

Art/Popular, Lopes-Graça/Amália, With a brief excursion through phenomenology and Glenn Gould

I. INTRODUCTION

Art and popular musics are different on many levels of analysis. From the historical, sociological, political and also internal, technical points of view. I do not intend here to survey all the implications of these differences, but, by examining some aspects thereof, to arrive at some possible implications of the decisive change which occurred in the 20th century.

The principal problem at stake is that of the incompleteness of cultures. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos states in exemplary fashion, if each culture were as complete as it considers itself, only one culture would exist. For this reason, cultural incompleteness is more easily perceived from the outside; from the perspective of another culture. “Increasing the awareness of cultural incompleteness is one of the crucial tasks for the multiculturalist construction of human rights.”¹ I will try to do this with music from a double perspective: on the one hand, emphasizing the differences and their specifically musical reasons for being, on the other looking at inevitable, or even actually desirable today, exchanges between cultures, in order to avoid cannibalism.

1.WRITTEN/ORAL

It may be said that Guido d’Arezzo’s invention in around the year 1000 - a system of musical notation – created the basis for the preservation in time of musical works written from the 12th century onwards. Writing thus marks the most important of all differences: European art music has had since then a

¹ Cf. Santos, Boaventura de Sousa (1996), “A queda do Angelus Novus”, *RCCS* n.º 45, Coimbra, pp.5-32 and Santos, Boaventura de Sousa (1999), “Porque é tão difícil construir uma teoria crítica”, *RCCS* n.º 54, Coimbra, pp.197-215.

technological means of historical preservation. If today we are able to perform the music of the past, of that past, it is because its means of survival exists: the score.

On the other hand, not only European folk music but all other musics of the world, in the absence of this means, lived as oral traditions, and thus underwent evolutions that were slow, but difficult to discover, and attempts to “write” a history of them are recent and seem to me destined to be inadequate².

2. ELEMENTARY SOCIOLOGY

European art music, usually and inaccurately called “classical music”, has had, during the course of its history, many and various commissioners and receptors – the mediaeval clergy, renaissance princes, monarchic aristocracy and, after the French Revolution, the triumphant bourgeoisie. At the same time, popular music, as its name undisguisedly indicates, was connected to the people, to the strata of the population far from political or symbolic power. The sociology of music is not my main subject here, but I should add that, in my opinion, popular musics have, within them, much less resistance to sociological investigation than art music. In this field, sociology is imbued with a number of suspicions, the least of which is not the eminent attempt at the *autonomy of the work of art*. “Cultural works are conceived as intemporal significations and pure forms requiring a purely internal and a-historic reading, which excludes all reference, held as “reductive” and “vulgar”, to historical determinations or historical functions”³.

3. DERIVATIONS OF WRITING, OR THE LIMITS OF MEMORY

From this difference, written/oral, derive others, of great importance. Everything that in European art music may be relate to an *ars combinatoria*, with an abstract speculation with

² Cf. Nattiez, J.J. (1999), *Le Combat de Chronos et d'Orphée*, Paris, Christian Bourgois, 19.

³ Bourdieu, P. (1997), “Para uma ciência das obras”, in *Razões Práticas*, Oeiras, Ceita, p.38.

figures and their manipulation and transformation – canons, fugues, imitation in augmentation or diminution, inversions, retrogrades, mirrors, enigmatic canons, even the actual thematic or motivic work – was only possibly given the existence of the score. This kind of speculation recurred in various historical periods, and the actual and gradual supremacy of harmony over counterpoint, or rather, of the vertical principal over the horizontal, may only be understood in writing, by means of writing.

The natural limitations of human memory prevented the same type of development in music of oral transmission. Of course, other musical parameters were widely and intensively developed outside Europe. This was what Debussy discovered at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1898, when, after hearing music from Bali, he made his famous comment: the richness of the timbres of that music makes the percussion of our own orchestras blush with shame. Hindu rhythms are rhythmic formulae of considerable variety and complexity; within the framework of music improvised on one of these formulae, there is no harmony in the western sense, but a polar centre, a centre of gravity, tonal or modal. Ragas and other non-European modes often make use of quarter-tones or eighth-tones – divisions of the octave different from those of the twelve notes of western music – and African or Balinese polyrhythms show complex superimpositions which reach a high degree of sophistication.

In sum, everything that could be developed in oral cultures and written musical cultures was developed, in diverse and specific ways, by a kind of exclusion of parts: a considerable development of one parameter would correspond to a lesser development of another. Until by and large, 1900.

4. RECORDING AND TECHNICAL REPRODUCIBILITY

In the 20th century, the appearance of recording, resulting from the same technical progress that underlay the expansion of

the West throughout the world in all aspects, substantially changed these relationships. In time and space.

Firstly, providing technological means to popular and non-European musics that allowed them to “come to have a history”, hitherto exclusively reserved for art music, and even there with limitations in time. Afterwards, and especially in the last decades of the 20th century, with the globalization of the economy and culture (it being important not to gloss over the fact that the most important aspect of globalization is the imposition of the current capitalist model, largely a hegemony in the rich northern hemisphere, on the rest of the world, the poor southern hemisphere), came global and interactive contacts between musics previously only rarely or superficially in contact. Anthony Giddens defines globalization as “the intensification of social relations on a world-wide scale, relations which link distant places in such a way that local occurrences are shaped by events that take place at many kilometres’ distance, and vice-versa. This process is dialectical because these local occurrences may go in the opposite direction to the distant relations that shaped them. *Local transformation* is part of globalization just as the lateral extension of social connections across space and time”⁴. Without entering here into discussion of the opposing visions of globalization, it is indeed just as possible to hear a symphony orchestra in Tokyo or Hong Kong as an African group in Paris or New York, the consequences in the long term, not only of the local transformations brought about but of the potential re-alimentation which could occur globally, being as yet unknown.

Finally, while this spatial expansion takes place, another is occurring in time. In the 19th century, knowledge of music of the past was much more limited than today, and the very concept of the history of music, such as it exists today, is recent. Schoenberg still considered music from before Bach’s time to be inferior. But, independently of these questions, essentially, all European musical history is available to buyers of discs, and in this sense *tradition* ceased to be a concept negatively or

⁴ Cf. Giddens, Anthony (1990), *As Consequências da Modernidade*, p.140-192.

positively charged, according to perceptions, and became a palpable reality in the auditory sense: we can hear everything. Indeed, the so-called New Early Music today holds an enviable position both in concert and in the catalogues of record companies. In the same way, World Music has moved from a non-existent concept a few years ago to an indispensable part of these catalogues.

5. AURA AND NON-AURA

The analysis of Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay “Art in the era of technical reproducibility”⁵, underlining the loss of “aura”, uniqueness and non-repeatability – the hear and now – of the artistic object, has his melancholic tone, but sees to envision, in the access to art of ever greater sectors of the world population, and in the first essentially reproductive arts, photography and cinema, new democratic possibilities of artistic creation. Adorno reacted immediately to his friend’s intuition, preferring to emphasize, in a letter from 1936, the potentially negative character of the emerging phenomenon. Moreover, in this latter, Adorno quotes, amongst the examples of new dangers, jazz, as a reactionary music, in spite of some deceptive superficial elements, apparently progressive (the appearance of having been put together, collective work, preponderance of reproduction rather than production)⁶

Adorno was so rigid in his conception of the historical evolution of musical material, derived from his knowledge and practice of European music, that, whatever the object of the analysis, he was never able to apply any other criterion, even if the object analysed had a completely different historical reason for being. On the other hand, his conception of Cultural Industry demonized any object of mass culture. I will come back to this, but first it is important to analyse substantial alterations from the phenomenological point of view, even though, also from this point of view, Adorno emphasizes the

⁵ Benjamin, Walter (1991), *Ecrits Français*, Paris, Gallimard, p.140-192.

⁶ *Idem*, pp.133-139

score, not only as a medium for the music, but as being the *work itself*. In addition, one of the arguments is that, most of the time, the works are badly played...⁷

6. ESSENCES

As I said above, if today we can perform and listen to music of the past, this past of European music, it is because its means of survival exists: the score. But the essence of the musical work, in the phenomenological analysis of Roman Ingarten⁸, does not reside exclusively in the *score*. This is one of the four indispensable factors: the being of the works also includes its *performance*, that is, its realization as a sound reality that exists in time, not to mention for the present the *creator* and the *receiver*; but it is the score that, though partially, permits its existence for 400 or 500 years after the composer has written it.

According to Mika Jaslo, Ingarten himself understood in the few allusions to his own work that he made before he died, that the new situation would oblige him to reformulate his conception of the musical work. Principally because electronic music – which began in around 1950 – dispensing at the same time with the score as a medium and with the performance as realization, places in the way a new object, outside the categories previously employed.

But I believe it possible today to go further. Ingarten's analysis is based above all on the music of the 19th century, which was available to him. Without leaving this historical ambience, he regarded the essence of the work as *becoming*, as the *possibility of existing*, maintaining his obligatory categories: creation, score, performance and receiver. The essence of the Third Symphony of Beethoven would continue beyond any temporal performance of it by a particular orchestra, under a particular conductor, etc. For Ingarten, the essence of the work does not reside in the score, this being one of the obligatory categories, is the others are missing. The score is partial; it is a

⁷ Adorno, Theodor W. (1970), *Teoria Estética*, Lisbon, Edições 70, p.111

⁸ Ingarten, Roman (1989), *Qu'est-ce qu'une oeuvre musicale*, Paris, Christian Bourgois [1933]

system of signs, it needs to exist in time, realized by a performance, and listener who confers meaning upon it. Of course, the score exists if it exists as a physical object, and its essence will be an object containing a system of signs; but it is not the musical work! The *recording* of a particular performance, if it naturally does not definitively capture the essence of the work – there will always be other possible interpretations –, creates a new object, immutable and unrepeatable, which is that *thing*, that disc with that performance, on such-and-such a day in such-and-such a year. For example, the recording by Glenn Gould of the *Goldberg Variations* from 1951 or 1980 are two different things of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, insofar as they are performances of the work and, therefore do not realize it definitively, but, in some way, acquire their own "aura". Being different from each other, each one has an aura as unique and unrepeatable as the Venus de Milo. As is obvious, this new *aura*, which does not reside in a single object, because it is reproducible, but in what is there – and this is always the same – it is valid for any and every recording. The essence of the *Goldberg Variations* may be their eternal becoming, but the essence of that disc resides in itself. I did not choose Glenn Gould by chance. The fact that he claimed that the concert-institution would come to an end, and spent part of his life only recording discs or videos, places him at the centre of this issue.

7. POPULAR MUSIC AS HISTORY

Until the 20th century, any José Afonso, Miles Davies or Amália would now exist only in the memory of those who had heard them, or as a useless verbal description of something lost forever. Today we can *really* hear them, and it is here that we find the most decisive factor of change. They left no scores, but to say that they left no work is absurd as saying that John Ford's film *How Green Was My Valley* is not a work of art because there is no text, or because *Hamlet* exists.

Their physical selves are not there, in front of us, just as we do not have the physical Chopin playing for us. How would he have played...? It doesn't matter much. We have recordings of Bartók playing, of Stravinsky conducting, but we can hardly say that they are definitive versions. They are only definitive as *those* performances. And it should be borne in mind that reserving the condition of a work exclusively for that which has the possibility of *becoming* would remove this status from Stockhausen's *Gesäng der Jünglinge* and any electronic works at all! Electronic works have exactly the same technical fixity as others. But they belong to *another cultural tradition*, and so we return to our starting point. But we have thought a little.

8. DIGRESSION ON *DINKY TOYS*

Essentialist thought does not interest me very much, I confess. Knowing where the essence of a musical work is was a problem that came about principally through the difference between a physical object which is a work of art or considered as such, such as painting or a building, and a virtual object, existing in time, such as any music. But in following this perspective through a piece of mine composed as a “jazz theme”, in other words, a melodic and harmonic structure that serves as a pretext for improvisation, this phenomenological approach becomes even more circular. *Dinky Toys* was composed in 1979, and settled as a *thing*, I have no doubts. There is a score, and thus it may be played by others, just as a piece from Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* or from the Book for Anna Magdalena Bach. Creator, score, performance and receiver exist without a doubt, Ingarten's four factors. There also exist two different recordings, one from 1983 on the CD *Outros Lugares* and another from 1996 on *A Luz e a Escuridão*. They are different even in their instrumentation. Even so, I know that each time I play this piece, and I can do so without improvising, that performance does not change the *essential*, but it is obvious that it is not definitive. Furthermore, given its character of a “theme”, when I play it I improvise, both before and after, so

that every time I play I realize that that time is was definitely unique, without ceasing to be *Dinky Toys*. There is that which *remains*, which is enough that the thing does not cease to be what it is and become instead something else (I continue to be able to think “I am playing *Dinky Toys*”), and there is that which *changes*, which does not reside only in the performance and its inevitable non-repeatability, but in the improvisation, yet less repeatable, even if there are similarities with others in the past or the future.

Making a surprising, hardly modest, but inevitable, leap now, there is a similar problem in a work by Mozart, which I know well. I played it in my piano examination at the end of my course. The second movement of Mozart’s A major Piano Concerto has an ending in which there are clearly gaps in the notation. One sees, at the end of this piece, that Mozart was not only relying on his own remarkable and renowned qualities as an improviser, but, probably on what must have been an oral tradition, unwritten, of the possibility of improvisation or variation in accordance with the tradition of ornamentation of the period, lost for us in the terms mentioned before. The incomplete character of the score, as a system of signs that allows the realization of the work but does not include everything that the work is, is in this case even more evident. At the time I listened to two performances: that by Murray Perahia, who plays without ornamentation – *literal respect for the text* – and that by Alfred Brendel, who adds unwritten figures – *respect for the oral tradition*.

9. CONTAMINATIONS

If, instead of *Dinky Toys*, we consider *Purple Haze* by Jimmy Hendrix, there is a factor that changes. If one concludes, from an elitist and Eurocentric perspective, that any music that comes from an oral tradition, or from that which oral tradition has become since its fixing by technological means, is not a work, this bizarre phenomenon may occur: one buys a disc by the Kronos Quartet, containing works by Anton Webern and

Sofia Gubaidulina, and we may consider the two previous essences: that of the *works* with their four obligatory factors, and that of the disc as *object*.

On the same disc there exists a version of *Purple Haze* by Jimmy Hendrix, in a transcription made for the Kronos Quartet by one of the group's collaborators. This *Purple Haze* is, in "essence", the same, except in the loss of the grain, in the sense of Roland Barthes, the loss of the grain of his voice and the grain of his guitar. What is there is what allows us to recognize the music, what allows us to say in a concert "This is *Purple Haze* by Jimmy Hendrix". Returning to the disc, we have, then, recordings of two works and a non-work. The dose of reality of *Purple Haze* on the disc would not be enough to confer upon it the quality of being a work. With Heidegger, we would have to say that it has the thing-like character of things; this thing is a music, but it is not a work.

Abandoning the phenomenological digression, and the useless search for essences, we may simply say that *Purple Haze* belongs to *another musical tradition*, and that, in the current post-modern phase, of conspicuous relationships between high and low culture, the struggle for legitimacy reaches new forms and, at times, an unheard violence. In the view of Andreas Huyssen, modernism was characterized by an alternation between periods of "anguish of contamination" by mass culture, seen as *the other* with which it was necessary to avoid any contact, with other periods of attempts at contact, post-modernism being, for him, a (or another) moment of contact⁹. The disc by the Kronos Quartet is an example of artistic work in the area of contamination. We do not yet know if it is cannibalization.

As a final note, these speculations, which bring to the fore the limits of Roman Ingarden's theory, would be partly annulled if the proposal for musical semiology of J.J. Nattiez, which employs the tripartite method proposed by Jean Molino were used. It is divided into three levels: 1) *Poiesis* – symbolic form resulting from a creative process; 2) *Aesthesis* – symbolic form

⁹ Cf Huyssen, Andreas (1988), *After the Great Divide*, London, The Macmillan Press

as it is understood by its receivers, who may attribute various meanings to it through an active process of perception; 3) – the contour – the symbolic form manifests itself physically under the guise of a contour accessible to the senses. Molino designates the line as the neutral or material level, and considers that it may be described objectively by means of an analysis of its properties and of its immanent and recurrent configurations. Though this method does not have as its object an ontological identification, but serves to separate different levels able to provide analyses of meanings, in any case there is operative a kind of fusion on the neutral level between score and performer. This neutral or material level, able to be described objectively, with the open idea of the contour which may assume the form of a recording, is part of oral traditions as having the capacity to leave traces of their existence. In a way, the performer is absorbed into this scheme: on the one hand, as a transformer of the virtual contour of the score into a sonic line in the realization in concert of written music, and, on the other, in oral traditions as obligatory. If there is no performer/creator, there is no contour.

At the current time, technologically, it would be absurd not to use this device, as, in fact, some programmes at IRCAM demonstrate, putting forward means of analysis and transformation within a given style, the information being given to the computer as MIDI files. The examples in one of these *libraries*, *LZ librarie*, includes music by Bach, Charlie Parker and Chick Corea.

II. LOPES-GRAÇA AND AMÁLIA

10. SYMBOLS

At first sight, the case seems simple: the composer, badly treated and persecuted by Salazar's regime, linked to the opposition, and perhaps already then a member of the Communist Party, which, has, moreover, no

importance at all in this case, criticized Amália, admired and protected by the Salazarist regime, which used **her** work as a true symbol. I searched for the text in question and ascertained that it does not, in fact, exist. What exists is a text in which the term *cantadeira* (songstress) is used, referring to Dina Teresa, performer in the film *A Severa*, by Leitão de Barros, and various others in which Lopes-Graça attacks fado¹⁰. The fact of the eminence of these figures increased the power of the symbolic and cultural potential in question. The fact that what I had heard it is not actually true does not mean that it is without meaning. A lie, an equivocation, set running, in a way comes to be true, even if merely symbolically, as much as the need to analyse the calumny, its provenance and its ideological or other *raison d'être*.

In the symbolic Lopes-Graça/Fado confrontation a number of different kinds of tensions took shape:

1. The question of popular music having two aspects, one rural and the other urban; the first seen as true, the second viewed by the communists and *compagnons de route* in a hesitant or suspect fashion.
2. The question of the appropriation by political regimes of artists who stood out because of their quality, as long as their work could be made to serve symbolic objectives of some kind, whether in power or in semi-clandestine opposition in totalitarian regimes.
3. The question of internal tensions and rules in the artistic field put forward by Bourdieu, which in this case is both ambiguous and clear.

¹⁰ Lopes-Graça, Fernando (1973), *Disto e daquilo*, Lisbon, Edições Cosmos, p.153

4. The question of art work on the basis of popular material and multiple consequences, musical, aesthetic and social.

11. WRITINGS

Returning to Lopes-Graça's writings allowed me to verify two things. Firstly, that the attacks on fado have two main components: one related to the historical situation of fado within the ideological framework of Salazar's regime and the difference in treatment by the regime's cultural policy, of the protection given to fado, seen as the national song, and the lack of support given to another, *true* culture, together with the repudiation of urban cultural expressions, seen, after Adorno, as irremediably degraded. Moreover, Graça refers to the decadence of fado, already contaminated by radio songs, compared with the more authentic expression that this musical had had up to the end of the 19th century¹¹.

But another, less comfortable, interpretation may be deduced from the term so employed: *cantadeira*. I have been told that the term *cantadeira* would not have had any depreciative connotations insofar as it is in current use in fado. In this context, I really cannot believe it. If I tell a musician in a symphony orchestra that he plays the fiddle, this word immediately has negative connotations. The word includes an implicit devaluation of the artistic quality in question; not from the technical or vocal point of view, but of the artistic-social status accorded to fado singers. The new point

¹¹ Lopes-Graça, Fernando (1973), *A música portuguesa e as suas problemas III*, Lisbon, Edições Cosmos, 1973, pp. 253..

of view of analysis places the case in another perspective: the composer, though a communist and marginalized, nevertheless remained within the field of “high culture”, in the double sense of being seen as such by that field, and, inversely, of seeing himself thus.

If we also add to the case the known fact that Fernando Lopes-Graça, together with Giacometti, had researched and collected a vast number of folk songs of rural culture, according to the practice and method of his Hungarian inspirers, Bartók and Kodály, things become even more interesting. I shall try to enumerate some of the aspects and attempt to examine them. 1) Folksong collecting itself; 2) The art-treatment of the material collected; 3) Its use in the creative work of the composer; 4) The difficult relationship between the communist parties and urban folk cultures; 5) Things, their authenticity and descriptions of the world.

While the mistrust of the communists with regard to the world of culture was built, I believe, on a textual analysis, or an analysis of the social context of creation – fado as an expression of reactionary, conformist, noble or *macho* content, or jazz as music originating in suburban areas of dubious morality, or as amusement for whites in clubs connected to organized crime -, the result passes over the artistic practice and meaning *itself* of these musics, independently or because – there is no difference – of the social character of their origins. This kind of analysis is usually called *reductive*, and the confrontation within the Marxist aesthetic goes back to the Lukács/Brecht debate, and complicatedly including Adorno. Pierre Bourdieu endeavoured to solve this

insufficiency in Marxist sociology with the concepts of *field* and *habitus*, though he himself was criticized as reductive¹². *Formalist* analysis, which tries to analyse the works themselves, apart from any social conditioning, suffers from the opposing error¹³.

On the other hand, rural folk music was seen almost as the idyllic survival of the authenticity of the true people, still free from the dark, vicious influence of the cities. Supporting itself with this idea of the authenticity of folk musics, not yet infected by “mass cultures”, Lopes-Graça’s work occurred in two phases: firstly, the collecting, by technological means, the score, but, above all, the recording and, afterwards or simultaneously, study and treatment. Even if the first step raises no great problems, except a possible interrogation about the moment of collection, in other words, knowing in what state of virtual authenticity the material was, the second step would seem to raise some theoretical and practical questions. Of transcription I will speak further on, in point 14, but I will here anticipate the report of the linguist-musicologist Y.R.Chao concerning his own mistakes: “The one who writes these lines once heard a piece of music and interpreted it as being here in C major, here in minor, the notes as being C, D, E, etc., merely somewhat out of tune; but he noted later, to his great surprise, that it was a scale of seven equal tones to the octave. The illusion persisted, even after he had been told. He had introduced his own intervals into the scale.”¹⁴

¹² Cf. Ferry, Luc (1999), *Le Sens du Beau*.

¹³ Cf. Pinho Vargas, António, “Sobre a análise musical”, in *Sobre Música*, Oporto, Edições Afrontamento, 2002.

¹⁴ In Nattiez, J.J. (1975), *Fondements d’une sémiologie musicale*, p. 199

The harmonizations of folk music collected by Lopes-Graça start from the same problematic principle which irremediably disturb the art-popular relationship: the collected object is treated, transfigured, retouched, made legible, “chic”, in its new version, possibly for a choir, a classically-trained soloist and/or a “noble” instrument.

A question never answered is that of knowing what is perverted in the transcription, and even more in the harmonization. At stake is a possible situation of colonization, of destruction of rural culture – of oral tradition, and therefore without history – in the inverse perspective of preserving it. This problem has never had, and does not have, a solution! Clearly, a civilization with power, money and technical means absorbs an artistic expression without equivalent power, money or technical means. But it would be worth while, instead of continuing the lament of an imaginary lost paradise, as I believe all lost paradises to have been, in which folk music would have been authentic, thinking that folk music was always what it *was*, in each historical circumstance, and what is *was* was an individual or collective artistic response to the conditions of life, just as it *is* today. It is a fact that, from this point of view, Graça tries to distance himself from this idyllic vision of the remote past. In “Sobre a canção popular portuguesa e o seu tratamento erudito”¹⁵, from 1942, he says: “It is, then, natural that, faced with various versions of the same song, I did not inquire to find out which was the ‘more authentic’, but rather which was the most beautiful, which offered the greatest possibilities for treatment, that could be

¹⁵ “On Portuguese Popular Music and its art treatment”

exploited without changing their primitive character, that which I call the purity and the identity of the song”¹⁶

But he goes resolutely forward with the “treatment”, with the “improvement”: “Why should we not make use of them? Are they, vocally, limited in range? Well then, let us stretch, vary, colour instrumentally its rudimentary tonal nucleus. Modern harmony offers us many resources in order to do this. And what harm is there in this? What harm in using chords made up of fourths and fifths, or an imitation in a distant key, or using a strange internal pedal, or in ornamenting a perfect chord with three or four appoggiaturas, what harm is there in using these or other processes in melodies of limited tonal range limited to the functions of tonic and dominant?”¹⁷ Graça was, undoubtedly, aware of the problems that his approach could raise, but he went forward, with the argument that if the people had created the music, somebody from the people could just as well correct it, improve it, and raise it to the status of art music.

What makes this case particularly provocative and interesting as an object of reflection is the difference of attitude, as we have seen, of the art composer of the left towards rural and urban folk cultures. One may see a transversality between the political position and the real place in the social fabric of the artistic field and it is relatively difficult to discover which of the two “ideological” positions was stronger at that moment.

¹⁶ Lopes-Graça, Fernando (n.d.), *Páginas Escolhidas de Crítica e Estética Musical*, Lisbon, Prelo, p.121.

¹⁷ *Idem.*

And then there is the question of the grain of the voice!

12. THE GRAIN OF THE VOICE

The grain of the voice is a concept used by Roland Barthes in an article in which he compares Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (just lungs, no body), with the French singer Charles Panzera who, in the opinion of the author, did not have the German's technical perfection, but possessed, on the other hand, a carnal quality, the passage of the voice to the rest of the body, which he calls Grain¹⁸. Even while disagreeing with Barthes's opinion of Dieskau (though this matter of the extreme specialization and perfection at which the performer arrives in the 20th century, definitively pushing aside the figure of the "amateur" from the field of classical music, is a very interesting question), at present it is important to analyse other possible derivations.

The idea of the grain goes back to a physical notion of authenticity which has little to do, I believe, with similar notions of authenticity and truth in Heidegger. I take a broad view of this idea, not, therefore, as being exclusive to voices as such. I could attempt to define the grain of the voice as the *basic element of authenticity of the sound object*. Perhaps it is easier to explain myself if I give some quick examples. We have all heard versions of songs by the Beatles. From *Yesterday* or *Michelle* with string orchestras, where there is not the slightest trace of grain, where the inauthentic is total, to versions "almost" identical, in which, however, one notes a certain uneasiness, which gradually becomes discomfort. The music of the Beatles has this damage inflicted upon it, but the music of Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Chopin and Beethoven is not safe. None, in fact, is safe from falsification, though Adorno perpetuated the mistake of thinking that it was possible to avoid this through incommunicative radicalism. Lyotard continued this idea with some unimportant nuances: "presentifying the

¹⁸ Barthes, Roland (1984), "O Grão da Voz", in *O Óbvio e o Obtuso*, Lisbon, Edições 70.

unpresentifiable” is merely a (post-modern?) variant of the Adornian aesthetic of permanent revolution. At the very moment at which the unpresentifiable, whatever this term may mean, is presented as a work of art, it acquires the status of merchandise and, at the same time, the possibility of falsification. It is for that reason that some of the techniques and acquisitions of historical artistic vanguards have a privileged position today in techniques of publicity. The paradox could not be greater!

13. REMBRANDT HAS LITTLE LIGHT

When a friend of mine, with an irrepressible taste for a provocative phrase, said to me that between José Afonso and Marco Paulo he did not see *musically* much difference, I immediately reacted in the most basic fashion: “How stupid!” But after this solemn declaration, I was confronted with the need to argue. This was not just a question of grain or of the literary or political content of the texts. The differences, from these points of view, are so obvious that it was clear that the comment was intended to refer to something else. While I was thinking about this, it occurred to me that it would be possible to write a text entitled “musical analysis as stupidity”, in order to maintain the provocative tone of my friend.

Indeed, if we analyse harmonically either of these musics in the manner of a Prelude by Bach or Chopin, we may come to similar conclusions. Even though, even in this dimension, there is without doubt a higher level of invention in the music of José Afonso, it must be admitted that the tonal chords I, V and IV are equally present, that the logic of the harmonic sequences is similar, that there is present a rhythmic squareness, whether in the protest songs, whether in pure “entertainment”. The problem is in approaching these similarities from the same analytical point of view, that is to say, essentially harmonic. I think of those tests of intelligence or professional aptitude, which produce false or irrelevant results, not because there are differences between those who take the tests, but because the

tests are badly conceived: they neutralize essential differences and emphasize irrelevant similarities, or vice-versa. When harmonic analysis, which could even be correct from its own strict point of view, surrenders to the claim of being “musical thought”, to the exclusion of everything else, it completely misses its target and becomes absurd. Remaining within this field, I think that one of the advantages of Schenkerian analysis, in spite of its obvious limitations, is its placing of a greater emphasis on the *Urlinie*, structurally connected by harmonic functions, but moving the principal focus from the vertical to the horizontal. Onwards.

But the essential thing is the grain! Not to hear the differences between the two singers mentioned is not to hear any kind of grain.

Grain exists in an even more obvious way in jazz musicians. To hear Miles Davies, John Coltrane or Keith Jarrett is to hear a recognizable sound, a particular musical thought, and a certain individual discursive capacity, or one that tends towards individuation. In the famous blindfold tests typical of jazz magazines, we never know which of distinguishes or *signs* first, whether it is the sound, thought or discourse... The grain is the ensemble of these factors, united in order to form an inseparable entity. Analysing the notes or the chords of these musicians, in itself, *musically*, is like analysing Verdi’s operas with the text removed, or saying that Rembrandt’s paintings have little light...

14. COLONIZATIONS?

I believe that rural folk music – authentic, from the standard Marxist point of view – always, when subjected to art treatment, loses its grain. For me it is a thousand times more impressive to hear Amália, or José Afonso, one of the recordings in the Música Regional Portuguesa collection made by Lopes-Graça and Giacometti, recently republished (or Jimmy Hendrix or Carlos Paredes, as a matter of fact...), than an arrangement **of, or** a harmonization of some folk song for

orchestral instruments or choir or string quartet. The grain disappears and the result, however well done it is, includes an artificial superimposition of culturally different worlds that have no interest for me. This does not mean that I think it impossible for musics to interact! But this interaction must work by means of the difference between *colonization* and appropriation within the work itself, on the basis of *equality of dignity*... It is not easy to explain this, I concede.

15. NATIONALISMS

I will give three historically different examples: musical nationalisms, Bela Bartók and Fernando Lopes-Graça. The nationalisms of the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century signalled the eruption of attempts by composers from the periphery of Europe to reconstitute their musical tradition on the basis of local folk roots. The general picture may be described as the intense predomination of the Austro-Germanic tradition, dominant since the 18th century, with a highly illustrious genealogy of composers (Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Wagner, Mahler, Schoenberg) to the point that in this genealogy practically all the current repertoire of concert halls and opera theatres may be found, if we add Chopin and some Italian opera composers.

In the Herculean task of confronting this Germanophile predomination, some illustrious names stand out, but let us limit ourselves to the case of Portugal and the exception of Bartók, treated separately. It is more or less universally agreed that the results of Portuguese nationalism were not brilliant. A tradition cannot be invented, much less decided upon. Folk music existed in its own sphere, practically without expression in the field of art music. The attempt at transcribing some elements of its vocabulary for the symphonic medium was neither easy nor successful. I believe that **the** root of this failure was the incompatibility between languages with a different *raison d'être* and, above all, the loss of the grain if the root once passed

through the “classical” filter. However good the orchestration, the conjunction of a folk melody and the sound of an orchestral flute or oboe produce, in the end, that unsatisfactory quality which Portuguese works that base themselves on these principles, from Vianna da Motta until now, have great difficulty in overcoming.

Bartók is a separate case. Bartók and Kodály, like Lopes-Graça and Giacometti on Portugal, undertook serious fieldwork in collecting and researching the folk music of their region. Using, I may add, the technological means of recording and transcription. They are different things. The recording preserves the recorded material in a raw state. Transcription into score by the researcher, as we have already seen, introduces musical notation, with its conventions, far from neutral. It is enough to compare scores by Bach, Beethoven and Ligeti in order for the historicity of notation to become evident in such a way as to render null and void any claim to unquestionable objectivity. Transcription, in itself, inevitably includes an historical vision. There is no alternative, but it is important to be aware of this: when one transcribes, one writes!

16. PIECES OF CIVILIZATION II

The composers in question, Bartók and Lopes-Graça, in addition to their collecting work, made use of folk material for their compositions. The artistic results of this generation are incomparably higher than the previous musical nationalisms. The basis of the work provides perhaps two important limitations: respect for the authenticity of the source and the clear distinction between transcription and composition based thereon. It is, in my view, essential to understand that some aspects of folk musics are not usable. Steve Reich said, after spending time in Central Africa, that, between civilizations, what had the ability to *travel* between civilizations were the structures, not the sounds (Boulez must certainly be of a different opinion, so much uses does his music from *Le Marteau* make of exotic timbres...). After studying African rhythms,

Reich examined the way in which rhythmic structures functioned in this music and used them in his own work together with his usual timbral materials. One may say that in these cases the loss of the grain is diminished by the *actual diminution of the desire to retain it*. The case of Lopes-Graça is more complicated. In addition to, as we have seen, the ideological conceptions with regard to urban folk culture and its inverse, in spite of some lucidity, with regard to the rural, it does not seem to me that there was any similar distancing vis-à-vis this “cutting pieces of civilization”¹⁹.

Still on this subject – the later work of the composer on folk music – there is a very interesting aspect which it remains to discuss. Emanuel Nunes, a renowned Portuguese composer, but representative of one of the various artistic currents in the 20th century who maintained with the popular arts or art of the masses a relationship of “fear of contamination”²⁰, expressed, in a video interview made by Jorge Lima Barreto, an opinion that deserves some reflection. For him, without ever mentioning Lopes-Graça, the case of Bartók and of the using of material of folk music in compositions, with explicit or underlying influence, results in an aesthetic success on account of two factors: the actual musical material of the regions investigated by Bartók, with their modal scales with unusual intervals, and very different from the major and minor modes of the tonal system, and the metrical irregularities, with bars in 5 or 7, that came to light at just the right historical moment, at the time of the evolution of European musical language during that historical period. It was, therefore, a fortunate coincidence, impossible to repeat by changing the factors in question, even keeping the basic principles unaltered. Let him who can understand understand...

17. TOPOI

I return to Boaventura de Sousa Santos to conclude that the exchange is not only between different kinds of knowledge,

¹⁹ Cf. Pinho Vargas, António, “Con(di)vergências musical”, in *Sobre Música*, Oporto, Edições Afrontamento, 2002.

²⁰ Cf. Huyssens, Andreas (1988), *After the Great Divide*, *op.cit.*

but also between different cultures; that is, between different worlds of feeling, in large part incommensurable. As he says, such worlds of feeling are made up of constellations of strong *topoi* – rhetorical but far-reaching commonplaces from particular cultures. The strong *topoi* become highly vulnerable when used in a different culture²¹.

The reservations that I have pointed out in the relationship between art and folk musicians that I described are a result of the process of appropriation employed. If we are looking at a process of cannibalization of one culture by another, within European society, it would be wise to examine until what point this strategy is not part of a defence against another cannibalization on another level, previous or higher. I believe that this, in the last analysis, is the case of Lopes-Graça. During his lifetime it was very important to mount a defence of Portuguese music, in the manner of Bartók, Stravinsky or Falla. Any investment in the search for roots is an attempt at **flight**, either from the lack of roots, or from colonization by another culture of greater irradiating strength, in the case of German or French music. At all events, his best music seems to me that in which this programme is least present, such as, for example, the Preludes for piano.

The problem may be expressed in the following way: not only is a different kind of knowledge necessary, but also a different process of creation of knowledge. The contradiction arises from the effort to study folk musics – a different kind of knowledge – being disfigured or bastardized by a process of a process of creation of knowledge that belongs to the *topoi* of another musical culture. Developing this *diatopic hermeneutics*²² is an important task when the processes of cannibalization are experienced as natural, spontaneous, apparently giving rise to a superficial multiculturalism. Nobody is safe from this difficulty, which appears differently in every historical period, but it is obvious that it was because of having an intuition of this kind that I was always mistrustful of

²¹ Santos, Boaventura de Sousa (1996), p.27

²² Santos, Boaventura de Sousa (1999), p.206

connections between jazz and contemporary music, which I discuss elsewhere. But it was not just this. It could perhaps have been, at the same time, the vulnerability of the *topoi* in question, in mid-apprenticeship, which was not east, believe me...

18. TWO STORIES SEEN AND HEARD

At this point, when various problems not easy to solve in terms of arriving at a conclusion have already been discussed, in which contradictions between art/folk, high culture/low culture, or culture of the masses, urban/rural, left/right, are interconnected in a complex fashion, two stories involving Luigi Nono, which I witnessed in 1974 and 1976, may cause, on the one hand, yet further confusion, or, on the contrary, bring new perspectives. In any case, they take me back to the moment when these problems began to become apparent to me.

The first occurred in the auditorium of the Faculty of Engineering in Oporto. The composer Cândido Lima had taken on the role of spokesman for a theme that recurred in various sectors in Portugal, the bitter complaint against bad conditions, in this case principally the lack of an electronic studio. Faced with this wall of lamentations – correct, in the context of the backwardness of Portugal in relation to other countries in Europe – Luigi Nono said: “I was just in Cuba, where there are also no studios, but the composers work with what they have, record the sound of a saucepan on a normal tape and compose with that. That’s what you have to do here!” The reference to Cuba was not innocent, far from it, but the reply made me think about the role of our individual responsibility, at least.

The second story, which happened during the first Festa do Avante at the FIL²³ in Lisbon, reveals even more. Fernando Lopes-Graça had taken part on the previous day in the hall intended for “classical” music. He played works of his own and by Webern for violin or viola and piano. But the comrades of

²³ The annual event organized by the Communist Party of Portugal, which then took place at the Feira Internacional de Lisboa exhibition hall. (*Translator’s note*)

the Communist Party did not, of course, know the rules of conduct for a concert of classical music. Not only did 50 people leave and 60 more enter at the end of each piece, but they applauded between the movements, and so on. These internal rules in the field of classical music are part of a series of symbolic behaviours, which include the (ridiculous) way in which musicians dress, the way in which they acknowledge applause, how they enter and leave the stage, the way in which they do not speak, which would disturb the *exquis* of the most spiritual of the arts. All this acquired through education, and therefore able to be used as cultural capital. Faced with this indiscipline of the masses, Lopes-Graça left the stage without finishing the pieces by Webern, saying that it was impossible like this. On the following day, Luigi Nono was going to show videos and recordings of the opera, or action on stage, on which he was working, *Al gran sole carico d'amore*, with texts by Brecht, Marx, Che Guevara, Rimbaud, Gramsci and others. Given the indiscipline of the audience at the Festa on the previous day, the comrades on duty that day at the Hall endeavoured to take precautions against the same thing occurring again. After all, they were in the presence of a great composer! He had to be treated with respect. But, unused to these things, people continued to celebrate, moving freely around from one place to another, in spite of the size of the crowd. While an attempt was being made to shut the door during the showing of fragments of his opera, Nono interrupted, saying that there was no problem, that his piece could perfectly well be part of the sound of the people celebrating! Ah, bravo, bravo! I am not sure that Nono would have had the same attitude if there had been musicians on stage. There is the question of concentration, but I do not believe, for example, jazz musicians who play in clubs complain about the inevitable noise in the room. It is normal, and so has to do with the symbolic character of the audiences' behaviours, and their differences, loaded with social meaning. Everything changes: the clothing, speaking, acknowledging, the attitude towards applause, etc.

Even so, I wondered whether there was not some “populist” demagoguery in Nono’s attitude...

These crossings of political attitudes versus artistic fields versus elites versus the people versus whatever are at the centre of the subject I have been discussing, and are not easy to disentangle. I do not claim to present a thesis which will explain the complexity of these relationships. It would be inappropriate and of no use. But, once again, let us think. Paraphrasing the titles of the works of Luigi Nono of the 1980s, which changed significantly after his disenchantment and later withdrawal from the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party, *No hay caminos, hay que caminar, soñando...*

19. GLENN GOULD

When Glenn Gould, at the age of only 30, took a famous and unheard-of decision to cease to give concerts, only recording discs, videos and radio and television programmes, he raised with extreme clarity and acuity the central problem of technical reproducibility within art music. Erroneously prophesying the end of classical concerts at the beginning of the 21st century, on account of acoustic misalignment with the new reality – with arguments such as “a person in the front row does not hear at all in the same way as a person in the back row” – Gould, in taking a decision that would have been unthinkable some years before, seems to me to have understood that something very important had changed and that *it was necessary to rethink, in new terms, the institution of the concert, the recording industry and its consequences, whether in relationships between musics or within the very act of playing or composing.*

On the other hand, placing Glenn Gould side-by-side with defenders of the mystery of music, of its immanent tendency towards the transcendental, its connection to counterpoint – analysed by Nattiez in an interesting way as a reworking of the basic idea of the suspension of time and inherent intemporality²⁴ - places his opting for the media, for recordings, instead of the

²⁴ Nattiez, J.J. (1999), pp.33-54.

unrepeatable concert, on the side of a kind of prosaic transcendence, of electronic eternity opposed to auratic art, the art of the unique or unrepeatable exemplar which is realized in its finitude in concert.

Translated by Ivan Moody