

COVERT INTERMEDIALITY BETWEEN POETRY AND MUSIC: *...il remoto silenzio* (2002) for violoncello solo by Graciela Paraskevaïdis

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Abstract: *...il remoto silenzio* (2002), a piece for solo cello by Graciela Paraskevaïdis, is analyzed in order to examine the idea of covert intermediality between poetry and music. Utilizing Werner Wolf's intermediality theory, the analysis concentrates on the ways in which the music subtly mirrors components of Cesare Pavese's poetry. By examining the piece's rhythmic, timbral, and intervallic structures through paradigmatic semiotic analysis, it becomes evident how the music demonstrates a hidden relationship between the two art forms by quietly evoking poetic themes without apparent textual parallels.

Keywords: cover intermediality, semiotics of music, paradigmatic analysis, Graciela Paraskevaïdis, Cesare Pavese.

Varjatud intermeedialisus luule ja muusika vahel: Graciela Paraskevaïdise "*... il remoto silenzio*" (2002) soolotsellole

Abstrakt. Artiklis analüüsitakse Graciela Paraskevaïdise teost "*...il remoto silenzio*" (2002) soolotsellole, et uurida varjatud intermeedialisuse ideed luule ja muusika vahel. Analüüs kasutab Werner Wolfi intermeedialisuse teooriat ning keskendub viisidele, kuidas muusika peegeldab Cesare Pavese luule komponente. Kui uurida paradigmaatilise semiootilise analüüsi põhjal teose rütmi-, tämbri- ja intervallstruktuure, saab selgeks, kuidas muusika etendab varjatud suhet kahe kunstivormi vahel: see esitab poeetilisi teemasid, kuid teeb seda ilma nähtavate tekstuaalsete paralleelideta.

Märksõnad: varjatud intermeedialisus, muusikasemiootika, paradigmaatiline analüüs, Graciela Paraskevaïdis, Cesare Pavese.

Introduction

The present essay aims to show, through a musical analysis, a case of a covert intermediality relationship between poetry and music. The analysis is based on a paradigmatic semiotic analysis of the piece *...il remoto silenzi* (2002a; 2002b) for violoncello solo by Graciela Paraskevaïdis. 'Covert intermediality' will be defined at the beginning of this work and understood within Werner Wolf's theory.

Paradigmatic analysis (see Nattiez and Campbell Huguet 2021: 117) is more related to the analysis of paradigms embedded in the text through substituting words of the same type or class to calibrate shifts in connotation to find syntagmatic relationships rather than syntactic ones. Applied to music, *paradigmatic analysis* is a method of musical analysis developed by Nicolas Ruwet during the 1960s. It is based on the concept of equivalence, iconic relationships, or, as it will be called in this essay, isotopic relationships.

Music and poetry have been related to each other since ancient times. Besides the discussions about the affinities between arts in the 18th century, it has almost always been poetry that has been considered a *sister art* of music. This common association is because both share two essential aspects: the use of sound as the prime material of their signifiers, and both dynamically unfold their structure and meaning on the axis of time.

Throughout the twentieth century, studies of the relationships between these arts have increasingly grown, and in 1997, *The International Association for Word and Music Studies* (WMA), dedicated to the promotion of transdisciplinary scholarly inquiry devoted to the relations between literature/verbal texts/language and music (The International Association for Word and Music Studies [s. a.]), was founded.

However, most of the studies regarding literature and music have been according to, or from, the literature medium to music, i.e., *music in literature*. I hope that this analysis will contribute to this field the other way around, i.e., *literature in music*.

Covert intermediality

Before speaking about the word 'covert', we will dive into the concept of *intermediality*. According to Wolf (2017[1999]), this term brings the contiguous concept of *intertextuality* into focus. If *intertextuality* designates the verifiable involvement of another verbal text, 'intermediality' shall be conceived as a particular phenomenon that is observable in the same way. However, the involvement only occurs between at least two conventional distinct media.

Intermediality can thus be defined as a particular (*intermedial* in the narrow, *intracompositional* sense) relation between (at least) two conventionally distinct

media of expression or communication: this relation consists in a verifiable, direct or indirect, involvement of more than one conventionally distinct medium in the signification of an artefact. (Wolf 2017 [1999]: 242)

Wolf proposes two fundamental forms within a general theory of intermediality. This is a reconceptualisation of the traditional typology of music-word relations derived by Scher (1984). These two fundamental forms are direct or *overt* intermediality and indirect or *covert* intermediality.

Direct or overt intermediality is defined by Wolf as:

[...] a form in which at least in one instance more than one medium is present in an artefact, whereby each medium appears with its typical or conventional signifiers, remains distinct and in principle separately 'quotable.' In other typologies of intermediality, this form corresponds to 'mixed mediality' or 'multimediality.' (Wolf 2017 [1999]: 243)

This *overt* variant coincides with Scher's combinatory form of music *and* literature. Wolf defines *indirect* or *covert* intermediality as:

[...] the involvement of (at least) two conventionally distinct media in the signification of an artefact in which, however, only one (dominant) medium appears directly with its typical or conventional signifiers, the other one (the non-dominant medium) being only indirectly present 'within' the first medium as a signified (in some cases also as a referent). [...] In other typologies of intermediality, this covert form corresponds to (or can be related to) 'intersemiotic transposition' and to 'trans-' or 'syncretic' mediality. (Wolf 2017 [1999]: 244–245)

In Scher's theory, this corresponds to the forms of music 'in' literature and literature 'in' music, which is the crux of this essay.

...il remoto silenzio by Graciela Paraskevaïdis

Ulrike Brand commissioned this work in 2002. It is a piece for solo cello, a poetic reference to Cesare Pavese (1908–1950), an Italian writer, translator and literary critic. Paraskevaïdis' link with the poet's work was established during her studies of the Italian language at the Dante Alighieri Association and remained throughout her life; she said: "Cesare Pavese, Juan Gelman, and Idea Vilariño are an inseparable part of my daily life" (Paraskevaïdis 2014: 124). On the other hand, this interest is a part of her larger concern: languages (in addition to her parents' Greek and Spanish, she mastered several other languages, such as German and Italian) and literature. It is recurrent that in her works, different poets are referred to, such as Paul Celan, Karl Kraus, Hans-Magnus Enzensberger from the Germanic sphere, and the Spanish Miguel Hernandez, mainly in those composed between 1968 and 1973; the Argentine poet Juan Gelman will also be a recurring figure from 1975 onwards through texts set to music and in several verses quoted as titles of her pieces.

In this particular work, the poetic stimulus comes from two poems:

L'amico che dorme

Che diremo stanotte all'amico che dorme?
La parola più tenue ci sale alle labbra
dalla pena più atroce. Guarderemo l'amico,
le sue inutili labbra che non dicono nulla,
parleremo sommesso.
La notte avrà il volto
dell'antico dolore che riemerge ogni sera
impassibile e vivo. Il remoto silenzio
soffrirà come un'anima, muto, nel buio.
Parleremo alla notte che fiata sommessa.

Udiremo gli istanti stillare nel buio
al di là delle cose, nell'ansia dell'alba,
che verrà d'improvviso incidendo le cose
contro il morto silenzio. L'inutile luce
svelerà il volto assorto del giorno. Gli istanti
taceranno. E le cose parleranno sommesso

I gatti lo sapranno

Ancora cadrà la pioggia
sui tuoi dolci selciati,
una pioggia leggera
come un alito o un passo.
Ancora la brezza e l'alba
fioriranno leggere
come sotto il tuo passo,
quando tu rientrerai.
Tra fiori e davanzali
i gatti lo sapranno.

Ci saranno altri giorni,
ci saranno altre voci.
Sorriderai da sola.
I gatti lo sapranno.
Udrai parole antiche,
parole stanche e vane
come i costumi smessi
delle feste di ieri.

Farai gesti anche tu.

Risponderai parole –
 viso di primavera,
 farai gesti anche tu.

I gatti lo sapranno,
 viso di primavera;
 e la pioggia leggera,
 l'alba color giacinto,
 che dilaniano il cuore
 di chi piú non ti spera,
 sono il triste sorriso
 che sorridi da sola.
 Ci saranno altri giorni,
 altre voci e risvegli.
 Soffriremo nell'alba,
 viso di primavera. (Pavese 1962)

Both poems belong to the cycle *Verrà la morte e avrà i tuoi occhi* (1962). From this poetic material, the composer selects the following poetic images:

...il remoto silenzio
 ...muto, nel buio. mudo,
 (*L' amico che dorme*)

the remote silence
 in the darkness

Ci saranno altri giorni
 ci saranno altre voci.
 (*I gatti lo sapranno*)

there will be other days
 there will be other voices

The composer clarifies in the indication sheet:

The poetic reference arises from some stimuli that Cesare Pavese has been awakening in me for many years through his repeated and torturing existential anguish. The rhythmic, the intervallic, and the timbre try to dimension the sparse words in a time-space of sounds and silences. It is not a musicalisation, but rather a desire, an attempt to rescue 'other days', 'other voices' from that 'remote silence' even if it insists on remaining mute and in the dark.¹ (Text in the score, translation by S.N.H.)

According to what the composer said in this clarification present in the score, I have developed a paradigmatic semiotic analysis, where these three axes (rhythm,

¹ Original: "La referencia poética surge de algunos estímulos que Cesare Pavese viene despertando en mí desde hace ya muchos años a través de su reiterada y torturante angustia existencial. Lo rítmico, lo interválico y lo tímbrico tratan de dimensionar las pocas palabras en un tiempo-espacio de sonidos y silencios. No es una musicalización, sino más bien un deseo, un intento de rescatar 'otros días', 'otras voces', de ese 'remoto silencio' aunque éste se empeñe en seguir mudo y en la oscuridad"

intervals, and timbre) were taken as structural axes that unfold in a non-discursive way through austere sonorous material, maintaining isotopic relationships between them at different levels.

In order to establish these relationships, I started with a paradigmatic distribution of the piece's material and established syntagmatic relationships. The paradigmatic analysis was derived from the chronological aural experience proposed by the piece itself, and the syntagmatic analysis suggests a distribution based on the rhythmic relations taking, as a starting point, the number of syllables of the verses and their phonetic accentuation. This process concludes with the formalisation of the different sonorous events according to three fundamental paradigms: the cry (timbre), the pitch material (intervals), and the rhythmic organisation derived from the verses (rhythm).

Before presenting the analytical process of formalisation, it is pertinent to clarify terms such as *isotopy*, *paradigmatic/syntagmatic analysis*, and *formalisation*.

Greimas' initial definition of *isotopy* is based on the concept of repetition (also referred to as redundancy) with emphasis on the role of isotopy in making possible a uniform reading of a story and resolving ambiguities.

In 1980, Umberto Eco demonstrated the concept of *repetition*. He replaced it with the concept of *direction*, defining isotopy more generally as *a constancy in going in one direction that a text exhibits when subjected to the rules of interpretive coherence* (see Eco 1980: 145). From the musical field, this concept allows for the understanding or interpretation of music as a discourse or language since it is the isotopic elements (elements of repetition) that allow for cohesion within a given musical context; for example, the development, repetition, variation, recurrence, or thematic-motive transformations in work, the organisation of the pitches, all those elements that distinguish one musical style or genre from another.

The terms paradigmatic, syntagmatic, and formalisation correspond to different methodological processes on the immanent level within Jean-Jacques Nattiez's semiotic analysis. This method involves a broader tripartition of *poietics*, *immanent level*, and *esthesis*. (see Nattiez 1990: 186)

Through a segmentation chart, it is possible to highlight the paradigmatic elements in the work. The basic paradigmatic level is represented by the piece's sonorous material, which generates different relationships, transformations, variations, and developments. The paradigmatic analysis recognises and highlights the work's main paradigms.

When reading the segmentation chart conventionally (from left to right and from top to bottom), the temporal distribution of the sound events is observed as they occur in the analysed piece. In the vertical sense of reading, the recurrences of the sound gesture and its modifications are observed.

In the syntagmatic analysis, the relationships between the events are established according to their temporal distributions and, with the different paradigmatic elements, their different isotopic relationships.

In the formalisation, a physiognomic list is presented with a catalogue of different characteristics in the analysis. These are abstracted from their specific contexts and presented as symbolic formulas.

Only the formalisation chart will be presented for clarity and due to the length of this work. The paradigmatic/syntagmatic analyses are summarised in this chart.

The piece is based on three different paradigmatic axes named A (timbral difference), B (rhythmic organisation), and C (intervals), only for the chronological order of appearance. The axes correspond to the treatment of the three musical parameters. The first sound event that opens the work is located in the first axis A (timbral differences) and is "*an unexpected piercing cry of despair, very sharp, loud, short, descending irregularly and rapidly (but without glissing), over "AHHHHH". A brief but charged silence follows*"²

Represented in the score (Fig. 1.) as follows:

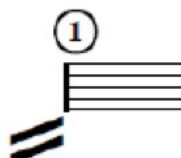


Figure 1. Beginning of the score.

Timbral differences associated with working in the extremes of the register, bow variations and percussion on the instrument's body contribute to the establishment of what Meyer refers to as perceived *conformant relationships*.

$$\text{Strength of perceived conformance} = \frac{\text{regularity of pattern (schemata)} \cdot \text{individuality of profile} \cdot \text{similarity of patterning}}{\text{variety of intervening events} \cdot \text{temporal distance between events}}$$

Figure 2. Model of the strength of perceived conformance (Meyer 1973: 49)

According to a scheme (Fig. 2) proposed by Leonard Meyer in his work *Explaining Music* (1973: 49), the regularity of the patterns, the individuality of the profile, and the similarity in the construction of the same allows to establish direct linear associations between consecutive sound events; these criteria place them at the top

² Translated by S.N.H. Original: "...un inesperado grito desgarrador de desesperación, muy agudo, fuerte, corto, descendiendo irregular y rápidamente (pero sin glisar), sobre "AHHHHH". Sigue un breve pero cargado silencio..."

of the scheme, while the variety of events involved and the temporal distance between them contribute to the fact that this type of association does not occur.

In this sense, the timbral differences play an essential role in establishing or not establishing these associations; they cross the paradigmatic axes, making them intermingle or differentiate to generate new materials or develop events without discursive regularity.

The next axis is the percussion on the instrument's body, which I located in the B axis. The rhythmic organisation is directly related to the number of syllables in the verses and their stressed syllables.

...il remoto silenzio	7 syllables, 3rd and 6th stressed.
...muto, nel buio. mudo, (<i>L' amico che dorme</i>)	5 syllables, 1st and 4th stressed.
 Ci saranno altri giorni ci saranno altre voci. (<i>I gatti lo sapranno</i>)	 8 binary articulated syllables.

This relationship becomes evident at the end of the score³ (Fig. 3):

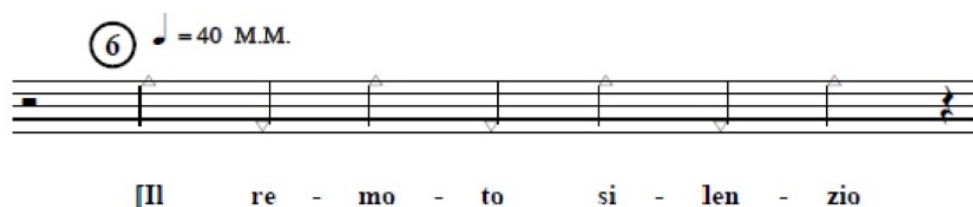


Figure 3. Fragment of the score.

(Without saying the text, the interpreter must rub the bow perpendicularly on the strings.)

These rhythmic relationships of 7, 5, and 4 events are essential as they temporally structure the material throughout the work (Fig. 4).

³The text of the poem is present in the original score.

mu - to nel bu - io.] ca 10'

pizz.
ppp
* [Ci sa - ran - no al - tri gior - ni

ci sa - ran - no] al - tre vo - ci

mu - to nel bu - io.] ca 10'

pizz.
ppp
* [Ci sa - ran - no al - tri gior - ni

ci sa - ran - no] al - tre vo - ci

Figure 4. Chart of fragments of the score.

The third axis concerns the selection and organisation of pitches (Fig. 5). In this analysis, it will be called C.

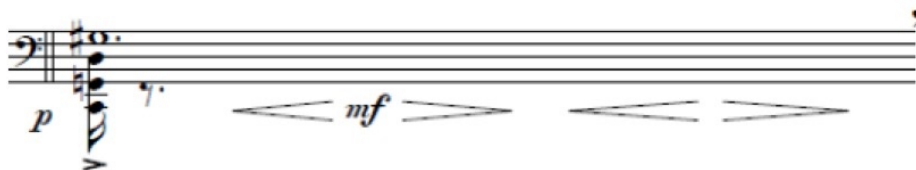


Figure 5. Selection and organisation of pitches.

The material of pitches is presented at first, taking advantage of the open strings of the cello with a scordatura of the first string. This generates two intervals: perfect fifth and tritone.

The perfect fifth interval is an interval that, at the same time, generates harmonic stability and establishes a tonal ambiguity, which, together with the choice of interval 6 (augmented fourth or diminished fifth), is part of an ideological choice by the composer seeking differentiation from the European tradition. Most of her pieces present this choice, especially the perfect fifth and augmented fourth intervals, the former as a structural sound that could represent European tradition and the tritone its differentiation.

These are the three paradigmatic axes on which the piece is built. The paradigmatic axis B (rhythmic organisation) is presented and combined with the other two, A and C, to derive different transformations of the materials, which, since they are not so evident when listening, contribute to the perception of the non-discursiveness of musical language.

The isotopies constitute recurrences or similarities at the structural and deep levels of sound events that are difficult to recognise when listening. In this way, one event can follow another with the feeling that they are entirely different, but in a deep sense, they share some iconic structural similarity. The paradigmatic axis that temporally structures the piece and organizes the events and their repetitions is axis B, the rhythmic organization derived from the syllabic structure of the verses.

The use of the different combined letters responds to the isotopic relationship and structural similarity that the sound events possess, showing how axis B articulates the entirety of the piece and is linked to the other paradigmatic axes.

The composer chooses to work from an austerity of materials; for this reason, the formalisation acquires a brief physiognomic list. The chart below (Fig. 6) shows how the B axis is present in each idiomatic sound event that characterises each paradigmatic axis. The formalisation is a synthesis of the previous ones (paradigmatic and syntagmatic charts); for this reason, the totality of the sound events is not present and is an unordered catalogue.

A	B	C
(timbral differences)	(rhythm organization)	(intervals)

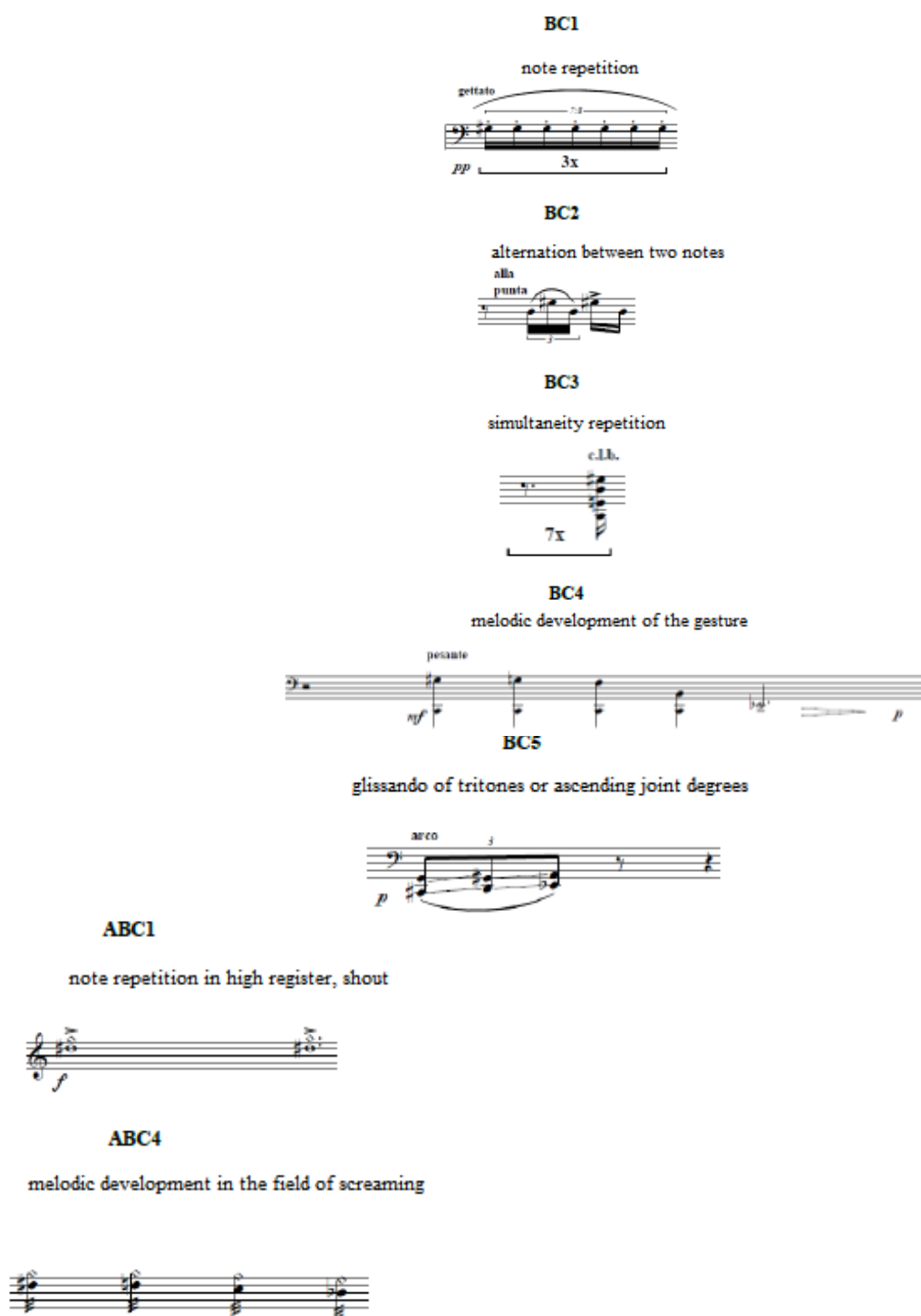


Figure 6. Paradigmatic chart.

Conclusion remarks

The most challenging aspect of these analyses, from music to literature, is finding the former's analysable aspects. Contrary to what happens in poetry, in music, the sounds are not directly related to a specific meaning or relationships of connotation/denotation, and, as was shown in this essay, the different analysable objects for the musical surface were outlined with the help of a paratextual element: the composer's comment at the beginning of the score.

The variation between the materials is that each one acquires a reasonably strong identity without revealing its isotopic relationship with the others to the listener. This way, the piece acquires a strong unity despite its non-discursive development. In the context of intermediality, the reference to the poem through variations in materials is a way to allude to it without overtly manifesting in the syntactical surface of the sounds, thereby asserting dominance over the musical communicative medium.

This case is an appropriate example of covert intermediality due to the lack of differentiation between the two mediums, i.e., poem and music, and the latter appears as dominant. The listener cannot identify the poem at the same time as the piece of music, and, as mentioned by the composer, it is not an attempt at musicalisation, which could be some feature of finding the poem in listening to the music.

The austerity in the materials corresponds to the main features of Latin American Minimalism (for further insights, see Orellana 2020), which the composer developed (see Aharonián 2012: 95). Austerity, dispossession, and silence were the three aesthetic concepts; *austerity and dispossession* being, in my opinion, different metaphors for *silence*.

This idea of silence, with its different metaphorical relations, such as austerity and dispossession, and its particular conceptualisations in the musical materials and structure, corresponds to an author's ideological stance shared with other composers from the same movement.

In this context, the creator has had to choose between remaining at the service of models or trying to break free from them, between remaining in the shelter of the known or defying the imposed hegemony by trying to generate counter-models. The entire twentieth century has witnessed these existential crossroads, a reflection in the artistic and cultural spheres of the ideological challenges at the continental level whose epicentre can be centred in the 1960s, a historical turning point, also in music.⁴ (Paraskevaídis 2009: 2 – translation by S.N.H.)

⁴In original:

En este contexto, el creador ha debido optar entre seguir al servicio de modelos o tratar de lib(e)rarse de ellos, entre permanecer al abrigo de lo conocido o desafiar la hegemonía impuesta intentando generar contramodelos. Todo el siglo XX ha sido testigo de esta encrucijada existencial, reflejo en los ámbitos artísticos y culturales de los desafíos ideológicos a nivel continental, cuyo epicentro podemos centrar en la década de 1960, un punto de inflexión histórica, también en música

In this regard, and paraphrasing Aharonián's words, the composers transform silence from negation to affirmation through an existential path, where silence becomes the principal force against silencing, that is the principal power dynamic of colonisation, allowing a counter-hegemonic cultural resistance through *being, memory, and history* (see Tarasti 2015: 163). As the poet says and constitutes the structure of this music: *there will be other days / there will be other voices*.

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