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“The Quotation in Electroacoustic Music”

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# The Quotation in Electroacoustic Music

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This paper focuses on the analytical approach of a phenomenon each time more recurrent in the Argentinean electroacoustic music of the last two decades: the quote, a resource which implies the more or less explicit and the more or less extensive presence of some works –contemporary or classical – or of some genres – popular or folk –in a new composition.

The aim we are pursuing consists, firstly, in the determination of the main modalities and procedures of quoting in a corpus of recent electroacoustic works. Regarding the proper and unavoidable distances, we will take as analytical categories certain notions developed by the linguistic science for tackle the intertextuality in the spoken language. Secondly we will try to differentiate in its mode of working and especially in its consequences for the construction of the meaning of the works, the quoting of particular compositions regarding those in which the references are less precise and point to a determinate style or genre. Thirdly, and regarding the distinction between more literal or more evocative quoting modalities, we will assess the degree of intervention of the quoter in the cited discourse, which means the degree of transformation of the original discourse in the cited discourse. This will imply attending the modalities of composing by deconstruction or reconstruction, techniques which were, until some time ago, an almost exclusive patrimony of the compositive schools dedicated to the traditional acoustic means: the instruments.

Regarding each one of the items proposed, we would try, if possible, to contemplate the differences and the nuances that may appear when facing such questions from the listener point of reception to what happens in the strictly composing field.

We wish to clarify that our way of tackling with the quote in these electroacoustic music works, excludes, considering not pertinent, the material reference, i. e., the use of clearly identifiable concrete sounds regarding its source. This is true either for the use of certain type of sound that has a direct material connotation, both the sound “of water” or “of a car”, as for a group of sounds that evoke a particular situation, like “the city” or “the jungle”. We will basically point, as we have already stated, in the reference to other works, genres or styles. Furthermore, and regarding the last ones, we will consider the quoting of a particular timbre, or of certain type of sonority, according to the degree of transformation of the sound material.

We will restrict the wideness of the intertextuality issue, which could be able of being proposed from a radical point of view to all the works and levels that integrate the same discursive web, to its more explicit examples, because even the quote of some timbrical or rhythmic styles is an action which belongs to the field of the explicit. The field for the implicit would have relationship, from our point of view, with the field of references in which each work is inserted, where it is always resounding what is “already said”: the tradition, the world of meaningful references where there is no such idea of an “original” discourse.

We will borrow two main categories of the linguistics, considering the differences imposed by the change of textual material. We will speak of direct and indirect quote, defining the first one (DQ) as the procedure that rebuilds a discourse keeping it identical to how it was produced. The indirect Quote (IQ) will be defined as that which make a periphrasis, adapting the original discourse to another communicative situation, giving the possibility to imagine what has been said but without trying to do a literal reproduction of it.

Leaving aside the particularities of the spoken language, we note a clear link between the habitual use of the quote in the linguistic field and in the electroacoustic procedures. When do we talk about DQ and IQ? We will talk about DQ when what is quoted is a particular work and it's inserted in a determinate moment of another work without any transformation. And we will talk about IQ when the quote is less precise and has no reference to a particular work but a more general genre or style. We can recognise certain sound, certain sonority, but it's not associated to a work. In this case the adaptation from the original discourse to a new one, is often sustained by different kinds of transformations or fragmentations.

The notions of genre and style will be of central importance for the cases in which the quote would not correspond or not be identifiable as the quote of a specific work from a specific author. These notions would also allow establishing some hypothesis about the consequences that this kind of references might have for the production of meanings and significations of a work.

From a semiotic point of view, *genre* implies a specific area of social interchange, while *style* refers only to a set of features which allow to “associate different cultural objects”, not necessarily belonging to the same genre. The key lies in the relationship of the formal or constructive features of the objects with the social context in which they have place. So, for example, if we talk about “tango” or “chamamé” as genres it will imply to relate it's stylistics features (harmonics, rhythmical, textural, etc.) which are possible to appear in any other style, with the field of signification they form and integrate: it means a specific form of consumption, and some audition expectative, together with some

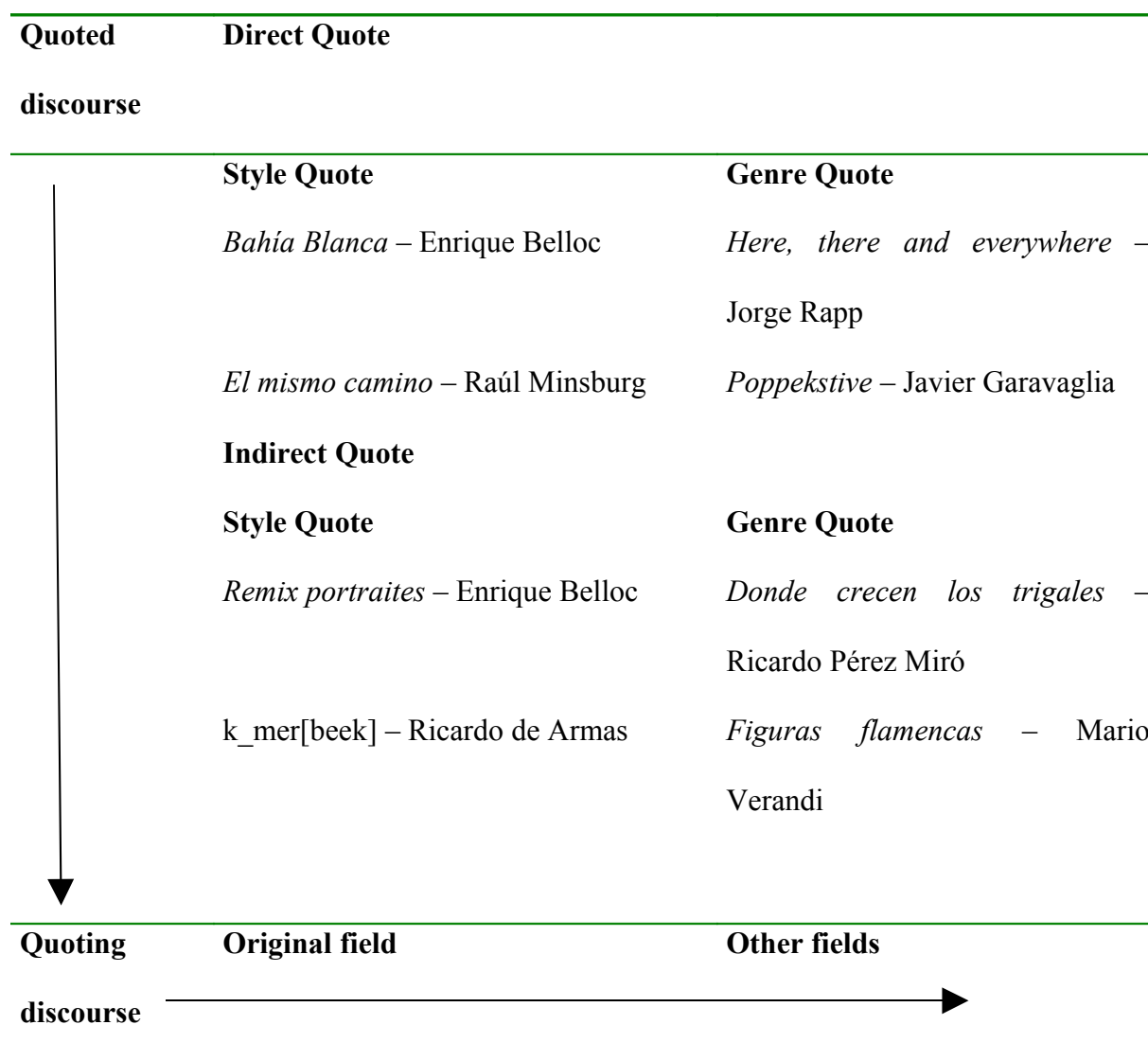
tradition and musical, or non musical, practices. Gender quotes will be specially considered regarding the problem of combination of audition expectative they stimulate, because the characteristic way of appreciation of the popular music, or those from the oral tradition, is inserted in a context of the so called academic or classical music, or those form the written tradition, where the electroacoustic music belongs.

### *Analysis*

The corpus of works to be analysed will be faced considering the progressive distance from the works, the styles and their origins. We will analyse firstly the cases of direct and indirect quote of style, pursuing later with the analysis of direct and indirect quotes of genre.

Figure 1 represents in the vertical axis the growing distance between the original and the quoting discourse, depending if it's direct or indirect quotation, and in the horizontal axis the distance between field of belonging, considering the difference between genre or style quotes:

### Clasification of analysed examples



Each of the quoting modalities has two works as example, and one of each will be described and analysed according to its particular meanings. This will imply to observe the intentions of the composer and the possible effects of the quote in the listener.

### Direct Quote

As Graciela Reyes pointed, we can say that the DQ makes juxtaposition with the quoting and the quoted text, and the reproduction (at least it seems so) of the original discourse. It means that a previously composed work, being it electroacoustic or not, a particular and clearly recognizable work, is part of another one. If the quoted work belongs to

the same fields of meanings, the same genre, of the quoting work, we will talk about style quote. If by means of the quote we mix two universes of reference, basically folk and academic music, it will be a genre quote.

#### Style quote

We will talk about a work where the quote belongs to the same field of reference.

#### *El mismo camino* – Raúl Minsburg

We listen the quote of two small symphonic excerpts which are slightly modified but without losing their identity: the first one around the minute five, from the Concert for two violins of J. S. Bach and one minute later the second one, from the 7th Symphony of Gustav Mahler. Both are in the same key and both have a very similar melody. The first comes after a soft F major chord giving place to a very tonal section in the work, with instrumental sounds that has some kind of transformation merged with electroacoustic sounds, all this concluding in the quote of the second excerpt, where this section starts to end, where there also fragmentation and transformations of sounds taken from the same symphony of Mahler. Both excerpts are clearly recognizable as orchestral and are linked at a harmonic, melodic and timbral level.

In this example is very clear the belonging of the quoted and quoting discourse to the same genre. The ambiguity may lay in the identification of the quoted works, being the feature the quote of a particular work or of a whole style, known as “orchestral”.

#### Genre quote

In this case, the quoted works (also clearly recognizable) doesn't belong to the same field of references.

#### *Aquí, allá y en todas partes* (Here, there and everywhere) – Jorge Rapp

This work is entirely composed with fragments of Beatles songs. The fragments are overlapped with different degrees of density according to the different sections of the work, and the extensions of each fragment were chosen with the same criteria, focusing in some cases in the rhythm, or in the timbral or tonal similarity, among many other features. It's important to point that they haven't been transformed, not even with a slightly filtering. Even it's possible that some listener couldn't recognize a particular song or fragment, the “Beatle origin” is always clear.

This work represents an extreme case because the quoted discourse filled the totality of the quoting discourse. There's nothing but the quote. It means talking with what has already been said. As a way of precisising the classification in terms of “genre” we need to clarify that this work applies a deconstruction / reconstruction feature which is proper of certain academical music estimated to be performed in a concert hall. If the field of performance would be another, the relationship between academic and popular would be faded, being understood as a quoting resource of the same genre, as happened today with the djs, who mix every kind of music in a very different performance situation than the concert. We don't have to forget also that this work was composed in 1984, entirely with analogical technology.

#### Indirect quote

IQ consists basically in the evocation, in an indirect reference to a whole style or genre, and not to a particular work. There is no literal quote but a paraphrases, an elaboration of the original discourse. As in the DQ, if what is quoted is a set of stylistics features (rhetorical, thematic or structural) belonging to the same field of reference of the quoted work, we will talk of style quote. If the quote implies the evocation of features whose universe of references belongs to the popular music, we will talk of genre quote.

#### Style quote

We will present a work that evoke or makes an allusion to certain compositional styles (vocal religious, ravelian, varesian), which belongs, to the same academic tradition, or from the written tradition where the electroacoustic music belongs.

#### *Remix portraites* – Enrique Belloc

This work has three “pictures” dedicated to Ravel, to the group Zap Mama and to Varèse. We will analyze the first one, which is about two minutes long. There is a first section that drives our attention because it gathers certain unusual characteristics in an electroacoustic work: instrumental sounds, specially string sounds, with a tonal relationship very similar to a cadence, basically V – I chords. After a resolution a chord that can act as a tonic chord, remains sounding until some seconds before the first minute. This orchestral chord is merged with other electroacoustic sounds whose pitch is determinate by this tonic. We don't hear, except at the end of the piece, a direct quote of Ravel. But we perceived in the whole piece, and especially in the first section with this tonic, the presence of the “ravelian timbre”. Using sounds that we don't know if were made by the composer or not, Belloc evoke and rebuild some of the characteristics of the sound and of the discourse of Ravel.

This example, as all which belongs to the IQ, needs a higher degree of skills of the listener to recognize the quote, because its based in allusions and evocations. The quote of style in IQ has a higher risk of not been identified, because the discourse levels involved –quoter and quoting– could be heard as only one..

#### Genre quote

We present two works which evoke Folk genres: the chamamé (North East of Argentina) and the flamenco (Spain). These quotes imply a mix of hearing habits.

### *Donde crecen los trigales* – Ricardo Pérez Miró

From the very beginning this work presents a clear reference to other style or genre but without letting us know which one. It starts with a minor chord that lasts for about 15 seconds, using sustain notes, and remains almost without any variation during the first minute, excepting some interpolations detached from the proper chord and other new one that are used as anticipations. To be specific, we hear some metallic attacks, which can be later recognized as part of guitar plucked notes. The minor chord has a double function: an introductory one and timbral anticipation since the use of the accordion, typical instrument of this kind of music. After four minutes and a half, the first section, basically based in sustained notes, we clearly recognized the sound of guitar among other attacks. It's just after the six minutes when we can hear the typical rhythm, melody and harmony of the chamamé among other sounds. This section lasts about one minute and half, until we listen the minor chord again. This time it presents a clear link with what has been heard, making a resignification of it.

There is a clear set of harmonic and timbral anticipations that makes sense from the minute six, when we recognize the style that the composer is making reference. But even if we state that it's an evocation of the music from the Argentinean North East, we can't hear any specific song at any moment. The fragments heard doesn't last a whole measure. It's duration, even it's enough for recognizing the style, it's not enough for recognizing a particular song or work.

### **Conclusions**

We have talked about two modalities of quoting and two kind of elements quoted; we talked about genre and style and we have put some examples with works that clearly fit into this kind of classification. However it's necessary to point that we don't try to categorize in closed boxes an artistic activity as the electroacoustic music, whose frontiers are today unsuspected, and where new lines of intertwines and new modalities of quoting can be generated.

We don't think either that this classification could be entirely applied to a whole work as it is the case of the examples analyzed in this paper. We could find works that used genre and styles quotes at the same time and also DQ and IQ in different sections or even in a section itself, according to the intentions of the composer.

It's worth pointing out the relationship in the similar use of the DQ and IQ in linguistics and electroacoustic composition. In the DQ the original quote is literally quoted and in the IQ a periphrasis is made. According to the analyzed works it's equivalent to a high or low, or even null transformation of the element quoted. We could see that there is a kind of parallelism between the periphrasis of the quote and it's sound transformation, therefore if we talk of the degree of transformation of a sound as its higher or lower similarity with the original, we can talk of a higher or lower degree of periphrasis. It's obvious to state that if the transformation is very deep there's a risk to lose the reference to the original quote but, and as we have seen, it could be part of the composer's decisions when he decides to make his sources more or less recognizable.

To sum up, we don't want to leave aside something that has an important role in the last decades: the technological development. We are referring to the use of digital means for sound processing and storing, a powerful and cheap tool comparing with those used in previous decades. This situation has made possible a great development of the electroacoustic music, especially in its materials and discourse and has give place, among many other features, to the quote, that was something used only in instrumental music. In this way, electroacoustic composition can add to the usual search for new sounds and new ways of articulate a discourse, a new search in the fusion of different genres and styles that may give place to a new sound discourse. We are specially amazed by the fact that this kind of works used to have a strong impact in non-specialized listeners, surely because he finds some recognizable elements that allow him to follow the sound discourse.

It's a field where electroacoustic music seems to have a great number of features, both in composition and in reception.