, and the grotesque in eighteenth-century caricature and theatrical disciplines are three different traditions with a direct translation in the musical repertoire analyzed. These three traditions act like branches of a same tree, sharing a fundamental core of grotesque characteristics while providing more nuanced specificities that enrich our

³³⁷ Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, “Eighteenth-Century Italian Theatrical Ballet: the Triumph of the *Grotteschi*,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 27. Baron Grimm describing his impression of Noverre’s ballets towards the end of the eighteenth century. Baron Friedrich Melchior Grimm (1723-1807), German-born French-language journalist, art critic, diplomat and contributor to the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. Jean-Georges Noverre (29 April 1727 – 19 October 1810) was a French dancer and *ballet master*.

understanding of grotesque aesthetics before the arrival of the nineteenth-century Romantic transformations. At the same time, reconstructing our interpretation of the grotesque by considering eighteenth-century expressions in their natural context enlarges our understanding of what could be considered grotesque (or grotesque-related) during that period,³³⁸ and provides a different approach to address the analysis of musical repertoires.

As already stated, the rupture of the classical canon as it is understood by contemporary aesthetic conventions is the first and most fundamental premise to consider when analyzing grotesque artistic manifestations. The classical canon maintains its essential body of features through time. Balance, symmetry, and proportion are certainly fundamental and unmovable requirements to consider classicism at any given time, however they are also subject to a certain degree of variation depending on the specific period analyzed. As in any other artistic field, grotesque musical manifestations will therefore depend on what is considered adjusted to conventions at a given time and will adopt a different shape depending on these, and at the same time they will share with grotesque expressions from other periods a core of features related to the presence of unbalance, lack of symmetry and proportion. These notions play a particularly important role in the neoclassic period, as can be seen in Tomas de Iriarte's poem (analyzed in chapter two). Lack of restraint, exaggeration, and excess are therefore at the source of most grotesque elements in all disciplines considered. They may appear in any musical parameter (rhythm, melodic contour, texture, instrumentation, form, dynamics, extension of the musical work) and must be considered in relation to conventional musical examples in the same period and region.

³³⁸ Even if it was not necessarily named like that.

The connection to popular aesthetics and folkloristic elements, although not indispensable to qualify something as grotesque, was a particularly influential element in the development of eighteenth-century grotesque aesthetics. Its impact can be especially appreciated in the Bakhtinian analysis of Rabelais' grotesque and in three contemporary phenomena related to these aesthetics: caricature, *Commedia dell'Arte*, and grotesque dance. The use of popular and folklore elements in these disciplines, as well as in music destined to non-popular contexts, may respond to a variety of reasons and as some scholars maintain,³³⁹ in most cases it is far from being just the result of direct contact with popular culture or a naïve and passive recreation of it. Depending on the context, the use of popular elements and strategies might respond to the desire to address profound social and spiritual uneasiness (as Bakhtin argues for some Rabelaisian examples), to fulfill the entertainment interests of a particular social class,³⁴⁰ or as a maneuver to appeal to audiences attracted by this content.³⁴¹ To these ends, when popular elements appeared in non-popular contexts they were filtered, selected, and shaped to function as a “deliberate, refined, and sophisticated collection of the most suitable elements for immediate identification of characters, situations, and circumstances,” in the words of Riccardo Drusi.³⁴² He also

³³⁹ Bakhtin, Taviani, Drusi...

³⁴⁰ Discussing *Commedia dell'Arte*, Taviani proposes that “putting the poor at the center is often made by aristocrats who find it fun mimicking characters that represent common people. Liked by poor and signori, too.” Ferdinando Taviani, “Knots and Doubleness: the Engine of *Commedia dell'Arte*,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 21.

³⁴¹ Riccardo Drusi, “Popular Traditions, Carnival, Dance,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 44-45. Drusi interprets the use of folkloric elements (masks, dance, and music) as a clever stratagem to attract audiences and maximise the popular impact of their art, and not as the result of the original contact between theatre and common people. The reason for the assimilation of traditional, popular, and folkloric elements and characters in the field of professional theatre would be, according to this author, to create works that resonate with their audiences.

³⁴² *Ibid*, 45. Referring to *Commedia dell'Arte*.

draws attention to the cultural and creative refinement of these creators and discards a simple and naïve use of the popular element. This is a particularly relevant element to consider in relation to late eighteenth-century Spanish grotesque, where the popular and elite environments were bonded by multiple and meaningful connections, as discussed in the previous chapter.

What follows is an analysis of specific traits that define three traditions – all present during this period – that participate from the aesthetics of the grotesque and have a direct translation into musical features. The study of the eighteenth-century ornamental grotesque, the Bakhtinian carnivalesque, and other artistic expressions in the sphere of the grotesque – caricature, *Commedia dell'Arte*, and grotesque dance – provides a more precise delineation of grotesque traits during the Enlightenment and results particularly relevant for the analysis of unconventional musical examples. Furthermore, it corroborates the existence (and currency) of grotesque taste in eighteenth-century Western Europe.

The Ornamental Grotesque

As an ornamental style, the original Renaissance grotesques, also known as “moresque” or “arabesque” during this period, enjoyed as discussed in previous chapters, great popularity in the eighteenth century.³⁴³ Although not the most common, during the second part of the century some musical ornaments also followed the same irregular,

³⁴³ Concha Herrero Carretero, Álvaro Molina, and Jesusa Vega, *La decoración ideada por François Gognard para los apartamentos de la Duquesa de Alba en el Palacio de Buenavista*. (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, Ministerio de defensa, 2020)<https://books.openedition.org/cvz/10687?lang=es>.

cornucopian patterns inherited from the baroque tradition. The main principle guiding the elaboration of these ornaments is the abandonment of classic conventions that prescribe containment, symmetry, regularity, and uniformity. In its place, grotesque musical ornamentation appeared in the margins, avoiding relapsing in strong beats and in doing so, moving the weight of the musical phrase to create asymmetry and a sense of unbalance. Instead of cleanness and transparency, grotesque ornamentation in the neoclassical period appeared as a jumbled, capricious, exuberant embroidery that overflowed the score and the senses. It was made by rhythmically uneven ornaments (mixing tempos and binary with ternary divisions) and did not keep a regular pattern within the same movement. On the opposite side of the spectrum, neo-classic ornamentation as utilized by Joseph Haydn in his op.33 is scarce, brief, placed strategically to reinforce the weight of important parts of the sentence and not obscuring the symmetry of the passage. It emphasizes the clarity and balance of the musical phrase, as we can see in the example below (see example 1).



Example 1 - Haydn op.33, n.3 in C Major, “The Bird”

In the following examples, by Luigi Boccherini and Manuel Canales, ornamentation – whether indicated by signs or written out – is profuse and irregular in its alternance of different rhythmic values and binary-ternary subdivisions. It may appear either on strong or weak beats (see examples 2 and 3):



Example 2 - Boccherini's Guitar Quintet in D Major, G.448, First violin, *Allegro Maestoso*, measures 6-8.



Example 3 - Manuel Canales op.1, no.1, Allegro Comodo (Violino Primo)

Grotesque ornamentation was also characterized by hybridity in its mix of vegetal, animal, and human forms and in its mélange of different species or body members. This hybridity – one of the features most criticized by neoclassic intellectuals – remained permanently at the core of the idea of the grotesque and can also be traced in musical elements different from ornamentation. The musical combination of the apparently incongruent, as shown in previous chapters in relation to music and *Commedia dell'Arte*,

could potentially provoke the same feeling of oddness experienced by the first viewers of grotesque ornamentation by appealing to the audience's musical literacy. The inclusion of popular instruments in music intended for aristocratic salons – as the castanets and guitar used in Boccherini's music despite the disapproval of Tomás de Iriarte³⁴⁴ – or Padre Soler's inclusion of a keyboard (harpsichord or organ) in the recently created string quartet³⁴⁵ could have been perceived as a rupture of the unwritten rules of decorum by these composers' audience, creating a sense of oddity characteristic of grotesque products. Although these elements by themselves would not have transformed a musical work into something grotesque, their presence distances these pieces from the classic ideal of symmetry, balance, and restraint that respects social and artistic conventions.

Antonio Soler's music presents yet another aspect that connects it with the volatile nature of grotesque ornamentation. In the presentation of the double CD that contains Padre Soler's six quintets recorded by the *Cuarteto Bretón* and the pianist Rosa Torres-Pardo in 2013,³⁴⁶ Andrés Ruiz Tarazona emphasizes the original and spontaneous character of Soler's compositions : “Las composiciones de Scarlatti, por ejemplo, parten de un motivo que se desarrolla poco a poco, de modo muy coherente. En cambio, Soler tiene una gran espontaneidad, como si incorporase fragmentos de distintas piezas a una misma composición.”³⁴⁷ (see example 4).

³⁴⁴ *La Musica Notturna* features castanets and simulates the sound of tambourines, the guitar employed in the Fandango quintet.

³⁴⁵ Antonio Soler, “Seis Quintetos para dos Violines, Viola, Violoncello y Órgano o Clave obligado,” score, 1776. Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

³⁴⁶ Padre Soler: “Seis Quintetos,” with Rosa Torres-Pardo and Cuarteto Bretón, recorded April 17, 2013, Columna Música, CD.

³⁴⁷ Andrés Ruiz Tarazona states that “Scarlatti compositions, for instance, start with a motive that develops gradually, in a very coherent way. Soler, however, features great spontaneity, as if he incorporated fragments from different works into one work.” In “Se recuperan los seis quintetos para cuerda y teclado del padre Soler,” Boletín Biblioteca Csma, Conservatorio Superior de Música de Aragón, May 10, 2013.

Example 4 - Antonio Soler, *Seis Quintetos para dos violines, viola, violoncello y órgano ó clave obligado, Quinteto 1º, Allegretto*, measures 1-16.

This capricious use of melodic motifs appears from the beginning of Soler's collection and remains a constant throughout the quintets. For instance, the first eight measures from the opening *Allegro* combine four different short melodic motifs in such way that no clear longer melodic unity is established. These reappear in the following eight measures combined with new melodic designs in an unpredictable way, not following any apparent principle that could be related to the neo-classic canon.

The Bakhtinian Grotesque

Giving musical compositions a natural form³⁴⁸ or observing them through the lens of other established musical forms, especially during the galant period (sonata form, rondo, minuet, etc.) helps in grasping and understanding an aural phenomenon that otherwise risks to turn into something unmanageable for the listener. As happens with the rupture of visual and literary conventional structures that provide a secure frame of communication for authors and audiences,³⁴⁹ the rupture of formal conventions in music generates specific effects in the audience, relies on their musical literacy and the composer's knowledge of it, and it is an intentional compositive choice, especially in such intensively codified mediums as the Western European string quartet at the end of the eighteenth century.

Although distant in several aspects from the string quartets in eighteenth-century Madrid, the argument made about literature, the monstrous, and the physical body of musical works by Anna Zayaruznaya in her book *The Monstrous New Art* is strongly compelling and relevant to the analysis of the grotesque, a close relative to the monstrous. Zayaruznaya establishes connections between the text of motets dealing with fragmented monstrous creatures – a chimera, a biblical statue with a fragmented body – with specific formal solutions that involve “division, stratification, and disjunction” in *ars nova* motets.³⁵⁰ She proposes this lens of “hybridity and division”³⁵¹ as an effective alternative

³⁴⁸ Anthropomorphic, with a head and feet, or zoomorphic, by adding *caudae* or *codas*, or ascribing a masculine or feminine genre. Chapter 1 (Songs Alive) in Anna Zayaruznaya's book provides an account of this tradition of “zoomorphization and antromorphization of musical works” (21) in medieval discourse and literary theory. Anna Zayaruznaya, *The Monstrous New Art* (Cambridge University Press, 2015): 21-70.

³⁴⁹ Helmut C. Jacobs, “Lo grotesco como programa de la Ilustración en el *Capricho 4* de Francisco de Goya,” *Acta/Artis. Estudis d'Art Modern*, no.2 (2014): 69-95.

³⁵⁰ Anna Zayaruznaya, *The Monstrous New Art* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 15.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

to reconsider some of this period's repertoire. In sum, Zayaruznaya argues that the same fissures that make up the essence of these monstrous creatures were also an essential part in the conception of these motets' musical shape. Even more, she does not consider this association casual but rather searched by experimental composers attracted to these creatures and their bizarre forms because of their unique potential to exploit the techniques of *ars nova* motets.³⁵² Always acknowledging the distance between both repertoires, I find that Zayaruznaya's analysis establishes an important antecedent for the analysis of the musical monstrous and its emergence in the relationship between formal structures and language content before the arrival of the nineteenth century. The wordless nature of chamber music makes the direct association with the grotesque looser, however the appearance of recurrent topics shared with other grotesque disciplines makes up in certain instances for such a direct link and allows for an initial examination of the musical grotesque.

I suggest that the rupture of formal musical conventions during the last three decades of the eighteenth century was also a conscious choice of disengagement with strict neoclassical norms – much more so in elite circles fully aware of the latest string quartet and quintet developments³⁵⁴ – and propose the lens of the grotesque (in its totality or in its

³⁵² Ibid, 14.

³⁵⁴ In his doctoral dissertation “El mecenazgo musical de las Casa de Osuna y Benavente (1733-1844). Un estudio sobre el papel de la música en la alta nobleza Española” (Universidad de Granada, 2005), Juan Pablo Fernandez Gonzalez documents the presence of up-to-date foreign European repertoire in the house of the Duchess of Benavente and Osuna, especially fascinated by Haydn's musical output. Inventories from this period reflect the richness of this house's musical library, testimony of the countess' patronage activity and musical practices of the house from ca.1780 to 1834. This library served during this period both for the private use in the house's activities and for performances in theaters, churches, and private academies outside the house through loan (“La papelera de música de la XV Condesa-Duquesa de Benavente. Los inventarios de 1824 y ca. 1838”:282-293 and “Sinfonías y música de cámara de Joseph Haydn, Ignaz Pleyel y otros autores centroeuropeos”: 545-550).

different, isolated components) as a way to “enlighten” the most unconventional works of the Madrilenian late eighteenth-century musical repertoire. I also suggest that the literary theory of the grotesque, and the Bakhtinian approach specifically, act as a valid framework to consider the musical grotesque during this period.

In the fifth chapter of his influential book *Rabelais and his World*, Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the grotesque body as a long-lasting literary trope present in literature and speech and antithetical to the more recent and restrictive “modern canon.” Bakhtin’s analysis, published in 1965, is still one of the main references for studies of the grotesque and a valuable tool in the study of a great array of grotesque manifestations (literary or not). In his view, the grotesque as a literary trope surpasses what he sees as the most common approach to the topic during the decade of the 1960s, a view embodied in the theory of German scholar G. Schneegans.³⁵⁵ Bakhtin interprets the grotesque body as an ambivalent concept, capable of embracing not only the negative and satire-centered exaggeration acknowledged by most literary analysis, but also the positive, optimistic, life and joy-creating aspect of the material body. This is, in his opinion, the positive raw material exaggerated “to disproportionate dimensions” by the grotesque, that acquires by virtue of this fact a positive character. Bakhtin’s analysis presents the grotesque body as the reverse of the modern canon in its physical presentation as a porous and inversed body, its hyperbolic nature, and its acceptance of the dismembered body.

³⁵⁵Heinrich Schneegans, *Geschichte der Grotesken Satyre* (Strassburg: K.J. trobner, 1894).

The physical approach of Bakhtin's analysis emphasizes the topographical aspect of the body, and especially what he calls the "logic of the opposites,"³⁵⁶ in relation to two different physical axes: the upper/lower and the inward/outward. The importance of the inside-out and the upside-down in the acts of the grotesque body is stressed in several parts along this chapter.

Instead of respecting the vertical hierarchy (head up / feet down) and natural placement of human anatomy and the boundaries that separate the body from its surroundings, the Bakhtinian grotesque privileges the contact, interchange, confusion, and contrast of the upper and lower levels, and of the inward and outward. In chosen examples extracted from Rabelais's works, Bakhtin highlights the significance of the head contacting the abdomen, the mouth put in relation with the birth canal, and so on. The Bakhtinian grotesque world is one turned upside down, with a close contact between what's up and what's down. The most apparent way in which this interchange between the low and the high can be transposed to music is by analyzing the behavior of top and low voices in relation to their traditional roles: the interchange between lower and higher voices could indeed mirror the interchange between the lower and higher bodily levels. In addition, this behavior was specifically censored by Tomás de Iriarte in *La Música*,³⁵⁷ something that places it directly outside of the boundaries of Spanish neoclassic musical taste.

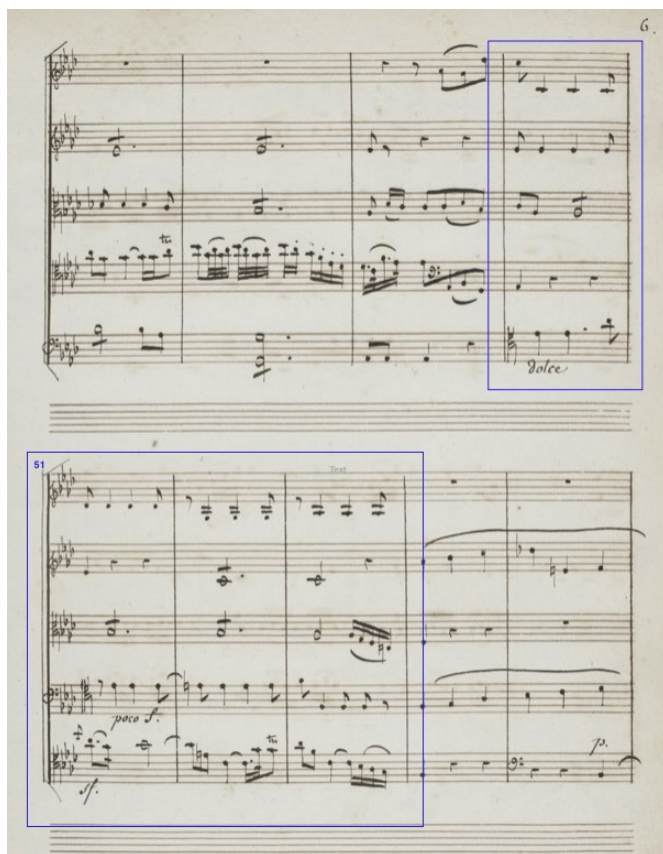
³⁵⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, [1965] 1984), 309.

³⁵⁷ Tomás de Iriarte, "La Música" in *Colección de obras en verso y prosa de D. Tomás de Yriarte*. Tomo I (Madrid: Imp. Real, 1805), 163.

Gaetano Brunetti and Luigi Boccherini's quintets occasionally feature a melodic line of the first violoncello that goes above the first violin's, which in this case adopts an accompanimental role (see examples 5, 6, and 7).

The image displays two systems of a musical score for Gaetano Brunetti's Quinteto 1 op.1, measures 176-183. The score is written for five instruments: Violin 1 (Vl 1), Violin 2 (Vl 2), Viola (Vla), Violoncello 1 (Vc 1), and Violoncello 2 (Vc 2). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 176-179) shows the first violin and second violin parts with a melodic line marked 'p' (piano) and 'rinf.' (rinforzando). The viola part is marked with 'p' and 'rinf.'. The first and second violoncello parts are marked with 'dol.' (dolce). The first violoncello part features a melodic line that goes above the first violin's line in measures 176-179. The second system (measures 180-183) continues the melodic line in the first violin and second violin parts, marked with 'p' and 'rinf.'. The viola part is marked with 'p' and 'rinf.'. The first and second violoncello parts are marked with 'dol.' (dolce). The first violoncello part features a melodic line that goes above the first violin's line in measures 180-183.

Example 5- Gaetano Brunetti, Quinteto 1 op.1, *Allegro Assai*, measures 176-183.



Example 6-Boccherini Op.11, n°1, *Larghetto*, measures 50-54



Example 7.A - Boccherini G.341, op.40, n.2, *Allegro Maestoso*, measures 15-27, violoncello part.



Example 7.2- Boccherini G.341, op.40, n.2, *Allegro Maestoso*, measures 15-27, violino primo.

Other times the first violoncello and the first violin share the same range without the violoncello surpassing the violin. Even in these cases Iriarte's rule against trespassing the instrument's range is broken.³⁵⁸

However, the relation inward/outward is the most remarkable way in which the Bakhtinian grotesque body displays its opposition to the classical canon and to naturalistic depictions of the body, and it is also at the root of most of its features: instead of respecting the confines of the body and its existence as a finished, independent object, the Bakhtinian grotesque body focuses on its porosity and its capacity to communicate with the exterior and outgrows itself. Bakhtin describes the grotesque body as one "in the act of becoming": it is open and remains in communication/exchange with the exterior. It inhabits and focuses on the borders, outgrows itself, pours out of its own limits, negating a closed individuality. It is constantly in the process of becoming something else, offering itself for an exchange with the world outside. It is not a finished product, it does not stress individuality, but rather

³⁵⁸Tomás de Iriarte, "La Música," in *Colección de obras en verso y prosa de D. Tomás de Yriarte*. Tomo I (Madrid: Imp. Real, 1805), 162-163.

lives in the borders, connects with the exterior and is susceptible to changes (or mutations). In this process, the inner body ceases to be cloistered and pours itself into the exterior:

“The grotesque image displays not only the outward, but also the inner features of the body...the outward and inward features are often merged into one.”³⁵⁹

The “bowels of the music” is actually the *ripieno*, the harmonic filling, especially since the crystallization of the structure (longstanding at this point, and present in most quartet music from the period) of a rhythmic/accompanying bass, plus the leading melodic line in the soprano, plus the internal *ripieno*. When this musical role is highlighted at the expense of the melodic line, we can interpret that the music’s guts are exposed (see examples 8-12). Elizabeth Le Guin discusses Boccherini’s non-melodic passages focusing on the creation of exceptional musical textures, and connects them with the penchant of all “*sensible* art” to appear incomplete, leaving space for an active listener to participate, to fill in, imagine, and complete what’s missing.³⁶⁰ José María Reynoso’s quartets (ca. 1740-1802) feature also some short passages of this sort, where the absence of a defined melody exposes the accompaniment parts to the listeners (see example 8 and 9).

³⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, [1965] 1984), 318.

³⁶⁰ Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press, 2006), 72-76.



Example 8- Reynoso, quartet n° 2, *Andantino*, measures 64-66.

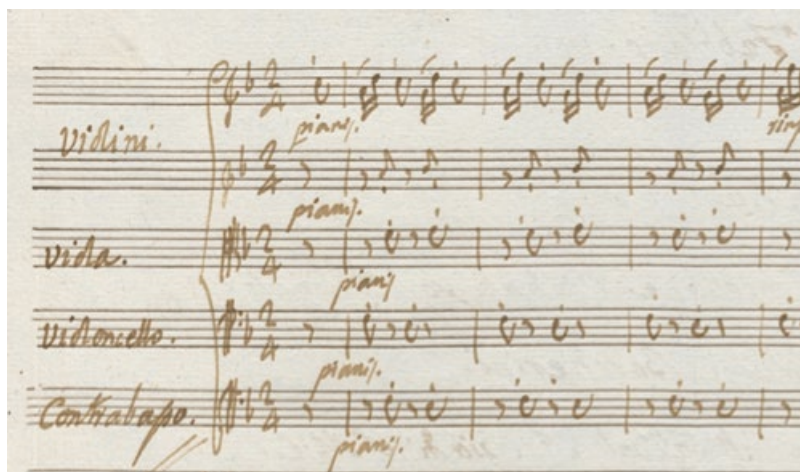
Quartetto IV°
I - Alleg[re]tto con Motto

Transcripción: Raúl Angulo Díaz José María Reynoso
(ca. 1740 - 1802)

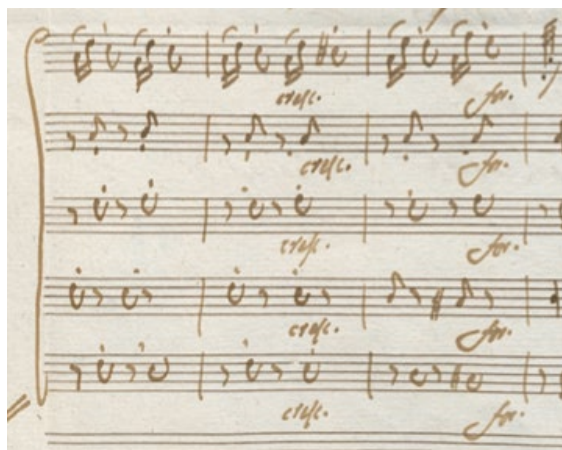
Alleg[re]tto con Motto

Violin 1° Violino secondo
Violetta
Violoncello

Example 9- Reynoso quartet n°4, *Alleg[re]tto con Motto*, measures 1-12



Example 10- Luigi Boccherini, Op. 39, n.2. *All° Vivo, ma non Presto*, measures 1-3 and 88-91



Example 11- Luigi Boccherini, Op.39, n.2. *All° Vivo, ma non Presto*, measures 9-11.



Example 12- Luigi Boccherini, Op.39, n.2. *All° Vivo, ma non Presto*, 72-77.

It is noteworthy that in examples 9 and 10 both composers utilize a similar formula: three repeated measures of non-melodic material that function as a beginning of the movement, combining two grotesque features, porosity and iteration.³⁶¹

This fluidity in the way the grotesque object sets the boundaries with its surroundings is one of the essential ways in which the grotesque body differentiates itself from the classic image, whether idealized or naturalistic. Central to Bakhtin's understanding of the grotesque body is its clash with this "classical body." For him, grotesque imagery before the sixteenth century was defined by these bodies with blurred boundaries, that remained opened to the outside. Starting in the sixteenth century, this body began to be called into question by a "new, so-called classical canon of the smooth, closed body. Orifices are closed...moderation restrains transgression."³⁶³ What Bakhtin calls the

³⁶¹ Discussed later in this chapter.

³⁶³ Linda J. Tomko, "Maggi's Grotteschi", in *The Grotesque Dance on the Eighteenth-century Stage: Gennaro Magri and his World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Wick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 161-162.

“new bodily canon,” in reference to its relatively recent arrival,³⁶⁴ is described as a finished body, complete and with clear limits and completely closed. It is characterized by its individuality, it does not blend/merge with other bodies or with what is outside it.

During the second part of the eighteenth century attempts to set clear boundaries between genres and to establish predetermined and closed musical forms were being made – sonata, concerto, sonata-rondo³⁶⁵ – and the cult of the classical body was on the rise. In this context, the rupture of the classical canon is illustrated by the cultivation of open musical forms – old ones such as the fantasia, capriccio and recitative,³⁶⁶ or new and less standardized ones – the use of musical textures that privilege the behavior of internal voices, or to the exchange between the popular and the elite performance environments and musical elements.

Bakhtin’s analysis of the grotesque body still provides three more elements central to grotesque aesthetics: its link with popular folklore, its leaning towards “hyperbolization,” and the acceptance of the appearance of isolated members of the body. He primarily finds the grotesque body in colloquial language, in different types of folklore

³⁶⁴ Linda J. Tomko, “Maggri’s Grotteschi”, in *The Grotesque Dance on the Eighteenth-century Stage: Gennaro Magri and his World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Wick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 162. Bakhtin places the beginning of its creation in the sixteenth century, a process intensified at the end of the seventeenth century, when the canon was created. Bakhtin claims that grotesque imagery has covered all time and space. The classical canon has operated for a short time in comparison, he indicates, as “a tiny island.”; Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, [1965] 1984), 319. Bakhtin also states that the limited canon of art, *belles lettres*, and polite conversation of modern times never prevailed in antique literature, and it has existed in official literature in Europe for just 400 years.

³⁶⁵ See Leonard G. Ratner, “Part III, Form” in *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 207- 331.

³⁶⁶i.e: Cultivation of fantasia and Capriccio. “The Fantasia, with its ramifications, was a sign of the unique in classic music, embodying one aspect of the idea of the genius that was taking hold in 18th-century thought. Fantasia, as a process, was far more important and pervasive at that time than is presently recognized: it was honored and admired as evidence of creative originality. Indeed, without the fantasia, the great forms of the classic style – the sonata, the concerto, and the sonata-rondo – could not have evolved.” Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 314.

(especially in those related to folk festivals and carnivals), and in the popular comic. The Bakhtinian grotesque body is a central element in popular-festive imagery and refers to deeper notions of social-popular awareness.³⁶⁷ This colloquial, folkloric, and popular component has a strong presence in some of the chamber music consumed in the Madrilenian aristocratic environment during the second part of the eighteenth century. The success of the *tonadilla* and popular singers and instruments, and the use of popular themes as inspiration, along with the rise of the social phenomenon of *majismo*, set the scene for the appearance of the folkloric in a medium otherwise dominated by pan-European trends. The compositions that form the core of the musical grotesque in Madrilenian chamber music during this period (Boccherini's *Fandango*, *Musica Notturna*, and *La Tiranna*) feature a strong popular component. In literature as in music, the crossroads between the folkloric and the aristocratic falls easily out of the conventions and have a strong potential for the creation of the grotesque, as it breaks the fine line of division between familiar speech and "correct" language, also mentioned by Bakhtin.³⁶⁸ Hybrid languages partaking in both worlds would fall into that category of objects that, breaking its own boundaries, become something new, as would happen with chamber music that is, at the same time, popular, lying in between two different products. This incongruous mix of popular (environment and characters) and learned (language) has already been discussed in relation to De la Cruz's *sainetes*.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Bakhtin links the image of the "ancestral body," a theme developed by Panurge in Book 3, Chapter 4, to popular awareness of historic growth and immortality. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, [1965] 1984), 324.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 320.

³⁶⁹ Chapter 4, 130-132.

The new canon observed by Bakhtin clashes directly with the grotesque nature also in its rejection of “hyperbolization” and its acceptance of the “independent existence of isolated elements.”³⁷⁰ Instead of the essential exaggeration characteristic of the grotesque, the new canon just allows the restrained accentuation of specific features, a slight stretching of the canonic margins.³⁷¹ Musical grotesque “hyperbolization,” on the contrary, writhes the traditionally acknowledged natural boundaries beyond the accepted limits and is most distinctly recognized in relation to two musical elements: the use of the instruments’ range and repetition.

In her article “One Says that One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep: Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini’s Chamber Music”³⁷² Elizabeth Le Guin discusses Boccherini’s exceptional use of the violoncello’s high tessitura in chamber music compositions, highlighting the unnaturalistic results, as the “natural” tessitura for the instrument at the time is surpassed in some cases by at least two octaves.³⁷³ Le Guin also signals that these extreme transgressions do not happen frequently but when they do, they present two characteristics of the grotesque: the deliberate pursue of a goal different than beauty – the instrument’s capacity to produce a sound accepted as beautiful in this conditions is severely reduced – and its unnaturalness, as the instrument adopts a

³⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, [1965] 1984), 322.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Elizabeth Le Guin, “‘One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep’: Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini’s Chamber Music” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 2 (2002): 207–54.

³⁷³ Ibid.: 239. Ellen Iris Amsterdam also discusses extremely high ranges in Boccherini’s quintet in her dissertation: Ellen Iris Amsterdam, “The String Quintets of Luigi Boccherini” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1968), 34.

timbre different than the usual.³⁷⁴ Le Guin's discussion of Boccherini's originality in his use of instrumental timbre and its grotesque undertones includes, along with the unique treatment of tessitura, the use of harmonics and special effects as *flautato* or *sul ponticello*, not discussed in this chapter.³⁷⁵

Contrary to the modern canon's indispensable unity, the dismembered body and the use of separate parts as independent entities are characteristic of the grotesque body. This "independent existence of isolated elements" can be traced musically to individual melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic elements that acquire a meaningful role outside the traditional musical structure (a rhythmic motive that appears isolated, a melodic unit that works outside the frame of a musical sentence, a harmonic structure that supports no melodic line). Again, the most audacious examples are represented in Boccherini's musical universe. In his quintet *La Musica Notturna delle Strade di Madrid* the composer provides several examples of the independent existence of harmonic and rhythmic elements detached from the rhythmic-harmonic-melodic infrastructure natural to the chamber music medium.

³⁷⁴ Elizabeth Le Guin, "'One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep': Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini's Chamber Music" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 2 (2002), 239.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 232-234; 239: Ellen Iris Amsterdam discusses Boccherini's use of special effects and unique sonorities (harmonics, exploitation of the instruments' resonant qualities, instrumental registers, parallel thirds and sixths, and articulation) in her dissertation: Ellen Iris Amsterdam, "The String Quintets of Luigi Boccherini" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1968), 63-69.

is especially relevant in the themes of “the change of epochs and the renewal of culture.”³⁷⁶ The grotesque as it appears in *Pantagruel* is interpreted by Bakhtin as a festive response to the stress and “cosmic terror” aroused in the people by the misfortunes that happened in France in 1532. In response to popular distress, folk culture creates images of “gay, material bodily cosmos, ever-growing and self-renewing”³⁷⁷ to combat feelings of anxiety in face of an uncertain future.

Eighteenth-Century Grotesque Entertainment

As seen in the previous chapter, the worlds of caricature, *Commedia dell’Arte*, and grotesque dance overlap in many aspects, while offering at the same time specific nuances to the concept of the grotesque in the performative arts during the eighteenth century. The most remarkable and defining features of all three disciplines are their comic and light-hearted character and its virtuosic nature, both also well-fitted to the specific environment of the aristocratic music salon.

Caricature

Caricature acts like an overarching umbrella present to different extents in grotesque performative arts. Its two main defining characteristics, exaggeration of essential traits and comic purpose,³⁷⁸ tinge all grotesque manifestations with a spectrum of satiric,

³⁷⁶Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, [1965] 1984), 324-325.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 340.

³⁷⁸ this is not necessarily the intended goal in most of the musical grotesque.

comic, or light-hearted affects. Georg Philipp Telemann's TWV 55:G10 *Burlesque de Quixotte*, inspired by Miguel de Cervantes' caricature-like novel, illustrates the main traits of the musical caricature during this period. Although in many aspects Telemann's burlesque differs from Spanish examples and displays a more central-European writing style, it also shares some of the main resources of the musical grotesque as analyzed in this chapter. The use of extreme repetition (The Awakening of Don Quixote, Rosinante Galloping), extremely wide and pervading melodic leaps (His Attack on the Windmills, Sancho Pansa Swindled), the over-simplicity in figuration and harmonies in most of its movements, or the apparent incongruity between some of the movement's titles and the recommended speed (*Moderato* in His Attack on the Windmills, *Vivace* in Don Quixote at Rest), are also found in some of the examples analyzed and are constitutive elements of the eighteenth-century grotesque.

Commedia dell'Arte and Grotesque Dance: virtuosity and gesture.

Links between *Commedia dell'Arte* and grotesque dance have already been touched upon. The exact influence these disciplines had in chamber music is still to be studied. What follows is a review of the parallels that can be traced between all three. Two important aspects in these artistic disciplines render the study of *Commedia dell'arte* and grotesque dance especially relatable and transposable to musical analysis: its turn into virtuosity and its use of gesture. Parallels between the three disciplines can be found in technical aspects but also in their relation to the audience, performance venues, and more.

In her chapter "Images of the *Commedia dell'Arte*," M.A Katritzky acknowledges the influence of *Commedia* in other forms of art:

“From the start, Commedia drew on and inspired a broad spectrum of other performing traditions, at every level from court festival to street mountebanks, eventually transcending the theatre to play key roles in music, dance, circus, literature and art.”³⁷⁹

To varying degrees, links between music and *Commedia* are acknowledged by several scholars. In his chapter “Incidental Music,” published in the *Companion to the Commedia dell’Arte*,³⁸⁰ Thomas Heck³⁸¹ discusses different ways in which both disciplines worked together.³⁸² Beyond the confirmation of some degree of musical participation in *Commedia dell’Arte* performances, his analysis of the use of music for the representation of madness or absurdity at the beginning of the seventeenth century illustrates one way in which the use of music served for the creation of grotesque meanings. In the *scenario*³⁸³ for *The Madness of Isabella* (Act 3, Scene 8), in a rapture of insanity the leading character says “I remember the year I could not remember / that a harpsichord joined together a Spanish Pavan with a Galliard of Santin di Parma...”³⁸⁴ Heck points out to the fact that this musical representation of nonsense would have required the audiences from around

³⁷⁹M.A. Katritzky, “Images of the Commedia dell’Arte,” in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (Routledge, 2015), 285.

³⁸⁰ *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (Routledge, 2015).

³⁸¹ Author of *Commedia dell’arte: A Guide to the Primary and Secondary Literature* (New York: Garland, 1988), “The Commedia dell’Arte in Naples: A Bilingual Edition of the 176 Casamarciano Scenarios,” which he translated and edited along with Francesco Cotticelli and Anne Goodrich Heck (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2001), and *Picturing Performance: The Iconography of the Performing Arts in Concept and Practice* (Rochester, NY: Univ. of Rochester Press, 1999).

³⁸² Thomas Heck, “Incidental Music in Commedia dell’Arte Performances” in *The Routledge Companion to the Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (Routledge, 2015): 255-267. Heck discusses the presumed use of bass dance patterns for improvisation, iconographic evidence about the use of instruments to accompany dance and songs, explicit requests for different kinds of music found in commedia scenarios, the use of incidental music as a reference to exotic thematic (probably the same musical hints used in other musical contexts), and the use of musical allusions, polyphonic music, singing entrances and exits, or canzonettas, highlighting the weight of singing over the use of instrumental music.

³⁸³ The term “scenario” in the context of *Commedia dell’Arte* is employed in reference to the scripts containing the argument of the play in a schematic manner, designed to be developed *ex tempore* in performance.

³⁸⁴ Thomas Heck, “Incidental Music in Commedia dell’Arte Performances” in *The Routledge Companion to the Commedia dell’Arte*, eds. Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick (Routledge, 2015), 260.

1600 to recognize some of the musical hints hidden in the mixture of a Spanish Pavan and a Galliard (a slow duple meter with a fast triple meter, and a different harmonic pattern),³⁸⁵ hinting at the potential of music (executed or just alluded to) to create images of madness, confusion, irrationality... or to evoke the grotesque in the minds of a musically experienced audience. Lastly, Heck mentions that music was also used with a comic intention through the call for ridiculous instruments in some scenarios.

Riccardo Drusi and Andrea Perrucci discuss the role of music as a comic device in *Commedia* performances. In “Popular Traditions, Carnival, Dance” Riccardo Drusi questions the idea of a generalized use of musical performances in *Commedia dell’Arte*.³⁸⁷ Based on textual material, Drusi does not consider dance and vocal music as a frequent device utilized in *Commedia*.³⁸⁸ However, when used as part of the show – actually performed or just evoked – he allocates music, because of its effect in characterization, a role in the creation of a comic effect, rather than an element to be enjoyed *per se*. Theorist Andrea Perrucci notes how the depiction of characters as inadequate, unable, graceless, or musically clumsy created comic or caricatural effects. Heck, Drusi, and Perrucci recognize the use of music in *Commedia* and provide compelling readings about the potential of music to evoke extra-musical ideas. Appealing to the audience’s musical literacy, music was used as a metalanguage able to wordlessly convey ideas of exoticism, madness, and

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 261. Heck also proposes a modern update of musical allusions to preserve the humor of the scene.

³⁸⁷ Riccardo Drusi, “Popular Traditions, Carnival, Dance,” in *Commedia dell’Art in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 34-45. Drusi hypothesizes about its use to lure the audience to the spectacle but considers that music was mainly performed outside the *Commedia* show itself.

³⁸⁸ Ibid, 41.

comical-ness, and it is reasonable to think that grotesqueness, present in other artistic fields, could also be evoked through the exclusive use of musical means.

Gesture had an essential role in defining the character's psychology in *Commedia*. Also in the *Companion to the Commedia dell'Arte* Domenico Pietropaolo summarizes the main features of some of these characters' gestural behavior, showing how specific movements were used to communicate personality traits.³⁸⁹ For him, the servant Harlequin's astute, comic, effervescent personality is communicated through movements characterized by their staccato nature, short and fast. Scaramouche's excessively long chains of large motions convey the pomposity of this character. Pierrot, simpleminded, naïve, honest, and static, moves using perpendiculars and parallels, and Pulcinella takes gravity to a higher degree, in a way that results in a total lack of elegance. It is not only the unnaturalness of some of these gestures that makes them grotesque, but also the consistency with which they are being used by each character that makes them abnormal, comedic, and exaggerated.

Grotesque dance also had a strong theatrical component, featuring mime and pantomime alongside dance, and as stated in the previous chapter, it was also characterized by its technical virtuosity. It can also be defined as acrobatic or as Kuzmick calls it, aerial style.³⁹⁴ Grotesque dancers depicted a wide range of characters, all within the sphere of the

³⁸⁹ Domenico Pietropaolo, "Commedia dell'Arte as Grotesque Dance: Decline or Evolution?," in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte*, eds. Chaffee, Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2015), 343-344.

³⁹⁴ Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, "Eighteenth-century Italian theatrical ballet: the triumph of the Grotteschi," in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 20. Kuzmick Hansell states that descriptions of Italian dances and dancers, along with details gathered from librettos "strongly suggest that the style of dancing to come to the fore by the early eighteenth century must have incorporated an acrobatic technique and a considerable degree of mime."

grotesque and far from the classical canons of the hero (magicians, pirates, gypsies, rustic villagers...) in performances where the narrative content was overshadowed by the spectacular use of pantomime and dance.³⁹⁵

Although isolated movements could have a certain degree of signification attached to them, dancers would recur to longer chains of motions and gestures to express more complex emotions or ideas.³⁹⁶ Individual steps were arranged in longer movement patterns called “attitudes,” defined as “a composite configuration that signals affective states, channeling energies to that representational end.”³⁹⁷ As mentioned before, one of the main goals of the grotesque dancer was to represent either specific stock characters – mainly *Commedia dell’Arte* characters – or certain cultural or regional figures. While the representation of *Commedia dell’Arte* characters appears only sporadically in the musical scene, the musical depiction of certain ethnographic or cultural groups was more widespread in a variety of genres of eighteenth-century music. While some of these dance techniques of representation are not easily transposable to musical parameters, a general overview can illustrate a similar ideological background on both disciplines.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 31-32. According to Kuzmick Hansell, Italian theatrical ballet worked better when it was simple and even exaggerated. She attributes the international success of eighteenth-century Italian ballet to the overemphasis on theatrical effects in dances as the ones created by Genaro Magri, one of the most famous grotesque dancers and choreographers during the second part of the eighteenth century.

³⁹⁶ Linda J. Tomko, “Magri’s Grotteschi,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 165. Tomko summarizes the requirements expected from a *ballerino grottescho* in two big overarching groups: the mastery of steps that “iterate and surge and extend the body in space”, highlighting the strength and physicality of the body emphasizing “continuous, violent extension”, and the ability to combine these to create larger gestures that represented either stock characters or specific cultural characters.

³⁹⁷ Linda J. Tomko, “Magri’s Grotteschi,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 160.

Apart from some very specific movements that identify some of the stock characters, the expression of cultural, national, or regional traits was also codified in movement and pertained to the performance literacy of the intended audience: *ultramontani* were depicted using exaggerated traits like high heaps or signs of clumsiness (like off-balance landings, lack of sophistication, excessive force, naiveté... are some of the traits Linda J. Tomko cites as used to depict the dance of the *ultramontani*.³⁹⁸ In sum, what these characterizations did was create a recognizable ‘other’ by opposing their movements to those of serious dance. Tomko ascribes an important social function to grotesque dance, as an artistic tool to deal with difference during foreign conquest, incipient nationalism, and emerging capitalism in Italy.³⁹⁹

As a distortion of serious dance and a definite rupture of classic conventions, grotesque dance (as well as any other grotesque manifestation) is well defined by opposition to its serious counterpart. Serious ballets such as those created by Jean-George Noverre, main representative and advocate of the French style, were at the other side of the aesthetic spectrum. In her chapter “Magri’s Grotteschi” Linda J. Tomko compares the *seri*’s “languid, soft, sustained qualities” with the *grotteschi*’s “continuous violent extension of the body.”⁴⁰⁰ While *ballerini grotteschi* were characterized by their technical virtuosity and “vigorous athleticism,” the style of the *ballerini seri* displayed countenance and restraint. Light-hearted topics of the *grotteschi* sharply differed from the mythological and historical subjects of the *seri*. As Tomko describes, these distinctions entailed different

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 156-158. Caprioles: these include steps used to characterize certain cultural groups and staple types in mid-eighteenth-century productions. The disposition of the feet directs attention (different for Turkish, Pulcinella, or the salto dell’impiccato, that codes ‘the eccentric’ as offbeat or off-balance, a social temperament type rather than a stock character from contemporary productions)..

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 171.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 163.

types of dancing styles and technical requirements for each category: *ballerini seri* performed with gravity and “composure,” *mezzo carattere* dance “with great velocity,” and the *grotteschi* rendered dance steps “on a grand scale.”⁴⁰¹ Musical examples of grotesque utilize the same techniques, communicating otherness and comicalness by bending the conventions of non-grotesque music and rendering conventional musical gestures in a magnified and/or distorted way.

John Weaver, considered the father of English ballet and pantomime, left a testimony on the nature of the gestural repertoire of *Commedia* performers in 1712 when discussing their “grimaces, posture, motions, agility, suppleness of limbs, and distortion in their faces” as exaggerated enough to participate in scenic dance.⁴⁰² In 1728, Weaver⁴⁰³ defined grotesque dance by opposing it to serious dance, and acknowledging the general⁴⁰⁴ and more restricted⁴⁰⁵ meanings of the genre by the late baroque period in this way:⁴⁰⁶

“By Grotesque Dancing, I mean only such Characters as are quite out of nature; as Harlequin, Scaramouch, Pierrot, etc. tho’ in the natural sense of the word. Grotesque, among Masters of our Profession, takes in all comic Dancing whatever: But here I have confin’d this Name only to such Characters, where, in lieu of regulated Gesture, you meet with distorted and ridiculous Actions, and Grim and Grimace take up entirety that Countenance where the Passions and Affections of the Mind should be expressed.”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 151.

⁴⁰² As cited in Domenico Pietropaolo, “Commedia dell’Arte as grotesque dance: Decline or evolution?,” in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell’Arte*, eds. Chaffee, Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2015), 339.

⁴⁰³ John Weaver (1673 –1760) is considered the father of English ballet and English pantomime. English dancer, dancing master and choreographer, and producer of several works dedicated to dance..

⁴⁰⁴ comic, based on stylized buffoonery.

⁴⁰⁵ based on *Commedia dell’Arte* characters and comic routines.

⁴⁰⁶ Domenico Pietropaolo, “Commedia dell’Arte as grotesque dance: Decline or evolution?,” in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell’Arte*, eds. Chaffee, Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2015), 338.

⁴⁰⁷ John Weaver, *The History of the Mimes and Pantomimes* (1728), 56. as cited in Ibid, 341.

In his definition Weaver provided the essential traits of the discipline: distortion and enactment of ridicule actions, grimace or exaggerated gestures, lack of countenance, and total disregard of conventions regulating the expression of the affects, artistic and social conventions. Later scholars have extended this definition further, providing a more detailed and nuanced characterization of the discipline.⁴⁰⁸

While the three Italian dancing styles⁴⁰⁹ utilized roughly the same body of steps and movements – and the *grottesco* technique served to a great extent as basis for all of them – the choice of steps and the way in which these were executed differed, achieving different effects in each case.⁴¹⁰ To obtain its spectacular results, it was characteristic of the *Grottesco* style to execute the steps on a grand scale,⁴¹¹ as well as to use iteration – the circular, exaggerated repetition that surprises, reclaims the attention, and functions as

⁴⁰⁸ Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, “Eighteenth-Century Italian Theatrical Ballet: The Triumph of the Grotesque,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 32. The study of grotesque dance is complicated by the scarcity of sources and the difficulty to accurately register the complexity of dance. Gennaro Magri’s *Trattato teorico-prattico di ballo*, published in Naples in 1779, is probably the most valuable surviving source. Its exceptional value lies on the fact that it deals equally with all the genres of Italian theatrical dancing existing at the middle of the eighteenth century, including the *grottesco* dance that is almost absent in contemporary ballet manuals. Magri’s treatise contains valuable and unique information about the discipline, and it is written by one of the most renowned ballerino *grotteschi* of that time. Two other sources have also been fundamental for the study and reconstruction of grotesque dance: Gregorio Lambrazi’s *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing: the Classic Illustrated Treatise on Commedia dell’Arte Performance*, rich in descriptions, illustrations and musical examples, and John Weaver’s writings on the subject (his collaborations in *The Spectator* and his book *The History of the Mimes and Pantomimes* from 1728). Despite these contributions, Kuzmick complains that apart from Magri’s treatise, we only count on unprecise descriptions by amateurs and “static pictorial representations.”

⁴⁰⁹ Briefly discussed by Elizabeth Le Guin in Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini’s Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press, 2006), 224-225. Le Guin discusses the different characteristics and highlights versatility of performers.

⁴¹⁰ Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, “Eighteenth-Century Italian Theatrical Ballet: The Triumph of the Grotesque,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 8.

⁴¹¹ Linda J. Tomko, “Magri’s Grotteschi,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 159.

another form of “continuous, violent extension” of the body.⁴¹² The grotesque dancer’s vocabulary of independent steps was based on the use of four different mechanisms that deformed conventional steps and created the desired contorted effect: forced positions, accentuation, repetition, and distortion. To these, shared with gestuality of the *Commedia*, we might add the timing used in comedy to create comedic effects.

Timing creates expectations on the spectator. The distortion of what is considered to be appropriate uses of rhythm and tempo is one of the most direct mechanisms to create a humorous effect.⁴¹³ This is equally true for music, and although most of the examples in this category take part, as happens with musical improvisation, to the forever lost sphere of live performance, some hints at the possibility of extreme or incongruent management of timing can be extracted from surviving indications in the score, as discussed previously considering caricature-like effects in Telemann’s *Don Quixote*.⁴¹⁴

Repetition is characteristic of comedy. While some degree is necessary to create recognizable musical patterns, an excess of repetition in a context where it is not expected can create a distorted effect. In the same way, the rupture of an expected pattern can also create the same effect of surprise. Both techniques can be easily translated into music if the audience has a reference of musical conventions and therefore the musician has expectations to play with.

⁴¹² Ibid, 160-161. Tomko also points to the fact that *grotteschi* could decide the degree in which they followed or not certain conventions (as the height to which they lifted their arms, or the principles of opposition), giving them more agency and freedom than other types of dancers to achieve the desired effect of offering a body in “continuous, violent extension.”

⁴¹³ Brian Foley, “Principles of Comedy for *Commedia dell’Arte*,” in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell’Arte*, eds. Chaffee, Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2015), 177-184. Brian Foley describes some of the elements that can be manipulated to create humorous effects in the art of comedy.

⁴¹⁴ See page 183 in this chapter.

Repetition is also characteristic of the *grotteschi*'s body language, and Tomko interprets some of these iterations as tools to draw the attention of the viewer and to signal significant gestures.⁴¹⁵ Wrapping feet, spins, or pirouettes repeated indeterminately – “bodies that circle again and again”⁴¹⁶ – are interpreted by Tomko as an expression of the grotesque's body language of continuity and violence, as a way to surpass the dancer's body boundaries that transform grotesque bodies in what she calls “bodies ever becoming.” Repetition is one of the most obvious gestures utilized to create musical awkwardness and to defy musical conventions of balance and restraint in some of the works analyzed.

Two of the most emblematic examples of grotesque repetition in the Spanish repertoire of this period occur twelve years apart and are written by Gaetano Brunetti and Luigi Boccherini.⁴¹⁷ Although Brunetti's *Il Maniatico* (1780), a *sinfonia*, does not pertain to the genre of the string quartet or quintet, the apparent similarities between both examples and its unapologetic rupture of the norm justify its inclusion in this section. The thematic subjects of this piece – a mentally ill individual hounded by a fixed idea⁴¹⁹ – and

⁴¹⁵ Linda J. Tomko, “Magri's Grotteschi,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and His World*, eds. Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 158.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, 159.

⁴¹⁷ More on Boccherini's use of repetition: Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press, 2006), 218.

⁴¹⁹ Gaetano Brunetti, *Symphony in c minor L 322, Il Maniatico*, ed. Raul Díaz Angulo (Madrid: Ars Hispana, 2018), 7. The inscription at the beginning of the manuscript reads: “Sinfonia, che describe per quanto si puole [sic] con l'uso de soli Instrumenti, senza l'aiuto delle parole, la fissazione di un delirante ad un oggetto, e questa parte viene eseguita da un violoncello solo, a cui si uniscono gli altri istrumenti quasi amici impegnati a liberarlo dal suo delirio, presentandoli una infinita varietà di idee nella varietà de motivi. Rimane il Maniaco per molto tempo fisso nel primo oggetto, finche incontra un motive allegro che lo persuade, e lo fa unire con gli altri, dopo questo nuovamente ricade, ad in fine trasportato dall'impulso comune, termina unito cogl'altri allegramente.”... (Angulo, *Ars Hispana*), 7: “Sinfonia, that describes as much as possible through the use of instruments only, without any help of words, the fixation of a delirious person on an object. That part is performed by a solo cello, to which the other instruments are added, almost as friends endeavoring to liberate him from his delirium by presenting him with an infinite variety of ideas in varying the motives. The Maniac however, stays fixated for a long time on the first object, until he encounters a lively motif that convinces him and makes him get together with the others. After that he

Boccherini's quartet op.44, n°4 *La Tiranna* – either a popular dance or a famous comedian from this period, the question remains unanswered⁴²⁰ – refer to the grotesque sphere in their reference to popular or marginal characters. The similarity between the repeated melodic patterns⁴²¹ is also worth mentioning, and in both cases the motive is repeated – whether maintaining the entirety of its components without any change, or using its melodic or rhythmic structure in variations that remain always close to the original – to an extent that thoroughly surpasses any expectation that the audiences from this period could have.

falls back again [in his fixation], and eventually, transported by the common impulse he ends happily in unity with the others.”

⁴²⁰ Miguel Ángel Marín, “Cuartetos y Retratos, Boccherini y Goya,” Program notes (Madrid: Fundación March, February 2021), 20. Marín suggests that Boccherini played with the double meaning of the word.

⁴²¹ It is noteworthy to mention that Ataide y Portugal quartet n.3 employs in its first movement the same motive.



- 14 -

Example 15: Gaetano Brunetti, *Sinfonia Il Maniatico*, first movement, measures 55-59.

The musical score is presented in four systems, each corresponding to a system of staves. The first system (measures 30-40) shows the Violin I and II parts with dynamic markings of *ff*, *p*, and *ff*, and the Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts with *ff* and *pp*. The second system (measures 41-50) continues the Violin I and II parts with *ff* and *f*, and the Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts with *ff* and *pp*. The third system (measures 51-57) shows the Violin I and II parts with *ff* and *pp*, and the Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts with *ff* and *ff*. The fourth system (measures 58-63) shows the Violin I and II parts with *pp* and *pp*, and the Viola and Cello/Double Bass parts with *pp* and *pp*.

Example 16, Luigi Boccherini, Quartet op.44, n.4, *La Tiranna*, first movement, measures 30-63.

More discreet but still excessively exaggerated are Reynoso's repetitions of short rhythmic motives with similar melodic contours in his second quartet:



49

52

57

61

Example 17, Reynoso, quartet n.2, Allegro moderato.

Forced positions are defined by Magri as those that exceed regular distances in the separation of steps, widening distances and taking the dancer's body beyond the physical limits of serious dance conventions.⁴²² According to Tomkon, the *grottesco* style was characterized by a continuous alternation between these extended steps and the exercise of restraint. Exaggerated gestures helped to create a comic effect and also to portray specific regional characters and were typical of the repertoire of the *grotteschi*. Forced positions could be translated in music into excessive melodic gestures, especially regarding melodic leaps and the use of unconventional, "contorted" melodic intervals or range. Accentuation, one of *grotteschi*'s expressive possibilities, is related to forced positions.

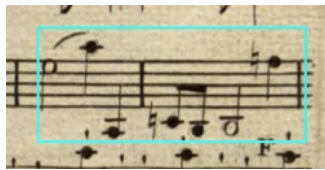
Finally, distortion of conventional steps multiplied the dancer's choice of expressive tools and expanded the creative possibilities of the *grotteschi* considerably. Conventional steps (French positions) could be distorted by changing the direction of the movement, thus creating false steps, or by neutralizing the direction of the movement as in Spanish positions. The *grotteschi* made frequent use of false positions.

Two examples of possible distortion are found in Ataide y Portugal's quartets, in the form of appoggiaturas featuring leaps of seventh and sixth in the first example, and as extremely wide leaps in the second example (something relatively frequent in the musical language of Ataide y Portugal's quartets):

⁴²² Forced positions are described by Magri as those which exceed normative distances separating paired feet; the capacity of these positions for accentuation becomes clear in later discussion of 'attitudes' adopted by furies, a grotesque characterization.



Example 18- Enrique Ataide y Portugal, quartet n°6, Rondeau Affectuoso, Var.1, First Violin, measures 14-15



Example 19- Enrique Ataide y Portugal, quartet n°2, All° Maestoso, First Violin, 49-50.

In addition to these technical parallels between all grotesque disciplines, the use of improvisation and the closeness and resemblance between the environments in which the three of them were developed unveil further affinities that justify the use of the grotesque lens in the analysis of some examples from this repertoire.

Improvisation is by no means a technique exclusive to music, but rather an important tool, even a genre, essential to all performative arts. As such, its practice contains shared elements that appear in all three areas: theatre, dance, and music. In all cases, improvisation allowed bypassing censorship, alleviating criticism, adapting to different circumstances, and/or exploring (and trespassing) the limits of artistic and social conventions with more freedom. Stefan Hufeld discusses how specifically in *Commedia dell'Arte*, the use of scenarios containing the play's basic structure along with the

improvisation of more detailed text permitted this flexibility and the avoidance of censorship.⁴²³

The ability to improvise was highly appreciated by audiences in all disciplines. The versatility of *Commedia dell'Arte* actors has already been discussed. However, Ferdinando Taviani says that above all genres, what caught more attention from audiences was the improvised plays and the agility in acting (“quick acting”).⁴²⁴ Stefan Hufeld comments how in *Del modo di recitar la commedia*,⁴²⁵ Frescobaldi (Stefanello Bottarga) praises the actor and improvisation:

“Furthermore, this prologue makes clear that the poetic value of an improvised comedy is independent of any writing-system. Actors, as masters of gestures, gesticulations and attitudes, created visual poetry.”⁴²⁶

Improvisation was also highly regarded in musical practice. The mastery of improvisation blurred the distinctions between performer and author in all fields, as has been emphasized in musical studies and is also pointed out by Taviani regarding the trajectories of Adriano Valerini, Isabella Andreini, Flaminio Scala, etc., all of them performers, improvisers, and authors.⁴²⁷ It should be emphasized that great virtuosity was required in all cases in the use of improvisation. It implied the memorization and constant update of a large spoken and gestural repertoire in the case of *Commedia dell'Arte*, an

⁴²³ Stefan Hufeld, “Notebooks, Prologues and Scenarios,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 52.

⁴²⁴ Ferdinando Taviani, “Knots and Doubleness,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 29.

⁴²⁵ Abagaro Frescobaldi, codex II-1586 (Madrid, Real Biblioteca). Cited in Stefan Hufeld, “Notebooks, Prologues and Scenarios,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 47. The author is most probably Abagaro Frescobaldi, known as Stefanello Bottarga or the Magnifico of the Zan Ganassa troupe.

⁴²⁶ Stefan Hufeld, “Notebooks, Prologues and Scenarios,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 50.

⁴²⁷ Ferdinando Taviani, “Knots and Doubleness,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 28.

equally large body of steps and physical routines in the case of grotesque dance, and of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic patterns in musical practice, and it always required a careful planification and mastery of literary culture.⁴²⁸ Stock speeches (*robbe generiche*) were supported by humanistic oratory and encyclopedic knowledge,⁴²⁹ essential disciplines in the education of composers, too.

The use of *scenarios* allowed for a very specific way of improvising, with similar techniques to those utilized in the *partimento* tradition. The degree in which *ex tempore* performance appeared in *Commedia* was variable. As it happens with scores, scenarios could be used in different situations and be adapted to different contexts, therefore the information they provided could vary in type and quantity. Hulfeld explains how *Commedia*'s delicate balance between its "popular" and "educated" roots – the improvisatory tradition of jugglers and buffoons and the adoption of structured narratives from novellas and comedies – brought it to a place of "structural tension" between the use of improvisatory techniques and a fixed plot.⁴³⁰

The mechanisms behind the *ex-tempore* creation of musical pieces using *partimento* technique and improvised comedy are structurally similar. *Partimento* works with fixed cells and combinations of harmonic patterns that parallel literary plots.⁴³¹ *Commedia* also works with fixed formulas, repeated mechanisms, and a framework where

⁴²⁸ Ibid, 29.

⁴²⁹ Stefan Hulfeld, "Notebooks, Prologues and Scenarios," in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 47-50.

⁴³⁰ Ibid, 55.

⁴³¹ More on Partimento: Giorgio Sanguinetti, "The Rules: a Synoptic View," in *The Art of Partimento: History, Theory, and Practice* (New York: Oxford, University Press, 2012), 99-166. Robert O. Gjerdingen, "Partimento and the Art of Improvisation," in *Child Composers in the Conservatoires: how Orphans Became Elite Musicians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 113-128.

the same theatrical routines (scenes, jokes, gags...) were used, appearing frequently in different comedies. *Commedia* utilized both gestural (*pezzi chiusi*, defined by Stefan Hulfeld as “enclosed units or independent routines,” mainly physical actions with no language involved⁴³²) and spoken (*robbe generiche*)⁴³³ formulas that were “embroidered” in the scenarios and provided the final product.

This use of fixed formulas was common in eighteenth-century literary and musical performance, and it is relatively easy to find the parallels between galant-style music and this way of comedy creation. Galant music makes use of melodic, formal, and even rhythmic formulas that, combined, allowed for a quick creation of light-hearted repertoire for entertainment (and even sacred purposes) in the same way in which what Taviani calls a “joyous form of theatre and improvised theatre with fixed features and repetitive, long-established characters”⁴³⁴ facilitated the fast production of light-hearted entertainment products. *Commedia*’s influence in musical galant creations, especially in comic opera and intermezzos, has already been discussed in chapter three.⁴³⁵

The use of *pezzi chiusi* gradually declined in improvised comedy (HuLfeld), as did the use of these improvisatory formulas by professionals of theater and music along the following century. In sum, in the eighteenth century there was a culture of improvisation that was highly regarded, common to all performative disciplines, and that shared similar basic elements and principles. This type of improvisation flourished and thrived during the

⁴³² Stefan Hulfeld, “Notebooks, Prologues and Scenarios,” in *Commedia dell’Arte in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 54-55. *Piezi chiusi* could be *balli, lazzi, baie, burle, scene, trionfi*,...

⁴³³ Ibid, 47.

⁴³⁴ Ferdinando Taviani, “Knots and Doubleness,” in *Commedia dell’Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 23.

⁴³⁵ See Chapter 3, pp. 106-108.

eighteenth century, nurtured by a cultural environment that appreciated this artistic freedom in all its performative disciplines. This cultural environment gradually changed, and improvisation began to decline towards the early nineteenth century. The popularity of improvisation practices during this period, as well as its joint decline, speak of a specific performance environment that thrived with spontaneity, close communication between audience and performers, and an intense contact with current performance practices.

The main goal of *Commedia* was indeed entertainment, and this required direct communication with the audience and a deep understanding of their expectations to either meet them, or else provoke surprise by deviating from them. One of the main advantages of the use of improvised physical and text routines was that it could be adapted to different venues and audiences,⁴³⁶ in an agile entertainment play in which performers and audience played an important role. Improvisation was a key element in this play. These dynamics and performer-audience relationship share some common points with the social context in which eighteenth-century music was created. Brian Foley states that before the beginning of the nineteenth century “in *Commedia dell’Arte*, players and audience exist in the same space and are able to communicate with each other.”⁴³⁷ In this performing space

“the audience is complicit in the performer’s imitative play: they recognize what’s being represented and their role in the game is to preserve the illusions the performers establish. But the objective truth is kept in sight as well, to keep the fantasy in balance.”⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ Olly Crick, “The Coming Together” in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell’Arte*, eds. Chaffee, Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2015), 222.

⁴³⁷ Brian Foley, “Principles of Comedy or *Commedia dell’Arte*”, in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell’Arte*, eds. Chaffee, Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (Routledge, 2015), 178.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid*, 179.

Foley describes it as a game, where the rules are understood by performers and audience. The knowledge of formulas, narratives, conventions, etc., allows for the creation of expectations and its rupture, arousing surprise, and other feelings. Chamber music audiences' musical literacy had the potential to stimulate a similar environment, providing some musical elements with an extra-musical meaning and justifying the rupture of conventions to favorize this almost theatrical play.⁴³⁹

Another characteristic of this environment in which *Commedia dell'Arte* thrived – where performers and audience inhabit the same space and communication is still possible – is the wealth of interconnections between “low” and “high” culture, the popular and the aristocratic milieu, the amateur and the professional practice of music and drama. As stated above, these connections are present since the origins of *Commedia*. The role of elite Venetian confraternities and wealthy Renaissance patrons, the collaboration between amateur and professional players, and between amateur literary societies and members of the aristocracy, and professional actors and playwrights has already been discussed.⁴⁴¹ Some of the elements that characterize this idiosyncrasy of the Renaissance salon culture that made possible the appearance of theatrical products in between the popular and the literary culture – those that at the same time included “themes and characters for popular and carnivalesque, but also plots from classical, sixteenth-century comedies, short stories of Boccaccio and Matteo Bandello, episodes from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* or Cervantes *Quixote*”⁴⁴² – where also present in the social dynamic of some eighteenth-century

⁴³⁹ Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press, 2006), 212.

⁴⁴¹ See Chapter 3, pp. 104-108.

⁴⁴² Ferdinando Taviani, “Knots and Doubleness,” in *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 29.

aristocratic salons and could have influenced the musical entertainment market in a higher degree than what has been recognized.

The connections between popular and elite elements were possible because *Commedia* never existed in a specific or contained cultural context, nor did it designate a fixed and unmovable set of features. It rather inhabited a cultural spectrum that allowed for the adaptation to different environments and situations. Domenico Pietropaolo acknowledges that it is difficult to clearly identify what kind of “theatrical practice” *Commedia* referred to, as there is possibly an array of different approaches and interpretations coexisting under the umbrella of *Commedia dell’Arte*.⁴⁴³ The most common interpretation of what *Commedia* is, as explained by Pietropaolo, involves the performances of professionals in either commercial theatre or court settings (as opposed to amateurs who do drama for diversion or education, or mountebanks...). These professionals could perform virtually all genres with or without scripts. It may apply to serious and comic genres and involve (or not) improvisation (Niccolò Barberini, 1634), or it could be used to designate only a comic genre based in improvisation (Carlo Goldoni, 1750).⁴⁴⁴ According to Taviani, there was a spectrum of performers between the professional and the amateur, and comedies in courts and academies could use the same scenarios as professional actors did.⁴⁴⁵ The almost exclusive focus of musical studies on written-down repertoires and their performance practices until very recently may be hiding a similar reality for chamber musicians in charge of providing entertainment for different

⁴⁴³ Niccolò Barberini, *The Supplication* (Venezia: Marco Ginammi, 1634); Carlo Goldoni, *Il Teatro Comico* (1750). Both cited in Domenico Pietropaolo, *The Commedia dell’Arte*, (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 2.

⁴⁴⁴ Domenico Pietropaolo, *The Commedia dell’Arte* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 2.

⁴⁴⁵ Ferdinando Taviani, “Knots and Doubleness,” in *Commedia dell’Arte in Context*, eds. Christopher B. Balme, Piermario Vescovo, and Daniele Vianello (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 20.

situations and audiences, where practices that contradict the official aesthetic conventions might not only have been accepted but even stimulated and fostered. In fact, recent discoveries about the role of improvisation in eighteenth-century elite environments would rather add weight to this hypothesis, and it is reasonable to think that, in environments where the popular and the learned established connections, *ex-tempore* practices would have also included some winks to out-of-the-repertoire works or gestures.

La Musica Notturna delle Strade di Madrid



“Nota: Questo Quintettino rappresenta la Musica che passa di notte per le strade di Madrid, cominciando dal tocco del’ Ave Maria sin a la Ritirata: é tutto cio’ che non e conforme alle regole della Composizione, deve condonarsi alla Verita’ della cosa, che si va a rappresentare &c.”⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁶ “Note: this quintettino represents the music that happens at night at the streets in Madrid, starting with the call of Ave Maria until retirement: and anything that do not conform to the rules of composition, must be forgiven by the truth of the thing that is to be represented.”

This inscription in the manuscript that contains Boccherini's quintet op.30, n°6 (1780) foretells the essentially programmatic and openly theatrical nature of this piece inspired by a daily, mundane, and popular reality. This atypical quintet connects directly with the aesthetics of the grotesque as described throughout this dissertation because of the exacerbated use of asymmetry, repetition and extreme simplicity, and its straightforward representation of popular folklore – contravening the most basic goal of neoclassical poetics, the imitation or idealized reproduction of the most perfect subjects in nature. These features are pervasive throughout the piece and affect every musical ingredient throughout the quintet. Its themes, rhythms, melodies, harmonies, timbres, and character are imbued with a unique obstinacy and candor foreign to the aristocratic chamber musical environment. At the same time, it is far from a plain popular music example and closer to the stylized examples of popular art discussed in the beginning of the chapter, created by elite artists to please aristocratic taste. In its instrumentation (a string quintet with two cellos) deliberate artistic recreation of reality, and aristocratic performance environment, it relates to classical string quartets and quintets from the period. It is in its hybrid nature and the apparent inadequacy of this product to the eighteenth-century aristocratic salons, especially outside the Madrilenian environment, where most of its grotesqueness resides. What follows is an analysis of this piece according to the parameters discussed in this chapter, as well as an exercise of contextualization considering the specific artistic environment in which it was written, with a special emphasis on the aesthetics of the grotesque.

As stated in the previous chapter,⁴⁴⁷ two traditional characteristics of Spanish drama that were particularly attacked by neoclassicists but still present throughout the century in the Madrilenian scene were formal fragmentation and a penchant for spectacular effects. Both are unmistakably present in Boccherini's quintet. Irregularity and deformity were also firmly censured during this period, and both among the defects argued to ban *autos sacramentales* in 1767. Exaggeration, histrionics, theatricality, pantomime, *costumbrismo* and a prime focus shifted to popular characters were all an essential part of this period's popular theater and breeding ground for the emergence of the grotesque. All of them are also central to this piece. Extreme variety in the movements' length, instrumentation, and affects, as well as exaggeration displayed in the use of repetition, textures, and range go directly against the classic canon prevailing in the European elite musical context of the time.

The quintet is divided into main four sections: *Minuetto*, *Largo Assai*, *Passa Calle*, and *Ritirata*, preceded by a short introduction. The following table summarizes the ensemble of elements utilized by Boccherini to build up this formal variety:

Table 1:

FORMAL STRUCTURE/total measures	Prelu- dio/11 ⁴⁴⁸		Minu- etto/23			Larg- o Assai /34				Pas- sa Calle/94				Inter- lude/ 5	Ritirata/40
TITLE IN SCORE			Minu- etto, Alleg- retto			Larg- o Assai , Senz a rigor de battu- ta	Alleg- ro	Larg- o Assai , come prim- a	Alleg- ro	Pas- sa calle Alle- gro Viv- o		Alle- gro Viv- o			Ritirata, Maestoso
Instrument- ation/Voice s	Violin o II, Viola, Violon- cello		Violino I and II (unis- on) Viola,		Violon- cello I and II, 2- 4	Violino I, Violino II, Violon- cello I, 2-	Violino I and II, Viola , Violo	Violino I, Violino II, Violon- cello I,	Violino I and II, Viola , Violo	Tutti, 3-7.	Violino II, 1.	Tutti, 3-7.	Violino II, 1.		

⁴⁴⁷ See Chapter 4, pp. 124-125, and 129.

⁴⁴⁸ My designation, not Boccherini's!

			Violoncello I and II (unison)/ 5-7			3 (2 + pizz)	ncello I and II (unison), 4-7.	2-3 (2+pizz)	ncello I and II (unison), 4-7.						
"Stage directions"	Imitando un campanello, Pizz	Imitando il tamburo	Con mala grazia, imitando la chitarra, con asprezza		Pizz	Dolcissimo e con grazia, pizz. Imitando un campanello,	Arco	Vcl.1 tutto sulla terza corda, imitando il fagotto.	Arco	Pizz, imitando la chitarra, con mala grazia.	Arco	Pizz, imitando la chitarra, con mala grazia.	Arco	Imitando il tamburo	Arco, imitando al tamburo,
Structure, Measures	3	8	A: , 8	B: , 8	Harmonic filling, 7	8	9 (first functioning as hinge)	8	9 (first functioning as hinge)	32	8	46	8	5	4: +4: +4: +4 +16 +4: +4: , 40

This formal structure highlights unevenness and lack of unity, as well as a complete removal from the period's quartet and quintet conventions. Formal asymmetry, unconventionality, and unevenness are expressed in a variety of ways throughout the piece:

- 1- The placement of interludes does not follow any regular pattern.⁴⁴⁹ Despite playing a similar structural role, these interludes differ in their length, instrumentation, and style. The two-part introduction has an irregular distribution of 3 + 8 measures.
- 2- The following abnormally short *Minuetto* does not follow the standard Minuet + Trio form, so common during this period. Instead, it presents a binary form with repetition in both sections with an added harmonic filling in 7 measures that does not act as a trio. Although Joseph Haydn's early string quartets incorporated two minuets as their second and fourth of five-movement

⁴⁴⁹ The four main movements (*Minuetto*, *Largo Assai*, *Passa Calle* and *Ritirata*) are preceded by a two-part introduction whose second part appears in a shorter version again before the last movement. Another interlude separates the first -*Minuetto*- and second -*Largo Assai*- movements.

works,⁴⁵⁰ at the end of the eighteenth-century minuets usually occupy the second or third place in four-movement compositions: it is definitely an oddity to start a string quintet with a minuet! This place was reserved for movements featuring sonata form, completely absent from this quintet. However, it presents the typical melodic structure of minuets with its 2+2+4 measures.

- 3- The third main section (*Largo Assai*) is divided into four segments that display extreme, opposite affects. Two ethereal *Largos* (8 measures), delicate and rhythmically fluid, alternate with two *Allegros* (9 measures) played in unison that strike with their surprising impetuosity.
- 4- The following *Passa Calle* combines two *Allegros* with the same thematic content but different lengths (32 and 46 measures), separated by 8 measures of arpeggiated violin interludes.
- 5- Finally, after the return of part of the initial introduction (first violin's *imitando il tamburo*), the final *Ritirata* is divided into 6 sections (4+4 +4+4+16+4+4).

Overall, this formal structure highlights asymmetry in its use of segments with an uneven number of measures, the introduction of interludes and contrasting sections in almost every movement, and the unpredictable reuse of previous material. It does not comply with any formal convention existing at the time concerning string quartets or quintets. In its form and organization, this *quintettino* rather resembles Madrilenian popular theatrical spectacles as described by Alberto Escalante Varona: “a principle of variety drove not only the internal structure of the pieces, but also the conception of the whole

⁴⁵⁰ William O'Hara, “Phrase extension in Haydn's string quartet minuets: A preliminary corpus study,” Paper presented at the Future Directions in Music Cognition International Conference, virtual, March 6-7, 2021.

theatrical spectacle.”⁴⁵¹ This principle of variety is further highlighted by the virtuosic use of instrumentation throughout the piece. The different sections feature segments written for one to five instruments in different combinations, and the use of double stops, chords, and pizzicato multiplies the possibilities exploited by Boccherini.⁴⁵²

Asymmetry is also occasionally used in the construction of melodic phrases, particularly in the most melodic movements, *Largo Assai* and *Passa Calle*, but also in interludes and harmonic patterns:

Largo assai, senza rigor di Battuta.

Violino I. *mf* *dolcissimo e con grazia*

Violino II. *pizz* *mf* *imitando un campanella*

Viola. *mf* *dolcissimo e con grazia*

Violoncello I. *mf* *dolcissimo e con grazia*

1 measure 1 measure 3 measures

P 1 measure *mf* 5 measures *pizz* *p* 5 measure

Example 20- Boccherini, op.30, n.6, *Largo Assai*, senza rigor di Battuta, measures 1-8.

⁴⁵¹ See Chapter 4, p. 124.

⁴⁵² Discussed by Ellen Iris Amsterdam and Elizabeth Le Guin.



Example 21- *Passa Calle, Allegro Vivo*, measures 12-23.



Y. 1635.



Example 22- *Allegro Vivo*, measures 4-15.

In the first case the thematic content is divided into segments of uneven length, while the examples from the *Passa Calle* feature asymmetry in a different way, with

melodic phrases of unusual length whose climax is markedly far from the middle (indicated in this edition by dynamic markings and reinforced with an *appoggiatura*).

Asymmetry is one of the resources that create a sense of instability and unbalance throughout the piece, but not only. Another technique utilized throughout the quintet consists of introducing slight variations to a given rhythmic pattern, breaking the expectations of the listeners, as happens in the introduction:



Example 23, *imitando il tamburo*

The continuous variations in the rhythmic pattern and silences eliminate for the listener the feeling of a periodic beat, something that could reasonably be expected after the stability displayed in the previous section and the rhythmic nature of a popular tambourine, often used as a rhythmic steady frame in popular music. Boccherini takes this effect even further when this section reappears before the final *Ritirata*, in a shortened version including different, more subtle rhythmic variations:



Rhythmic instability is also created in the *Largo Assai* through the frequent use of fermatas, the composer's indication "senza rigor di Battuta," the lack of a rhythmic foundation, and the irregular placing and upbeat nature of the second violin's pizzicatos.

The lack of adjustment between the first violin and the “grotesque” ornamentation in the first violoncello accentuates the sensation of instability in the second *Largo Assai*. The essential classic principles of balance, symmetry, and proportion are dismantled at a formal, melodic, and rhythmic levels in most of the quintet.

Repetition and extreme simplicity, interrelated features, are also defining in this quintet. Repetition, in a variety of different forms, is used as an essential compositive element in every section throughout the quintet. The quintet opens with the most extreme of these forms of repetition, featuring a single chord or note and contrasting the steadiness of the first three measures with the unsettlement of the following 8:

The image displays a musical score for a quintet, specifically Example 24. It features four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello I & II. The Violino I staff begins with the instruction "imitando un campanello" (imitating a bell). The Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello I & II staves are marked with "f" (forte) and "pizz" (pizzicato). The Violoncello I & II staff also includes the instruction "imitando il tamburo" (imitating a drum). The score is written in 2/4 time and consists of three measures. The first measure is a single chord, while the following two measures feature a steady, repetitive rhythmic pattern. The word "allucina" is written at the end of the third measure.

Example 24, *Imitando un campanello* and *imitando il tamburo*

Another example of rhythmic repetition appears in its most exaggerated version in *La Ritirata*, the last and longest movement. It is built entirely on the repetition of four

rhythmic motifs (one of them derived from the other) featured in the four first measures of the movement.

The image shows a musical score for the movement 'Ritirata' in 3/4 time, marked 'Ritirato. Maestoso.'. The score is for five instruments: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello I, and Violoncello II. The first four measures are highlighted with blue boxes, and the next two measures are highlighted with red boxes. The Viola and Violoncello I parts are marked 'arco' and 'imitando il timbre'.

Example 25, Ritirata, measures 1-6

Similarly, the accompaniment in the *Passa Calle* uses only two different rhythmic units (two eighth notes followed by two quarter notes) repeated throughout the movement in three different rhythmic patterns. The result strikes as extremely simple, and although this might have been appropriate for music in other environments, it strongly perturbs the norm for this repertoire and performance context. Furthermore, rhythmic repetition is also combined with harmonic repetition as only the first, fourth, and fifth degrees of the scale are used, something that can be applied to the rest of the quintet with the exception of the first three measures and the *Largo Assai*.



Example 26, *Allegro vivo*, measures 1-7.

Melodic repetition is attained in *Largo Assai* and *Passa Calle* by the repetition, with slight variations of the entire sections. The *Passa Calle* repeats the same melodic motif with slight variations three times, new material occurring only at the very end. *La Ritirata* utilizes only two basic melodic structures repeated throughout the section multiple times, either in its entirety or combining shorter melodic motifs taken from these.

Finally, the harmonic and melodic content is inherently simple in all sections except the *Largo Assai*. Few and simple harmonies are used, melodies frequently move in thirds or octaves, stepwise motion occurs profusely, and breathe popular inspiration. Also, except for the *Allegro Assai*, no technical virtuosity is required. Ranges are comfortable, tempos manageable, tonalities suitable for bowed string instruments.

All these characteristics are not foreign to popular environments that do not follow – in music as in other artistic disciplines – the precepts of neoclassic aesthetics. Furthermore, the links with popular folklore are numerous besides what has already been discussed. Apart from the obviously popular thematic elements represented, these are reflected in the timbre, with the imitation of popular instruments and accompaniments (the strumming of a guitar, the percussion of castanets...), the indications provided by the

composer – *Con Mala Grazia* depicts a thuggish character directly linked to the protagonists of late eighteenth-century *majismo*, *majos* and *majas* – and the more or less veiled references to popular theater (in form and richness of indications).⁴⁵³ Finally, all the elements discussed above, along with technical effects such as the violin's bariolage, chords, and fast, easy accompaniments, provide the spectacular effect so valued in popular theatrical productions.

La Musica Notturna delle Strade di Madrid is unique in its virtuosic use of repetition, its mix of elegance and rusticity, and the joyously grotesque interpretation of the city's sonic landscape. As the composer recognized in a letter to his editor Pleyel,⁴⁵⁴ only a profound understanding of late eighteenth-century Madrilenian idiosyncrasy allows for the full comprehension of all of the nuances contained in this quintet.

All things considered, the analysis of specific musical examples from the repertoire examined reveals that the different grotesque modes that coexisted in the late eighteenth century in literary, theatrical, and visual arts were defined by features also present in musical chamber works. The ancient ornamental grotesque at the origin of later aesthetic developments is mirrored by ornamental and rhythmic designs that can be found, for instance, in some of Boccherini's violoncello sonatas, quartets, and quintets – as in his *Divertimento II* op.15, or his quintet G.275 – or in Manuel Canales' two sets of quartets, op.1 and op.3. In both examples, occasional passages feature rhythmic figuration and/or written ornamentation in which the combinations of several different rhythmic patterns

⁴⁵³ Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press, 2006), 231-232. Le Guin discusses links with theatrical practices in pages 231-232.

⁴⁵⁴ Boccherini's letter to Ignaz Pleyel. Madrid, July 10th, 1797. Morlanwelz (Belgium), Musée Royal de Mariemont, 1090/2. In Luigi Boccherini, *Epistolario*, ed. Marco Magnani (Madrid: Asociación Luigi Boccherini: 2011), 77-79.

break the sense of rhythmic unity. This is sometimes accompanied by the lack of clear pulse, an emphasis on syncopation, or the accentuation of weak beats, resulting in asymmetrical and unbalanced melodic lines that defy the most fundamental principles of the classic canon.

Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais' grotesque body outlines two essential features that proved to be fruitful when applied to the musical analysis of this specific repertoire: the inversion of the upper and lower parts, and the exposure of the inner part of the grotesque body. The use of extreme high ranges in the violoncello part, present in Brunetti's and Boccherini's quintets – as in Brunetti op.1, n.2, or in Boccherini op.11, n.6 – occasionally results in the inversion of the traditional roles attributed to each instrument according to their natural capacities. In these occasions, the balance is subverted when the lower part of the string ensemble's body stands out and surpasses the traditional upper voice of the violin. This circumstance results in a double grotesque occurrence, as Le Guin already argued, as it also limits the natural capacity of the instrument to sound beautiful and natural.⁴⁵⁵ The inversion of the inner and outer parts of the body is a central characteristic of the Rabelaisian grotesque. The use of textures that lack a clear melodic line and highlight instead the ripieno parts is the closest translation of this literary resource into the musical language and is found occasionally in the musical language of Boccherini and in Reynoso's quartets.

Repetition is the most fascinating and common manifestation of grotesque aesthetics in the repertoire analyzed. It appears frequently in various degrees and forms,

⁴⁵⁵ Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (University of California Press, 2006).

developing on occasion patterns characteristic of specific composers. In his op.1, his first set of quintets for string ensemble, Brunetti utilizes repetition with regularity in various forms. Especially frequent is the exact immediate repetition of passages from two to twelve measures as a recurrent resource. This can occasionally occur in some movements or be used as a pervasive resource along with other forms of repetition throughout the movement, as in the second movement of his first quartet. Repetition from the first measures of the movement is also characteristic of another composer working in this environment, José María Reynoso. The second and fourth of Reynoso's six quartets highlight repetition in their opening passages, where identical musical short sections (four and three measures, respectively) are repeated up to four times as an opening in its first movement. Boccherini's extreme use of repetition, as in his quartet *La Tiranna* and in his quintet *La Musica notturna delle Strade di Madrid*, has already been discussed, also by Le Guin.⁴⁵⁶

Passages utilizing extreme resources affecting the disposition of the voices, instrumental range, repetition, or distorted melodic leaps are by no means common in the repertoire analyzed. Far from invalidating its significance, this circumstance turns these examples into meaningful exceptions worth considering. However, although several authors display grotesque elements in certain passages, just a few of the analyzed works can be unquestionably defined as grotesque considering the amalgam of grotesque elements they contain or the absolute removal of some of its parameters from the classical or conventional canon from the period. Brunetti's sinfonia *Il Maniatico* and Boccherini's

⁴⁵⁶ Elizabeth Le Guin, "'One Says That One Weeps, but One Does Not Weep': Sensible, Grotesque, and Mechanical Embodiments in Boccherini's Chamber Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 2 (2002): 218-223.

quartet *La Tiranna*, as well as the quintets *Fandango* and *La Musica Notturna di Madrid* display such exaggerated use of repetition, asymmetry, distortion, and hybridity that can confidently be designated as true grotesque examples. In all cases these compositions display connections to the popular, the folkloric, and the theatrical.

As it happens in other disciplines, the spectrum between perfectly balanced classicism and the absolute incongruent grotesque is wide, and compositions situated entirely in either one or the other extreme are rare. Don Enrique de Ataide y Portugal's two-movement quartets conform for the most part with the ideals of balance, symmetry, simplicity, and proportion guiding neoclassic poetics as musical composition at the time. Although they feature a two-movement disposition – with a Theme-and-Variations as second movement in all the quartets – and the occasional use of extreme ranges and melodic leaps, they are far from the most extreme examples by Boccherini and Brunetti discussed here. Chamber music repertoire from late eighteenth-century Madrid was versatile and able to accommodate elements from different worlds, rendering any absolute stylistic statement about this repertoire problematic. Grotesque traits appeared in different degrees. They could affect isolated elements or sections of any piece, making its identification harder, or constitute a structural part of longer compositions and affect every element involved. Any artwork could accommodate the beautiful and the grotesque coexisting side by side, as happened in literary works and in the visual arts.

Eighteenth-century boundaries between accentuation, exaggeration, and grotesque profoundly depend on the context and are still difficult to fathom from a twenty-first century perspective. Unconventional techniques have traditionally been considered as a uniform ensemble and attempts to identify, name, or classify them are still scarce. The

more the grotesque (or unconventional) lens is applied to analyze this period's repertoire (Spanish or other) and the more we admit these as equally valid examples of the period's aesthetics, the closer we will be to determining their significance to the eighteenth-century musical scene.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION. THE RHETORIC OF THE MUSICAL GROTESQUE.

Ascribing the label “grotesque” to artistic artifacts from any period is something that inevitably comes with a certain degree of risk, especially when dealing with pre-romantic materials. Few terms involve such a load of unspoken associations and, without previous explanations, misunderstandings are guaranteed. As for the late eighteenth-century grotesque, still impersonating the playfulness of its forebears while already sensing the gloominess of the future grotesque, the task becomes extremely delicate. It is a term that carries an extraordinary semantic richness and is capable of great adaptation to different media. Grotesque can be used as a profoundly pejorative qualificative in some circumstances, but other times it expresses a deep fascination for the unique that no other term can convey. Its status is highly variable, and in many aspects, its development can be comparable to the transformations endured by the word “baroque” in its constant journeys from the derogatory to the complimentary. However, while “baroque” remains mostly circumscribed to a specific period⁴⁵⁷ and its meaning comes effortlessly to many minds even when used outside this period, the origins of the term “grotesque” got lost for most of us, making substantial preliminary explanations a necessary element in discussions about the grotesque as an artistic category.

In my study, I have used the concept as an analytical tool, reverse to the lens of classical beauty, to rethink some chamber music compositions in late eighteenth-century Madrid. Without the awareness of the unruly, nonchalant, and jolly connotations it still

⁴⁵⁷ An exception is Eugenio d’Ors, who in his *Du baroque* (Gallimard, 1935) identifies several “baroque” moments throughout art history.

bore in the decades before the turn of the century, this association could seem to be completely inappropriate. Eighteenth-century grotesque does not sound stinging or distressed like later examples from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries traditionally considered as the embodiment of the musical grotesque. Eighteenth-century grotesque is more subtle. Our lack of a real understanding of eighteenth-century musical – and also literary, visual, and theatrical – literacy makes it less apparent. Nevertheless, once seen through the pertinent lens of the eighteenth-century grotesque the incongruent, playful, silly, extravagant, nonchalant, and comical, just one or all at once, stand out and reveal a different way of communication between composer, performers, and audience. The grotesque is always first and foremost spectacle, and its aim is to provoke.

The grotesque, understood as a fundamental violation of the classical canon and its perpetual search for beauty, was part of the artistic environment, music included, in Enlightenment Madrid. Madrilenians who had access to the cultural life of the city would find ruptures of the classical ideals in the books they read, in their evenings at the coliseums and *corrales de comedias*, in paintings hanging in aristocratic salons, in the streets during Carnival and processions, and also in the music they heard in social gatherings. They were accustomed to the elegance and harmony of music composed conforming to the most classical principles by foreign and national composers thanks to the patronage efforts of nobles like Maria Josefa Pimentel, who treasured and shared music from progressive northern European composers. They were an informed audience capable of recognizing the difference between these and other musical gestures foreign to this tradition. The label “grotesque” was not utilized at that time for these examples, but neither was it for the works

decorating Nero's *grottae* at the time they were created, and nevertheless, both share the essential traits of the grotesque as later described by scholars across disciplines.

After the analysis of scholarly descriptions of the grotesque in literary, theatrical, dance, and visual arts studies, I have outlined as main elements of general grotesque aesthetics in the eighteenth-century exaggeration, disproportion, disorder, asymmetry, and the use of marginal, popular, and comic characters. A second layer of characteristics further defines the grotesque as it emerges in aristocratic circles: its focus is placed on virtuosity, watered-down grotesque elements, a non-confrontational character, an antagonistic and dependent relation with its "serious" counterparts, and the adaptation of the material to the performance literacy of aristocratic audiences.

Eighteenth-century Spanish intellectual elites were fully aware of aesthetic principles and stances advanced by enlightened and neoclassical thinkers in and out of the country, but at the same time they also had a firm conscience of the unique idiosyncrasy of the country and fostered a climate of acceptance to solutions that differed from that canon. After all, the eighteenth century welcomed aesthetic variety also in the wider European context – late baroque, rococo, *stile galante*, *Empfindsamer Stil*, and classic trends – and Madrid, as a cosmopolitan capital, partook in this artistic diversity on its own terms. A renewed confidence and respect in the potential of human rationality fostered artistic individuality and the development of means of expression adapted to artistic subjects typical of this period. The aesthetic transition into nineteenth-century modernity is defined in this environment by the tensions between an enduring tradition and recent neoclassical principles till the end of the century. The musical grotesque emerged at the crossroads between tradition and modernity, classicism and baroque, national and cosmopolitan.

A look at Madrid during the last three decades of the century, i.e., Boccherini's Madrid, reveals an eclectic artistic scene in all the fields studied, in which artists experimented with concurrent trends. Popular theater and folklore held an important place in this cultural context and stimulated the appearance of the grotesque: the taste for the disordered, varied, fragmented, spectacular, and irregular were an important part of the success of the Madrilenian popular theatrical scene. The gap between neoclassic poetics as discussed at intellectual gatherings or in the texts concerned with the topic and a reality marked by the endurance of popular and baroque features is evident throughout the last part of the eighteenth century in the musical, visual, literary, and theatrical examples discussed.

My analysis of quartets and quintets by Gaetano Brunetti, Luigi Boccherini, Manuel Canales, Antonio Soler, Enrique Ataide y Portugal, José Teixidor y Barceló, and José María Reynoso, composed for the enjoyment of royal and aristocratic circles in late eighteenth-century Madrid, reveals to a greater or lesser extent the appearance of musical elements characteristic of grotesque aesthetics that share an essential core with those found in other artistic disciplines: exaggeration, repetition, asymmetry, excess, hybridization, topographical inversion. Although just a few compositions in this repertoire can be defined as essentially grotesque in this aesthetic framework – all mostly composed by Boccherini – elements that move away from neoclassic aesthetics appear in smaller sections in the compositions of his contemporaries. Boccherini remains, as proposed by Elizabeth Le Guin, the absolute master of grotesque aesthetics in his place, time, and genres, and his style perfectly exemplifies eighteenth-century aesthetics in its entire spectrum from classical to grotesque. To this we can add that composers working in the same

environments occasionally utilized similar grotesque features that involved excessive repetition and the use of extreme ranges, asymmetry or unbalance in their use of ornamentation and formal solutions, excessive melodic gestures, and inversion of the hierarchy of the voices, although except for Brunetti's sinfonia *Il Maniatico* (a rare occurrence in this composer's output), nobody surpassed Boccherini in bending the neoclassical principles.

Brunetti's Symphony in C minor *Il Maniatico* L 322 (1780), Boccherini's *Quintettino* op.30 n.6 *La Musica Notturna delle Strade di Madrid* (1780), his *Quartettino* in G Major *La Tirana* G 223 (1792), and his Guitar Quintet in D Major G 448 *Fandango* (1798) are the most unequivocal examples of the Spanish grotesque in the last decades of the century. All of them share their programmatic and theatrical nature and feature the protagonist role of either popular elements characteristic of the city and/or characters typical of the popular stratum. There are, however, enough differences in their style and compositional approach to prevent considering the grotesque in this environment as a homogeneous category.

The extent to which grotesque elements appear during this period in Spanish repertoires is out of the scope of this dissertation, and considering the repertoire analyzed it is not a common feature in string quartets and quintets. Most of the pieces analyzed in my study present features that fit into neoclassical standards. Moreover, and as has already been stated, the grotesque and the classic exist in a spectrum (as Paul Illie describes it in literature) or on a continuum that encompasses everything from the most extreme examples of distortion to the most subtle deviations from contemporary standards. Further research that considers this topic from a quantitative approach taking into consideration objective

features discussed here could better answer the question about the extent of grotesque practices in this repertoire.

Studies in this direction, considering both extremes of the aesthetic palette, could also shed light in the extent to which this period's "deviations" could have influenced later developments in the romantic period. The possibility of a thread that ties together baroque and romantic artistic expressions has been evoked throughout the dissertation and considering it as a possibility would have further implications for the understanding of nineteenth-century repertoires, traditionally considered mostly to be a rupture with the classic period and most of the eighteenth-century musical productions. Focusing on deviations from the predominant classical canon could unveil unnoticed connections, in composition as in performance. Kuzmick's claims for the field of grotesque dance coincide with this idea, highlighting the importance of this tradition for later ballet. For her, some aspects of this tradition, and particularly the virtuoso technique of the grotesque dancer, gradually integrated international dance vocabulary during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the nineteenth century these were at the base of what we call classical ballet technique as it was taught and performed throughout Italy.⁴⁵⁸ In a similar way, some of the techniques used by eighteenth-century authors and composers and labeled here as grotesque – as the use of extreme ranges or the exploitation of a wider scope of instrumental timbres and compositional textures – could have been the basis for later developments. Further research linking both repertoires could bring existent connections to light, fostering historical performance practices in new directions.

⁴⁵⁸Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, "Eighteenth-Century Italian Theatrical Ballet: the Triumph of the Grotescchi," (The University of Wisconsin Press: 2005), 17 and 22.

The persistence of improvisation techniques in professional environments throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is one of the main fields of performance studies that nowadays recognizes the endurance and adaptation of older, non-written traditions to late eighteenth-century and nineteenth contexts. This fact is widely acknowledged today in academic circles, supported by contemporary writings from Mozart to Czerny,⁴⁵⁹ and is gradually being re-introduced in performing contexts by culturally informed performers. However, improvisation in late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is still far from being as consistently accepted as in repertoires from previous periods. I suggest that considering late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century musical practices from a perspective that emphasizes continuity with, instead of opposition to previous periods, would foster the practice of improvisation among today's performers by "legitimizing" this practice and linking it to a strong, long-lasting tradition.

In addition to considering specific performance aspects such as ornamentation and sound production, studies that further analyze the consideration and extent of musical endeavors characterized by artistic freedom and originality during this period could bring surprising new insights to this repertoire.⁴⁶⁰ An over-emphasis on neoclassic regulations and principles during the neoclassic period outshines practices that thrive on spontaneity and originality, particularly in chamber music. Repertoires created for aristocratic salons

⁴⁵⁹ For more information on baroque and late-baroque improvisation see Frederick Neumann's chapters 32 and 33 in *Performance Practices of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), especially pages 528-529 and 551; Leopold Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*; Carl Czerny, *A Systematic Introduction to Improvisation on the Pianoforte*.

⁴⁶⁰ Studies analyzing the extent of musical practices that do not conform with the neoclassical canon in repertoires from this period, as well as reception studies, would be especially valuable for the reconsideration and expansion of this period's musical canon. They would also support the reconsideration of specific compositions under a lens that do not privilege traditional classical musical performance patterns that affect sound quality, balance, the use of dynamics, or the treatment of form.

in the last decades of the eighteenth century were conceived for the most part with neoclassic regulations in mind, but they were also, first and foremost, productions meant for entertainment. As discussed in chapter two, Spanish theorists who endorsed neoclassic poetics to a wider or lesser extent, such as Jerónimo Feijoo and Tomás de Iriarte, accepted at the same time the legitimacy of artistic freedom and the rupture of the norms in ways that recall baroque ideals and techniques of exaggeration and contrast. Studies that privilege the analysis of persisting traits from the baroque period in late eighteenth-century musical performance could result in new approaches that introduce more variety in the treatment of timbre, form, ornamentation, or dynamics, granting performers with a greater spectrum of agency and possibilities.⁴⁶¹

Grotesque practices were then the target of a number of critics who despised them while considering them ridicule, tasteless, superficial, colorful exotic products in the best of the cases and in general, low in quality. Apart from some exceptions, this pattern has been maintained by later mainstream critics, music historians, concert organizers, and performers. And they are right. According to a specific aesthetic ideal that privileges balance, proportion, symmetry, and restraint as the goals of artistic expressions, Boccherini's *Musica notturna* does not meet the standards. Brunetti's *Il Maniatico* and his first set of string quintets do not live up to contemporary classical standards. None of the works or passages analyzed in this dissertation do. Yet this perspective does not consider the presence of different sets of standards utilized by successful playwrights, writers, painters, and musicians in Enlightened Madrid. Whether these products were conceived to

⁴⁶¹ The exploration of different sonorities, especially in the use of extreme ranges; the possibility of adding repeats or to expand the form as in popular traditions, or fantasia, prelude, variations, ground bass traditions. A wider range of ornamentation models and dynamics.

seek economic success, to connect with wider portions of the Madrilenian society, to privilege plain enjoyment over academic beauty, to describe realities not considered as artistic models until then, as exploratory exercises, or just to try to draw attention and stand out in the ears of selected audiences, all of the described grotesque works – and other compositions that do not fit in the classical canon for containing grotesque elements – were nonetheless successful among their contemporaries. Padre Isla and Torres Villarroel, Paret and Goya, de la Cruz and Boccherini met the standards of their audiences in the last decades of the eighteenth century. I propose the reconsideration of this repertoire as part of a cultural environment that included artistic endeavors in the sphere of the grotesque as an important part of its idiosyncrasy. Such an exercise would result in a different, deeper appreciation of these products and would highlight musical elements more relevant to their understanding and performance. It would contribute to enrich performance practices by relocating the emphasis in aspects of the musical composition so far neglected by practices focused exclusively on the search of classical beauty, drawing attention to elements essential to the expression of the grotesque.

For example, the search for a “beautiful” sound as a main goal in instrumental playing conforms to the ideals of a neoclassic approach as discussed in chapter two. Adopting beautiful models (again, according to specific neoclassic parameters) and idealizing them was presented in neoclassical aesthetic writing as the unique valid approach to art. The resulting uniformity, however, does not align with the richness of aesthetic approaches present in the Enlightened Madrilenian environment. Granting this repertoire the possibility of pursuing different sound quality goals – in timbre, dynamics,

texture, or instrumentation – would be more in accordance with the surrounding artistic context.

Similarly, adapting performances to other neoclassic parameters without a previous consideration of the specific work and performance context could end up watering down the unique diversity that characterizes this repertoire. An excessive focus on symmetry and balance, for example, could discourage the performer from pursuing more baroque or popular ornamental patterns, and that would in any case be more appropriate in works with non-neoclassical inspiration. An over-emphasis on achieving variety may lead to introducing variations (usually dynamic changes) into sections with a focus on repetition, sabotaging their excessive, grotesque effect. Passages designed to highlight internal parts, incongruous displays of virtuosity, excessive accentuation patterns, exaggerated or distorted melodic gestures, and open formal solutions are not absent in this repertoire either. A performance approach that acknowledges the possibility of the grotesque will highlight these elements, rather than trying to introduce variables that dilute their anti-classic theatricality.

A parallel to this may be seen in the eighteenth-century dancer Gennaro Magri who considered that serious dancers should not be valued more highly than grotesque dancers just because the heroes and kings they played enjoyed a higher social or aesthetic status than the shepherds, artisans, or maidens performed by grotesque dancers. Magri defended the centrality of the role of the performer and considered the quality of the performers in their different practices as the only requirement for their judgement.⁴⁶² I suggest that a

⁴⁶² Linda J. Tomko, “Magri’s Grotteschi,” in *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage*, (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 164.

similar knowledge of grotesque practices is required from musical performers in order to honor the authentic theatrical and rhetorical nature of works featuring grotesque elements, passages, or topics. In the manner of De la Cruz's *sainetes*, which relied heavily on the performers' expressive qualities and knowledge of the context and audience to communicate its truth, the performer who approaches this repertoire (compositions for string ensemble by Brunetti, Boccherini, Canales, Reynoso, etc.) should at least consider the possibility of playing with different sets of aesthetic goals. Leaning exclusively on classical standards for the entire repertory of the last decades of the eighteenth century in the Western European context leads to the loss of meaning in compositions that function according to different principles, the clearest example being Boccherini's *Musica notturna*. Such an approach takes away the theatrical, sensorial, and spectacular essence of this work, and the same applies for the remaining works and passages discussed in chapter five.

The study of traditional sources – academic and technical writings, correspondence, biographies, and the like – have until now been the most logical and appropriate in an effort of reconstructing historical performance contexts and practices. I propose that inquiries that privilege the analysis of disciplines mostly disregarded in academic studies so far (popular music, theater, literature, dance) are also adequate to inform historical musical affairs and can serve to shed light on specific aspects of this period's repertoire. A deeper understanding of gesture, prosody, rhetoric, and general aesthetics as they applied to different repertoires and disciplines during this period are a powerful tool in the hands of culturally informed performers.

I suggest that performance practices that highlight the difference between classical-inspired and non-classical inspired works (or isolated elements) would more accurately

reflect eighteenth-century chamber musical practices such as those in Madrid. Also, efforts to accommodate performance practices to different settings, considering historical contexts as well as today's audiences' musical literacy are essential in the transmission of compositions that do not comply with classical norms. The grotesque, like the comical and the satirical, relies heavily on immediate communication between composer, performer, and audience. Shared codes are necessary to grasp subtle musical references and ruptures of shared conventions. Boccherini's *Musica Notturna* is an example of a composition that, despite the distance between original and today's audiences, still retains its ability to surprise and confuse listeners who are confronted with this piece for the first time. Something similar happens with Telemann's *Don Quixote*: the depth of their disengagement with contemporary conventions is such that audiences are still capable to enjoy the excitement of its genuine bizarreness. Its essential theatricality and direct references to characters marginal to the canon are still easily recognizable, its grotesque elements are difficult to disguise. Ideally, performers with enough awareness of this aesthetic mode (the playful eighteenth-century grotesque) should accommodate their performance choices in order to pursue as much as possible, similar effects in works that participate in the same aesthetics in a more temperate way.

The identification of other musical trends that partake in popular, comic, or grotesque aesthetics in the aristocratic environment during the second part of the eighteenth century is still challenging because of the lack of studies focused on the intersections between artistic disciplines, contexts, and genres. Studies that prioritize further exploring the links between popular and elite, theatrical and musical, or visual and musical could bring new connections into light and provide new sources to examine. Similar

interdisciplinary studies focused on the musical grotesque before the nineteenth century in other geographical areas would also broaden our understanding of this aesthetic category and the extension of its practice. Finally, the analysis of some specific aspects of the Spanish grotesque as described in chapter five, especially repetition, could be expanded, primarily with a quantitative and categorizing approach, bringing a better understanding of the role played by these techniques in the classic, Enlightened environment.

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