



Perfect Shark Music:

"How can the principle of prosody be used in contemporary song-writing?"

Dave Bishop

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

WINTEC

February 2012

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## **1) Dissertation Question**

"How can the principle of prosody be used in contemporary song-writing?"

## **2) Introduction**

As a passionate songwriter I am generally struggling with two fundamental questions, firstly what am I trying to say? And secondly how can I say it better? The first question impacts greatly upon the content of a specific song I might be writing, whereas the second essentially involves song-writing craft and this is an area I have been researching for a number of years. In my pursuit to improve as a writer I have read a great deal of song-writing text-books and it was through these that I was introduced to the principle of prosody. This dissertation is an opportunity for me to deepen my understanding of prosody, which I hope will increase my song-writing skills.

To explore the principle of prosody I will to analyse a song titled "Galileo (Someone Like You)" which is written by Irish singer/songwriter Declan O'Rourke. The analysis is mainly musicological in focus and will be implemented within five specific areas: lyric, performance, rhythm, harmony and melody. This type of analysis lends itself to being performed under a qualitative methodology.

### 3) Post-structural Questions of Meaning

Allan Moore (2003) in the introduction to his book "Analyzing popular music" writes:

The last two decades in particular have sown poststructuralist doubts deep within the close reading of music of all kinds, doubts which are directed not only at the authority of the composer but, perhaps even more strongly, at the identity, the coherence, the autonomy of the individual piece, work, song. (p. 6)

He then states, "analysis is an issue of interpretation." (2003: p. 6) and goes on to suggest, "Nobody can claim to see the entire picture." (2003: p. 6)

Moore is a musicologist and in chapter three of the same book contributor Dai Griffiths (2003) continues:

"What bothers sociologists about the words of pop songs is any presupposition that songs have inherent meanings which can be objectively identified, that the meaning of lyrics can be defined independently of their music, and that such cultural messages are effectively transmitted and received." (p. 39)

This academic viewpoint is very different when compared with the writing and teaching by authors of song-writing textbooks. Authors in this area tend to take for granted that meaning and emotion can be read into popular song. A couple of comments by Jason Blume highlight this fact and he writes, "A successful melody touches listeners and stays with them. It communicates the emotion that the composer felt and wanted to convey when he or she wrote it." (Blume, 2004: p. 109) Discussing lyric writing he proposes, "Effective lyrics are crafted in such a way that listeners can clearly understand the story and/or feel the emotion the writer intended to evoke." (2004: p. 42)

There is a noticeable division between the popular literature regarding song-writing and the academic analysis of popular music. However I believe a middle ground is available and is located within an audience. A point that

many authors stipulate about the practice of song-writing is that there are no rules only tools. “There are no absolute rules or formulas for song-writing. For every rule, you’ll find a song that broke the rule and succeeded.” (Braheny, 2006: p. 10) In a way I think this is a concession that other factors aside from song craft can influence the reception of a song and its intended message. A topic that many of these authors include within their books specifically deals with writing in different styles for different audiences. Braheny writes, “You have to know, for instance, that while jazz fans may love complex melodies and chord changes, they don’t work in country songs. Abstract lyrics that might spark a pop or rock piece would turn off a country audience.” (2006: p. 51) Echoing this sentiment Blume states, “When gearing a song to any specific market, it’s important to remember that some lyrical and musical elements lend themselves to certain styles of songs and are quite inappropriate for others.” (2004: p. 79) I think these statements naturally lead to placing song interpretation and meaning with an audience rather than with an author or text. Braheny even goes so far at one point to write, “Something that speaks to *my* heart may leave *you* cold.” (2006: p. 81) I would suggest that this is a common experience for many music aficionados where personal likes and dislikes vary from person to person and lead to the type of comment that Braheny highlights. The study of semiotics and the communication models that have been developed within this field are helpful to explain these polar opposites of reaction.

Phillip Tagg outlines the general concept of semiotics as “studying the interpretation, message and meaning of any communication system,” (Tagg, 1999: p. 3). He also includes a dictionary definition, “the study of the relationships between signs and symbols and what they represent.” (1999: p. 3) Tagg outlines a diagram of a basic communication model and within this it is easy to recognise the semiotic emphasis placed upon how information is received by individuals (diagram, appendix one). A focal point within the model is called a “receiver” and directly between what’s labelled a “transmitter” and this “receiver” is a “channel”. Tagg writes “The channel or ‘coded message’ is the music as it sounds and the receiver is anyone hearing the music – the ‘transmitters’ themselves or other people.” (1999: p. 9) Two other main headings “Store of symbols” and “Sociocultural norms” frame the

diagram and by way of sub-headings can be either shared by both the “transmitter” and “receiver” or alternatively by a “transmitter only” or a “receiver only”. What Tagg explains with the assistance of this diagram is that for a piece of music to be successfully interpreted both a transmitter and receiver has to share the same vocabulary of musical symbols. He comments that, “Codal incompetence in music arises when transmitter and receiver do not share the same vocabulary of musical symbols.” (1999: p. 11) Regarding “Sociocultural norms” he states, “Codal interference means that the ‘adequate response’ is obstructed by other factors, such as receivers general like or dislike of the music and what they think it represents, or by the music being recontextualised verbally or socially.” (1999: p. 11)

So I think academics and authors of song-writing textbooks can be seen to agree that musical communication and the possibility of conveying meaning through music is a complicated process. Also that musical communication is a process that relies upon shared information and this is crucial because if it is absent musical meaning is lost at an individual and/or audience level. Another semiotic theory that highlights the complexities of this communication process even further is the post-structural idea of intertextuality. Cobley suggests, “texts are traversed by the traces of other texts” (Cobley & Jansz , 2010: p. 97) and expanding upon this writes, “Signification becomes a powerful system in which human knowledge is wholly implicated.” (2010: p. 98) This is exactly what Moore is alluding to in his quote included at the start of this section (Moore, 2003). I would suggest that many song-writing authors and teachers generally keep an open mind on the options of what a song or specific part of a song might ultimately mean. As seasoned industry professionals they realise that at some point meaning is left up to an individual listener. I think what song-writing authors and teachers essentially do is to highlight popular music conventions and not so much absolute truths or rules. They analyse popular songs, questioning why they work the way they do. Along the way uncovering useful conventions within particular musical genres. These conventions are then delivered as tools within textbooks and song-writing classes. Musicologist Richard Middleton (2006) comments:

The most persuasive approaches to popular music form have been those which emphasize the role of conventions. Pieces and performances can always be considered in relation to genre. Genres are defined, in part, by conventions governing the musical processes: what can be, what cannot be, what is usually, done: of course, this includes conventions relating to form. (p. 144)

I think the “poststructuralist doubts” that Moore discusses cannot be ignored. However what is noticeable is that academics while accepting these doubts are willing to continue to analyse popular music. Moore comments, “this book lays no claim to the provision of a single mechanism whereby musical meaning is enabled.” (Moore, 2003: p. 8) He states, “analysis is necessarily interpretation. Analysis is put at the service of answering some larger question.” (2003: p. 9) A recent publication by David Machin (2010) is ambitious in its approach to the close analysis of popular music and he attempts to define a semiotic resource of musical meaning:

In the way that a linguist might document the linguistic resources and structures available to create meaning in linguistic communication, we look for the kinds of semiotic resources and patterns available for communication in the sounds, images and worlds of popular music. (p. 3)

This dissertation is an activity of analysis and acknowledges all viewpoints as discussed. The intent here is to follow a similar path as Moore all the while aware that analysis is highly subjective. This dissertation will continue along a middle ground between popular song-writing text-books and academic theory in order to uncover the benefits of the principle of prosody for contemporary songwriters.

#### 4) Defining Prosody

Through research I have discovered that there are various definitions of the term prosody. In the Oxford Dictionary (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011) prosody is defined in two ways,

- The patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry.
- The patterns of stress and intonation in a language.

The first definition can be categorised within the discipline of poetry the second finds its home in linguistics, an area that can broadly be broken into three fields, language form, language meaning and language in context. Both linguistics and poetry share commonalities with music, overlapping in the areas of rhythm, melody, harmony, lyrics and performance. For example it is common in linguistics to describe the patterns of stress and intonation of a language as melody (Wennerstrom, 2001).

The Oxford dictionary definitions are the accepted explanations of prosody however in many contemporary song-writing textbooks (as detailed in the bibliography) there is a broader approach to defining the term. John Braheny explains his definition, "Prosody is the agreement of lyric and music. Ideally you want the emotional tone of the music to enhance the songs message." (Braheny, 2006: p. 76) Braheny's definition of prosody is very similar to many other song-writing textbooks. I think this translation of prosody by song-writing textbooks to be a macro approach, a broader technique to ensure that a song can be developed and created as best as possible. This is macro prosody to assist a songwriter with craft. Craft in relation to song-writing is generally perceived as the specific application of knowledge and artistic skill to create a song. In my practice as a songwriter I find this macro approach to be very helpful.

This broader definition of prosody is not entirely extraordinary, poetry and the study of poetry craft (sometimes called versification or also simply prosody) is also concerned with how structural elements such as meter and rhyme can combine to create a variety of effects. Prosody within poetry is concerned with how elements convey emotion and can combine to reinforce the intent (or the



perceived intent) of words. Film and film scorers utilise this broader definition of prosody as well. Simon Frith discusses this topic, arriving at it first by questioning the use of musical structure and its manipulation to elicit an emotional response. He writes, “film scorers, who are, among all popular music composers, perhaps the most concerned to use music to communicate particular feelings to a great range of people” (Frith, 1996: p. 105). Noel Carroll suggests, “If adding music to the movie enhances one’s expressive control over the action, it is also the case that the imagery intensifies the impact of the music by particularizing its affective resonance.” (Carroll, 1988 as cited in Frith, 1996: p.105) In the mid 1970’s Hollywood blockbuster “Jaws” composer John Williams created a simple two-note bass motif (Dum da). This motif was designed to musically reinforce the frantic activity represented on screen by the shark. Paul Tonks labels the score of “Jaws” as “perfect shark music” (Tonks, 2001: p. 47) and he highlights that film composers utilise music to manipulate emotion (Tonks, 2001). In “Writing music for hit songs” Jai Josefs comments with this analogy, “As pop composers, whether we write our own lyrics or collaborate with others, we are basically film scorers – and the film we are scoring is the lyric message of the song.” (Josefs, 1989: p. 19) He goes onto write “marriage of music and lyric in emotional tone is what I refer to as prosody.” (1989: p. 19)

The second Oxford definition “the patterns of stress and intonation in a language” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011) is what I would term micro prosody. Specifically useful to remind a song-writer that it is important to align downbeats or musical accents with stressed syllables and/or important words. Pattison (2011) writes:

Not that a poor match doesn’t break any mythical rules, it just sounds unnatural. We lose the illusion of a real person making a real statement, deflating the emotion of the language and distracting the listener. This is crucial: a song is simply natural speech, exaggerated. (p. 2)

Frith also mentions something similar, “to sing words is to elevate them in some way, to make them special, to give them a new form of intensity.” (1996: p. 172)

I would suggest that singing emphasizes what is already there. This second definition is associated with linguistics and in this area three key elements of prosody are identified as: stress, rhythm and intonation. In linguistics the stress placed on words within sentences is called “prosodic stress”. Prosodic stress can be applied to any word in a sentence, which in turn can result in different sentences that carry different meanings. Simon Frith (1996) neatly sums this up commenting:

The point is that as speakers we create meaning through stress; music creates stress; therefore music creates meaning. As a spoken phrase, for example, “she loves you” shifts its narrative meaning (if not its semantic sense) according to whether the emphasis is placed on “she” (rather than someone else), “loves” (rather than hates), or “you” (rather than me or him). In setting the words to music the Beatles had to choose one stress, one dominant implication. The song becomes the preferred reading of the words. (p. 181)

In answering my research question, "How can the principle of prosody be used in contemporary song-writing?" I have covered some ground. I have established that there are conflicting viewpoints on the validity of identifying meaning within popular song. I have identified that there are a variety of meanings for the principle of prosody and this has led to discussing poetry, film and linguistics. The various meanings of prosody have uncovered different applications of the term. I have organised these applications into either a macro or micro sub grouping. Macro prosody I suggest is ensuring that the emotional tone of the music enhances the songs lyrical message. Within this area I have drawn parallels of prosodic application within poetry and film. Micro prosody I have proposed deals specifically with matching stresses in music to stressed syllables and/or important words. This sub grouping naturally falls into the study of linguistics and the concept of “prosodic stress”.

I will now analyse the song “Galileo (Someone Like You)” within five specific song-writing areas: lyric, performance, rhythm, harmony and melody. Firstly I will explore prosody and lyrics.

## 5) Prosody & Lyrics

In 2004 Irish singer/songwriter Declan O'Rourke released his debut album titled "Since Kyabram" a song from this album is "Galileo (Someone Like You)". Since its release musicians including Josh Groban and Paul Weller have covered the song. It is an ideal piece of music to analyse in relation to my research question because I believe it contains many examples of macro and micro prosody.

The process of lyric writing is a fine balancing act and as a song develops a songwriter has many choices to consider. Choices and/or decisions that when made will influence the final result. Five structural elements for a songwriter to balance within a lyric and as identified by Pat Pattison, are the number of lines, the length of lines, the rhythm of lines, the rhyme scheme and the rhyme type (Pattison, 2009). The first verse of "Galileo (Someone Like You)" is as follows (lyric sheet, appendix two).

### 1<sup>st</sup> Verse

Galileo fell in love as a Galilean boy

And he wondered what in heaven who invented such a joy

These two lines of the first verse match each other in length and rhythm. Speaking them out loud by the time we reach the word joy it feels natural to pause. What reinforces this pause aside from the matching length and rhythm of these lines is the perfect rhyme of boy and joy. In a musical sense by the time we reach the word joy we are at rest.

If however the word boy was exchanged for guy at the end of the first line a different result is achieved.

Galileo fell in love as a Galilean guy

And he wondered what in heaven who invented such a joy

Without the rhyme scheme the word joy is not as pronounced. It runs past us because it has no aural match from the previous line. It could also be argued

that some of the information that songwriter O'Rourke wants to communicate is also less pronounced. The interesting idea of Galileo long ago falling in love and wondering about the origin of love is not communicated as strongly without rhyme as it is with it. This example highlights how rhyme is an important decision for a songwriter to balance. Pat Pattison comments, "The movement of your lyric's ideas can be outlined and supported by your rhyme scheme" (Pattison, 1991: p. 49) This is of course just one of the choices a songwriter has to consider when developing a lyric.

In the second verse of "Galileo (Someone Like You)" O'Rourke does something different with the structure that in turn creates a very different result.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Verse

But the question got the better of his scientific mind  
And to his blind and dying gaze he looked up high and often sighed and  
sometimes cried

These two lines of the second verse don't match each other in length. Line two is comparatively longer than line one. Speaking them out loud by the time we reach the word cried it feels natural to pause. However unlike the pause after line two of the first verse this pause of the second verse is loaded with anticipation. What engineers this feeling of anticipation is the difference in line length and the rhyme scheme. These are of course just two structural elements of a lyric that a songwriter is trying to balance. Also something else is starting to influence this anticipation. The verse one rhyming couplet of boy and joy has raised expectations for a similar rhyming couplet to occur in verse two, however this doesn't eventuate. The first line of verse two ends with mind and is rhymed with blind in the second line, but unexpectedly, a lot earlier.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Verse

But the question got the better of his scientific mind  
And to his blind....

Following this four rhyming words within the second line are quickly sung, dying, high, sighed and cried. They aren't perfect rhymes instead they're either additive or subtractive. So they don't quite close the line down but having four rhymes of any type in quick succession creates excitement. Pattison writes, "The closer rhymes are to each other, the faster your lyric moves." (Pattison, 1991: p. 39)

For a moment lets examine the content of these two lines from the second verse. O'Rourke is singing about Galileo and as history would have us believe Galileo was a man who was used to working things out, providing answers to questions that he had posed. However in this song O'Rourke is singing that Galileo from the first moment he fell in love until his last dying breath could not unravel the mystery of love. There is tension in this idea, a great thinker unable to explain a mystery of the universe. The quick internal rhymes and mismatched length of line two of the second verse supports this tension structurally building anticipation. I believe this is an example of macro prosody. Highlighting how rhyme or lets say structure when used effectively can support the emotional meaning of a lyric and/or the intent of a songwriter.

The chorus to "Galileo (Someone Like You)" is as follows.

### Chorus

Who puts the rainbow in the sky?

Who lights the stars at night?

Who dreamt up someone so divine?

Someone like you and made them mine?

It is interesting to notice how the tension of verse two isn't released until the word of sky at the end of the line one of the chorus. As a rhyme sky links up with the preceding words of dying, high, sighed and cried. Also the final rhyming couplet of divine and mine succinctly close down the end of the chorus. Once again highlighting how rhyme can influence how lyrical ideas move through a song.

## 6) Genre

So far my analysis of the song “Galileo” has been taken from a musicological perspective. Generally I have identified structure and how elements within this structure move to either create and/or release tension. However I could look at “Galileo” from a sociological point of view. Such an approach is helpful because it introduces the concept of genre and convention and places an emphasis on the listener. Simon Frith (1996) states:

Musicologists can rightly claim, in short, to be able to relate the structural qualities of a certain sort of music to the emotional effects it has on its listeners; or, to approach this the other way around, we can examine instrumental music which is labelled as sad or angry or happy and find that such labels match specific structural qualities. Such feelings *are* caused by the musical elements themselves, but through a process of conventional association. (p. 109)

He then comments, “From a sociological perspective, then, music listening can only occur in music cultures. To hear combinations of sounds as music, it is necessary to know something about the conventional meanings of agreed musical elements.” (1996: p. 109) So what Frith is highlighting is that music creates meaning but that this meaning does not occur for listeners in isolation. Meaning in music is also arrived at through convention and this idea links with semiotics and Tagg’s “Store of symbols” and “Sociocultural norms” (Tagg, 1999).

For example Declan O’Rourke is marketed as a “singer-songwriter” and a convention (generally speaking) within this genre is that lyrics should be “well crafted” and “serious” in nature. Roy Shuker identifies that within this genre artists “have strong connotations of greater authenticity and ‘true’ auteurship.” (Shuker, 2005: p. 275) He comments that because of these connotations the lyrics of singer/songwriters are subjected to concentrated analysis. He writes, “An emphasis on lyrics has resulted in the work of such performers often being referred to as song poems, accorded auteur status, and made the subject of intensive lyric analysis.” (2005 p. 274) From this I would suggest

that the “Store of symbols” and “Sociocultural norms” (Tagg, 1999) that singer-songwriters and their audiences share, ensures that lyrics are highly valued.

Previously I outlined that macro prosody was, “ensuring that the emotional tone of the music enhances the songs lyrical message”. However considering the concept of genre and convention I can broaden the definition to, “ensuring that the emotional tone of the music enhances the songs lyrical message and matches the appropriate genre”. Expanding this definition raises some interesting questions around the word “appropriate”. Semiotics and Tagg’s “Store of symbols” and “Sociocultural norms” would be one viable option to answer this question (Tagg, 1999). Perhaps another way to answer what is “appropriate” music for the lyrics of “Galileo” is to continue the musicological analysis. I will now explore prosody and melody.

## 7) Prosody & Melody

The first reaction I have as a listener when concentrating upon the melody of “Galileo” is that it sounds like it’s floating. The notes feel like they’re gliding out of the speakers and drifting across the room. If I had to identify an emotion that this melody evokes I think it would be one of whimsy. The specific phrasing of the melody I think conveys a playful sensibility. However wistful is another emotion that could be associated with “Galileo’s” melody and I think this highlights the feeling of yearning that is created. From a perspective of prosody whimsy and wistful are interesting words to choose, especially when considering that I interpret the lyrical narrative of “Galileo” to involve unanswered questions regarding love. Identifying my reaction to “Galileo’s” melody as whimsical or wistful is also sociologically important due to the singer/songwriter genre that Declan O’Rourke occupies.

This personal observation that the melody of “Galileo” is whimsical or wistful is of course highly subjective. But it could be regarded as an example of macro prosody and how it is defined in various song-writing textbooks. Remember the quote of Jason Blume earlier, (Blume, 2004). Blume goes on to write:

To achieve prosody, the melody should sound as if it is happily married to the lyric it accompanies, and vice versa. A melody that makes the listener feel happy should accompany a lyric that has a positive, pleasant message. Likewise, a lyric that conveys sadness should be expressed melodically with notes, chords and musical phrases that evoke a similar feeling of sadness. (p. 106)

Two questions that arise here is, how is it possible for a melody to convey happiness or sadness? The second question is was Declan O’Rourke intending his melody to produce a whimsical or wistful emotion for listeners? If the answer to this second question is yes, it could be theorised that my wistful and whimsical feelings are a perfect textbook reaction.

An interesting aside is that melody doesn’t occur in isolation. Supporting harmony, rhythm and performance within a song can play a major part in how



listeners appreciate and react to melody. Jai Josefs has this to say, “You can give the same melody, with the same intervals and range, a completely different effect by altering the accompanying harmony.” (Josefs, 1989: p. 122) In chapter one of the same book Josefs uses the first two lyrical lines of Billy Joels song “The Longest Time” as an example. The melody that accompanies these lines is exactly the same however the harmony is different. Playing through the example as provided by Josefs is a practical demonstration of how melody can be influenced by harmony.

I think my reason for describing Galileo’s melody as floating is due in a big part to the 6/8 rhythm of the song. But also my reaction could be a result of the “dreamy” harmonic nature of the A6 tonic chord and the two/five/one jazz chord progression. Also within the performance of “Galileo” orchestral instruments are prominent, especially the sixteenth note arrangement of the strings. The performance of the strings in this manner makes them sound like butterflies hovering gently overhead. As a sociological aside it’s important to recognise that orchestral instruments within the singer/songwriter genre have had a long and fruitful association. Supposedly a main reason record producers in the 1960’s employed strings was because they supported an intimate vocal without overwhelming it. Producer Joe Boyd is said to have initiated string arrangements for Nick Drake recordings after being inspired by the use of them on Leonard Cohen’s debut album, (Boyd, 2006). Strings are a very common device that are often utilised within recordings of singer/songwriters. So perhaps conventions of genre are contributing to my overall appreciation of “Galileo’s” melody. Whatever the case for the moment I will focus solely on the melody and discuss these other elements in detail shortly.

Jason Martineau (2008) describes melody as:

A melody is created by the succession of tones through time. Step by step, note by note, an outline is formed, a path carved. Gestures appear, like the inflections used in speech, or the dialectic of rising and falling tones, or the contrast of high and low notes. (p. 18)

I think this definition is quite accurate and I can easily relate this description to the melody of “Galileo”. Martineau continues, “The expressivity of a melody comes in part by the tension and release of the intermediary notes of the scale, their rhythmic placement on a strong or weak beat intensifying or diminishing their effect.” (2008: p. 18) Close analysis of “Galileo’s” melody in the first eight bars / two lyrical lines highlights a couple of intermediary words / tones (as discussed by Martineau) that are placed on strong beats. The lyrical lines of the song are again,

### 1<sup>st</sup> Verse

Galileo fell in love as a Galilean boy

And he wondered what in heaven who invented such a joy

Two words of this lyric that are placed on strong musical beats are boy (first beat of the fourth bar) and joy (first beat of the eighth bar). The specific tones of these words as sung by Declan O’Rourke are a “B” for boy and a “G#” for joy. The song is in the key of A major and in relation to this major scale we can alternatively label the tone of “B” as the second tone of the scale and the “G#” as the seventh tone of the scale. It’s quite common for these tones (the second and the seventh) within a major scale to be called intermediary. Sometimes they are also termed “passing tones” and this is because they’re widely recognised as harmonically “unstable” when compared to other tones surrounding them. Generally tones within a major scale such as the second and the seventh can be described as “unstable” and/or “restless” because when they are sounded they push to resolve to stable chord tones like the tonic, third and/or fifth. Jack Perricone writes, “We define *stable tones* as one, three, five of the tonality. *Unstable tones*, since they “need” to move, have intrinsic melodic energy. Unstable tones tend to resolve in a *downward* direction to stable tones.” (Perricone, 2000: p. 9)

Also noticeable in O’Rourke’s singing of these unstable tones is that he holds them for a quite sometime. For example he holds the seventh tone / word of joy for a whole note. Which in relation to the other quarter and eighth notes within the melody feels like a long time. Perricone (2000) states:

Because they need to resolve, *unstable tones* create expectations. The movement of a point of tension (for example, an unstable tone) to a goal area that provides release (for example, a stable tone) creates forward motion. *Stable tones* are often employed at cadences when termination or resolution is desired. Examine the ending notes of each of the following phrases. Note the increase in forward motion created by unstable tones appearing at the end of phrases. (p. 11)

Perricone provides an example of a melodic phrase where the endnote is “unstable” and comments that this, “creates expectation of resolution.” (2000: p. 11)

I think that the first verse of “Galileo” contains an example of micro and macro prosody. As a songwriter Declan O’Rourke has chosen to finish both lyrical lines with heavily accentuated unstable tones and these tones link with the important rhyming words, boy and joy. O’Rourke is matching the stresses in “Galileo’s” music to the important stressed syllables within the songs lyric and this is an example of micro prosody. An example of macro prosody (the emotional tone of the music enhances the songs lyrical message) can also be identified. At the end of each line O’Rourke is creating an expectation within the music that requires resolution. The unstable tone choices reinforce the conflict inherent in the lyrical narrative. I think that the musical and lyrical choices of Declan O’Rourke have resulted in my assessment earlier that the melody of “Galileo” sounds like it’s floating and two emotions I can assign to this melody and lyric is whimsical and wistful.

## 8) Prosody & Rhythm

When describing Galileo's melody earlier as "floating" I remarked that I thought this was due in a large part to the 6/8 time signature of the song. It is a common belief within song-writing text books that rhythm is a crucial factor in creating a popular song. Jai Josefs comments that rhythm is, "in many cases as important as the melody and harmony in determining the impact that a song has on an audience." (Josefs, 1989: p. 181) An interesting way to think about the basics of rhythm is to liken it to the human activity of walking. Machin discusses this approach, "One way to think about the combined effect of percussion, instruments and vocals creating rhythms is offered by Cooke (1959) who showed that we can relate the metaphorical meanings of these rhythm sounds with the human activity of walking." (Machin, 2010, p. 128) Taking this approach further he writes:

Walking and running and shifting from one foot to the other have a binary nature. Triple time is therefore not a natural rhythm. Van Leeuwen (1999) suggests that artificiality can indicate high status as it involves artifice rather than nature. In jazz 4/4 time songs are often played with a triple-time feel called 6/8 to make them lighter and precisely to avoid the constancy of the binary rhythm. (p. 129)

As a musician I identify with the so-called "lighter" feel of a 6/8 time signature and enjoy playing within this rhythm because of the swing factor that I can generate when accentuating the stronger first and fourth beats of a bar. So macro prosody can be identified at work here through the 6/8 time signature and rhythm of the song "Galileo".

Another important aspect that relates to rhythm within music is how a vocalist interprets the "feel" of a song. Machin states, "It is also important to think about the way the vocalist relates to the rhythm created by the instruments. Do they embrace the time, allowing it to govern them, or do they struggle and refuse to be contained by it?" (2010: p. 130) O'Rourke released the song "Galileo" in 2004 and it has been recorded by a variety of artists including Mary Byrne an Irish X-Factor finalist in 2010. Her interpretation of "Galileo" is

remarkably different to Declan O'Rourke's original recording and mainly this difference I think can be put down to her particular vocal phrasing. Byrnes recorded version is in a different key (F) and is quicker in tempo but I would suggest that it is where she places the words of "Galileo" that makes the real difference. Using a musician's terminology I would label Byrnes version as "straight" meaning sanitised and lacking feel. Her recording doesn't impact with me as a listener and this reaction of mine reinforces Frith's point again relating to prosodic stress (Frith, 1996). Mary Byrne's recording of "Galileo" is on youtube and it's interesting to quote a comment about her version from a message posted by someone going by the name of Londari, ":( sorry, but Mr O' Rourke sings this much better. Good effort though." (Byrne, 2011) Over half of the seventeen messages posted on this page seem to agree with Londari that Byrnes recording doesn't match O' Rourke's original. However some are also positive which most likely highlights that fact that Mary Byrnes prosodic stress is appealing to a certain audience and that as a listener I'm not one of these. Perhaps an example of codal interference has occurred and using a semiotic explanation I could suggest that I don't share the same "Sociocultural norms" as Byrne's target market (Tagg, 1999).

## 9) Prosody & Harmony

The harmony of “Galileo” as recorded by Declan O’Rourke is major and this is because the chords created and used by all the instrumentation within the track are diatonic to the key of the song, which is “A”. Generally speaking major key songs are associated with happy uplifting lyrical sentiment and are very common in music. The song “Galileo” is sung from a lyrical point of view of someone who is glad that he is in love so this major harmonic approach highlights our earlier definition of macro prosody, where major “happy” harmony matches and reinforces a positive lyrical message. Also I think the happy harmony of “Galileo” supports my earlier assumption of the melody being whimsical and wistful in nature. Overall the happy major harmony of “Galileo” combined with the wistful and whimsical melody creates a “bittersweet” feeling.

I have mentioned earlier that the “dreamy” harmonic nature of the A6 tonic chord and the two/five/one jazz chord progression forms a musical backing that contributes to the whimsical, wistful melody. Listening closely to this musical backing what strikes me as assisting in this process is the bass part. For a majority of the track the bass is playing tonic notes of the chords as they move, however subtly and on critical changes in the chorus the bass sometimes will play a third or fifth of a chord. This creates what are called inversions and these help to create musical motion. Josefs (1989) writes:

How is it possible, then, that composers have been able to create such an endless variety of harmonic colours with such a limited palette to choose from? The answer lies in the techniques of enhancing these chords that we’re going to be discussing in this section: inversions. (p. 85)

Essentially there aren’t a lot of chords in “Galileo” as well as no percussion and so the bass inversions help to create some subtle activity underneath everything else.

## 10) Prosody & Performance

Through the process of writing this dissertation it has become evident to me how closely the instrumentation, arrangement and performance of the song “Galileo” fits within the singer-songwriter genre. I have mentioned the orchestral instrumentation and how this can be linked to conventions that were established within the folk boom in the 1960’s (Boyd, 2006). Historically folk music has greatly influenced the singer-songwriter genre. Shuker (2005) writes:

The folk music revival in the 1960’s saw several singer-writers come to prominence: Donovan, Phil Ochs and especially Bob Dylan. Singer-songwriters were a particularly strong ‘movement’ in the 1970’s, including Neil Young, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, and Joan Armatrading, most of whom are still performing/recording. (p. 275)

Shuker also defines singer-songwriters as, “artists who both write and perform their material, and who are able to perform solo, usually on acoustic guitar or piano.” (2005: p. 275) Authenticity within the singer-songwriter genre is articulated in a number of ways but I think central to it all is a performer being able to deliver a convincing performance by performing solo on an instrument. Declan O’Rourke’s accomplished performance vocally and on acoustic guitar is placed prominently within the arrangement of “Galileo” and this reinforces his authenticity within the singer-songwriter genre.

Other similarities within the instrumentation of “Galileo” to the singer-songwriter genre are that there’s no percussion on the recording. I think this helps to ensure a certain “intimacy”, a direct approach that directly links to singer-songwriter genre connotations of ‘true’ auteurship (Shuker, 2005). Also creating a strong sense of auteurship is the deep rich vocal performance of O’Rourke. His vocal and melody are placed in a “low” range and this helps to add inevitability to the narrative of the lyric. Frith writes, “all songs are narratives; genre conventions determine how such narratives work; words are used to define a voice and vice versa.” (Frith, 1996: p. 199) Words such as “intimate” and “low” that I have used to describe specific arrangement

components within “Galileo” can be associated to sounds in the real world. Various academics (including Tagg) have researched this area and Machin (2010) writes:

The meaning of sound quality may also derive from associations of things in the real world. Our physical environment produces noises all the time. These may be due to certain qualities of the element that makes the sound or even its meaning to us in our lives. (p. 121)

As humans in the natural world we experience a range of very high to very low sounds and Machin highlights how these sounds can relate to melody, “associations of high with brightness and energy as apposed to low with gravity and weight.” (2010: p. 124) He also discusses breathy and non-breathy sounds, commenting, “breathiness can connote delicate intimacy, as well as sensuality, eroticism and emotional intensity.” (2010: p. 124) So following from this I think it’s fair to identify that the instrumentation, arrangement and performance of “Galileo” adheres closely to conventions within the singer-songwriter genre and this in turn ensures that macro prosody is achieved.



## 11) Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have highlighted various academic theories that discuss the problematic nature of interpreting meaning within music. It was important to do this because the core function of this dissertation is mainly musicological and a majority of the references utilised for this work are practical in approach. I think academic theories within semiotics, sociology and linguistics have deepened analysis of how the principle of prosody can be used within contemporary song-writing. *So the first conclusion of this dissertation is that musicological analysis is highly subjective.*

*A second conclusion central to the task of answering my research question, "How can the principle of prosody be used in contemporary song-writing?" is that contemporary song-writers can use the concept of prosody to convey meaning in music.* At a macro level prosody can ensure that the emotional tone of the music enhances the songs lyrical message and matches the appropriate genre. Micro prosody ensures that musical stress is matched with lyrical stress. In my practical project I have consciously applied macro and micro prosody principles throughout. In a song titled "Wrong Turn" I utilised macro prosody by creating a bold musical backing involving dissonant flat fifths to support a lyrical theme of alienation. Micro prosody has focused my song-writing placement of important words to stressed beats and I believe my practice in this area has improved especially since Pat Pattison my practical supervisor is highly skilled in this area.

*A third and final conclusion is that macro and micro prosody can be used in a variety of musical areas including lyric, performance, rhythm, harmony and melody.* In my analysis of the song "Galileo (Someone Like You)" I have discovered examples of macro and micro prosody within all these areas.

In the introduction I stated that a personal goal was to improve my skill as a song-writer. Through writing this dissertation and my practical project I believe that I have achieved this outcome.

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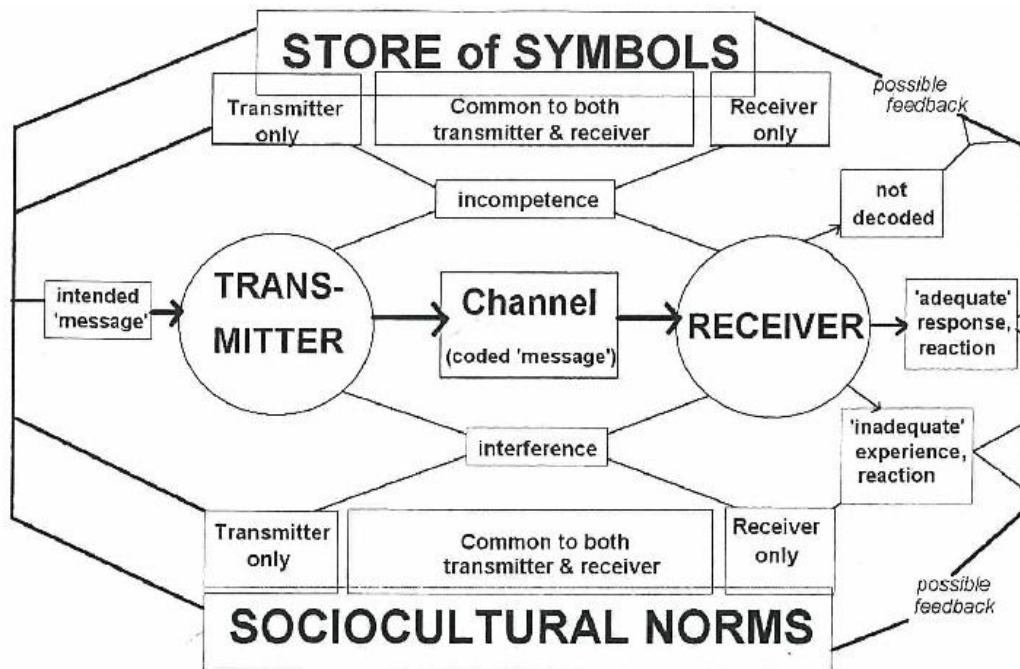
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13) Appendix One

Basic communication model (Tagg, 1999).



## 14) Appendix Two

### Galileo (Someone Like You) - Declan O' Rourke

Galileo fell in love as a Galilean boy  
And he wondered what in heaven who invented such a joy

But the question got the better of his scientific mind  
And to his blind and dying gaze he looked up high and often sighed and  
sometimes cried

Who puts the rainbow in the sky?  
Who lights the stars at night?  
Who dreamt up someone so divine?  
Someone like you and made them mine?

Love can make you ask some funny questions now and then  
But just remember the alternatives for I remember when

I was lonely and unhappy and my lips were cold as ice  
But you kissed me, and good heavens now I'm here in paradise  
So if ever I'm not kissing you or looking in your eyes  
I won't be blind, and I won't cry, I'll look up high and gladly sigh  
And thank the guy

Who puts the rainbow in the sky?  
Who lights the stars at night?  
Who dreamt up someone so divine?  
Someone like you and made them mine?  
Someone like you and made them mine?