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# Sound in Brazilian and German Concrete poetry

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## Abstract

This work studies *sound* in the concrete poetry of *Grupo Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, focusing in particular the *recordings* of poems and the *Hörspiele* recorded in the Sixties. The manifold problems connected with the concrete poetry movement (intended as a whole) is followed by a specific theoretical-methodological section on sound, which clarifies the inclusion of this study in the field of the *sound studies* and introduces tools for the analysis (phonetics, music, technology). The latter is qualitative, since it focuses specifically on a few recordings, in an attempt to “build” possible meanings of the hearable sounds, and especially to consider the importance of the impact on the body for better understanding the esthetic experience of listening that concrete poetry provides. By focusing on sound, this study aims to return the *body to* concrete poetry, its physical presence and materiality, whose importance has too often been diminished by critics concerned exclusively with the graphic-visual aspect and interested in the mere attribution of “right” meanings. This comparative approach reveals of some common aspects between two extremely important schools within the context of concrete poetry, which however only rarely engaged in dialogue regarding poetic composition, and even less in regard to their respective relationships with sound and the esthetic experience that it produces.

## Resumo

Este trabalho estuda o som na poesia concreta do *Grupo Noigandres* e do *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, enfocando em particular as gravações de poemas e os *Hörspielen* realizados nos anos 1960. O necessário discurso sobre as múltiplas problemáticas ligadas ao movimento da poesia concreta (entendida como um todo) é seguido por uma seção teórico-metodológica específica sobre o som, que explica a inserção deste estudo na linha dos *sound studies* e introduz as ferramentas usadas pela análise efetiva (fonética, música, tecnologias). Esta é de tipo qualitativo, pois enfoca de maneira aprofundada poucas gravações, na tentativa de “construir” o possível significado dos sons audíveis e, sobretudo, de considerar a importância da afetação corporal que eles exercem, a fim de entender melhor a própria experiência estética de escuta que a poesia concreta proporciona. Através do enfoque sobre o som, este trabalho almeja restituir à poesia concreta o seu corpo, a sua presença física e material, cuja importância foi com certa frequência diminuída por críticos preocupados exclusivamente com o aspecto gráfico-visual e interessados à mera atribuição de significados “certos”. A abordagem comparativa permite considerar alguns aspectos comuns a duas correntes extremamente importantes no contexto da poesia concreta, mas que raramente se confrontaram no mérito da própria composição poética e ainda menos na respectiva relação com o som e a experiência estética que ele produz.

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## Notes

All English translations of original texts in other languages are my own, since no official translation was available. As for my listening, I used a PC (hp G62) and normal headphones.



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## Introduction

The present work is a comparative study focused on the sound of *concrete poetry*, an avant-garde movement developed starting from the Fifties in a wide international context involving culturally distant players such as Germany, Brazil, the USA and Japan.<sup>1</sup> Because of its peculiarly global nature, *concrete poetry* elicited much critical uncertainty in regard to its esthetic nature as well as to its actual birthplace. Where does the term “concrete” come from and what is it intended to mean in the artistic sphere? Who assumed the most prominent role in the development of “concrete” poetry and what did his artistic production look like? These puzzling questions never found a really definitive, shared answer: several extremely different poetic practices, a “confused geography” determined by the simultaneous but independent publication of similar manifestos, poets claiming (or retracting) their affinity to a quite vaguely defined “concrete” esthetic- all this triggered many debates involving poets, critics and art historians throughout the Fifties and Sixties. In the following decades, even though these questions were far from being answered, they were left aside and critical concern with concrete poetry decreased quite abruptly in chronological concurrence with the exhaustion of the movement’s innovative force, between the Mid-Sixties and the beginning of the Seventies. Then, a new phase emerged more recently, as Marjorie Perloff witnessed in the opening discourse of a seminar on concrete poetry in 2014:

Today concrete poetry is hot: scholars are jumping all over it, conferences are held about it and exhibitions like the one we were sitting in are becoming ever more common. I've been encouraged by this turn of events but I still couldn't understand just how and why this stuff found its way back into the discourse?

A possible answer to this question may be given by the recent development of new analytical tools and the consequent emergence of unprecedented critical perspectives on the multifarious issues that concrete poetry has always triggered. Beyond those already mentioned above, further possible questions concern the reception of concrete poetry in different countries, namely its acceptance in/exclusion from the mainstream literary canon, or the hypothetical connections between some formal features of the poems and

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<sup>1</sup> The most renowned collection on concrete poetry, published by Mary Ellen Solt, “Concrete poetry: a world view” (1969) includes the works of poets from the following countries: Switzerland, Brazil, Germany, Austria, Iceland, Czechoslovakia, Turkey, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Japan, France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Scotland, England and USA (this order reflects the chapters in the original publication).

the local socio-cultural context where they were developed. The list of possible topics is surprisingly long and diversified. This is also due to the fact that concrete poetry always had a profoundly *multi-disciplinary* character, since it has been in constant connection with the contemporary leanings of music and visual/plastic arts, thus producing mutual exchanges between different artistic fields. The following quotations from some of the main representatives of concrete poetry witness their interest in manifold artistic spheres as well as for the the need for dialogue between them when elaborating their works:

In this museum [MAM of São Paulo] there was a cinema, where the whole range of avant-garde films from the beginning of the XX century was showed. From Eisenstein, Fischinger, Hans Richter, to Maya Deren and Norman McLaren. There were bookstores specialized in importing books from foreign publishing houses, and a record store hell-bent on the import of modern and jazz music (Schoenberg, Webern, Varèse e Cage). In the French bookstore, we bought books and magazines which contained the first articles by Boulez, and others, for example studies on dodecaphonic music by René Leibowitz and the book “A la recherche d'une musique concrète” by Pierre Schaeffer.<sup>2</sup>

I am against the specialization, the partition of culture. The specialist. In literature. In popular music. In erudite music. In pop music. In folklore. Invention, yes, without hierarchies (CAMPOS, 1986:347).<sup>3</sup>

For the realization of esthetic hybrids, the author and the printer and the musician and the translator and the technician and the programmer are needed (DÖHL/BENSE in GOMRINGER 2001:168).<sup>4</sup>

As it should appear evident, the analysis of suchpoetic products cannot be tackled without an interdisciplinary approach. The research fields present in this study aren't conceived of as “tin compartments”, because they are involved in mutual interaction and to go beyond their respective boundaries, thus creating a theoretical/methodological ‘interzone’. Décio Pignatari seems to agree with such an approach when he affirms that “today more than ever, it is relatively unimportant to ‘know a lot’, for this knowing a lot is a bit more than nothing in front of the explosion of information. What is important is

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<sup>2</sup> See the interview with Augusto de Campos (Appendix 2).

<sup>3</sup> “Sou contra a especialização, a compartimentação da cultura. O especialista. Em literatura. Em musica popular. Em música erudita. Em musica pop. Em folclore. A invenção, sim, sem hierarquias.”

<sup>4</sup> „zur realisation ästhetischer gebilde bedarf es des autors und des druckers und des malers und des musikers und der übersetzers und des technikers und programmierers“.

to know *how to relate things*” (PIGNATARI, 1971:42).<sup>5</sup> The fecundity of the interdisciplinary attitude within the context of literary criticism has been exemplarily proven by the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, who firmly opposed the isolationism between disciplines like linguistics, literature, anthropology and information theory, describing the division between western and eastern linguistics, formal and semantic analysis as unnatural. Jakobson promoted a “polyphonic” unanimity, where “everyone plays a different note, but all seem variants of a unique phoneme” (JAKOBSON, 2012:5). Also, specialists from diverse scientific disciplines were directly dialoguing with him, as is testified by his participation in a program broadcast by French Radio and enthusiastically reported by Décio Pignatari:

(...) [It was] an extraordinary meeting: Claude Levi-Strauss (anthropologist), Roman Jakobson (linguist), François Jacob (biologist, Nobel prize 1965), and Philippe L’Heritier (geneticist), and the four of them found, with a surprising ease, a shared language and shared interests, right at the level of an actualized comprehension of codes and languages! (PIGNATARI, 1971:41)<sup>6</sup>

However, it is important to underline that the proposal for an interdisciplinary approach must not result in a messy massing of issues; instead, the coherence of their relationships has to be guaranteed by a unique and clear research topic.

My concern in this work has constantly been the *sound* of concrete poetry and my research corpus was constituted exclusively by the *recordings* of some concrete poems. By focusing on sound, this study aims to return the *body to* concrete poetry; this poetry is *fleshly* present in the listening experience, it is an acoustic body that enters the listener’s body and affects it. This idea does not implicate that the structural approach has been completely left aside; on the contrary, I recognized it as an unalienable starting point for a methodologically valid research. However, I found that structuralism alone was an insufficient tool, since it would have accounted for, so to say, the *bones* of concrete poetry. Haroldo de Campos was well aware of this aspect, when he affirmed

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<sup>5</sup>“Hoje, mais do que nunca, importa relativamente pouco “saber muito”, pois este saber muito é pouco mais do que nada em face da explosão da informação. O que importa é saber relacionar as coisas.

<sup>6</sup> It may be said that the role of the scientific disciplines in the development of literary criticism has consisted basically in the awareness that any literary work can be an object of methodical and rational analysis, its structure at the very core of critical attention. Structuralism was a starting point for my approach, even though at some point it proved to be inadequate for the accounting of concrete poems.

that “poetic creation can be the object of rational analysis, of methodic approach (an approach that in no way excludes the perceptual intuition and the phenomenological description, rather it is integrated by them)” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:45).<sup>7</sup> This study tries to bring out the “perceptual intuition and the phenomenological description” from the brackets where Haroldo put them in this statement, highlighting them as basic factors in the esthetic experience of concrete poetry.

In my perspective, the focus on sound fulfills a significant lacuna in the literary criticism on concrete poetry. Most studies neglect or discount its auditory aspect, generally considered as secondary in respect to its visual-graphic features. I do not agree with the common idea of a “primal contribution” of visuality, since, as we shall see, sound was essential for the esthetic complexity of many concrete poems. Consequently, the present study firstly intends to shift the focus towards sound and its importance, for a better understanding of the very nature of concrete poetry. A formidable incentive for this shift was provided by the relatively recent development of *sound studies*, a wide research field whose main goal is to give sound back both its central position in our daily life and its epistemological function. In a way, it can be stated that the present work is an encounter between literary studies on concrete poetry and sound studies, which results in an analysis aimed at delineating a possible account of the sound of concrete poetry.

Thus, my structural strategy consisted in devising separate sections regarding, firstly, the “main subject” (concrete poetry), and secondly the methodology and the tools (sound and its components) used for the analysis. The latter constitutes a third section, which is followed up by a fourth and the conclusion, summarizing some new insights provided by the analysis. This pattern, then, is the very skeleton of my work: subject – methodology and tools – analysis – conclusions are the four chapters that conceptually assemble the entire work.

The first chapter introduces the subject of the present work: concrete poetry. It is divided in several paragraphs, each one concerning a different aspect, from the problematic definition of the formula “concrete poetry” to the movement’s peculiar

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<sup>7</sup> “A criação poética pode ser objeto de análise racional, de abordagem metódica (uma abordagem que não exclui, de modo algum, a intuição sensível, a descrição fenomenológica, antes se completa por elas)”.

“confused geography”. A second, but not less crucial function of this chapter consists in the primary determination of my specific, restricted area of interest within the wide universe of concrete poetry. The selected movements are the Brazilian *Noigandres* group and the German *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. Then, a further step for determining the corpus of analysis more clearly is accomplished through the selection of a limited number of authors within each group. Even though the justification for these choices is presented in the first chapter, I believe it is important to underline already that such a comparative study is intended to fill another lacuna in the studies on concrete poetry. In fact, most works and essays focused on it develop two opposite approaches: either they aim at encyclopedic anthologies, which gather the most representative productions of all concrete currents on a worldwide scale, or, on the contrary, they focus on different aspects of a single, national concrete poetry. In the first chapter, a basic chronology of the respective evolution of these movements and a critical analysis of their manifestos published during the Fifties and Sixties is provided, in order to clarify their general esthetic principles and their positions within their respective cultural contexts. Finally, the last paragraph of this first chapter focuses on the musical influences of the selected concrete poets, as well as on their collaboration with contemporary composers and musicians. This part can be intended as a sort of bridge connecting the more general part regarding concrete poetry with the introduction of the specific methodological approach focused on in the second chapter.

This regards exclusively *sound*, in its multifarious constitutive aspects. All issues connected with my methodological approach are gathered in the initial paragraph (2.1), which therefore results quite complex. The word “soundscape”, borrowed from the field of *sound studies*, is introduced and proposed as an efficient term for accounting for the acoustic complexity of the considered recordings. For dealing with these, a “deep listening” is requested, namely profound acoustic attention on the features of any hearable sound, and also on their positions within the sonic macro-structure of the whole poem. These aspects are part of a more general discussion on the recent “return to sound” occurring in the academic sphere, with an ever-increasing amount of studies concerned with sound in general, the sound of the voice and the sound of poetry. A specific section is dedicated to each of these three subgroups, which are followed by a theoretical discourse on the bodily involvement experienced by humans when they come in contact with sound. This first, longer paragraph ends with a discussion of the

epistemological function of imagination, which proves to be crucial for realizing a more flexible and complete interpretation of any object of study. Then, the following three paragraphs provide the specific theoretical tools which will be later used to analyze the recordings. Coherently with both the importance of interdisciplinarity and the necessity of a unique, clear research topic (sound), three disciplines have been chosen: phonetics, music and technology. The general insights provided on each of these matters should prevent the reader from getting lost during the analysis, while they do not claim to map out a comprehensive account of any specific discipline.

Once the theoretical core has been constituted, it will finally be possible to approach the analysis of the recorded poems. This is conducted in the third chapter, and the poems of *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe* are analyzed separately. An initial section is intended to present the criteria that allowed me to further determine the specific *corpora* of poems to be effectively analyzed. The fourth and last chapter presents the results of the conducted analysis, namely the proposal of a possible theoretical framework (the *core-horizon* model) that would account for the kind of listening experience provided by the recorded concrete poems of both *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. The discussion on the core-horizon model, in turn, gives rise to some critical considerations on the differences and similarities between both considered movements, especially in regard to the esthetic nature of their sound poems. Consequently, this last chapter has been divided into two main sections, regarding respectively the *discourse* originated by the analysis and the *meta-discourse* deduced by the *discourse*.

By focusing on the sound poems elaborated by two among the most representative currents of the international *concretism*, the present work intends to contribute to the critical discussion regarding the meaning and essence of concrete poetry. In particular, it may trigger further reflections on the *communicational possibilities* of concrete poems, which appear as complex *media* that vehicle multiple and equivocal messages, providing infinite potential meanings due to the substantial involvement of the listening body in the reception and interpretation of these poems.



Basta ter ouvidos livres para ouvir “estruturas” (e estrelas...)

You just need free ears to hear “structures” (and stars...)

Haroldo de Campos

# Chapter 1

## The esthetic change in Post WWII poetry

### 1.1 What is the “concrete” in poetry?

In synchrony with the terminology adopted in visual arts and, to some degree, in vanguard music, I would say that a “concrete poetry” does exist.<sup>8</sup> (A. de Campos)

Concrete, concret, concreto, konkret, konkretnij. Within the wide western civilization, from Latin and Neo-Latin up to Slavic cultures, via German and Anglo-Saxon, the original root of this word didn't change along the centuries, didn't undergo any substantial phonetic variation, besides the mere adaptation to the grammatical rules of each language; not a single letter softening the rudeness and hardness of both occlusive unvoiced sounds [k] and [t].<sup>9</sup> Derived from the Latin *concretum*, past participle of *concrecere* (harden), this word seems to stand, in the whole Western world, as an efficient articulation for pointing out something present, concretely perceivable, visible and touchable, that can, for its own “hardness”, hit and affect the human body.



<sup>8</sup> “Em sincronização com a terminologia adotada pelas artes visuais e, até certo ponto, pela música de vanguarda, diria eu que há uma poesia concreta”.

<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, the <r> is pronounced differently depending on each language. It can be a poly-vibrant alveo-dental or uvular, or a mono-vibrant alveo-dental.

In the arts, the term “concrete” was first taken by pictorial and musical vanguards, for referring to the elaboration of the work of art on the basis of some unprocessed or “rough” material, taken in its natural state, without the softening mediation of harmonic and roundish forms. The possibility of transferring to poetry such a radical concept expressed by an articulation so strongly related to the represented idea (indeed, an efficient application of the isomorphic principle),<sup>10</sup> may have influenced Augusto de Campos in the choice of the term “concrete” for defining the new poetics springing at the beginning of the Fifties. Actually, the poet himself, explicitly asked about this choice in the interview he very kindly conceded me,<sup>11</sup> left aside this etymological/phonetic question, focusing instead on a report of a “bio-history” of the term “concrete” in the artistic ambit, up to the appearance of the term “concrete poetry”:

Before Schaeffer used the word “concrete” for his music, we [Noigandres Group] were already connected with the Paulista painters and sculptors of *Ruptura* group, whom we knew in 1952 and who called themselves “concrete” or “concretists”, from the expression “concrete” introduced by Van Doesburg and replaced in circulation by Max Bill, in the Forties, with the specific goal of distinguishing it from “abstract” art.<sup>12</sup>

A further integration of this account comes by Haroldo de Campos, who recalled in an article published in 1955 that “Hans Arp spoke of concrete poetry [...] when talking of the book published by Kandisky and entitled *Klage* (Sounds)”<sup>13</sup> (quoted in FRANCHETTI, 2012:78). The term “concrete”, in sum, went a path through distinct arts (only in this excerpts, artists tied with music, painting, sculpture and architecture were mentioned by Augusto), whose intertwinements became more and more complex and inextricable, especially starting from the end of the XIX century. But, while an international pictorial movement explicitly defining itself “concrete painting” never existed,<sup>14</sup> and “musique concrète” was a specific definition for Schaeffer’s music,

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<sup>10</sup> See also: Campos, Augusto e Haroldo; Pignatari, Décio (2006), pag. 217.

<sup>11</sup> Interview conducted by the author via email (see Appendix 2).

<sup>12</sup> “Antes de Schaeffer ter usado a palavra “concrète” para a sua música, já estávamos [o grupo *Noigandres*] ligados aos pintores e escultores paulistas do Grupo *Ruptura*, que conhecêramos em 1952 e que se intitulavam “concretos” ou “concretistas”, a partir da expressão “concreta” introduzida por Van Doesburg e reposta em circulação por Max Bill, nos anos 40, com o objetivo específico de distingui-la da arte ‘abstrata’.”

<sup>13</sup> “Hans Arp chega a falar em poesia concreta [...] a propósito do livro de Kandinsky, *Klage* (Sons).”

<sup>14</sup> Of course, various avant-garde movements could be included in a hypothetical “concrete painting” group, due to the development of revolutionary principles in pictorial esthetics (like the “neoplasticist”

destined to be soon included within the more generic cluster of “electronic music”, the definition of “concrete poetry” managed to resist as a valid term for identifying poetical currents grown within very distant cultural contexts, even if all flowing into a single movement. The markedly *global* character thus acquired by “concrete poetry” may be recognized as a factor that allowed for its diffusion and its relatively long resistance within the international literary context; as Henry Cowell properly stated, “there is a bigger strength in an idea when it arises at the same time in various different places” (quoted in CAMPOS, A. 1998:232).

However, when it comes to the definition of the effective meaning of the word “concrete” in the poetic ambit, many difficulties arise. Already in 1968, in the first lines of her famous *Anthology of concrete poetry*, Mary Ellen Solt stated: “There are now so many kinds of experimental poetry being labeled “concrete” that it is difficult to say what the word means” (SOLT, 1968:7). Solt took also into account the pattern of three basic types of concrete poetry proposed by Weaver (kinetic -intended as “moving in a visual succession”-, visual and phonetic), though the term, in her perspective, is “most effective when applied generally” (ibidem). Many concrete poems, in fact, are built on more complex superimpositions of different layers, and therefore cannot be singled out as belonging to just one of the mentioned groups; moreover, even if concrete poems are mostly related either to constructivist or to expressionist traditions, one can often identify in a same poem features acquired from the former in connection or interaction with traits inherited from the latter praxis; and here I am taking into account only the production of the first two decades of concrete poetry, leaving aside later, extremely complex expansions in the domain of so called “digital poetry”.

The basic esthetic principles of concrete poetry were briefly outlined by Solt, who saw as fundamental requirement of any concrete poem the “concentration upon the physical material from which the poem or text is made” (SOLT, 1968:9). The material is the *language* (both in its phonetic and typographic aspects), that undergoes a thorough, meticulous process of study, being reduced to its smallest constituents, in order to explore their intrinsic nature as well as the relationships between them. Other questions, like the relationship of “concrete” language to space and time, or the inclusion/exclusion of the semantic level in the poem’s construction, deserve in my

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Mondrian or the “suprematist” Malevitch, for instance). Here we are just dealing with a terminological question, which results in the absence of a group of painters univocally identifiable with this term.

opinion more attention, as each movement (or even each author) develops different approaches with regard to both points; in my view, the stress on the *materiality* of language is actually the only stable anchor all concrete poets were always sharing. This is also sustained by the conception of “concrete” expressed in Bense’s *Kleine Aesthetik* (1969), where the term “concrete” is intended, in a Hegelian way, simply as the contrary of “abstract”; the concrete object is intended as something appearing just as itself in its whole *materiality*, so that “in some way, concrete art could be also defined as material art” (quoted in CAMPOS, 2006:194).

Another concern is about the concept of “concrete” in the context of the international poetic tradition. It would be erroneous to consider concrete poetry as a movement that radically breaks with the past upon all esthetic aspects, inventing a different language without roots in any older, “classical” poetical tradition. In his essay “The concrete historical” (1992), Roland Greene traces some interesting parallels between the “material” poetry of Renaissance and “concrete” poetry of the Second Post-War, underlining, for instance, to what degree the material character of poetry was evident in some Shakespeare’s Sonnets, that provided numerous “inventive uses of sound and even typography”, or in Harvey’s *Shepherd’s Calender* (1579), that contains several eclogues that “depend on the play of materiality against meaning, of sound against semantics”. Even if the former are just two examples, in Greene’s perspective the parallel is more general, and “the generation of English poets born about 1550 prefigures the Brazilian *Noigandres* group that came to prominence in the 1950s”. Then, Greene goes further on into the past, taking into account Hrabanus Maurus’s *De imagine Christi* (circa 810), published in an edition of 1503 in order to re-propose (in Greene’s terms) “a way of writing that will not stand still to accept the world-boundaries of a Dante, a Petrarch, or a Chaucer”. Thus, the English “material” poem is acknowledged as “the historical concrete”.<sup>15</sup> However, Augusto de Campos, asked by Greene himself about the “concrete” character of his poetry, generalized it as a common feature of any truly poetic work, whose physical, sensual element is the essential discriminating factor between prose and poetry. In this sense, Augusto recalled Valéry’s conception, according to which “a poem cannot be summarized”; and, in Augusto’s

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<sup>15</sup> All the excerpts quoted in this paragraph are taken from: Greene, Roland: *The concrete Historical*. Available online at: <http://www.ubu.com/papers/greene.html>. Last access September 2016

words, “this is valid, generically, for poetry of all times, whether Sappho, Dante or concrete poetry.”<sup>16</sup>

In sum, “concrete” poets have never been pretending to present themselves as the unique or the first movement discovering the “materiality” or “concreteness” of poetic language; for them, all poetry is “concrete”. Thus, in the formula “concrete poetry”, the adjective is not intended as an esthetic feature exclusively pertaining to the poetic movement developing on a world scale in the Fifties, but as a term accounting for the international character (as it is easily understandable in all languages involved in the “concrete project”) and for the interdisciplinary call (as it was adopted in the context of several arts) of the new poetics.

A paradox, then, seems to arise. I affirmed the *materiality* of language to be the sole feature clearly shared by all concrete poets; and immediately later, I proposed this same character as the connection point between concrete poetry and the “classical” poetic tradition. Isn’t this an irresolvable contradiction? The proposal for a possible solution of this question through the identification of a distinguishing factor of concrete poetry is one of the main issues of this work, and will be presented in its conclusive part (4<sup>th</sup> chapter) after the analysis of the selected poems. For now, I would avail myself of Augusto de Campos’ declarations issued in the same interview with Roland Greene I was referring to in the previous pages. In his perspective, concrete poetry represents a “radicalization” of some features that had been always latent in all poetic production; in this sense, Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de Dés* (1897), the most extreme poetic experiment of the XIX century, which inaugurated the “modern” era of poetry, has been always considered as the most significant reference for the concrete esthetics. The language itself turns into the “main character” of poetry, substituting the lyric “I”, its emotions and/or ideas; the linear syntax is abolished, in order to deflect the recipient’s attention from the narration regarding some object or concept *external* to the poem itself, and directing it on the text’s meta-discourse; the *signifier* “lives in equal condition with the

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<sup>16</sup> See: Greene, Roland: *From Dante to the Post-Concrete: An Interview with Augusto de Campos*. Available online at: <http://www.ubu.com/papers/greene02.html>. Last access September 2016. This answer finds a parallel in another statement by Haroldo de Campos: "All poets converge at the materiality of the linguistic sign. This [concern for materiality] exists in a poem by Camoes in the same way it exists in a poem by e.e. cummings, or in some supposedly Concrete poem." Quoted in: Perrone, Charles: *The imperative of invention*. Available online at: <http://www.ubu.com/papers/perrone.html>. Last access September 2016.

*signified*”, that is, phonetic and typographic features of the word are put on the same level as its meaning. In order to simplify a bit the complexity of the definition of concrete poetry, I would close this first introductory paragraph with Augusto’s words:

To the extent that it [the concrete function]<sup>17</sup> tends to identify and isolate pregnant words that enact a textual materiality, it’s implicated in the most complete rejection of the more moderate resources involved in the usual practices of poetry, where instances of the poetic function are occluded by a sea of more or less sentimental circumlocutions (quoted in GREENE, 1992).<sup>18</sup>

## 1.2 The “confused geography” of concrete poetry

In the broad international context of concrete poetry, some places were more important. They distinguished themselves firstly as proponents and then as active developers of the new esthetics they launched. Other secondary currents, although not mere imitations, were surely more influenced by the original founders rather than being leading figures in the revolutionizing of compositional processes. The “origins” of the concrete “earthquake” were, in Mary Ellen Solt’s perspective, Switzerland and Brazil:

What has mushroomed into a worldwide movement was founded in Europe by a single poet, Eugen Gomringer of Switzerland, who adhered to the strictest concrete practice, and almost simultaneously in Brazil by the *Noigandres* group – Haroldo de Campos, Décio Pignatari and Augusto de Campos (SOLT, 1968:8)

Eugen Gomringer has always been considered as an indisputably central figure in concrete poetry. His manifesto *vom vers zur konstellation* (1953) has often been considered the manifesto of European concrete poetry in general. He achieved the most radical essentiality with the one-word-poem, reflecting his inclination “to express all thoughts in a short form” (SOLT, 1969:9) based on algebraic equations. Thus he arranged many of his poems spatially, in a way that aimed to express the signified

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<sup>17</sup> The term was proposed by R. Greene during the interview and was accepted by Augusto as “a good name for the strategy we adopt to put that Jakobsonian poetic function in evidence” (quoted in GREENE, 1992). For further explanations on the “poetic function” proposed by Jakobson, see chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> See: Greene, Roland: *From Dante to the Post-concrete: An Interview with Augusto de Campos*. Available online at <http://www.ubu.com/papers/greene02.html>. Last access September 2016.

object through a process that also occurred on the page, as in the case of “Wind” or “Ping pong”.

ping pong  
ping pong ping  
pong ping pong  
ping pong

Gomringer’s poetry, however, had not yet been defined as “concrete” when he launched his manifesto. Augusto de Campos recalled that “Gomringer, who called his poems “constellations”, grounded on Mallarmé’s example, adopted, in a letter sent to Décio Pignatari, the denomination of ‘concrete poetry’, proposed by the Brazilian group”.<sup>19</sup> Only after 1955, different creative styles began to be gathered in a unified, international “container”, because “the generic denomination of “concrete poetry” [was] more apt for designating a movement with international character.”<sup>20</sup> Some critics even saw Brazil as the place “where theory and practice of concrete poetry developed more intensively than anywhere else”, so that “in many respects, the international movement of concrete poetry of the Fifties and Sixties grew out of Brazilian initiatives.”<sup>21</sup>

If one believes these statements, it seems that Gomringer and the *Noigandres* group were the sole creators of the term “concrete” to define the new esthetic.<sup>22</sup> In reality, the

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<sup>19</sup> “Gomringer, que denominava seus poemas “constelações”, fundado no exemplo de Mallarmé, passou a adotar, em carta dirigida a Décio Pignatari, a de “Poesia Concreta”, proposta pelo grupo brasileiro.”

<sup>20</sup> Here I quote the whole passage: “(...) Eugen Gomringer, (...) partindo de pontos comuns aos concretistas brasileiros – ou, pelo menos, paulistas – Mallarmé, Cummings – chegou a realizações semelhantes, por ele denominadas “constelações (...), mostrando-se, já, inclinado a adotar a denominação genérica de “poesia concreta”, mais apta a designar um movimento de caráter internacional.” [Eugen Gomringer, starting from points shared with the Brazilian concretists – or at least, poets from São Paulo – Mallarmé, Cummings – came to similar realizations, his so-called “constellation” (...), and he showed himself favorable to adopting the generic denomination “concrete poetry”, which was more adequate for identifying a movement with an international character].

<sup>21</sup> See: Perrone, Charles, *The Imperative of Invention: Brazilian Concrete Poetry and Intersemiotic Creation*. Available at:<http://www.ubu.com/papers/perrone.html#foot2>. Last access September 2016 .

<sup>22</sup> In regard to this, the following statement by Augusto should also be considered: “Na revista “Forum” (dos alunos da PUC) e no Teatro de Arena (onde em novembro Diogo Pacheco e o grupo Ars Nova apresentaram um espetáculo de música e poesia concreta com três dos poemas em cores lidos a quatro vozes e projetados em slides), a expressão “poesia concreta” começou a ser difundida por mim”. [In the journal “Forum” (edited by students of the PUC University) and in the Teatro de Arena (where in November Diogo Pacheco and the Ars Nova group presented a show of music and concrete poetry with three of the colored poems [from the collection *Poetamenos*] read by four voices and projected on slides), the expression “concrete poetry” began to be spread by me]. In: Gonçalves, Marcos Augusto, “Entrevista de Augusto de Campos a Marcos Augusto Gonçalves”. Available online at: [http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto\\_view.php?id=10](http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto_view.php?id=10). Last access September 2016.



attempt to attribute concrete poetry to just one (or two) original founder(s) meets is problematic. According to Emmett Williams, this poetry movement has a “confused geography [which] reflects the universality of its roots” (WILLIAMS, 1967:VI). Indeed, concrete poetry seems to be an exemplary case of what comparative studies theorized as “polygenesis”,<sup>23</sup> namely the arising of very similar lines of esthetic development in two (or more) literary contexts, totally independent from one other. While Gomringer is said to be the “acknowledged father of concrete poetry” (WILLIAMS, ibidem) with the composition of his “constellations” (1953), it must be stressed that both Gomringer and the *Noigandres* poets were unaware of the publication, in that same year, of Öyvind Fahlström’s manifesto explicitly entitled *Manifest for konkret poesi*. The Swedish poet, however, was no more than a meteor in the concrete universe, especially if his production is compared with the development of concrete poetry during the following decades in various countries all over the world. Fahlström was much more tied to Surrealism (especially to Antonin Artaud) and much of his artistic production consisted of installations and happenings, which totally left aside the rigorous approach of “orthodox” concrete poetry. It was not a coincidence that Emmett William’s broad anthology<sup>24</sup> included only two very brief poems composed by Fählstrom, both on a single page. Even if a judgment like that of Frances Richard, who considered Fählstrom’s work as a “throwback to Surrealism or Agitprop at worst”<sup>25</sup> may be too severe, it is indisputable that his merit seems to have been limited to his groundbreaking concrete manifesto.<sup>26</sup>

If the “universe” of concrete poetry consists of different “constellations”, it is also true that each one is a complex universe in itself, with numerous different practices theoretically liable to be included in concrete esthetics, and uncountable artists contributed to it. In German speaking countries, several of the most important authors flowed into either the *Wiener Gruppe* or the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*; but other representative poets like Ferdinand Kriwet, Carlfriedrich Claus, Hans Helms and others also made original and stimulating contributions. Many radio studios and laboratories,

<sup>23</sup> See: Pineda, Victoria: *Speaking about genre: the case of concrete poetry*. Available at: <http://www.ubu.com/papers/pineda.html>. Last access September 2016.

<sup>24</sup> The anthology consists of more than three hundred pages, with about fifty authors included.

<sup>25</sup> See: Richard, Frances (2003), pag. 167–8.

<sup>26</sup> The relative unimportance of Fählstrom’s production in the avant-garde context of the Sixties and Seventies is indirectly shown also by his own official website, which states: “Fahlström wrote what was known as the first manifesto for concrete poetry. That document alone earned Fahlström a prominent place in the history of the avant-garde in the second half of the twentieth century.” Available at: <http://www.fahlstrom.com/poetry>. Last access September 2016.

even if they were more focused on musical practices, were involved in developing experimental processes with words, phonemes and articulations, constituting a so-called “border-space of arts”.<sup>27</sup> In Brazil, the *Noigandres* group was just the first and the most important within the concrete movement, established a theoretical basis inspiring (or being contested by) successive movements such as *Neo-concrete poetry*,<sup>28</sup> *Praxis*, *Poema processo*.

I was initially lost in this “sidereal chaos”, I needed some theoretical contribution to orient my analysis. A remark made by Mary Ellen Solt in her famous anthology helped me define an initial outline of my corpus of analysis: “[...] the important link between Brazilian and German concrete poetry, developed through association with the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, should be mentioned” (SOLT, 1969:16). Just mentioned? Why not deepened? Indeed, the only European concrete poet still dialoguing with the founders *Noigandres* after 1960 was Max Bense, around whom the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* arose. It gradually became one of the most important concrete movements in Europe during the Sixties. For this reason, I decided to focus on this specific group, leaving aside other German authors and movements, following the “concrete lines” in Austria and Switzerland.

However, the more general sphere of *Konkrete Poesie* deserves at least a superficial outline, mainly intended to clarify the peculiar historical context of its emergence. The following chronological account of the development of the *Noigandres group* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* is based on a critical approach. I am not concerned with the mere listing of dates and events, but rather with a deepening of issues tied to the emergence and growth of both movements under consideration. That is why, when I see a more brilliant “stone” along the way, I get closer to observe it better.

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<sup>27</sup> “Grenzbereich der Künste” is also the title given by Hans-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn to the 81<sup>st</sup> issue of the *Musik-Konzepte* Review, focused on experimental poetry and music developed in particular by Ferdinand Kriwet, Helmut Heißenbüttel, Dieter Schnebel, Mauricio Kagel, Laurie Anderson.

<sup>28</sup> For a more in-depth account of the “conflict” and the break between *Noigandres* poets and the Carioca poet Ferreira Gullar, see: Campos, Augusto “Memória e desmemória”. Available at: [http://www2.uol.com.br/augustodecampos/mem\\_desmem.htm](http://www2.uol.com.br/augustodecampos/mem_desmem.htm). See also the interview of Décio Pignatari with Noemi Jaffe and Eduardo Simoes: [http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto\\_view.php?id=9](http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto_view.php?id=9) Last access September 2016. The controversy between Augusto de Campos and Ferreira Gullar was reawakened in 2016, with the verbal crossfire published in the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*. See for example A. Campos’ reply to F. Gullar, available at: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2016/07/1787739-um-necordeiro-superconcreto-e-um-expremio.shtml>. Last access September 2016.

## 1.3 The initial evolution of *Noigandres*

### 1.3.1 A brief history of the first decade (48-58)

The critical accounts of the creative activity of the *Noigandres* group tend to divide it into three different phases: a first phase (1953-56) of “organic” or “phenomenological” production, a second phase (1956-61) of “orthodox” or “classical” concrete poetry, based on rational principles of composition, and a third phase (from 1962 on), generally defined as characterized by more fluid and flexible principles of invention. Even though this perspective is absolutely plausible, grounded on an excerpt from the *Pilot plan for concrete poetry* (1958),<sup>29</sup> I propose a chronology of the first decade of the history of the *Noigandres* group in its entirety since it spans the most intense period in regard to the theoretical evolution of the Paulista group: from the initial contact between its founders up to the culmination of the publication of their most representative manifesto.

The principal reference for tracing this chronology is without a doubt the collection *Teoria da poesia concreta* (Theory of concrete poetry),<sup>30</sup> a sort of Bible of Paulista avant-garde esthetics. This volume is a collection of articles, essays and manifestos written by the three founders which were published in various journals between 1950 and 1960.<sup>31</sup> In this section I will try to retrace this development, also on the basis of other declarations, essays and interviews that serve as short biographical insights on the three protagonists. In my opinion, these elements were essential in the evolution of the movement itself. In this sense, the collection of recordings housed at the *MIS* (Museum of Images and Sounds) archive in Rio de Janeiro proved to be a fundamental reference source.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup>See: Campos, Augusto e Haroldo; Pignatari, Décio (2006), pag. 217.

<sup>30</sup>This text will be indicated in the following pages as “TPC”.

<sup>31</sup> Even in the latest edition (2006), the manifestos collected in this anthology were published originally in that period with the exception of “Nova linguagem, nova poesia” (1964) and “& se não perceberam que poesia é linguagem” (1967).

<sup>32</sup> It would also be essential to consult the correspondence between Pignatari and the Campos brothers between ‘54-‘56, while the former was visiting Europe. I quote here an entire passage from the interview with Décio Pignatari by Noemi Jaffe and Eduardo Simoes (available at: [http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto\\_view.php?id=9](http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto_view.php?id=9). Last access September 2016): “O que pode ter interesse para pesquisadores no futuro é a correspondência minha com os Campos. Eu na Europa, eles em São Paulo, entre 1954 e 1956. Eram cartas assim de dez, doze, quinze páginas, e eu datilografava todas, eu não escrevia à mão. Tenho muitas delas, pois eu tirava cópia [...] E era uma briga danada, discussões de tudo o que você pode imaginar, até xingatórios. E imbatível mesmo é o Haroldo. Só o Haroldo sozinho, meu Deus, só a correspondência do Haroldo deve ter 2.000 cartas. Nessa correspondência se vê tudo, o nascimento da poesia concreta praticamente. Aquilo que antecedeu também, porque eu tinha sonhado mesmo em ir embora do Brasil.” [What can be interesting for future researchers is the

In a 1948 collection published by Serge Millet,<sup>33</sup> Décio Pignatari's first poem entitled *Lobisomem (Werewolf)*, caught the attention of the young Augusto de Campos: "I didn't understand. And the things that I don't understand always thrill me".<sup>34</sup> Augusto came into contact with Décio at a roundtable coordinated by the modernist poet Murilo Mendes later that same year. The immediate understanding between both young poets was the beginning of a shared poetic project. Décio also met Augusto's brother, Haroldo, who was enrolled in the same Law Faculty as Décio. He confessed: "I chose Law by exclusion. The Literature Faculty had very little appeal to me".<sup>35</sup> However, it cannot be excluded that both Campos brothers, by enrolling at the same Faculty as Décio, were trying to facilitate collaboration with him. At the beginning, he seemed to be the most important reference for both of the Campos brothers, as if he assumed the role of "mentor". This was made clear by Augusto himself, who stated: "Among all Brazilian writers, maybe the greatest influence, what one could define as 'education', was the encounter with Décio".<sup>36</sup>

Starting from 1949, periodical meetings of the three young poets occurred in at the Campos' house, as Décio recalled with some emotion and longing in his voice: "Everything happened there, in Haroldo and Augusto's house, all *new fun*",<sup>37</sup> and "we began a tremendous critical practice, the ones in relation to the others. Each of us presented his poem and the others criticized it tremendously. Through this practice, a

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correspondence between me and the Campos brothers. I was in Europe, they were in São Paulo, between 1954 and 1956. They were letters of ten, twelve, fifteen pages, and I typed all of them, I didn't write them by hand. I have lots of them, because I made copies [...]. And it was a bloody quarrel, discussions on anything you can imagine, even imprecations. And Haroldo was unbeatable. Only Haroldo, my God, only Haroldo's correspondence consists of about 2000 letters. In this correspondence everything can be seen, in practice the whole emergence of concrete poetry. And also what preceded it, for I really dreamed of going away from Brazil]. In this same interview, the researcher Maria Eugenia Boaventura was then (2007) concluding her work to publish these letters with Unicamp, but this never happened.

<sup>33</sup> Following Décio Pignatari, Serge Millet also made decisive contributions to launching the poetic activity of the *Noigandres* group, publishing their first poems in the literary section of the *Estadão*. It is noteworthy that a bit later, he was struggling against the concrete movement, and that Pignatari distanced himself from Millet's esthetic ideas. On this aspect, it is worth listening to Décio's declarations on CD 2 from the collection available at the MIS in Rio de Janeiro (recording realized by *Jornal do Brasil*, 1987).

<sup>34</sup>Recording realized by *Jornal do Brasil*, 1987, CD 1. "Eu não entendia. E as coisas que não entendo sempre me apaixonaram".

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. "Escolhi Direito por exclusão. A faculdade de Letras apresentava pouca atrativa".

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.: "Dos escritores brasileiros, talvez a maior influência, o que a gente poderia chamar de "formação", é o encontro com o próprio Décio".

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.: "Tudo se passou ali, toda curtição nova".

micro-tradition of rigor was founded.”<sup>38</sup> The three poets actively participated in the *Clube de Poesia*. In 1950 the first collection of poems written by Haroldo, *Auto do possesso*, was published, followed in that same year by Décio’s *Carrossel*. But already Augusto’s first poem, *O Rei menos o Reino* (1951) “was no longer launched by the *Clube de poesia* because we broke with the *Clube de poesia*, we didn’t agree with their way of acting, narrow-minded and ‘pickaxe’ people.”<sup>39</sup>

The rupture with the *Clube* was the premise for the foundation, in 1952, of an autonomous group called *Noigandres* and the journal of the same name. This was a crucial point in the development of an exclusive and original poetic path, a voyage through language (a “*linguaviagem*”,<sup>40</sup> as Augusto would say), focused on experimentation and creation.<sup>41</sup> From the beginning, the group developed a team-work attitude, without compromises or concern for “glory”. They were proposing the idea of a *collective* creation, highlighting the variety and beauty of the poetic product rather than the egocentrism of the author:

So, already starting from 1952, Haroldo, Décio and I [Augusto] decided to publish our works together, in the book/review called *Noigandres*. This idea broadened through the contact with the *Ruptura* group, and became even more emphatic when, in the fourth number of the review *Noigandres 4*, we published our poems in the form of unbounded posters, without the name of the authors (MATOS, 2002:20).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Recording realized by the *Jornal do Brasil*, 1987, CD 2. “Nós começamos a fazer um tremendo exercício crítico, uns em relação aos outros. Cada um apresentava o poema e os outros dois criticavam tremendamente o poema. [...] Com isso se criou uma micro-tradição de rigor”.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.: “Não foi mais lançado pelo Clube da poesia porque nos rompemos com o Clube de poesia, não concordávamos com a atuação deles (...), gente careta e picareta”. By using the expression “pickaxe”, Décio wanted to express the provincial character of the *Clube de poesia*.

<sup>40</sup> This expression is not translatable in English without renouncing the wordplay; it suggests a “trip through the language”.

<sup>41</sup> Haroldo de Campos speaks of a “indefatigable curiosity”, and he also adds: “Se eu pudesse dizer algum lema que resumiria esta minha atividade, eu poderia assim [apontar] o lema dantesco do “Intelletto d’amore”; isto é, fazer aquelas coisas em que eu estou ligado com um interesse criativo amoroso mesmo, da curiosidade permanente”. [If I could choose a motto to summarize my activity, I would [choose] Dante’s lemma “Intelletto d’amore”; that is, I do those things which I’m tied to with a very creative, loving interest, with a permanent curiosity]. In: *Jornal do Brasil*, 1987, CD 2.

<sup>42</sup> “Assim, já em 1952, Décio, Haroldo e eu preferimos publicar nossos trabalhos em conjunto, na revista livro que se chamou *Noigandres*. Essa idéia se ampliou no contacto com os pintores do grupo *Ruptura* (...), e tornou-se ainda mais enfática quando, no n° 4 de *Noigandres* (...), publicamos nossos poemas sob a forma de cartazes soltos, sem o nome do autor.”

The name chosen by the group has a peculiar history. The word *Noigandres* was discovered by the poet Ezra Pound in the lyrics of two songs composed by the medieval troubadour Arnaut Daniel, which are housed at the *Biblioteca Ambrosiana* in Milan.<sup>43</sup> Pound went to meet the philologist Emil Levy in Freiburg to receive assistance in translating this fascinating and untranslatable term. Since then, the discussion has remained open among philosophers and medievalist translators, who however have not managed to respond to the question posed by Pound. Despite this fact (or maybe exactly for this reason), the American poet included the “history” of the word *Noigandres* in his *Cantos* (Canto XX), where the three young poets came in contact for the first time with what was destined to be their own, unchanging poetic “identity”:

*And he said: “Now is there anything I can tell you”?*

*And I said: “I dunno, sir”, or*

*“Yes, Doctor, what do they mean by noigandres” ?*

*And he said: Noigandres! NOIgandres!*

*You know for seex mon’s of my life*

*Effery night when I go to bett, I say to myself:*

*Noigandres, eh, noigandres,*

*Now what the DEFFIL can that mean!*

(From: POUND, *Cantos*, Canto XX)

Beyond its musicality and multifaceted taste, the word *Noigandres* attracted the attention of the three young poets for its strict connection with Arnaut Daniel and the Occitan poets in general, the undisputable masters of what could be defined as “poemusic”, the organic fusion of music and poetry. As Solt put it, “this puzzling word suited the purposes of the three Brazilian poets very well; for they were working to define a new formal concept. The name *Noigandres* was both related to the world heritage of poems and impossible for the literary experts to define” (SOLT, 1968:12).

The choice of this term also provided a very significant example for the synchronic vision of history that the Brazilian poets have always promoted. Grounding themselves on Jakobsonian theory, the poets emphasized the need to overcome the merely

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<sup>43</sup> See: Campos, Augusto: *Poemúsica*. Available at: <http://www.blogdoims.com.br/ims/poemusica>. Last access September 2016.

diachronic vision of art history, which was esthetically indifferent and simply a banal collection of chronological data.<sup>44</sup> What interested them was not just the reading of the present, but rather the attempt to reconsider the past from a synchronic viewpoint that “considers not only the literary production of a given period, but also that part of literary tradition which, for the period in question, remained alive or happened to be renewed” (CAMPOS, H. 1972:207).<sup>45</sup> The modernity of a work of art could not be measured merely in temporal terms. What counted more was its *esthetic* relevance, its degree of inventiveness, its contribution to the construction of new categories of thought and perception. In Ezra Pound’s words, “All ages are contemporary (...), the real time is independent from the apparent one, and many dead people are contemporary of our grandsons, while it seems that many of our contemporaries met in Abraham’s breast or in some more adequate receptacle” (quoted in CAMPOS, H. 1972:208). However, for these poets it was also fundamental to underline that the relationship between diachronic and synchronic visions could not be reciprocally exclusive, but rather dialectic; Anatol Rosenfeld explained the integration between these two approaches, declaring that “a critic, however radically ‘synchronic’, (...), also has to keep a ‘diachronic’ horizon open, by referring to the epoch in which the work arose” (CAMPOS, H. 1972:215).

Thus, the essential function of literary criticism is “the ordering of knowledge, in such a way that the following person (or generation) could, as rapidly as possible, find the living part, and waste the shortest amount of time on obsolete questions” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:18). The poetic “identity” chosen by the three young poets from São Paulo witnessed for their position in this conceptual line, unceasingly re-affirmed throughout their poetic and critical activity. The *Noigandres* poets considered themselves, from the very beginning, to be the result of a cultural process and not a “spontaneous generation”.

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<sup>44</sup> See also the following excerpt: “[...] Gosto de ler a tradição como partitura transtemporal, fazendo, a cada momento, “harmonizações” síncrono -diacrônicas, traduzindo, por assim dizer, o passado de cultura em presente de criação” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:258) [I like to read tradition as a transtemporal score, making some síncrono-diachronic “harmonizations” at every moment, translating so to speak past culture into a present creation].

<sup>45</sup> “Consider[e] não apenas a produção literária de um período dado, mas também aquela parte da tradição literária que, para o período em questão, permaneceu viva ou foi revivida”.

After the foundation of the *Noigandres* movement, Décio Pignatari pursued his dream of visiting Europe.<sup>46</sup> Evidently not interested in Law studies, and even less in the “legitimacy” that the degree would guarantee, he made a compromise with his father:

See, I get this degree, and you send me to Europe; you pay for the trip and, during a certain period, at least for four years, you send me money for living there, until I get a job.<sup>47</sup>

Décio was no longer willing to endure the cultural context in Brazil, dominated by the *Geração de 45* movement, defined as “provincial, snob and *sabonete*”.<sup>48</sup> In 1954, aware of the grave illness affecting Oswald de Andrade, “the sole poet of that period with whom we [*Noigandres* poets] cohabited”, probably convinced him of the necessity to realize his plan for a preliminary exploration of Europe. After de Andrade’s death, which occurred that same year, the *Noigandres* poets began to perceive their responsibility for poetic innovation in Brazil even more strongly.

In Europe, Décio came in contact with the most important avant-garde masters, especially in the visual and musical spheres, who were destined to play a fundamental role in “verbal and non-verbal influences” on the Paulista poetic group, both Campos brothers prepared the publication of the second *Noigandres* Review, with the chromatic poems composed by Augusto entitled *Poetamenos* (1955). In 1956, Pignatari was back in Brazil for the official launch of concrete poetry, on occasion of the first international exposition of concrete art organized at the MAM (Museum for Modern Art) in São Paulo. The *Noigandres* poets, who in 1956 were invited to exhibit their works by the painter Waldemar Cordeiro, organized a further exposition at the MAM in Rio de Janeiro the following year, and this second event had even great impact on Brazilian literary criticism. It was defined as “rock n’ roll of poetry” in the review “O cruzeiro”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Décio defined his plan of travelling to Europe as a “dream”.

<sup>47</sup> “Olha, eu tiro esse diploma, e o Senhor me manda pra Europa; paga-me a viagem, e durante um período x, no mínimo quatro anos, me manda um dinheiro pra eu poder viver lá até que eu arranjo um emprego”. Recording realized by the *Jornal do Brasil*, 1987, CD 2.

<sup>48</sup> This phrase is an untranslatable wordplay: the word “snob” expresses, beyond its conventional meaning, a very famous brand of napkins, while “sabonete” means “soap”. So, in Décio’s perspective, the authors of the *Geração de 45* wanted their hands to be clean and dry; metaphorically, they were not able to dirty their hands with the rough material of language.

<sup>49</sup> See: Perrone, Charles: *Versatile Vanguard Vectors*. Available online at: <http://periodicos.ufpb.br/index.php/graphos/article/viewFile/4218/3205>. Last access September 2016. It must be noted that in regard to this definition, Perrone noticed skeptically: “The only thing *poesia concreta* and rock 'n' roll had in common was reaction to them: they were scandalous, the establishment was shocked by them”.



When talking about the origins of Brazilian concrete poetry, Décio Pignatari stated that it “really couldn’t be launched in Europe, it had to be in Brazil”.<sup>50</sup> It is a pity that the poet, in a long, extremely rich and detailed interview recorded in 1987 (missing in all official biographies or essays), does not explain this affirmation more extensively, as the phrase is followed by a silence. Perhaps such a resolution to launch concrete poetry in Brazil rather than in Europe originated from a strong desire to “de-provincialize” Brazilian culture in a way that would help Brazil to abandon its peripheral position and develop as a cultural center of primary importance. Décio himself alludes to this possibility by formulating one of the basic questions on which the *Noigandres* movement was founded: “Is it possible to have a great Brazilian poet, who could face international comparison?”<sup>51</sup> Haroldo de Campos, in turn, wondered: “Is it possible that the Brazilian poet, in the Fifties, can renew international literature?”<sup>52</sup> *Noigandres* wanted to “try to be this”, a movement that could accept comparison with creators from all over the world, concerned exclusively with the cultural enrichment and development of Brazil as well as all other “actors” participating in this exchange. The idea was not to “influence” others, but rather to dialogue with them:

Generally, the problem of influence is questioned wrongly. [This problem] doesn’t exist in these terms, rather there is a dialogue. No one makes a work starting from nothing; rather it [the work] represents a dialogue, an intertextuality, a contact between forms.<sup>53</sup>

The task of the three poets immediately before the launch of concrete poetry was, in fact, to “choose authors who, in an international context, had brought the literary

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<sup>50</sup> “Realmente [...] não era pra ser lançada na Europa, [teve] que ser no Brasil”. Recording realized by the *Jornal do Brasil*, 1987, CD 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.: “É possível haver um grande poeta brasileiro que não resista a um confronto internacional?”. Consider also the interview with Pignatari: “Nós nos perguntávamos, Augusto, Haroldo e eu, nas nossas reuniões: o que queria dizer um grande poeta brasileiro? O que queria dizer um grande autor brasileiro? Se começarmos a cotejar internacionalmente, onde ele ficaria?” [During our meetings, we wondered, Augusto, Haroldo and I: what would it mean to be a great Brazilian poet? What would it mean to be a great Brazilian author? If we begin to make comparisons on an international scale, where would he be located?].

<sup>52</sup> *Jornal do Brasil*, 1977, CD 5. “É possível que este poeta brasileiro, nos anos 50, inove em relação à literatura internacional?”.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.: “Geralmente se coloca erradamente o problema da influência; [este problema] não existe nesses termos, há um diálogo. Ninguém faz uma obra no vazio, mas [a obra] sempre representa um diálogo, uma intertextualidade, um contacto de formas”.

experience to its most extreme point”.<sup>54</sup> Not due to imitation or defining themselves with the somehow glorifying label of “avant-garde”, but rather due to understanding how to *overcome* that experience, what was “step forward” they needed to take. These questions were gradually answered during eight apprenticeship years (readings and debates on the most radical artistic experiences between 1948 and 1956) that were fundamental for “determining the fracture level of the internal mechanism”<sup>55</sup> in order to “enter the critical phase [of the movement]” (CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006:63).<sup>56</sup>

### ***1.3.2 Forms and esthetic principles in the manifestos of the Fifties***

The first national exposition of concrete art occurred at the MAM of São Paulo in December 1956, followed up by the publication of three texts in the twentieth issue of the review *ad – arquitetura e decoração*, each written by one of the three founders of *Noigandres*. I chose to take into account exclusively these texts, along with the *Pilot Plan* (1958), as they are the only ones explicitly marked as “manifestos” in the *TPC*. The brief analysis of these four manifestos is aimed at the comprehension of the profoundly unitary character of the *Noigandres* group and its remarkable, shared esthetic evolution. This internal synergy proved to be a very helpful factor in the definition of the Brazilian *corpus* of poems I will be analyzing.

The three manifestos from 1956 account for the respective (but evidently shared) concern and for the expressive style of each of its founders, while the *Pilot Plan* shows their desire to fix and sanction a unanimous poetic project. Regarding the manifestos of 1956, I have considered here not only their ‘content’, but also the various formal tools employed by the respective authors for expressing *Noigandres*’ esthetic principles. In fact I believe the examination of some peculiar syntactic and graphic devices to be crucial for the comprehension of each poet’s main theoretical concerns, due to the frequently isomorphic character of their statements.<sup>57</sup> The first text entitled “New

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid: “Escolher aqueles autores que, num contexto internacional, tivessem levado a experiência literária ao seu ponto extremo”.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid: “Para determinar os planos de clivagem de mecânica interna”.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid: “Entrar na fase crítica [do movimento]”.

<sup>57</sup>The poets expressed the isomorphism with the formula “content = form”. The following examples in reference to the considered manifestos should help in understanding this issue.

poetry: concrete”<sup>58</sup> was composed by Décio Pignatari. The extremely simplified syntax characterizing the whole text results in a sort of “communicational minimalism” consisting of very brief sentences and an almost total absence of dependent clauses. At the beginning, this manifesto presents a lapidary declaration regarding the crisis of verse (“the verse: crisis”).<sup>59</sup> Consequently, it provides a practical application of criticism to the linear links of language, which had always pervaded traditional verse, defined as “anti-economical” and incapable of developing rapid communication. The proposal to overcome verse as a basic idea for the development of non-logical, analogical syntax had, as immediate consequences, the transformation both of the nature of the artistic product, intended as an “industrial product for consumption”,<sup>60</sup> and the concept of art itself, that turned into “a general art of language. advertisements, press, radio, television, cinema. a popular art”.<sup>61</sup> The word, the basic unit of the poetic work, “began to be detached from the object to which it was referred, alienated itself, turned itself in a qualitatively different object, wanted to be the word “flower” without the “flower” (CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006:68-69);<sup>62</sup> in practice, the poem was now aimed at recreating the concrete reality of the object rather than its abstract essence. Also, in the last sentence of this manifesto, verse is questioned, this time by proposing a solution to the problem formulated at the beginning: the “transition from verse to ideogram”.<sup>63</sup> It is very peculiar that, in all four pages of this manifesto, the word “verse” only appears in the first and in the last sentence. Far from being a coincidence, the respective positioning of problem and solution in the initial and the final extremes of the text seems to create a synthesis of the real essence of concrete poetry, that is, “to create exact problems and solve them in terms of perceptible language”.<sup>64</sup> It is as if Décio wanted to express that what mattered for him was the connection between the crisis of verse and the communicational possibilities of the ideogram; all other questions, like the conception of poetry as industrial product or the concreteness of the word, were consequences/results of this dialectic, or rather they were both conceptually and textually contained within it.

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<sup>58</sup>See: Campos, Augusto and Haroldo; Pignatari, Décio (2006) pag. 67-70.

<sup>59</sup> “o verso: crise”

<sup>60</sup>“Produto industrial de consumo”

<sup>61</sup>“uma arte geral da linguagem. propaganda, imprensa, radio, televisão, cinema. uma arte popular”

<sup>62</sup>“começou a descolar-se do objeto a que se referiu, alienou-se, tornou-se objeto qualitativamente diferente, quis ser a palavra “flor” sem a flor”.

<sup>63</sup>“Transição do verso ao ideograma”.

<sup>64</sup>“criar problemas exatos e resolve-los em termos de linguagem sensível”.

The second manifesto, simply entitled “Concrete poetry” and published by Augusto, was still far from the search for the isomorphism between form and content, since the syntax used in it was much more linear than that employed by Pignatari. The document is an ordered list of esthetic proposals expressed in a totally discursive manner, with an almost exclusive focus on the nature of the “new” word, refusing to consider it as a “mere indifferent vehicle, without life or personality or history—tumulus-taboo through which convention insists on burying the idea” (CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006:71).<sup>65</sup> The highlighting of concreteness and the autonomy of the words in relation to their meaning and to the traditional syntax was expressed in the text through metaphorical language that opposes life and death, aiming at the vivification of the “dead” words: they are, according to Augusto, “complete organisms, with psycho-physical-chemical properties, touch antenna circulation heart: alive”,<sup>66</sup> and have to refuse what Augusto defines as “perspectivist” syntax, where they would “sit down as cadavers in a banquet” (CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006:71).<sup>67</sup> Also in this manifesto, the necessity of overcoming verse (“formal unit of a conventional organization”) is claimed,<sup>68</sup> but the ideogram is not presented as a possible solution; the proposal is more generic, namely the highlighting of the poetic core “through a system of relationships and balances between any part of the poem” (CAMPOS e PIGNATARI, 2006:72).<sup>69</sup>

In the third manifesto, entitled “Olho por olho a olho nu” (An eye for an eye with unaided eye), Haroldo brought the process of “rebellion” against discursive syntax to its most extreme consequence by developing the “atomization” or “pulverization” of the word conceived by the American poet e. e. cummings. In other words, Haroldo used the page as a spatial resource, arranging words and letters based on the “constellational” principle proposed for the first time in the Mallarmean *Coup de Dés*:

(...)

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<sup>65</sup>“Com que a convenção insiste em sepultar a idéia”.

<sup>66</sup>“ Organismo[s] completo[s], com propriedades psico-físico-químicas, tato antenas circulação coração: viva[s]”.

<sup>67</sup>“Sentar-se como cadáveres em banquete”.

<sup>68</sup>“Unidade formal de uma “organização convencional”.

<sup>69</sup> “Por um sistema de relações e equilíbrios entre quaisquer partes do poema”.

neotipografia, “paroliberismo”, wireless imagination,  
simultaneism, sonorism etc.etc.

etc. etc.

i

n

FUNCTION of one

NOT

only psychology

BUT

phenomenology

of composition

(CAMPOS e PIGNATARI, 2006:75)<sup>70</sup>

It seems very peculiar that the word “verse” doesn’t appear at all in any of the four pages of this manifesto. Haroldo critically addresses the more general “language of everyday life and of literary convention”<sup>71</sup> and the “usual communication of bookish convention”.<sup>72</sup> But it would be incorrect to affirm that a reflection on verse is absent; on the contrary, the disapproval of verse is even more radical, because it is not explicitly affirmed, *theorized*, but rather *realized in practice* through graphic devices borrowed from e.e. cummings (spatial syntax based on the free distribution of the graphemes on the page). Another central point highlighted in this manifesto was the *concreteness* of the word and the poem, its “object-like” nature. This time, the resource used for expressing this feature is evidently of Mallarmean influence; only in the first page, seven of the nine words printed in capital letters are tied to the concept of “object” (OBJETO, repeated six times, and the neologism with attributive function OBJETAL, one time). In the following pages, the word CONCRETO/A, is the only one written in capital letters, repeated nine times in the whole manifesto. In both cases, the *visual* aspect took the place of the *verbal* one. All further questions, like the three-dimensionality of the word (visual, auditory, and verbal) and the list of the names

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<sup>70</sup> In this translation, I tried to maintain to the highest degree the visual structure proposed in the original manifesto.

<sup>71</sup> “Língua de uso cotidiano ou de convenção literária”

<sup>72</sup> “Comunicação habitual ou de convênio livresco”.

constituting the *paideuma*<sup>73</sup> of the movement were visually subordinated to the central principle, that is, the *concreteness*, the *object-like nature* of the material that the *Noigandres* poets were working on. Briefly, in this manifesto Haroldo managed to underline the very core of concrete poetry in his view, through the integration between, on the one side, the absence of the word (verse), and, on the other, its obsessive repetition (concrete), highlighted through graphics.

In 1958, after two years of further theoretical deepening, the *Pilot Plan of concrete poetry* was published in the fourth issue of the official *Noigandres* review, and definitively fixed the basic esthetic principles and perspectives of this poetic movement. The manifesto, written together by all three founders, has always been considered the principal reference for scholars who wanted to approach the theoretical insights of *Noigandres* during its first decade of activity. It consists, in fact, of a collage of sentences formulated in the manifestos from 1956, in an attempt to find a balance, a compromise for the needs and the different artistic sensibilities of all three poets. A few excerpts taken from this manifesto should help identify the main concerns of the *Noigandres* group.

Firstly, the necessity of overcoming verse is reaffirmed. This is connected with the stress on “the importance of the idea of ideogram, from its general meaning of spatial or visual syntax, to its specific sense (Fenollosa/Pound) as a compositional method based on the direct juxtaposition [...] of elements.”<sup>74</sup> Secondly, the concrete *paideuma* is more clearly constituted, that is, the most important predecessors of concrete poetry within the poetic sphere are listed: Mallarmé’s *Un coup de des*, Pound’s *Cantos*, Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Cummings’ “atomized typography”, along with other, secondary influences (Apollinaire, Futurismus, Dada; in Brazil, Oswald de Andrade and João Cabral de Melo Neto). The poem is thus defined as an “object” instead of as “the interpreter of external objects and/or more or less subjective sensations”.<sup>75</sup> By using the

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<sup>73</sup> With this word, Haroldo intended “the list of authors culturally-morphologically acting in the historical moment = qualitative evolution of the poetic expression and of its tactics” [“elenco de autores culturmorfologicamente atuantes no momento histórico = evolução qualitativa da expressão poética e suas táticas”] (CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006:74). In practice, the *paideuma* consists of those ground-breaking artists who established the theoretical basis for the development of concrete poetry.

<sup>74</sup> “Daí a importância da idéia de ideograma, desde o seu sentido geral de sintaxe espacial ou visual, até o seu sentido específico (Fenollosa/Pound) de método de compor baseado na justaposição direita [...] de elementos”

<sup>75</sup> “O poema concreto é um objeto em e por si mesmo, não um interprete de objetos exteriores e/ou sensações mais ou menos subjetivas.”

phonetic system and analogical syntax, the concrete poem “creates a specific linguistic area – ‘verbivocovisual’- that takes advantage of non-verbal communication, without giving up the virtues of the word”.<sup>76</sup>

In relation to these manifestos, Paulo Franchetti’s critical evaluations must be briefly taken into account. In his perspective, irresolvable contradictions arose in the comparison between various theoretical essays published during the Fifties, most evidently in relation to the *paideuma* that the poets developed in order to legitimize their poetical project. According to Franchetti, in the texts published in the *ad* review in 1956, the three authors tried to present their own esthetic conception as the result of the concerns of the greatest number of important authors, even though in reality it derived only from a few of them. In order to do this, the poets diminished the importance of the authors who, in previous essays, were shown as the very basis of their esthetics (such as Mallarmé and Joyce), while giving value to those who were at first presented as secondary interlocutors (Dada, Futurismus, Apollinaire).

However it is undeniable that the project never lacked general coherence. The authors who, in *Noigandres’* perspective, contributed to the concrete esthetic were always the same. The claim for an evident lack of coherence would be justified if the Brazilian poets had, at some point, denied the influence of some of the authors they had affirmed, in previous manifestos, to be their most important points of reference. The balance between the claim for innovation and the legitimization of the *Noigandres* poetic project through the identification of the “founding fathers” of modern poetry could not have been reached without some initial instability. After all, at the beginning of the Fifties, the three poets were little more than twenty-year old students, who could not have known the works of authors like Mallarmé, Joyce, Cummings and Ezra Pound in their entirety. Further study and further reflection could have caused some change in their perspective on one poetic work or another.

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<sup>76</sup> “O poema concreto [...] cria uma área linguística específica – “verbivocovisual”- que participa das vantagens da comunicação não verbal, sem abdicar das virtualidades da palavra.

## 1.4 *Konkrete Poesie*

Post WWII Germany was like no other place in the world; in the land of the executioners, responsible for a tragic and destructive war and authors of abominable crimes, the moral scourge was so severe that it was extremely hard to think about a “normal” future. In poetry, the Adornian statement of 1949 about the “barbarian act” of composing poetry after Auschwitz seemed to impede all attempts to say anything in front of a reality that deserved only reflection and silence. Maybe Eugen Gomringer also wanted to respond provocatively to this issue when he stated, in his manifesto, that “silence characterizes new poetry, contrary to individualistic poetry” (GOMRINGER, 1977:280),<sup>77</sup> and the same could also be said of Ernst Jandl’s statement in regard to the necessity for a “new way” in poetry:

I fear that one cannot speak anymore about some things one was speaking about in the poetic medium in the past; one cannot express them at all, if a totally different way for speaking about them is not found. And I think, one of these attempts to go the basis, almost towards the foundations of language, and there it is, where the suffering, the pathos is to be found and expressed, more convincingly, more profoundly, more concretely.

(quoted in SCHÖNING, 1983:208).<sup>78</sup>

Moreover, it seemed necessary to overcome the immense cultural gap that had emerged between the end of the Weimar Republic thanks to the Nazi-coup and the end of the Second World War. Twelve years of cultural and intellectual emptiness that had to be filled up as rapidly as possible through the rescue of “another” German literature, one that was very different from that written by some pen pushers celebrating the Arian race, and imposed on students and scholars through the indoctrination and manipulation of thought operated by the regime. In this sense, very important testimonials can be found in the essays of various authors of concrete poetry, like Franz Mon and Ernst Jandl, who personally experienced, as students, the utter lack of any literary movement (especially Dada and Expressionism) in the didactic programs, which were destined to

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<sup>77</sup> „das schweigen zeichnet die neue dichtung gegenüber der individualistischen dichtung aus“.

<sup>78</sup> “Ich fürchte, das man über gewisse Dinge, über die im Medium Dichtung in der Vergangenheit bereits gesprochen wurde, überhaupt nicht mehr sprechen, sie nicht mehr ausdrücken kann, wenn man nicht eine völlig andere Art, über diese Dinge zu sprechen, gefunden hat. Und ich meine, einer dieser Versuche geht eben auf diesem Weg nach unten, in die Niederungen der Sprache sozusagen, und dort ist das Leiden, das Pathos genauso vorzufinden und auszudrücken, überzeugender, ins Nähere gehend, konkreter“.



become the main poetic references in their subsequent creative activity.<sup>79</sup> In 1946, the publication of Carola Giedon-Welcker's *Anthologie der Abseitigen* showed the urgency of fixing a basis for re-thinking literature and poetry in relation to the real, contemporary context. In the anthology, texts by revolutionary authors such as Hans Arp, Hugo Ball, Kurt Schwitters, Tristan Tzara, and other pioneers whose work was seen as "an audacious advance in the new land of language"<sup>80</sup> (MON, 2009:404),<sup>81</sup> were gathered. In the same year, a part of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* was also translated and published in the first issue of the *Fahre* review; movements such as Dada, Surrealism and Expressionism, until then censored by Goebbels' propaganda, began to re-emerge, showing the extreme allure of the esthetic evolution which occurred on an international scale during such a brief and dark period.

On the basis of that same synchronic vision of literature discussed above in regard to the Brazilian context, the German authors pertaining to the so-called "Flakhelfergeneration"<sup>82</sup> (that is, young Germans personally involved in the war only after 1943) stressed the importance of the parallel rescue of their own literary tradition, marginalized for different reasons in the educational system of the Nazi-regime:

We re-discovered German literature, pursuing through the entire literary history "a "second" literature suppressed or discriminated in the schools, our own true tradition (quoted in MON, in BUSCH/COMBRINK, 2009:404).<sup>83</sup>

Then, after the (re-)discovery of both the literary tradition and the experimental movements of the preceding decades, the need for a further evolution that could go *beyond* those experiences arose. The authors of the *Wiener Gruppe* gathered at the beginning of the Fifties around the composer Gerhard Rühm to discuss problems and formulate creative answers, creating a debate on "aspects of language theory" (*sprachtheoretische Aspekte*):

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<sup>79</sup> See: Mon, Franz (1994) and: Jandl, Ernst (1990).

<sup>80</sup> „In einem kühnen Vordringen in sprachliches Neuland.“

<sup>81</sup> Giedon-Welcker's anthology has been also mentioned by Haroldo de Campos, together with Alfred Döblin's "Desaparecidos e Esquecidos" (1951). See on this: Campos, Haroldo (1972), pag. 51 *Giedon Welcker\_ and 162\_Döblin*.

<sup>82</sup> Literally translated, the expression identifies the "generation of the assistants for the anti-aircraft cannons".

<sup>83</sup> „Wir entdeckten die deutsche literatur neu, verfolgten eine von der schule unterschlagene oder diskriminierte "zweite", unsere eigentliche tradition nun zurück durch die gesamte literaturgeschichte.“

The linguistic material, freed from the causal conceptual constraint, flows into a semantically floating condition, generating surprising word sequences and images thanks to mechanical methods (quoted in MON, in BUSCH/COMBRINK 2009:404).<sup>84</sup>

Poetry had to abandon the entertainment style (*Unterhaltungsstil*) and conventional patterns, converging progressively with other arts (especially music and painting). Poetry no longer served as a means for ethical questions or as a vehicle for “ideological mischief” (*weltanschauliche unfug*), since the esthetic morals and the task of linguistic invention based on new visual and auditory arrangements substituted the ethical obligation.

*Dada* poets like Kurt Schwitters, Hugo Ball and Raoul Hausmann were considered among the most important predecessors of concrete poetry in all German-speaking countries. They experimented with oral articulations, showing total disregard for the semantic level and focusing instead on the search for the basic elements of poetic expression stemming from an auditory level (phoneme and syllable). The utterances they mumbled or shouted didn't pertain to any existing linguistic system. They aimed at revealing a rough vocal substratum, potentially present in any idiom,<sup>85</sup> therefore generating “a trans-cultural appeal within language, similar to the one already rehearsed within the ideas of music as a universal communicator” (STERNE, 2012:429). The “virtuosos of elocution” tried to revive a pure, ancestral, auditory language, by exclusively stressing its textural roots. Their works, in particular Schwitters' *Sonate in Urlauten* and Ball's *Verse ohne worte*, traced a sort of prehistory of the auditory sphere, revealing the phonetic infrastructure which “lies asleep under the frazzled coinages of both utilitarian language and artistic convention” (CAMPOS, H. 1972:44),<sup>86</sup> and enabled a comeback to the matrixes of the poetic material. Even among the *Noigandres*

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<sup>84</sup> „Das sprachliche material, sollte, aus einem kausalen begriffszusammenhang gelöst, in einem semantischen schwebezustand geraten, auf mechanischem wege überraschende wortfolger und bilder erzeugen.“

<sup>85</sup> See also: “[K. S.] é conduzido irresistivelmente à pesquisa dos próprios elementos fundamentais da expressão poética, e, visando à coisa em si dessa expressão, só se detém em sua espeologia linguística no próprio som, no fonema, na sílaba, nos radiais do idioma: não de certo e determinado idioma, mas de um substrato vocal que poderia informar qualquer língua” (CAMPOS, H. 1972:43). [Kurt Schwitters irresistibly led to the research of the very fundamental elements of the poetic expression and, aiming at the this expression itself, he only concentrates, in his linguistic speleology, on the sound, the phoneme, the syllable, the radials of the language: not on a certain, determined language, but rather on a vocal substratum that could be present in any language].

<sup>86</sup> “[...] revelando a infra-estrutura fonética adormecida sob as cunhagens gastas tanto do idioma de comunicação utilitária, como do de convenção ‘belartística’ ”.

poets, who considered the sacrifice of the semantic level as too simplistic technique for poetic composition,<sup>87</sup> these poets were highly respected, as they contributed decisively, in *Noigandres'* view, to the enlargement of the “arsenal” of expressive resources specific of poetic language, by means of what Haroldo called “sinusoidal phonemes”.<sup>88</sup>

These three authors were especially considered as honorary members of the German “avant-garde tradition”, the esthetics of which should be firstly studied and understood, and then overcome, in exactly the same manner the *Noigandres* group was doing with the artists of its *paideuma*. The leap towards a new, innovative poetry was carried out by Eugen Gomringer, whose poems *Konstellationen* (1953) and the manifesto *vom vers zur konstellation* (1954) made him, as mentioned in the second paragraph of this chapter, the “father” of concrete poetry, the first relevant personality for the development of concrete esthetics within the whole European context. His work has been seen even as a “liberating act” (*Akt der Befreiung*) that accomplished the necessary adaptation of literature to its historical contemporaneity.<sup>89</sup> Thus a brief analysis of his manifesto, also conducted under the perspective of a comparison with *Noigandres'* manifestos, cannot be neglected.

When reading *vom vers zur konstellation*, one is astonished by the similarity of several esthetic principles proposed by Gomringer with those formulated in *Noigandres'* manifestos (especially the *Pilot Plan* of 1958). And it was all the more surprising that Gomringer and the Brazilians developed this theoretical basis independently from one other, as Augusto de Campos witnessed by answering a question about the relationship between Brazilian and European concrete poetry in an interview with Marina Correa:

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<sup>87</sup>See the interview to Augusto de Campos attached in Appendix 2.

<sup>88</sup>See the following excerpt: “Schwitters contribuiu decididamente para o alargamento do arsenal de recursos expressivos específicos da linguagem poética, regenerando a matéria verbal a partir de seus radicais elementares, de seus “fonemas sinusoidais”, cujas possibilidades de manipulação trouxe à evidencia” (CAMPOS, H. 1972:47). [Schwitters contributed decisively to the widening of the arsenal of expressive resources specific of poetic language, regenerating the verbal matter starting from its elementary roots, its “sinusoidal phonemes”, whose possibilities of manipulation he evidenced].

<sup>89</sup> Here I quote a whole excerpt from Heißenbüttel’s introduction to Gomringer’s book *Konstellationen, Ideogramme, Stundenbuch* (1977): “Und eben da erkannte ich nun an den *Konstellationen* Gomringers, was man machen konnte, nicht unbedingt ich selber, aber jemand, der etwa gleich alt war, der jetzt lebte und schrieb, der bei allen möglichen Unterschieden unter denselben zeitgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen gross geworden war. [And exactly there I recognized in Gomringer’s *Konstellationen* what one could do, not just me, but rather any one with the same age as me, who lived and wrote in that same moment, who even with of all the possible differences, grew up under the same historical conditions].

It seems to me that differences have existed from the beginning, but not of a fundamental kind. Fundamental and appalling were, however, the affinities. And in such a way that made us believe that the new poetic language that we were looking for did reflect a necessity that was collective, historical, and not just some kind of idiosyncrasy or individual exhibitionism.<sup>90</sup>

Firstly, verse had to be abandoned, for a poem based on verses was “either a historical entity or an artisanal reminiscence” (GOMRINGER, 1969:278).<sup>91</sup> The proposed alternative was the “constellation”, where words had their own capability of expression, as they interacted with the other words based on an analogical principle; this resulted necessarily in a rapid communication, appropriate for the needs of the contemporary world. Secondly, the main literary references were, also for Gomringer, the late Mallarmé (*Coup de Dés*), Apollinaire, Cummings, Futurism and Dada. However, Joyce’s name appeared exclusively in relation to *Ulysses*, while two crucial works in *Noigandres’* canon, *Finnegan’s Wake* and Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*, were not mentioned at all. Thirdly, the poem turned into an object of use (*Gebrauchsgegenstand*), because it was “a reality in itself and not a poem about...” (GOMRINGER, 1969:281);<sup>92</sup> in this case, even the formulations of this shared conception approached impressively to each other were very similar.<sup>93</sup> Finally, the constellation was grounded on mathematical-combinatory patterns, and thus constituted a unity in which “mechanic and intuitive principles could be connected in the purest form” (ibidem, 282).<sup>94</sup> In *Noigandres’* “orthodox” phase, when the pilot plan was published, the three Brazilian poets also defined themselves in a moment of predominantly mathematical composition; it is no coincidence that the connections between Gomringer and *Noigandres* were particularly intense during this specific period, while after 1961, as we shall see below, the dialogue was completely interrupted.

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<sup>90</sup> See: Correa, Marina: *Concrete Poetry as an International movement viewed by Augusto de Campos: An Interview*. Available online at: <http://pt.scribd.com/doc/36967268/Concrete-Poetry-as-an-International-Movement-Viewed-by-Augusto-de-Campos>. Last access September 2016.

<sup>91</sup> „das gedicht in versform ist entweder eine historische gröÙe oder, wenn heutig, eine kunsthandwertige reminiszenz.“

<sup>92</sup> „sie [die konstellation] ist eine realität an sich und kein gedicht über...“

<sup>93</sup> See: Campos, Augusto and Haroldo; Pignatari, Décio (2006), pag. 216.

<sup>94</sup> „Und mann erkennt ferner, dass mechanistisches und intuitives prinzip in reinster form verbinden können.“

Gomringer's manifesto, however, is formally quite "disappointing", because it respects all conventional syntactic rules, with the only exception of the absence of capital letters normally used for German nouns. The linear-discursive organization of the text is never put into question, no graphic element intervenes to stress some central concern of the proposed esthetics (for instance, the concept of "constellation") or the primary role of some specific author (for example, Mallarmé or Arno Holz). The text is made up of a regular flow of drab words, conceived as mere "vehicles of meaning", and only a narrow space divides the paragraphs, as in any traditional piece of prose. In regard to conceptual differences with *Noigandres* esthetics, one point emerges with extreme clarity: there is no reference to the area of music, no concern with the contemporary development of electronic music or *Alea*, or with the revolutionary experience of the Second Viennese School. Sound in general seems absent from Gomringer's interests. The only mention of sound in the whole text occurred in defining the "only acoustically effective" experiments of Dada poetry, which "fall out of the poetic ambit" (GOMRINGER, 1969:281)<sup>95</sup> as "errors". Thus, "interdisciplinarity", for Gomringer, was reduced to the exchange with plastic arts and painting (he names Kandinsky, Klee and Mondrian), and the element of the "word" is interpreted only as a basic "building" unit. Indeed, Gomringer was, both in his personal work experience (assistant to the architect Max Bill) and in his poetical production, much more related to the visual than to the auditory aspect of language. Following him, in fact, concrete poetry relates "less to 'literature' and more to earlier developments in the fields of architecture, painting, sculpture, industrial design" (quoted in SOLT, 1969:11).

Another central figure for German concrete poetry was the philosopher and poet Max Bense, internationally renowned as one of its most important theoreticians, especially after the publication of his *Aesthetica* in four volumes (published between 1954 and 1960). In this work, Bense was particularly concerned with the "information esthetics" (*Informationsaesthetik*), which would permit the deconstruction of concrete poetics; in other words, the categories at hand in this esthetic provided the resources for focusing on the materiality of each linguistic constituent, from the simple utterance up to the entire text, via all intermediate units (syllable, word and sentence). This approach facilitated not only a critical analysis based on mathematical principles, but also the

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<sup>95</sup> „Es ist der fehler früherer versuche einer reinen wortdichtung, dass sie [...] nur klanglich wirksam waren und dann dem bereich der dichtung entfielen“.

development of a new manner of writing. Starting from 1955, his esthetic conception was publicized through the review *augenblick*, while the *rot (red)* series distinguished itself as lead resource for the publication of both essays and poems of the most prominent authors of concrete poetry in the international sphere; of course, several works of *Noigandres* were published there, especially during the Sixties. Max Bense was also a personality of capital importance for his leading role in the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, which constituted the main concern of this work in the context of German concrete poetry.

### 1.4.1 *Stuttgarter Gruppe*

The *Stuttgarter Gruppe*<sup>96</sup> appears in the “Fischer Lexicon Literature” (1996) as one of the most important and representative movements of German concrete poetry starting from the Sixties, together with *Wiener Gruppe* and *Darmstadter Kreis*. As Reinhardt Döhl underlines, the inclusion in such a valuable literary encyclopedia is the incontrovertible evidence of the true existence of this poetical circle, and allows him to respond to some provocative critical definitions of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* as an evanescent, phantasmal *Fata Morgana*.<sup>97</sup> However, if such “insinuations” have existed, some questions about the nature and experience of the group must be raised. It cannot be denied that the *SG* has a peculiar history, characterized by several contradictions, especially in regard to its constitution and development.

Differently from *Noigandres*, *SG* wasn't a very cohesive group, as its members didn't share a common set of esthetic principles that would clearly distinguish their production from that of other poets or groups within the German concrete poetry sphere. Döhl took into account the criticism of the Austrian review *Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst, Kritik*, that tried to establish two general characteristics of the *SG* as an esthetic unity: firstly, “the tradition of a so-called experimental art starting from the literary revolution”, and secondly, a “comparatively similar (theoretical) awareness in relation to the material,

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<sup>96</sup> In the following pages, the name will be shortened in the acronym *SG*.

<sup>97</sup>For this and all following quotes, see: Döhl, Reinhardt (1997). Available online at: <http://www.stuttgarter-schule.de/stuschul.htm>. Last access September 2016.

with which one works”.<sup>98</sup> I showed above to what degree “experimentation” was also present in *Noigandres*’ production (as in countless other movements within and beyond the context of concrete poetry); It should also be clear that the radical stress of “materiality” is the sole feature which can be identified as the unifying element within the vast and manifold universe of concrete esthetics around the world. The weakness of these arguments, however, is confirmed by Döhl’s next statement, where he honestly recognized that in the SG “each one goes through his own path, and realizes for himself his esthetic concepts and proposals”,<sup>99</sup> and, later in the same article, that “a common style has never existed, rather common interests”.<sup>100</sup>

The authors’ biographies were not intertwined with the history of the group, as they did not “grow up” together. Despite the explicit geographical reference contained in its name, the most representative members of *SG* originally came from some other place: Max Bense from Strasbourg, Ernst Jandl from Vienna,<sup>101</sup> Franz Mon from Frankfurt, Helmut Heißenbüttel from Rüstringen (North Germany), Reinhardt Döhl from Bochum, Ludwig Harig from the Saarland region. Moreover, the group was not founded in Stuttgart or even in Germany. The first official appearance of an *Ecole de Stuttgart* occurred in Paris in 1963, during the Third Biennale in the *Musée d’Art Moderne*, in the context of the event entitled “Art du langage”. One would expect, at least, that the “general headquarters” of *SG* were located in Stuttgart, and that its works were published through Stuttgarter publishing houses and collected in Stuttgarter archives. But this is not the case. According to Döhl, the materials related to the *SG* are more easily found in Tokyo (Mushajino Art University), Prague (Bohumila Grögerová/ Josef Hiršal collection) and Amiens (Pierre Garnier’s collection) than in the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach* (Stuttgart region).<sup>102</sup> And, while in Paris (and in other cities)

<sup>98</sup> Döhl reported the criticism published in the *Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst, Kritik*, which appeared in Graz in March 1965: „Was diese Gruppe verbinde, sei 1. die Tradition einer sogenannten experimentellen Kunst seit der Literaturrevolution und 2. ein vergleichsweise ähnliches (theoretisches) Bewußtsein den Materialien gegenüber, mit denen man arbeite“ (quoted in DÖHL, 1997)

<sup>99</sup> „Ansonsten gehe "jeder seine[r] Wege" und verwirkliche "für sich seine ästhetischen Vorstellungen und Absichten".

<sup>100</sup> „Eine Gruppenstil hat es nie gegeben, wohl aber gemeinsame Interessen.“

<sup>101</sup> Jandl was already active as a poet in Vienna, and is also considered a member of the ‘Forum Stadtpark’ in Graz; however, Reinhard Döhl, in the same text, claimed Jandl’s affiliation to the *Stuttgarter gruppe*, by stating that he was “discovered” in Stuttgart: „Ernst Jandl, der in Stuttgart entdeckt wurde, muß [...] der ‘Stuttgarter Gruppe’ zugerechnet werden“.

<sup>102</sup> „Und wer Materialien sucht [...] wird zwar nicht in Marbach, wohl aber in der Bibliothek der Mushajino Art University in Tokyo (im Nachlaß Seichii Niikuni), im Museum der tschechischen Nationalliteratur in Prag (in der Sammlung Bohumila Grögerová/ Josef Hiršal), in der Bibliothek in Amiens (Sammlung Ilse und Pierre Garnier) und anderen Orts fündig“.

numerous articles on happenings and events organized or participated in by the *SG* were published, the Stuttgarter press paid very little attention to their activities carried out in Stuttgart. Finally, *SG* was a very short-lived movement. The reading that occurred in Stuttgart in 1969 (with Döhl, Heißenbüttel and Harig) was, in Lawrence Alloways' words, a definitive farewell (*Abgesang*) to the "heroic phase" of *SG*. After 1970, the possibility for orthodox, rigorous concrete poetry seemed to be exhausted, and the members of the *SG* began to concern themselves more and more with other kinds of research, or return back to their original home cities definitively.

All these features of the *SG* become evident when one searches for theoretical publications and/or anthologies of texts exclusively pertaining to this group. Publications similar to *Noigandres'* "Theory of concrete poetry" or "Grupo Noigandres: arte concreta paulista" simply do not exist. It is true that Bense and Döhl published a sort of manifesto entitled "*zur lage*" ("About the situation") in 1964, but as both the late date of publication and the chosen title suggest, it is intended more as a report of the contemporary evolution of poetry in the last decade than as a proposal of new principles conceived by the *SG* itself. As one would have expected after familiarizing with the very scarce cohesiveness of the *SG*, the manifesto contains no specific reference to any of its members, while very general principles possibly shared by all poetic groups affiliated to concrete esthetics are presented with some vagueness. The poet, in particular, was considered "an artisan, whose concern was aimed at language, the material he needed to manufacture patterns and structures which he methodically handled" (BENSE/DÖHL in GOMRINGER, 2001:167).<sup>103</sup> Thus, working on poetry was a "poietike techné" (ibidem, 168), aimed at producing a material object, with no sentimental or ethical concerns. Actually, none of these propositions suggested anything new. However, one crucial difference in regard to Gomringer's manifesto of 1954 must be noted: music is mentioned as one of the art forms that influenced (and was influenced by) poetry, and the reference to sound in general is stated several times throughout the document. Among the six "tendencies" of contemporary poetry listed on the second page of the manifesto, two are explicitly connected with the auditory sphere: "Akustische" and "Phonetische Poesie".<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> "ein handwerker, dessen augenmerk der sprache, den materialien gilt, derer er bei der verfertigung seiner reihe und strukturen bedarf, die er methodisch handhabt."

<sup>104</sup> See: Bense, Max; Döhl, Reinhard. In: Gomringer, Eugen (2001), pag. 168.



If the absence of any reference to sound in Gomringer's manifesto is, in my view, the witness of a serious lack of his esthetics, one that questions its supposedly central position in the subsequent development of European concrete poetry. The concern with music expressed in the manifesto *zur lage* is a sufficient demonstration of the significant contribution of the SG to the evolution of German concrete poetry, intended as a more multifaceted form of art, no longer constrained in an exclusive dialogue with typography, painting and the plastic arts. However, even if the connection with poetry with the auditory sphere was generally a fundamental concern in the context of the SG, not all its members equally participated in the direct production of sound poetry or *Hörspiele* (Radio Play): Bense and Döhl were mostly renowned for their theoretical contributions, while Harig and Heißenbüttel for their work mainly connected with the production of *Hörspiele*. Only Ernst Jandl and Franz Mon developed a more diversified approach to sound production, experimenting with both *Hörspiele* and *Sprech- and Lautgedichte*.<sup>105</sup> Thus the two latter poets were chosen in the present study. It wasn't possible to draw a profile of the *Stuttgarter gruppe* in the way I could in regard to *Noigandres*, so an introductory paragraph on the specificity of these two personalities is necessary.

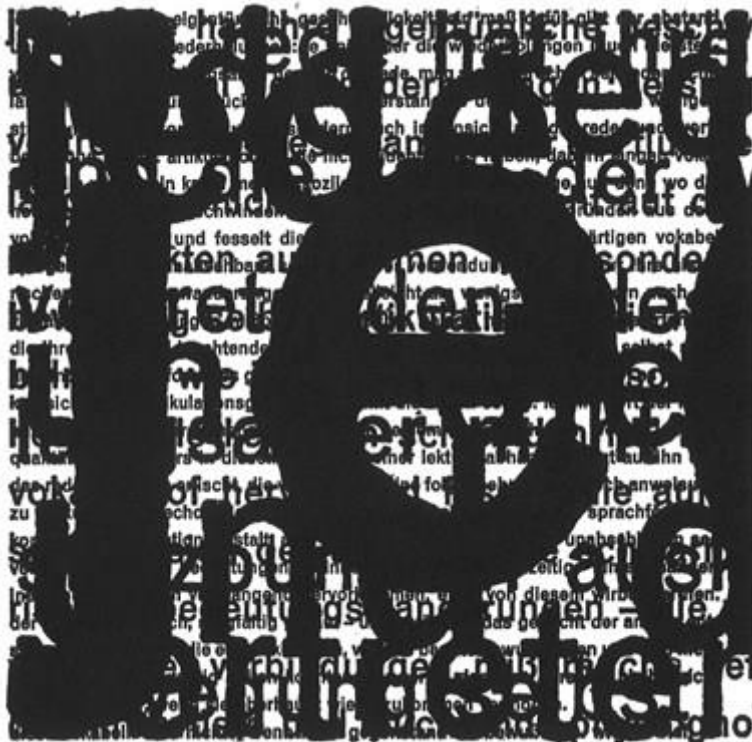
Franz Mon's production can be divided into at least three different phases: scriptural, visual and acoustic/auditory.<sup>106</sup> His first phase is closer to Surrealist literature, which he became aware of thanks to the painter Otto Götz. Mon was later fascinated "by the grammar of the baroque Justus Georg Schottel with respect to his exemplar wordlists" (MON in BUSCH/COMBRINK, 2009:417)<sup>107</sup> and by the graphic composition of pages in contemporary journals and newspapers. Consequently, he proposed a kind of typography that would generate a "spatial rather than temporal articulation of written language" (SOLT, 1969:18), one that would remind the reader of the pictorial origin of writing, capable of expressing meanings that conventional written letters could not express. In this sense, one very specific kind of visual poem he developed was the so-called "poetry of surface", where the readable text is put into the "negative areas between fragmented letter forms" (SOLT, *ibidem*).

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<sup>105</sup> In this case, the bibliographical source for this methodological choice was the extensive, three-volume written by Christian Scholz (1988); for this specific matter, I have utilized the second volume, that collects the entire discography of international sound poetry.

<sup>106</sup> See: Solt, Mary Ellen (1968), pag. 20. See also the interview with Franz Mon (Appendix 2)

<sup>107</sup> „Eine Anregung war beim Studium der Grammatik des barocken Justus Georg Schottel angesichts deren exemplarischer Wörterlisten gekommen.“



After knowing Schwitter's and Hausmann's work,<sup>108</sup> Mon began to concern himself with the vocal-auditory aspect of poetic speech and he developed a composition process based on the articulation of both verbal and non-verbal sound sequences. For him, in fact, literary texts do not consist of words that only mean one thing; they also have an "articulation structure" (*Artikulationsstruktur*) that becomes audible when read aloud. *Artikulationen* is also the title of his first poetic collection, published in 1959 and re-edited in 1994 in the two-volume anthology *Gesammelte Texte*, which gathers both his theoretical essays and his poetic/visual works. The auditory aspect of Mon's poetry was not conceived of as an isolated, hermetically sealed entity, but was instead intended as

<sup>108</sup> Citing his first contact with sound poetry, Mon named Hausmann's work; without specifying the recording he was referring to, Mon stated: "Hausmann hatte eine kleine Schallplatte besprochen, die mir zugänglich wurde" [Hausmann had recorded a little LP, that became accessible to me]. See: Mon, Franz in: Busch, Bernd; Combrink, Thomas (2009), pag. 418.



Regarding his concern with the auditory aspect of concrete poetry, he was defined by Schöning as “one of the most consistent artisans of the new *hörspiel* (along with Mon, Rühm and Kagel)”,<sup>111</sup> as he introduced several new processes which had a consistent influence on its evolution, especially in regard to notation, acoustic realization and theory. His emergence as one of the most representative authors in the sphere of the so-called *Neues hörspiel* dates back to the realization of *fünf mann menschen* (1969). This radio play was awarded with the prestigious *Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden* on the basis of the following judgment by the jury: “*fünf mann menschen* has taken on in an exemplary way the means of concrete poetry in the Hörspiel” (SCHÖNING, 1983:204).<sup>112</sup> He was so attentive to the “correct” acoustic realization of his works, that he evaluated the notational possibilities of acoustic parameters as inefficient and he took charge the direction of his production of *Hörspiele* starting from 1970 (for the realization of *das röcheln der monna lisa*). This concern was easily understandable if one considers the crucial role assigned by Jandl to the *neues hörspiel*, intended as an artwork “liberating the human voice from linguistic conventions” (SCHÖNING, 1983: 208),<sup>113</sup> and thus continuing a process already begun with Dada sound poetry in the Twenties. Moreover, Jandl’s experience with the production of *Sprechgedichte* helped him to develop the form of the short-*Hörspiel* and to integrate it in a new esthetics of the radio.

These superficial insights on the production of two authors from the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* served as an introduction aimed at outlining their main characteristics, but a more profound treatise of their concerns with music and the auditory aspect in general shall follow in later in this chapter. Before addressing this question, however, it also seemed important to outline the nature of the relationships between the *Noigandres* group and the poets of *Konkrete Poesie*, especially regarding the claims advanced by the former in relation to the latter, which cannot be overlooked in the perspective of the subsequent analysis.

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<sup>111</sup> See: Schöning, Klaus (1983), pag. 221: „Neben Franz Mon, Mauricio Kagel und Gerhard Rühm, um drei zu nennen, ist Ernst Jandl einer der konsequentesten Handwerker des (Neuen) Hörspiele“

<sup>112</sup> „(...) in exemplarischer Weise die Mittel der Konkreten Poesie ins Spiel übernimmt“.

<sup>113</sup> „Eines der ‚achievements‘ des Neuen Hörspiele was ja überhaupt die Befreiung der menschlichen Stimme aus Sprechkonventionen“.

## 1.5 Brazilian-German relationships

When considering the relationship between *Noigandres* and *Konkrete Poesie* poets during the Fifties and Sixties, it is valuable to consider that much Brazilian cultural discourse in the mid-1950s was colored by awareness of colonialism and the hegemonic relationships between industrialized nations and the “Third World”. In that period, even Brazilian intellectuals minimized the role of Brazilian literature in the international context, by “deny[ing] purely and simply any integration of Brazilian literature on an international level, by reason of vainglorious *tropicalism*” (CAMPOS, H. quoted in FRANCHETTI, 2012:44),<sup>114</sup> without questioning its “officially” assigned role of “exotic literature”. The *Noigandres* poets challenged this conservative commonplace, trying to subvert the dominant center-periphery logic, conducting a critical revolt against the idea that an economically underdeveloped country produced necessarily underdeveloped art. The opposition to this apparently unassailable law was mainly grounded on Marxist ideals, as shown in by some statements in *Noigandres* essays from Marx’s and Engels’s *Manifesto*,<sup>115</sup> the formulation of the neologism “marxillar” (Marx + maxillary) for expressing the anthropophagic character of their poetry, or the explicit reference to the Engels-Conrad Schmidt correspondence in Haroldo’s 1962 essay.<sup>116</sup> However, *Noigandres*’ position was defined by the poets as “critical nationalism”, for Brazil was conceived as a national subject “in dialogical and dialectic relation with the universal”,<sup>117</sup> and not as a perpetually subjugated entity. *Noigandres* poets proudly

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<sup>114</sup> “Negando pura e simplesmente qualquer integração da literatura brasileira num plano de experiência internacional, por razões de tropicalismo porquemeufanista (sic), como se lhe fosse destinado, sem remissão, o papel de literatura exótica ou de exceção”.

<sup>115</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo (2006), pag. 233. “Manifesto de Marx e Engels: ‘Em lugar do antigo isolamento das províncias e das nações bastando-se a si próprias, desenvolvem-se relações universais, uma interdependência universal de nações. E o que é verdadeiro quanto à produção material o é também no tocante às produções do espírito’”. [Manifesto by Marx and Engels: “Instead of the ancient isolation of self-sufficient provinces and nations, universal relations are developed, a universal interrelationship of nations. And what is true in relation to material production is also true for what concerns spiritual production]. Further references to Engels’ ideas can be found in the same chapter (pag.232).

<sup>116</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo: *A poesia concreta e a realidade nacional*, Tendência n. 4, Belo Horizonte, 1962.

<sup>117</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo (2006), pag. 234: (...) Pensar o nacional em relacionamento dialógico e dialético com o universal. A “antropofagia” Oswaldiana (...) é o pensamento da devoração crítica do legado cultural universal, elaborado não a partir da perspectiva submissa e reconciliada do “bom selvagem” (...) mas segundo o ponto de vista desabusado do “mau selvagem”, devorador de brancos, antropófago. [ (...) To think of the national in dialogic and dialectic relationship with the universal. The Oswaldian “anthropofagy” (...) is the the the critical devouring of the cultural world heritage, elaborated

presented themselves as main contributors “to the very formulation of an avant-garde poetic movement in national and international terms”, and claimed their work as crucial for making Brazilian poetry “totally contemporary” (CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006:211).<sup>118</sup> They stressed their leading role in the esthetic revolution occurring on a global scale during the Fifties, breaking the “tradition” of cultural backwardness that always characterized Brazilian art in relation to European. Brazilian culture was no longer presented as being influenced by European art after a delay of one (or more) decade(s), as always happened before the launch of *Noigandres*’ poetry.

Moreover, *Noigandres* poets worked intensely to reclaim Brazilian literary and critical contributions whose significance was barely recognized (if not explicitly contested), stressing, for example, the importance of the innovatively rationalist and objective “*poesia de construção*” (poetry of construction) developed by João Cabral de Melo Neto after overcoming the surrealistic alogic of his initial phase, and especially in the work *O Engenheiro* (1945). Cabral was also taken as a model for his critical work, especially for his concern with the communicational problems in literature. He indicated the poets’ preference for intimistic and individualistic themes as the main reason for the “divorce” between contemporary poetry and the reading public, criticizing works written in the first person which were characterized by a total lack of organization and construction. These appeared, in Cabral’s perspective, to be similar to a sort of “accumulation of poetic material (...) chaotically abandoned in a deposit box” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:83).<sup>119</sup> José de Alencar’s romance *Iracema* was also a riveting work for *Noigandres* group. It used very peculiar language that tried to imitate the phonic character of the *tupi* language, in particular “[its] agglutinant vocalism [...], such as it was described by the chronicler of the colonization and by the first grammarians of the catechesis” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:156).<sup>120</sup> In order to create this peculiar literary

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not starting from the submissive and reconciled perspective of the “good savage” (...), but from the disillusioned point of view of the “bad savage”, swallower of white people, cannibal].

<sup>118</sup> “A poesia brasileira é totalmente contemporânea, ao participar na própria formulação de um movimento poético de vanguarda em termos nacionais e internacionais, e não simplesmente em sentir-lhe as consequências com uma ou muitas décadas de atraso, como é o caso até mesmo do *Movimento do 22*”. [Brazilian poetry is totally contemporary, by participating in the very grounding of a poetic avant-garde movement in national and international terms, and no more simply by feeling the consequences with one or many decades of delay, as it was the case even of the *Movimento do 22*].

<sup>119</sup> “O simples acúmulo de material poético (...) atirado desordenadamente numa caixa de depósito”

<sup>120</sup> “O vocalismo aglutinante dessa língua geral, tal como a descreveram os cronistas da descoberta e da colonização da terra e os primeiros gramáticos da catequese.”

language, he disseminated the text with phonic metaphors, paronomasias, anagrams, playing with the figures of the *signifier* and constituting affinities between fragmented words. In sum, Alencar somehow anticipated processes which were further experimented by concrete poets. But the most important reference for the *Noigandres* group in the Brazilian context was undoubtedly the modernist poet Oswald de Andrade, whose work was mocked or totally unheeded, especially in the immediate post WWII period, during the “domination” of the *Geração de 45* in the literary scene. The *Noigandres* group considered De Andrade as a guiding light, especially for his *Manifesto antropofago* (1928), where the incorporation of the literary canon was conceived of as an expropriator and “devourativ” act realized by the ex-centric, de-centered Latin-American writer. The *Noigandres* poets used this concept for presenting Brazil as the legitimate leader of a new synthesis of the universal esthetic code and the poetic function itself, which was not simply “inherited” from Europe, but rather “assumed, criticized, re-masticated”. They even claimed that Oswaldian anthropofagy inspired the development of “proto-structuralism”, for it could be seen as a “brutalist” (*brutalista*) form of deconstruction realized before the import of the Derridean concept of “deconstruction of the proud western, European *logocentrism*” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:261).<sup>121</sup> The Oswaldian “Anthropophagic act” was not intended as an exclusively theoretical concept, but rather a constant concern regarding the effective compositional practice of *Noigandres*’ production, influencing its anti-normative, “baroque” character and its profound “Latin American vocation”. In Haroldo’s words:

Combinatory and playful poli-culturalism, the parody-like transmutation of meanings and values, the open and multilingual hybridization are the devices responsible for the constant alimentation and re-alimentation of this baroque Almagest: the carnivalized (*carnivalizada*) trans-encyclopedia of the new barbarians, where everything can coexist with everything.<sup>122</sup> (CAMPOS, H. 2006:251)

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<sup>121</sup> “Para nos não é nova a idéia de ‘desconstrução’ do orgulhoso logocentrismo ocidental, europeu, à maneira preconizada por Derrida, uma vez que já tínhamos a antropofagia oswaldiana, que é, por si mesma, uma forma ‘brutalista’ de ‘desconstrução’”.

<sup>122</sup> “O policulturalismo combinatório e lúdico, a transmutação paródica de sentido e valores, a hibridização aberta e multilíngue, são os dispositivos que respondem pela alimentação e realimentação constantes desse almagesto barroquista: a transenciclopedia carnavalizada dos novos bárbaros, onde tudo pode coexistir com tudo.”

The baroque nature of *Noigandres* poetry was most probably the principal discriminating factor in respect to Gomringer's pure, architectural forms. The Swiss concrete poet, more directly linked to Max Billian's plastic minimalism and the constructivism of the Dada poet Hans Arp, continued to develop more static and balanced compositions, characterized by "asceticism and purism" during the Sixties. His production was seen by the Brazilian poets as "neutral" and "aseptic", far away from the playful and semantic dimensions of *Noigandres* poems, with their kinetic features and the openness of their possible readings. Augusto also claimed the originality of Brazilian "more spatial, organic forms, assimilating neologisms and vocabulary fragmentations", integrated with esthetic principles developed in the context of concrete painting, and with some fundamental musical references (especially Webern's music). On the basis of these elements, Haroldo traced the basic discriminating lines between *Noigandres*' and Gomringer's poetry:

Despite its divestment and its voluntary delimitation of means (...), Brazilian concrete poetry appeared irremediably to critics and observers (...) as baroque (*barroquista*), multiple, manifold, in comparison with the severe orthogonality of Gomringer's *konstellationen*, limpid and pure like a Billian composition. Our "difference" produced a different result in the chemical composition of the poem, even if the global data of the new poetic program had some common points (CAMPOS, H. 2006:248).<sup>123</sup>

Actually, the Brazilians proposed, from the very beginning of the Sixties, more complex speculations, like "the investigations driven by the incorporation of "chance", under the influence of the ideas of Cage, Mallarmé's posthumous aleatoric "Le Livre" and the semiotics of Peircian origins, in addition to the re-appropriation of Duchamp's "readymades", rehabilitated in the 1960s". Briefly, as Augusto summed up, Gomringer "seem[ed] to have remained more faithful to the initial orthodoxy, while the Brazilians continued to be more experimental and baroquizing".<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> "Apesar de seu despojamento e de sua voluntária delimitação de meios (...) a poesia concreta brasileira, para os críticos e os observadores (...) parecia irremediavelmente barroquista, plurima, polifacética, ao ser comparada à austera ortogonalidade das *konstellationen* de Gomringer, límpidas e puras como uma composição de Bill. Nossa "diferença" produziu uma resultante diversa na química do poema, ainda que os dados globais do novo programa poético tivessem pontos em comum."

<sup>124</sup> For this and all following quotations see: Correa, Marina: *Concrete Poetry as an International Movement viewed by Augusto de Campos: An Interview*. Available at:



However, during the years of the Brazilian “*orthodox*” phase (1956-1961), Gomringer’s poetry had numerous points in common with the *Noigandres* production. The meeting between Décio Pignatari and Eugen Gomringer in 1955 was the first contact between Brazilian and European concrete poetry. Both poets admired Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de Dés*, “which was then regarded as a poetic failure by the mainstream”, and which, instead, represented for them the first step in direction of an irrevocable *simplification* and *concentration* of the poetical language. Gomringer was explicitly defined by Augusto as “the first European poet in whom we [*Noigandres*] found the affinities we were searching for”,<sup>125</sup> and he was also considered the international co-launcher of the movement.<sup>126</sup> Haroldo, in turn, underlined Gomringer’s significance by stating that “he [...] strove, in chronological contemporaneity with some young poets from São Paulo, to understand the dialectic evolution of the poetic forms [...]”<sup>127</sup> (quoted in FRANCHETTI, 2012:102). For several years, *Noigandres* poets and Gomringer “approached each other a lot, arriving at a kind of least common denominator of poetical language and even at the one-word-poem”. The dialogue between *Noigandres* group and Gomringer led to an agreement on the definition of “concrete poetry” as a general and internationally valid formulation for the new esthetics they were proposing. In Haroldo’s view, only starting from that point could concrete poetry be considered an international movement.<sup>128</sup>

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<http://pt.scribd.com/doc/36967268/Concrete-Poetry-as-an-International-Movement-Viewed-by-Augusto-de-Campos>. Last access September 2016.

<sup>125</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>126</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo (1972), pag. 202. “Mesmo os poemas da fase “geométrica” foram [...] acusados pejorativamente de “barroquistas”, por seu caráter cinético, de matriz aberta de leituras [...], em contraste com a ascese e o purismo das composições equilibradas e mais estáticas do co-lançador internacional do movimento, o suíço Eugen Gomringer.” [Even the poems of the geometric phase, were [...] accused pejoratively of being “baroque”, for their kinetic character, their open matrix of possible readings [...], in contrast with the ascent and purism of the balanced and more static compositions of the international co-launcher of the movement, the Swiss Eugen Gomringer].

<sup>127</sup>“Gomringer [...] empenhou-se, em contemporaneidade cronológica com o que vinham fazendo alguns jovens poetas de São Paulo, em compreender a dialética evolutiva das formas poéticas [...]”

<sup>128</sup> See the following excerpt: “Havia muito pontos em comum no programa poético dos brasileiros do grupo *Noigandres* e no do poeta suíço das *Konstellationen*. Esboçou-se então um movimento, em base internacional, tendo Gomringer, em 1956, aceito o título geral proposto pelos brasileiros: poesia concreta, e que, desde então, passou a ter transito universal (CAMPOS, H. 2006:248). [There were many common points in the poetical program of the Brazilian poets of the *Noigandres* group and that of the Swiss poet of the *Konstellationen*. Then, an international movement began to be sketched, for Gomringer accepted, in 1956, the general denomination proposed by the Brazilians: concrete poetry, that, since then on, had a universal transit].

When contact between *Noigandres* and Gomringer became more and more sporadic, a new personality intervened in the exchanges between Brazilian and German concrete poetry: Max Bense, who worked with poetry from a semiotic and logical perspective. In this case, the concern of *Noigandres* regarded less Bense's poetic production than the strictly theoretical aspects proposed in his monumental *Esthetics* in four volumes; his text *Kleine Aesthetik* (Little esthetics) of 1968 was even translated into Portuguese and published under Haroldo de Campos' supervision. In the latter's perspective, Bense's work showed "the concern for putting the esthetics in "situation" [...] in the setting of contemporary thought, enriching it with the terminological instruments of the new scientific formulations [...], and, most of all, placing it in the general body of communication and information theory, with the contribution of Shannon's mathematical linguistics, Norbert Wiener's cybernetics and Morris and Carnap's semiotics" (CAMPOS, H. 2006:22).<sup>129</sup>

Bense's conception of a "union or combination of languages" realized by concrete poetry was shared by *Noigandres* poets, who also agreed on recognizing, in this unifying linguistic intention, the basis for making concrete poetry "the first international poetical movement". Moreover, through his new esthetics, Bense managed to actualize the terminological arsenal of poetry by including processes of non-artistic extraction, for the identification, analysis and comprehension of the artistic products. Also, his concern with semiotics and communication theory was crucial for *Noigandres'* poets, and especially for Décio Pignatari, who translated McLuhan's pioneering work *Understanding Media* (1964) into Portuguese and also published various books and essays on the relationships between literature, semiotics and communication in the new media.<sup>130</sup> The first personal meeting with Bense occurred in 1959, when Haroldo de Campos visited the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* in Ulm, exactly the same institution where Gomringer had met Décio Pignatari four years before. During the next three

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<sup>129</sup> "Bense reúne, por um lado, o interesse pela obra de arte inventiva, ampliando-o, inclusive, do setor puramente literário para o das artes plásticas; do outro, a preocupação de colocar a estética em "situação" (...) no conjunto do pensamento contemporâneo, enriquecendo-a com o instrumental terminológico das novas formulações científicas (...) e, sobretudo, enquadrando-a no corpo geral da teoria da comunicação e da informação, com os aportamentos da linguística matemática de Shannon, da cibernética de Norbert Wiener e da semiótica de Morris e Carnap."

<sup>130</sup> See for instance: *Informação, linguagem, comunicação* (1968), *Contracomunicação* (1971) *Comunicação poética* (1978).

years (1961-1964)<sup>131</sup> Bense made four trips to Brazil and organized several exhibitions in Stuttgart, which were at least in part dedicated to *Noigandres* (as it is possible to see in the chronology–Appendix 1). His strong interest in Brazil is also witnessed by a constructivist poem dedicated to Rio de Janeiro’s unique mountainous environment, in which he managed to “create metaphor and onomatopoeia as well to express the character of the city and his love for it” (SOLT, 1969:17).<sup>132</sup> In 1964, Haroldo de Campos himself was invited to organize five seminars on Brazilian modern literature at the *Technische Hochschule* in Stuttgart, very well received both by critics and the public, making German students and scholars aware of the (unsuspected) modernity of contemporary Brazilian literature. The concept of an “anthropophagic act” was also explained by Döhl in his brief report of Haroldo’s seminars:

In 1928, Oswald de Andrade founded the "Anthropophagic Movement" thus definitively giving the Brazilian poets the signal for “eating” the acquisitions of foreign literatures and to "transform and further develop them in accordance with the creative spirit of Brazil”.<sup>133</sup>

Bense was the only representative of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* with whom the Brazilians kept in strict contact during the Sixties; however, his effective poetical production showed only few common points with *Noigandres* practice, also due to his lack of concern with the musical aspects and the auditory sphere in general.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> On this, see also: Walther-Bense, Elisabeth: *A relação de Haroldo de Campos com a poesia concreta alemã, em especial com Max Bense*. In: *Transluminura, Revista de estética e literatura*, n.1, 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Another explicit tribute to Brazil was made in the poem “Calypso”, included in: Jandl, Ernst: *Laut und Luise* (1966). The poem consists of some verses written in a strange mixed language, halfway between German and English: *ich was not yet/in brasilien/nach brasilien/wulld ich laik du go*.

<sup>133</sup> „1928 begründete Oswald de Andrade dann das "Antropophagic Mouvement" und gab damit endgültig das Signal für die brasilianischen Dichter, die Errungenschaften fremder Literaturen zu "essen" und "entsprechend dem schöpferischen Geist Brasiliens umzuformen" und fortzuführen“ (DÖHL, 1964). Available online at: <http://www.stuttgarter-schule.de/camposstu.htm>. Last access in January 2016.

<sup>134</sup> According to the discography of sound poetry compiled by Christian Scholz, Bense’s production in this sphere was limited to the *Hörspiel* entitled “Der Monolog der Terry Jo” (broadcasted in 1968) in collaboration with Ludwig Harig.

## 1.6 Concrete poetry and music

As was briefly illustrated in the previous paragraphs, the main representatives of concrete poetry both in Brazil and Germany followed the developments in contemporary painting and plastic arts, architecture and music with the greatest interest. They were concerned with all aspects of the “cultural spring” which developed immediately after the end of the Second World War. However, as the present study focuses on the relationship of concrete poets with *sound*, I believed it essential to conclude this first, more general part with an outline of the collaborations of concrete poets with both *avant-garde* and popular composers and singers, in an attempt to highlight their interest in music through their own explicit statements from interviews or written in their numerous critical essays. By focusing on these essays, no reference will be made to any process or principle effectively applied in the composition of concrete poems. This aspect pertains to the analysis of the selected corpus of works that will follow in the third chapter.

Even if a new and more complex kind of connection between poetry and music began to develop starting from the second decade of the XX century,<sup>135</sup> the “classical” poet-composer collaborations - a common practice of setting highly valued lyric works (such as, for example, in the case of Schubert-Goethe or Schönberg-George) to music - was still frequent in the context of concrete poetry.

### 1.6.1 *Noigandres*

The *Noigandres* group emerged in a context of great cultural development, developing with particular intensity in the rich city of São Paulo, but involving the whole Brazilian subcontinent. In the same year of the publication of the Pilot Plan (1958), a new phase in Brazilian popular music was opened. *Bossa Nova*<sup>136</sup> inaugurated a period of exceptionally intense development of revolutionary musical forms and sonorities, further sustained by the *Tropicalia* movement founded by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto

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<sup>135</sup>This happens, basically, when compositional principles taken from both poetry and music are superimposed within a unique, hybrid and multilayered “sound object”. The poet-composer tried to gather most of the technical tools in both spheres and use them in his creative practice, abandoning the conventional systems upon which both the poet and the musician were constrained until then. The interplay between different types of “discourses”, which is the basis of concrete poetry, broke the old, clearly defined borders, making them into a sort of floating membrane.

<sup>136</sup> The main developers were the singers and composers Tom Jobim and João Gilberto and the writer Vinicius de Moraes.

Gil in 1967, and later enriched by many other artists who made the Brazilian musical scene one of the most interesting and beloved on a worldwide scale.<sup>137</sup>

The poets of *Noigandres*, who were always involved with a critical activity addressed to all aspects of Brazilian cultural life, participated with the greatest enthusiasm in the development of both *Bossa nova* and *Tropicalismo*, which broke conventional laws and limits, daring the conservative critics and public with their unprecedented experimentations.<sup>138</sup> Similarly to *Noigandres* in poetry or Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer in architecture, João Gilberto and Caetano Veloso contributed to the evolution of Brazilian art, making it an “exportable” product.<sup>139</sup> Augusto de Campos in particular carried out truly significant critical activity regarding Brazilian popular music, a valuable sample of which is offered by the renowned collection of articles and essays entitled *Balanço de Bossa e outras bossas* (1968).<sup>140</sup> In regard to *Bossa Nova*, Augusto especially highlighted the fruitful intermingling between popular patterns and compositional principles taken from the European *avant-garde*, and pointed out the valorization of the pause as an exemplary case, which was particularly developed in Anton Webern’s music.<sup>141</sup> Augusto also underlined that the closing of the gap between popular and erudite music was not the consequence of a planned or even forced

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<sup>137</sup>In spite of the very short duration of the *Tropicalia* movement (1967-69) due to Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil’s forced exile in England, its effects have been really valuable and both its founders succeeded in continuously re-inventing their music in the following decades. Their activity still continues today on a worldwide scale (I personally attended one of their concerts in Milan in July 2015).

<sup>138</sup> I am not affirming here that both singers developed the same esthetics, as they were extremely different; I am just suggesting their approach based on their revolutionary role in Brazilian music. As for the courage of Caetano Veloso, Augusto affirmed: “Desmentindo as previsões de impopularidade dos que julgam que é preciso simplificar e “quadranizar” tudo para ser entendido e aceito pelas audiências brasileiras” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:64). [Contradicting the predictions of unpopularity by those who judge that it was necessary to simplify and “make a square” of everything, in order to be understood and accepted by the Brazilian public].

<sup>139</sup> Following Augusto de Campos, *Bossa Nova* realized the Oswaldian “anthropophagic act” in the musical sphere: “[...] A bossa nova [...], a partir da redução drástica e da racionalização das técnicas estrangeiras, desenvolv[eu] novas tecnologias e criou realizações autônomas, exportáveis e exportadas para todo o mundo.” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:60) [Bossa-nova [...], starting from the drastic reduction and the rationalization of foreign techniques, developed new technologies and created autonomous realizations, exportable and exported all over the world].

<sup>140</sup> The first edition was published in 1968. However, the quotations refer to the fourth edition published in 1986.

<sup>141</sup> Actually, this is just one of the several aspects through which popular music approached much *avant-garde* music, and especially post-Weberian and electronic music, as well as Concretism in the arts in general. In regard to the approach between João Gilberto and Anton Webern, Augusto wrote a special kind of essay/poem in the Cagean style of *A year from Monday*. See: Campos, Augusto (1986), pag. 313 ff.

adoption of *avant-garde* musical processes, but rather it occurred as “an almost intuitive process, a true convergence of sensibilities” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:27).<sup>142</sup>

Moreover, *Bossa Nova* proposed an “isomorphism” similar to that promoted by *Noigandres* which was also present in some musical works of the post-weberian phase, such as Stockhausens’s *Gesang der Jünglinge*.<sup>143</sup> For Augusto, “a dialectic process between music and lyrics, similar to concrete ‘isomorphism’, was realized in several songs”.<sup>144</sup> In regard to some *Bossa Nova* lyrics, Augusto recognized that “they show a tendency [...] that corresponds to the manifestations of the poetic avant-garde, participating together with it in the same cultural process” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:39).

The *Tropicalismo* was of even greater importance for *Noigandres*; Augusto was particularly attracted by Caetano Veloso’s unconventionality and bravery in struggling against the still widespread conservative musical patterns. In 1966, in an article entitled “Boa palavra sobre a musica popular” in homage to Caetano’s song “Boa palavra”, Augusto decisively defended the young Bahian composer from all critics by affirming the necessity “to commend Caetano Veloso [...] and the opportune rebellion against the ‘order of the backward step’” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:143).<sup>145</sup> Augusto’s continual support to the experimental approach of Caetano’s music gave rise to a great friendship based on the sharing of the “imperative of invention”. Beyond the concrete poetry developed by *Noigandres*, Caetano was introduced by Augusto to Joyce’s *Finnegans wake* and *Ulysses*, which stimulated him to further develop all kinds of verbal wordplays within his lyrics, his “assemblage process and the direct and explosive juxtapositions of vocabulary sonorities” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:289),<sup>146</sup> that was among the main characteristics of concrete esthetics.<sup>147</sup> Later, a more strict artistic collaboration with

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<sup>142</sup> “Trata-se, antes, de um processo de aproximação quase intuitivo, de uma verdadeira convergência de sensibilidade”.

<sup>143</sup> In regard to this, also see the next chapter, and in particular paragraph (2.3) concerning the musical patterns re-utilized in concrete poetry.

<sup>144</sup> “Há mesmo letras que parecem não ter sido concebidas desligadamente da composição musical, mas que, ao contrário, cuidam de identificar-se com ela, num processo dialético semelhante àquele que os poetas concretos definiram como isomorfismo” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:38). [Some lyrics don’t seem to have been conceived separately from the accompanying music, but, on the contrary, they identify with it in a dialectic process similar to that defined as “isomorphism” by the concrete poets].

<sup>145</sup> “É preciso saudar Caetano Veloso [...] e sua oportuna rebelião contra a ‘ordem do passo atrás’.”

<sup>146</sup> “[...] o processo de montagem e justaposição direta e explosiva de sonoridades vocabulares.”

<sup>147</sup> “A modernidade dos textos de Caetano e Gil tem feito com que muitos os aproximem dos poetas concretos. De fato, existem muitas afinidades entre os dois grupos. Quanto a mim, creio, mesmo, que Caetano è o maior poeta da geração jovem” (CAMPOS, A., 1986:286). [The modernity of the texts of Caetano and Gil ensured their approximation to the concrete poets. In fact, many affinities exist between both groups. As for me, I believe that Caetano is really the greatest poet of the young generation].

Augusto was established, especially during the Seventies, resulting for example in the setting to music of the poems *Dias Dias Dias* (from the collection *Poetamenos*, 1953) and *O Pulsar* (1975).<sup>148</sup> Similarly to *Bossa Nova*, *Tropicalia* also included several processes borrowed from the erudite context in its music, namely the experiments with electronic sonorities and the assemblage techniques similar to those developed by *musique concrète*, that “extend the listener’s auditory horizon towards a musical universe where dissonance and noise are common” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:154).<sup>149</sup>

Thus, a general tendency of convergence between the popular and the erudite cultural spheres became more and more evident.<sup>150</sup> However, if the contact between popular music and concrete poetry resulted from such a fruitful exchange, the former more than the latter seems to have the greatest merit. In fact, while many popular singers showed a peculiar openness to more complex language, both in relation to music and lyrics, I would agree with Paulo Franchetti (2012) that the *Noigandres* group always tried to make mass communication and culture more “erudite” rather than to turn erudite production in something easily accessible to the lowest levels of the Brazilian society.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, the connection of *Noigandres* with music occurred in first instance on an erudite level, namely with the courses at J.H. Koellreuter’s *Escola livre de musica* (Free School of Music), where the three young poets came in contact for the first time with the twelve-tone technique. Haroldo also highlighted the chronological coincidence between

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<sup>148</sup> Other significant collaborations with the main representative of *MPB* (Música Popular Brasileira) were developed with Walter Franco and Tom Zé; the first concrete poem appearing in a plate available within the commercial circuit was Augusto’s *Cidade-city-cité* (1963), which was included in Tom Zé’s LP of the same name (1970).

<sup>149</sup> “As sonoridades eletrônicas ampliam o horizonte acústico do ouvinte para um universo musical onde são comuns a dissonância e o ruído.”

<sup>150</sup> See on this the following excerpt: “Algo de novo está acontecendo: [...] uma possível atenuação dos conflitos entre a música popular moderna em geral e a música impopular moderna (i.e, a música erudita de vanguarda), cuja falta de assimilação constitui uma das mais sérias lacunas da cultura de nosso tempo” (CAMPOS, A. 1986:122) [Something new is happening: [...] a possible attenuation of the conflicts between modern popular music in general and the modern impopular music (that is, erudite avant-garde music), whose lack of assimilation constitutes one of the most serious cultural gaps of our epoch].

<sup>151</sup> See the following excerpt: “A poesia concreta parece ter estado sempre, segundo os textos teóricos, a buscar a consecução de uma obra inspirada na tradição erudita [...] mas que utilizasse procedimentos ou recursos típicos dos mass media: não se trataria de uma tentativa de massificar a produção erudita, mas sim de “eruditizar a comunicação de massas” (FRANCHETTI, 2012:95). [Concrete poetry seems to have always been searching, following the theoretical texts, for the consecution of a work inspired in the erudite tradition [...] but that would require processes and tools typical of mass media. It’s not an attempt to make erudite production accessible to the masses, but rather to “make the mass communication erudite]. This idea is also confirmed by Augusto, who said: “A música popular tende a se nivelar, no curso dos anos, à erudita” (CAMPOS, A., 1986:27). [Popular music tends to gradually level itself to erudite music].

the first experimental experiences of *Noigandres* and the “heroic” period of electronic and concrete music, represented especially by Schaeffer, Boulez and Stockhausen. The latter, in particular, is seen as a central figure in the development of a new esthetic in the arts, since he seemed to be dealing with the same esthetic concerns of concrete poetry:

When Stockhausen writes, for the first time, that a musical piece will be organized in a synthetically serial way, he tackles a problem that, *mutatis mutandis*, corresponds to the hypothesis of concrete poetry: it comes to organizing “synthetically-ideogramically” instead of “analytically-discursively” the totality of the poem” (quoted in FRANCHETTI, 2012:78).<sup>152</sup>

It seems obvious, then, that the three poets of *Noigandres* rejected the conservative program of the anti-dodecaphonic composer Camargo Guarneri, supporting the urgency of letting new musical languages enter Brazilian cultural life to be further developed according to Brazilian conditions.<sup>153</sup> The members of the *Wien group* (Schönberg, Webern and Berg), who first proposed and developed the twelve-tone technique, were the most valued composers in the pre-war context for *Noigandres*. Anton Webern, as we shall see, was always one of the main figures within their musical-poetical *pantheon*. Some other composers, and actually the least renowned representatives of contemporary music, such as Henry Cowell, Giacinto Scelsi or (even) Galina Ustolvskaja also attracted Augusto’s attention;<sup>154</sup> several of his articles on their extreme musical esthetics were published in national journals and newspapers, later gathered in the very valuable collection entitled *Musica de invenção* (1998).<sup>155</sup> Its contribution to the renewal of the musical criticism in Brazil was crucial, since, in many cases, totally unknown composers were introduced to the Brazilian “erudite” public.

The most significant exchange that developed was with John Cage. Meetings occurred in 1978 in New York at John Cage’s house and in 1985 in São Paulo, for the 18<sup>th</sup> Biennale, where, among other Cagean works, *4’33’’* was performed. As early as 1952,

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<sup>152</sup> “Quando Stockhausen [...] escreve que, pela primeira vez, uma peça musical está em vias de ser organizada de modo tal e totalmente serial [...], aborda um problema que, *mutatis mutandis*, se situa como hipótese de trabalho na poesia concreta: trata-se de organizar de maneira “sintético-ideogramica” ao invés de analítico-discursiva.

<sup>153</sup> The opposition between Hans Joachim Koellreuter and Camargo Guarneri, after the publication of the *Open letter to the composers and the critics of Brazil* (1950) reached such a high degree, that a kind of war within the erudite sphere between traditionalists and avant-garde supporters was conducted for several years.

<sup>154</sup> In the interview that Augusto granted me, he defined the authors mentioned in this book as “the composers who were important for [him]”.



Augusto came in contact with the *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano (1946-48). The features that mostly attracted his attention were Cage's spatial conception of the composition, his utilization of silence and the percussive melody-of-timbre. Even if Augusto and Cage didn't create any works together, the American artist can undoubtedly be said to have profoundly influenced many Brazilian composers with whom Augusto worked, so that a sort of "mediated" collaboration can be said to have occurred. For example, Augusto recalled that Gilberto Mendes' *Blirium C9* "largely uses the montage of popular compositions with an aleatoric structure in all its parameters" (CAMPOS, A. 1986:215)<sup>156</sup> and Willy Correa de Oliveira's *Ouviver Musica*, defined as "a sort of avant-garde "musicomics", with audiovisual scores mixing traditional notation with characters from comic strips, varied signs and symbols, that should be freely interpreted by the performers" (CAMPOS, A. *ibidem*).<sup>157</sup>

The compositional processes briefly taken into account in this critical excerpt drafted by Augusto reflect the profound concern of Brazilian composers with the main features of Cage's works. The interest in the irreverent creative activity of the American composer was also evidenced by the improvised *happening* which took place during the *Week for Avant-garde music* at the *Paulista Teatro Municipal*: two composers (Willy Correa de Oliveira and Rogerio Duprat) and a concrete poet (Décio Pignatari) went on stage and began to sing *Juanita Banana* during the performance of a piece by the French-Greek composer Iannis Xenakis. The surprise and the upset of both performers and public in front of the "sacrilegious act" by the three artists, as it was reported by most critics, give sufficient proof of its nature as a *happening* in the most classical Cagean style.

Such profound knowledge of the evolutionary dynamic of *avant-garde* music, both inside and outside Brazil could not remain without effecting the *Noigandres'* poetics. As is evident (and explicitly stated), the influence of Cage's music on his own compositional proceedings occurred starting from the Sixties, with the inclusion of the aleatoric principles within the poem's structure, for example in *Acaso* and *Cidade*, both composed in 1963. Specific explanations about how this process was realized can be

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<sup>156</sup> "*Blirium C9* faz largo uso da montagem de composições populares numa estrutura aleatória em todos os seus parâmetros."

<sup>157</sup> "*Ouviver música*, espécie de 'musicomics' de vanguarda, com partituras audiovisuais, misturando a notação tradicional com personagens de histórias em quadrinhos, signos e símbolos diversos, que deveriam ser interpretados livremente pelos executantes."

read in the interview granted to J. Jota de Moraes and will be taken into account in the analytical section of this work.<sup>158</sup>

If it is true that among the three founders of *Noigandres*, Augusto indisputably had the greatest musical sensibility, it must be underlined that both Décio and Haroldo also showed a profound interest in music, evidenced in the significant recordings of their poems set to music. Haroldo witnessed the interest of both Gilberto Mendes<sup>159</sup> and Joachim Koellreuter in his poem *Nascemorre*, while Décio's *Movimento* served as a text for Willy Correa de Oliveira's vocal composition (1962). The latter's music for *Movimento*, arranged in high choral style, was performed and recorded by the vocal group 'Madrigal Ars Viva' directed by Klaus-Dieter Wolff, that collaborated with *Noigandres* in 1955 in the event organized at the *Teatro de Arena* of São Paulo.<sup>160</sup> Another poem by Décio, *Beba Coca-Cola* (1957), was performed and included in the LP *Madrigal Ars Viva* (1971).<sup>161</sup> In general, this partnership resulted in abundant and high quality results over a long period, as Décio recalled:

In 1953 I knew Cozzella and Pacheco in Teresopolis [...] and there we realized the oralizations of the colour poems by A. de Campos [...]. Starting from 1956, concrete poems were oralized, set to music and performed by Rogerio Duprat, Cozzella, Willy Correa de Oliveira, Gilberto Mendes, Julio Medaglia, Koellreuter, Diogo Pacheco, Luis Carlos Vinholes, Willys de Castro, Klaus Dieter Wolff.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> The interview is also included in the collection *Música de invenção* (1998): “Mais tarde [...] as idéias de música indeterminada de Cage, [...] influíram na minha decisão de incorporar o acaso aos procedimentos de elaboração do poema. É o que acontece com *Acaso e cidade*, ambos de 1963” (CAMPOS, A. 1998:143). [Later [...] Cage's ideas of undetermined music [...] influenced my decision to incorporate chance in the process of composing a poem. This is what happened in the case of *Acaso and Cidade*, both from 1963].

<sup>159</sup> Gilberto Mendes' “aleatoric” pieces were characterized by “the incorporation of urban popular music [...] in the syntactic context of erudite music” [A incorporação da música popular urbana [...] no contexto sintático da música erudita] (CAMPOS, A. 1986:13).

<sup>160</sup> See: Pineda, Victoria: *Speaking about genre: the case of concrete poetry*. Available online at: <http://www.ubu.com/papers/pineda.html>. Last access September 2016.

<sup>161</sup> The same versions of both poems were also later collected in: “*Verbivocovisual, a poesia concreta em musica*” (2007).

<sup>162</sup> “Em 1953, [...] em Teresópolis [...] conheci Pacheco e Cozzella, e ali realizamos as oralizações dos poemas em cores do A. de Campos. (...) Desde 1956, poemas concretos tem sido oralizados, musicados e executados por Rogerio Duprat, Cozzella, Willy Correa de Oliveira, Gilberto Mendes, Julio Medaglia, Koellreuter, Diogo Pacheco, Luis Carlos Vinholes, Willys de Castro, Klaus Dieter Wolff”.

This very significant exchange with the greatest representatives of Brazilian contemporary music was based on a convergence defined as “favorable and natural”, because Brazilian concrete poetry “offered structural problems congenial to those proposed and faced by *avant-garde* music” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:287).<sup>163</sup>

As it should be now clear, the connections and the intertwinings with music were numerous and complex. Without a doubt, essays like Antonio Vicente Bessa’s “Architecture versus sound”,<sup>164</sup> wherein the two poles were represented, respectively, by *Noigandres* poets and Öyvind Fählstrom, may provoke some perplexity, and require some further insight. The title of the essay does not do justice to the importance of sound in *Noigandres*’ work, since it seems to identify the *Noigandres* group as focused on merely “architectural” interests, and, what seems even more unlikely, settled on a position definable as “versus sound”. Such a formulation rather marks the great distance, regarding the auditory aspect, between *Noigandres* and Eugen Gomringer. Also, several statements aimed at supporting his argumentation are questionable. In Bessa’s view, “the musical element in [*Noigandres*] poetry has been internalized, bringing it close to a silent experience”, and he also finds that “when reading a *Noigandres*’ poem, one is caught in a mental web of associations and references that are of a thoroughly visual nature”; finally, the reference to music is seen merely as “an attempt to link concrete poetry to Webern by way of Boulez and Stockhausen”. I would contest the idea of a mediated connection between *Noigandres*’ poetry and Webern, because the latter’s music was as well known and admired among the electronic experiments of the Fifties. Moreover, the “silent experience” to which Bessa refers would occur only in a silent reading, focused on the graphic disposition of the elements on the page, or when approaching productions such as the *Cartazes* designed by Augusto in collaboration with Julio Plaza. Thus it is not possible to generalize in such a broad manner, since there is no way to define as a “silent experience” the reading aloud of many of *Noigandres*’ poems, and, least of all, listening to their recordings.

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<sup>163</sup> “No Brasil, a poesia concreta oferecia problemas estruturais congeniais aos propostos e enfrentados pela música de vanguarda, o que tornava natural e propicia a convergência.”

<sup>164</sup> See: Bessa, Antonio Vicente Sergio: *Architecture versus Sound in Concrete poetry*. Available online at: <http://www.ubu.com/papers/bessa.html>. Last access September 2016. All following excerpts are quoted from this essay.

I find that such an essay, by underrating *Noigandres'* concern with sound so drastically, contributes significantly to the conception of *Noigandres'* poetry as something merely visual and graphic; a conception that, in spite of the strong opposition showed by the poets themselves for many years, still resists today. Being defined by Bessa as poetry marked by “absence of sound“, asking for an “approach to reading which completely denies performance”, Brazilian concrete poetry hasn't been recognized as thoroughly intertwined with performance. The very proof of this connection is not my personal argumentation, which may always be disputable. The effective existence of numerous recordings (and videos) of both live and studio *performances* speaks convincingly for itself.

I would stress, for instance, that Décio Pignatari's "beba coca cola" (1957), within which the auditory aspect would be, in Bessa's perspective, an “entirely secondary or even gratuitous [one]”, did not simply “invite some musical performance”, but was actually performed and recorded in several different versions;<sup>165</sup> the solo reading for itself (recorded in 1992), is at least as efficient as the written score in realizing what Bessa points to be the poem's goal, that is, “the deconstruction of an advertising icon (Coca Cola), its debasement through scatology [...]”. Moreover, it is politically incorrect to disown the auditory aspect of this poem due to a superficial and wrong phonetic analysis, which identifies a pattern of “repetitive bilabial and palatal sounds”. In fact, the consonants interacting in the poem's phonetic texture are actually three, since the liquid /l/ is also present, and, what is even more important, no palatal sound is found, but rather the velar /k/; as we shall better see in the following analysis, this is not an unimportant difference.

In another essay, entitled significantly “Sound as subject: Augusto de Campos' Poetamenos” (2009), Bessa seems to have become aware of the essential role of sound for the *Noigandres* poets, by highlighting the frequent references to the emerging new music marking their texts of the early Fifties. Bessa also comes to recognize the *Noigandres'* critical contribution to the overcoming of the erudite-popular dualism in music, by pointing out the equally significant influences of the samba composer Lupicínio Rodrigues and the *avant-garde* composer Anton Webern on Augusto's first

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<sup>165</sup> Beyond the solo reading of the poet himself, *Beba Coca Cola* was performed by the group *Madrigal Ars Viva* (the recording being included in the disc I already referred to) and by the *Kammerchor der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin* (the recording being included in the LP “Surf, bola na rede, um pente em Istanbul e a musica de Gilberto mendes” (1992).

“concrete” collection, *Poetamenos* (1955).<sup>166</sup> However, he identifies those poems as marked by “*purely* visual [concerns] (my stress)”, without the recognition of the significance of the vocal arrangements in the oral performance.<sup>167</sup>

Then, after properly stating that “the interpretation of a song or a poem is an issue particularly dear to [Augusto] de Campos” (BESSA in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:231), he once more diminishes the crucial role of the auditory aspect in *Noigandres*’ early phase, by speaking of a supposed (but really nonexistent) “reluctance to perform” on Augusto’s part. It must be stressed, however, that Bessa bases his argument on quite incorrect information, namely, “that only late in his career was he [Augusto] able to perform his poems and musical compositions onstage” (BESSA, *ibidem*). A couple of elements, then, seem to originate some perplexity. First of all, it is not clear what Bessa intends with Augusto’s “musical compositions”: in fact, even if thoroughly intertwined with music, none of his works were somehow similar to a score with explicitly musical notation. I would say that many among his poems, there are also (but in no way purely) musical compositions. Secondly, as I mentioned above, Augusto performed his poems onstage as early as 1955 at the *Teatro de Arena* in São Paulo, when not even the formula of “concrete poetry” had been yet established. Just a few years later, in 1962/63, both Augusto and Haroldo recorded some poems in Augusto’s very simply equipped<sup>168</sup> house in Perdizes (São Paulo), thus showing their urgency (and no “reluctance” at all) for performing their works and fixing them on a tape.

Thus, I reaffirm *Noigandres*’ connection with music and sound in general on several different levels: sound was both a raw material and a structural principle in their compositional practice, a crucial proof for the “anthropophagic act” occurring in Brazilian arts after the Second World War, and a possibility for the precious enrichment of poetical possibilities in both live performances and recordings.

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<sup>166</sup> See: Bessa, Sergio Antonio Vicente: *Sound as subject: Augusto de Campos’ Poetamenos*. In: Perloff, Marjorie and Dworkin, Craig (2009), pagg. 219-236.

<sup>167</sup> It is undeniable that in this specific collection, the visual character is primary in regard to the auditory one. However, it will be shown in the analytical section how, in the case of “Lygia Fingers”, the recording from 1968 contains interesting connections with the score of Webern’s *Quartet op.22*, that the score in itself would in no way provide.

<sup>168</sup> See the analysis of *Lygia Fingers*, included in chapter 3.

## 1.6.2 The *Stuttgarter Gruppe*

The inhomogeneous character of *Stuttgarter Gruppe* doesn't impede clearly identifying a general scarcity of collaborations between its representatives and the avant-garde composers of the new, post-weberian generation. Reinhard Döhl, in his theoretical outline of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*,<sup>169</sup> briefly mentioned the "Schola cantorum" conducted by Clythus Gottwald, which performed, among others, Bense's Collage "Rosenschuttplatz" (Rose Landfill) and Döhls "man"; Peter Hoch, who composed a "portrait m.b." (in reference to Max Bense) and set some poems by Ludwig Harig to music; and the "Trio Ex Voco", the unique musical ensemble with which Franz Mon (rarely) collaborated. Reinhard Döhl also alluded to the composer Friedhelm Döhl, even if he didn't mention any production or performance realized in co-production with him. However, it's interesting, in the perspective of a musical analysis of *Stuttgarter* sound poems, to highlight his profound knowledge of Anton Webern's music, which resulted in a monumental and impeccable dissertation on Webernian compositional processes.<sup>170</sup> A particularly "illustrious" case is certainly Heissenbüttel's collaboration with Karlheinz Stockhausen for the electronic piece *Mikrophonie II*. (1965), based on Heissenbüttel's poem *Einfache grammatische meditationen* (Simple grammatical meditations). The latter was also active in musical criticism, contributing significantly to the theorization of a "Grenzbereich der Künste" (border area of arts) in reference to a "creative zone" shared by both contemporary poetry and music.

Among the main representatives of this hybrid "poemusical" field (like Gerhard Rühm, François Dufrêne or Mauricio Kagel), Heissenbüttel also situated Franz Mon, for his capacity in "immediately transferring the sound material of language in the musical dimension" (HEIßENBÜTTEL in METZGER/RIEHN, 1993:6).<sup>171</sup> Both his *Artikulationen* (1959), and his *hörspielen*, as we shall see in the analytical section, often refer back to the musical sphere by "putting the language used semantically in relation with language used purely phonetically and with almost-musical sound images [...]" (HEIßENBÜTTEL, *ibidem*). However, in spite of his undeniable involvement with

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<sup>169</sup>See: Döhl, Reinhard: *Der Stuttgarter Gruppe oder Einkreisung einer Legende*. Available online at: <http://www.stuttgarter-schule.de/stuschul.htm>. Last access September 2016. All following excerpts are quoted from here.

<sup>170</sup> See: Döhl, Friedhelm (1976). This text was my main reference for deepening my knowledge of Webern's compositional processes; besides the high quality of the study, the connection of its author with the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* seemed to be a good reason for taking it into account.

<sup>171</sup> „Das Lautmaterial der Sprache unmittelbar in musikalische Dimensionen überführt.“

musical processes, Franz Mon was not seeking musicians for collaborations. The only exceptions were the vocal *Trio Exvoco*, who performed, among others, “ich bin der ich bin die” and the Dutch composer Tera de Marens Oyens, who collaborated with Mon in the realization of the Hörspiel “da du der bist“ (1973). Some connections to music can be found in Mon’s theoretical essays on the experimental *Neues Hörspiel*, wherein he refers to the evolution occurring in electronic music in order to highlight the creative potentials provided by new technical devices and media. In his view, already in the Fifties electronic music had realized the necessary adaptation of its compositional processes to the technical features of the radio, thus developing unprecedented auditory processes. Following the example of the new generation of composers, who managed to apply their knowledge in the technical field without abandoning their reflections on instrumental music, the poets could in turn “update” their skills, while at the same time preserve their work from the “disappearance in the grey infinity of the technical possibilities” (SCHÖNING, 1983:62).<sup>172</sup>

Ernst Jandl was also concerned with the musical aspects of the *Neues Hörspiel*, identifying in its exclusively acoustic character something valuable for new creative horizons. “A *Hörspiel* without optic illusion, limited to a thinking ear, which is not obliged to translate something on the optic level. It is the purest and the most independent type of the *Hörspiel*, and shows the possibility to create something new” (quoted in SCHÖNING, 1983:4). It may be that he felt he approached this quite indefinite “something new” in *Aus der fremde* (1980), in relation to which Jandl explicitly stated that he aimed at developing a particular way of speaking, one that “moves more or less on the border with singing, without effectively being sung” (SCHÖNING, 1983:211).

Thanks to his extremely precise descriptions of the technical-acoustic processes, he achieved high quality results in the realization of his own works. His conception of language as “noise of the body” and the equal role assigned to language, noise and music in the constitution of his pieces reached the most extreme results in *Spaltungen* (1970), where the performed text is totally unimportant, since it is contained in just one single page, while about 25 pages are dedicated exclusively to the instructions regarding the acoustic direction. For Klaus Schöning, such impressive precision on non-verbal

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<sup>172</sup> „[...] Es Sprechspiel bleiben muss, wenn es nicht in der grauen Unendlichkeit der technischen Möglichkeiten verschwinden soll.“

aspects would need a sort of musical notational system, which however Jandl was not able to create. His instructions constantly “return to a literary level” (SCHÖNING, 1983:224). The musical-semantic expressive potentialities hidden in the very core of the word are awakened also in his *Lautgedichte*, by means of phonetic alienation and stressed articulation, to the point that, in many cases, they are barely comprehensible in their true sense if they are not performed by the author himself.

While Mon’s co-productions with musicians were extremely rare, Ernst Jandl always showed a solid link with music by working together with different kinds of musical ensembles, from a single accompanying instrument up to an entire jazz orchestra. In Klaus Siblewski’s beautifully illustrated book *a komma punkt* (2000), the last section is dedicated to Jandl’s relationship with music, namely one of profound passion, for which the poet would even renounce to his poetry: “If I could make music, I would make no poems at all or only in passing” (quoted in SIBLEWSKI, 2000:191)<sup>173</sup>. I think that not even Augusto would have dared to express such an extreme claim. The picture by Helmut Moser opening this musical section perhaps manages to better account for Jandl’s profound concern with the musical-poetical relationships.<sup>174</sup> It portrays Ernst Jandl with a strange wind instrument in his mouth, similar to a clarinet or a saxophone, but that is revealed to be a series of half-face letters tied together and disposed as if to build an imaginary saxophone made of letters. A very poetic image, pointing to the true nature of Jandl’s physical link with music: he blew into the letters, making their apparently dead matter vibrate and incarnate the beauty of their sounds. Contrarily to the *Noigandres* poets, Jandl didn’t develop an intense critical activity regarding music. The translation, realized in collaboration with Heißenbüttel, of several texts from John Cages *Silence: Lectures and writings* (1961), can be taken as a proof of his interest in the reflections on the sense of silence. But these translations remained an isolated case in Jandl’s “musical” activity. The most intense connection with music were realized on a more immediate, practical level: Jandl tried to include and express musicality in his poems, mostly by playing with language, its forms and its materials.

Siblewski identifies in Jandl’s poems an evident closeness to jazz music, for “they are short and have a nervous, pushing character like Bebop in the late Forties and Fifties” (SIBLEWSKI, 2000:190). Beyond this (disputable) parallelism, however, Siblewski

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<sup>173</sup> “Wenn ich Musik machen könnte, würde ich keine Gedichte machen, oder nur ganz nebenbei.”

<sup>174</sup> See: Siblewski, Klaus (2000), pag. 198.



provides valuable documentation on the musical collaborations that Ernst Jandl managed to establish starting from the mid-Sixties. His poems stimulated several jazz musicians with particular intensity, and Jandl had always been mostly interested in jazz. His first approach to that relatively new musical genre occurred quite early (through a schoolmate who played the piano) and wasn't seen favorably in the extremely provincial and conservative ambience of the Nazi Vienna; the first collaboration with a jazz musician occurred in the Sixties, when Jandl was already forty years old and his works were receiving some attention on the part of the critics for the first time. In 1966, the first performance was organized in collaboration with the pianist Dieter Glawischnig. For Siblewski, several poems upon which Glawischnig worked "conceal a beat related with jazz, a strong musical character which, at its turn, can be combined successfully with music".<sup>175</sup>

After the recording of *Laut und Luise* (realized in 1968 with Jandl's *solo* voice), the Austrian poet approached music always more, and musicians "[sought] the proximity with his texts with him as reader" (SIBLEWSKI, 2000:195).<sup>176</sup> However, Jandl had to wait some more years for succeeding in producing an LP in collaboration with jazz musicians. In 1984, the LP *Laut und Luise* was published, and gathered the recording of his performances with the NDR-Big-Band conducted by Glawischnig.<sup>177</sup> The involvement with an entire jazz orchestra demanded a more complex task on Jandl's part, for "he had to learn to move into a more ramified musical texture" (SIBLEWSKI, 2000:195).<sup>178</sup> Through the superimposition of jazz and free jazz with avant-garde poetic speech, new acoustic possibilities were explored by Jandl and Glawischnig. Regarding some aspects, their collaboration also contributed to the enrichment of the already consistent results achieved in XX century Western music through the experimental intertwining of speech and music.<sup>179</sup>

Further collaborations were realized with the *Vienna art orchestra*, whose music was commented on enthusiastically in Jandl's couplet: "even if music is no more in me/here

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<sup>175</sup> "[...] In Gedichten von ihm [...] ein dem Jazz verwandter Beat steckt [...]; dieses starke musikalische Element wiederum gut mit Musik [sich] kombinieren lassen müßte."

<sup>176</sup> "...suchen Musiker die Nähe zu seinen Texten und zu ihm als Sprechenden."

<sup>177</sup> Further collaborations with Glawischnig resulted in the recording of "Aus der Kürze des Lebens" (1989)

<sup>178</sup> "Er muss sich in dem verzweigteren musikalischen Gewebe zu bewegen lernen."

<sup>179</sup> The ground-breaking works in this sense were, without doubt, Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1913) and Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955). But several works of this kind were also realized later.

I listen to music within which I'm in" (JANDL in SIBLEWSKI, 201).<sup>180</sup> Especially after the production of the LP *bist eulen* (1984), which was awarded with the Prize of the German discography critic, Jandl's LPs began to be sold even more than his written collections, and his discography became impressively consistent, as a glimpse into Christian Scholz's catalogue exemplarily shows.<sup>181</sup> Even if, following Siblewski, "not only can jazz bring out musically the sensory element of Jandl's music" (SIBLEWSKI, 2000:203),<sup>182</sup> Jandl's collaborations with musicians out of the jazz sphere was quite unimportant. In any case, whether in jazzy or non-jazzy contexts, his voice was always taken as the very core of any kind of performance, as it can be easily experienced by listening, for instance, to the LP *Laut und Luise* (1984).

Siblewski also argues that a kind of "second career" can be said to have been satisfactorily realized through the jazzy "musical moment" of Jandl's poems.<sup>183</sup> In this respect, a critical remark on jazz expressed by Augusto seems particularly significant: namely the definition of jazz as "enormously contributing to the reduction of the distance [between popular and erudite music]" (CAMPOS, A. 1986:27).<sup>184</sup> This idea had been also sustained by McLuhan, who traced an interesting parallel between jazz music and Charlie Chaplin, assigning both of them the role of "efficient bridge" between erudite and popular spheres, in regard, respectively, to music and cinema.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, jazz has been described by McLuhan as "a break with mechanism in the direction of the discontinuous, the participant, the spontaneous and improvisational" and consequently it can be considered as "a return to a sort of oral poetry in which performance is both creation and composition" (MCLUHAN, 2001:306). Both of these excerpts seem to have been written expressly in regard to Ernst Jandl, who became the most "popular" poet of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* by means of his fascinating public performances accompanied by jazz music. His indisputably complex linguistic and semiotic experiments, instead of being destined only to a closed intellectual elite, became accessible to a quite large public thanks to this popular musical form. And the jazz features pointed out by McLuhan make quite clear the reason for Jandl's predilection for jazz.

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<sup>180</sup> "ist auch musik nicht länger in mir drin/hier höre ich musik drin ich enthalten bin. "

<sup>181</sup> See: Scholz, Christian (1988).

<sup>182</sup> „Nicht nur jazz kann das sinnliche Element von jandls Dichtung musikalisch herausarbeiten.“

<sup>183</sup> See: Siblewski, Klaus (2000), pag. 191.

<sup>184</sup> "O jazz [...] tem contribuído enormemente para a redução desta distância."

<sup>185</sup> See: McLuhan, Marshall (2001), pag. 304.

I'd like to close this paragraph by formulating, instead of a conclusion, a hypothesis that will remain unanswered in this study, but that could stimulate further research. There seems to be a notable difference between Jandl and the *Noigandres* poets in their involvement with popular music. In the first case, the exchange occurred between poetry and jazz, that is, a markedly foreign genre that seems to have "invaded" the German musical scene as an external element, never being assimilated and re-used for developing something new and original in German terms, while, in the second case, the extremely rich and dynamic popular scene in Brazil let the exchange occur in truly Brazilian conditions, as a general renewal of its entire culture. In this sense, Augusto's reflection on the scarce capability of European countries to regenerate their musical languages seems to be extremely telling:

In other nations, with a more ancient and more profoundly rooted culture, with a more determined ethnicity, and with an already advanced civilization while ours wasn't born yet, the sphere of possibilities and research are very much reduced [...]: new paths [...] will be hard to discover (CAMPOS, A. 1986:25).<sup>186</sup>

This seems to be particularly true for German countries,<sup>187</sup> with their heavy symphonic and operatic traditions that were extremely difficult to remove. As Jandl himself admitted, "music corresponds to the world of machines and motors, while in some classical music the horses' clogs and the hunter's horn can be heard- thus, there the past dominates" (SIBLEWSKI, 2000:194).<sup>188</sup> In the very conservative Austrian context, the sounds of the past were much more appreciated than those of the future, and it is no surprise that innovators such as Schönberg and Webern were considered authors of "distorted art" and forced to emigrate or live in misery.

This first chapter was conceived as a "rapid handbook" of the concrete poetry of the *Noigandres* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, with the aim of making clear the general lines of their esthetics and inserting them in the cultural-historical context where they arose

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<sup>186</sup> Em outras nações, de cultura mais antiga e mais sedimentada, de etnia mais definida, de civilização já bastante evoluída ao tempo em que nossa ainda não surgira, limita-se muito o âmbito de possibilidades [...]: não se descobrirão facilmente [novos] caminhos.

<sup>187</sup> On the contrary, England and UK in general can be seen as a quite remarkable exceptions within the European context, thanks to the development of highly experimental rock and pop music (the name of the *Beatles* should suffice as an eloquent example), that was destined to influence the evolution of popular music worldwide.

<sup>188</sup> „Die Musik entspreche der Welt der Maschinen und Motoren, während in manch klassischer Musik das Trampeln von Pferden und das Horn des Jägers zu hören seien- also tiefe Vergangenheit herrsche“.

and developed during their first, “heroic” phase. Even if this chapter doesn’t represent the very core of this study, its role is crucial in the understanding of what must follow. With all evidence, before approaching a discussion of the auditory aspects of concrete poetry, one must necessarily be aware of the very nature and the basic concerns of its esthetics. General knowledge about the authors included in the corpus of analysis and about the relationships they maintained with each other must be guaranteed. Indeed, this was the goal of this introductory chapter, which in no way is intended to be taken as a sufficient resource for scholars interested in deepening specific movements or authors. Many monographic works, concerning both authors of the *Noigandres* group and of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, are available for this purpose.



## Chapter 2

### Theory and analysis methods

#### 2.1 Approaching poetic *soundscapes*

##### 2.1.1 A “deep listening” to poetic soundscapes

As we saw in the last section of the preceding chapter, several poets involved in the “concrete project”, both in Stuttgart and São Paulo, were profoundly concerned with music and sound from the very beginning of their creative activity. This interest gave rise to an extremely significant recording practice, which resulted in the production of a consistent, even if often seldom accessible,<sup>189</sup> poetic discography (LPs, audiocassettes, CDs). Many of these recorded poems include a vast range of sounds, which go beyond mere verbal speech; musical noises and noisy music, sound distortions or manipulations, synthetic sounds produced by new electronic or digital devices should be considered active protagonists of the sound and, possibly, of the meaning of several of the poems I will analyze. That is why I would like to analyze the concrete sound poems as if they were complex *soundscapes*,<sup>190</sup> “fields of interaction” within which different sound events occur *simultaneously* and influence each other, thus breaking with the conventional conception of an exclusively linear, temporal listening experience.

The term *soundscape*, firstly proposed by the composer Murray Schafer, provides an efficient methodological tool for focusing on the sounds that fill our daily environment. The term is an evident parallelism to the concept of landscape, in fact, it suggests an balance between visual and auditory perception in the experience of the world. The proposal for a poem as a *soundscape* is supported by sound scholars who underline that a “soundscape is any acoustic field of study; we may speak of a musical composition as a soundscape, or a radio program as a soundscape or an acoustic environment as a soundscape” (SCHAFER in STERNE, 2012:99). Moreover, the recently developed area

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<sup>189</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>190</sup> See: Schafer, Murray (1985), pag. 183.

of *sound studies*<sup>191</sup> is still characterized by notable theoretical instability. Jonathan Sterne claimed that “all the key terms we might use to describe and analyze sound belong to multiple traditions, and are under debate” (STERNE, 2012:4). Even the term *soundscape*, although generally accepted in the approach for a wider understanding of sonic ambiances, has been criticized within the very field of sound studies.<sup>192</sup> Far from discouraging my perspective, the relative uncertainty of *sound studies*’ theoretical basis seems to provide a fertile field for further reflections, allowing for new formulations and applications in extremely diversified contexts. However, even if there seems to be no apparent obstacle in conceiving of a concrete sound poem as a *soundscape*, the following analysis will either confirm or contradict the assumption: can *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe* sound poems be considered *soundscapes*? And if so, what are their characteristics?

Since this is one of the basic hypotheses and questions of the current study, this section aims at establishing a few fundamental theoretical aspects regarding sound, in respect to its general nature and its relationship with voice and poetry, as well as its perception through the human body. My research is neither a classification of poetical genres, nor a definition of narrative strategies in relation to specific themes (war, love, etc), but it exclusively focuses on sound. I will be analyzing *all* perceivable sounds, then try to assign a significant function at least to some of them in the experience of the chosen poems. My approach is, in a sense, a move against modernist “totalitarianism”, which, by legitimizing hierarchy and discrimination, would ban “subversive” noises to the advantage of tonal melody and linear verbal language.<sup>193</sup> On the contrary, no perceived sound, whatever its characteristics, will be overlooked *a priori* in this analysis. From the explosion of a unsounded bilabial /p/ or the sounding of gasps and slurs, up to the cacophonous crackle of a passing truck or the light swish of a turning page, all

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<sup>191</sup> See following paragraph (2.2)

<sup>192</sup> See on this: Ingold, Tim: *Against Soundscape*. Available online at: <http://lajunkielovegun.com/AcousticEcology-11/AgainstSoundscape-AutumnLeaves.pdf>. Last access September 2016.

<sup>193</sup> See also the following excerpt: “Whereas voices or music has been privileged instances of sound, now they were merely instances of a more general category of sound” (STERNE, 2003:94). And: “Nas estruturas despóticas, onde o corpo da terra e do som é apropriado pelo poder mandante, o som passa a ser privilégio do centro despótico, e as margens e as contestações tendem a se tornar ruídos, cacófonos sociais a serem expurgados” (WISNIK, 2004:34) [In despotic structures, sound comes to be the privilege of the despotic center, while margins and contestations tend to turn into noises, social cacophonies to be purged].

identifiable sounds will be equally considered as having the same unalienable “right of speech”, whatever their duration, intensity, pitch, intended/unintended character.

I admit the *relativity* of my approach, and I am perfectly aware of the existence of different listening abilities as well as of a vast range of reactions, memories and affects potentially provoked by a single sound.<sup>194</sup> In fact, as Fonagy affirmed, “every articulated sound consists of a complex of sensory stimuli, and every originated stimulus triggers an entire sequence of adjacent memorial traces” (FONAGY, 1963:107),<sup>195</sup> which are of course diversified, depending on the specific, intimate personality of each listener. Not even this apparent difficulty, however, permits me to desist from my goal. On the contrary, the recognition of the irremediably personal character of listening serves to make it valid. I agree with John Mowitt that “any meaning an individual assigns to experience is valid provided it immediately renounces all claims of generality” (MOWITT in STERNE, 2012:220). This approach is proposed, for example, in Salomé Voegelin’s *Listening to noise and silence* (2010), where the author theorizes an absolute correspondence between “listening to the world” and “producing a world” and invokes Theodor Adorno as a warning from making a universal case out of a contingent, subjective listening experience.<sup>196</sup> Roland Barthes revealed the inexistence of a univocal, “right” meaning of any artistic work, given that “the author has died”<sup>197</sup> and the reader has replaced him/her through his/her own, personal creation of the work’s potential meanings. If this is so, then the listener, even more than the reader, cannot longer be seen as *de-coding* a message, but rather as employing a personal, subjective *super-coding* which creates some new, additional meanings.

It must be clarified, however, that to affirm the personal character of *super-coding* does not entail erasing one’s cultural background. I cannot propose a reading characterized by any kind of *naturalness*, for I have that “preparatory set in [my] mind” which is the result of my living (and listening) within Western culture of conventional signs and

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<sup>194</sup> See: Schafer, Murray (1985), pag. 203.

<sup>195</sup> “Jeder erzeugte Laut besteht aus einem Komplex von Sinnesreizen, und jeder ausgelöste Reiz erregt eine ganze Reihe von angrenzenden Erinnerungsspuren“.

<sup>196</sup> See: Voegelin, Salomé (2010) pag. 14. See also, for example, the following excerpt: „Es wird gezeigt [...], dass wir Vereinzelt nicht als das zu rezipieren bereit sind, was es ist, sondern als das, wozu wir es machen wollen und als was wir es erwarten (BROCK in SCHÖNING; 1970:218). [It is showed [...] that we are not ready to perceive an isolated object as it is, but as what we want it to be and what we expect]. (BROCK in SCHÖNING; 1970:218).

<sup>197</sup> See: Barthes, Roland (1977), pag. 142-148.



symbols that Meyer defined as “connotations” (MEYER, 1956:265). This is, from a certain perspective, also a guarantee for the *plausibility* of my interpretation, since a discourse on meaning and emotion in any artistic work would not be possible without some shared rules and sets. Even so, my particular experience, marked by my own listening sensibility and by the space-time where the listening experience occurred, will be the basis of my analysis.<sup>198</sup> My wish, then, is to carry out a “deep listening”,<sup>199</sup> a reflexive sonic awareness that, similar to the hermeneutic circle, is constantly moving between the strain to hear the entire sonic field and at the same time, to have a more directional focus on single sounds or sonic categories.<sup>200</sup> A fundamental feature of this listening approach is its *intentionality*, which in Husserlian phenomenology is “an essential or invariant structure of experience” (IHDE, 2007:42). By rejecting passive, unconscious listening, I strained to get as close as possible to that operative perceptual field defined by Don Ihde as “active letting be” of the sonic presence (IHDE, 2007:102), which encompasses both concentration and openness simultaneously.

Indeed, “deep listening” is anything but an easy, “natural” way of listening for today’s average human,<sup>201</sup> dominated by the chaos of his/her mechanical universe. The massive presence of indistinguishable clusters of sounds is responsible for a drastic decrease of the average listening ability, which that results in the absolute predominance of non-focused hearing and provides an extremely simplified acoustic image of any complex, multiple *soundscape*, a *soundscape* that “tend[s] to readily yield [its] shapes because [it is] superficially, conventionally heard” (MING QIAN MA in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:265).

However, my task will be at least in part facilitated by the *acousmatic* character of the poetic *soundscape*s I will be considering; that is, they are separate from the sight of their sonic source, as they are sound recordings and not videos of poetic performances.<sup>202</sup> Thus, they allow for a perceptive experience exclusively focused on their auditory features, one that refuses to simplify the internal, textural complexity of the considered sounds. In the analysis of the sound of poetry, the absence of the visual

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<sup>198</sup> See also: Meyer, Leonard (1956), pag. 265.

<sup>199</sup> See: Schafer, Murray (1985), pag. 221.

<sup>200</sup> See: Sterne, Jonathan (2012), pag. 8.

<sup>201</sup> According to Schafer, the listening ability of the average person seems to have decreased despite the improvements in acoustic sciences. See: Schafer, Murray, (1985), pag. 179.

<sup>202</sup> M. Schafer called it “*schizofony*” while McLuhan “extension of hearing”.

aspect of the performance promotes a deeper immersion into the sound of the recited poem, while “video [...] is often less engaging for poetry, since the typically depleted visual resources (static shots of a person at a podium) tend to flatten out the affective dimension of the live performance” (BERNSTEIN, 1998:12).<sup>203</sup>

It is clear, then, that I decisively oppose the perspective promoted by empirical epistemology, since it is not the basis for establishing other theories, but only a miserly interpretation of reality (Barthes). Thus, rather than claiming the senses as “a stable foundation upon which a single and unassailable truth can be erected” (HIRSCHKIND in STERNE, 2012:61), I would consider human cognition as “a space of indeterminacy, heterogeneity, and possibility” (HIRSCHKIND in STERNE, *ibidem*). In Julia Kristeva’s terms, this kind of engagement with the world is defined as “text”,<sup>204</sup> because it presupposes a complex and individual engagement which results in the *production* of sounds instead of their mere recognition and description.

## 2.1.2 Return to sound

For several centuries, following the development of the printing press and perspective in painting, sound was a mainly overlooked aspect in Western civilization. The visual aspect gained absolute primacy in day-to-day imagination, and the idea of a dualistic juxtaposition between objective, scientific sight and subjective, emotional listening arose and led to undisputed certainty, especially during the dominance of Illuminist and Cartesian thinking. For Don Ihde, the primacy of visual perception has its roots in an even more ancient tradition, one “as old as our own cultural heritage” (IHDE, 2007:7). By reviewing the whole Greek philosophical tradition, Ihde highlighted the explicitly visual configuration of the Western conception of knowledge and further supported his argument by quoting such limpid and incontrovertible sentences as “eyes are more accurate witnesses than ears” (Heraclitus) or “[...] sight is the principle source of knowledge” (Aristotle) (IHDE, 2007:7). And, as Morris pointed out, “most twentieth-century thinkers drew their models for reading, writing, and the formation of

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<sup>203</sup> Something similar can be affirmed in relation to some performances of electronic music (Stockhausen), where the primary role of static and visually inexpressive elements on the stage (such as synthesizers and amplifiers) implicates considerable dullness and emotional emptiness for the audience.

<sup>204</sup> See: Kristeva, Julia (1984), pag. 99-106.

subjectivity from mirrors, lenses, cameras, screens, and other paraphernalia of the gaze” (MORRIS, 1997:2).

It is a pity that this perspective still finds some support even in contemporary research on sound,<sup>205</sup> according to which sight is an “ordering-tool” that “enables thought and engenders the idea of purpose and order by forfeiting the immediate sensibility of its own materiality” while sound is “its immediate sensibility: unordered and purposeless” (VOEGELIN, 2010:169). Even if it is true that sight generally assumes a more objective ordering function, while sound is more likely to involve affection and emotion, this “setting-out” is not so tightly fixed: sight is perfectly able to emotionally affect the body<sup>206</sup> as much as hearing can, on the other hand, it provides some “objective” clues to the material features of the surrounding reality,<sup>207</sup> being absolutely crucial for our orientation within it. It is urgent to contrast the tendency to subsume sound to vision, rather than to assign sight and hearing drastically differentiated functions on the basis of an obsolete subjective-objective dichotomy.

In the last decades, several scholars with extremely different academic backgrounds have shared the struggle for the reconsideration of auditory perception. Murray Schafer’s *The Tuning of the world* (1977) is considered a groundbreaking work in the emergence of the *Sound Studies*, which account for “the interdisciplinary ferment in the human sciences that takes sound as its analytical point of departure or arrival” (STERNE, 2012:2). At present, *sound studies* focus especially on the lack of attention on the radical changes that occur in our contemporary *soundscape*s and their drastic effects on human acoustic perception.<sup>208</sup> According to Schafer, our society “exchanged

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<sup>205</sup> Voegelin speaks of eyes as “segregating according to differences and aligning references to build meaning within the field of vision” (VOEGELIN, 2010:34).

<sup>206</sup> See for example: Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich (2004). Among his *moments of intensity*, Gumbrecht includes the purely affective involvement of sight, for example, in California’s blinding sunshine. Sight can also find itself completely lost in front of some objects, unable to employ its “ordering” function: Ming-Qian Ma convincingly shows, through different examples taken from Mccaffery’s production, that some texts “resist and frustrate any attempt at a visual determination” (MING-QIAN MA in STERNE, 2012:268).

<sup>207</sup> See for example: Ihde, Don (2007), pag. 99. Ihde shows to what a high degree it is possible to guess the material of the objects through their sounds: “The reverberation can reveal a great deal of the thing (or of the word and its meaning) when the attack of the sound is much less important in revealing things than the echo. The same thing happens with the echo: the “fine focus” is on the following and running off phenomena of the whole temporal event.”

<sup>208</sup> See: Schafer, Murray (1985), pag 211.

its ears with its eyes”, thus making the world an immense “sonic sewer”.<sup>209</sup> More recently, Jonathan Sterne edited a collection of extremely diversified studies on sound, entitled *Sound studies reader* (2012), aimed at a general review of the results hitherto obtained during circa thirty-five years of research developed on a worldwide scale. The promotion of an “auditory culture” aims at “disrupt[ing] narratives of the so-called hegemony of the visual and the privileging of the eye” (STERNE, 2012:7) by approaching sound as a sensory problem.

Thus, the once dominating visual epistemology has been gradually fading out in the last decades, while numerous potential functions of sound and listening are more and more recognized. Sound has been taken, for instance, as a historical-documental resource,<sup>210</sup> as an efficient narrative instrument,<sup>211</sup> or as a tool for drawing social dynamics.<sup>212</sup> However, I do not endorse the idea of “competition” between different senses for epistemological supremacy, for I agree with the claim that hearing and vision are “intimately intertwined in some sort of preexisting harmony” (MING-QIAN MA in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:253), in the constitution of an equal, balanced, perceptive experience.<sup>213</sup> The value of hearing must be recognized, not excessively stressed to the point of claiming “superiority” to sight, because the loss or the weakening of any of these abilities would necessarily produce a severe lack of quality in perception. What seems crucial, then, is not the *fetishism* of sound but its effective equality with sight. Sonic sensibility “can illuminate the unseen aspects of visibility”, (VOEGELIN, 2010:XIII), but cannot substitute it.

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<sup>209</sup> See: Schafer, Murray, (1985), pag 327.

<sup>210</sup> See for example: Birdsall, Kathrin (2012). In *The tuning of the world*, Murray Schafer also quotes the following sentence by Adolf Hitler: “We wouldn’t have conquered Germany without [...] loudspeakers”. In this same book, Schafer aims at showing, in a more general way, how sounds can be determinant for better knowing the historical evolution of human civilization and social change. Emily Thompson’s statement is also interesting: “Clearly, these histories have much to say about the larger historical processes at work within their *soundscapes*. (...) Until recently, that long-term process of modernization was perceived as a particularly visual one, but the new aural history now demonstrates that, to paraphrase Schmidt, there is more to modernity than meets the eye” (THOMPSON in STERNE, 2012:124).

<sup>211</sup> See: Arnheim, Rudolf (2001).

<sup>212</sup> Steven Connor argues that “within modern cities, often understood as spaces of intense visibility, we rely on a vocal-auditory consciousness to orient ourselves and find our way around. Much of our capacity to navigate the city, to enjoy its pleasures and be attentive to its dangers, relies crucially on subterranean forms of auditory knowledge and skills frequently ignored by analysts of urban life” (CONNOR in STERNE, 2012:62).

<sup>213</sup> According to J. Sterne, the “modernization of the senses” that considers the different senses as autonomous and separated from each other, concerns both the auditory and the visual aspects. See: Sterne, Jonathan (2003), chapter 1.

In the case of poetry, the recorded performances should be always analyzed in relation to the respective written scores, in order to possibly “illuminate” some “unseen aspects” of the printed graphic effects. The written score may be perfectly adequate for the oral reading, or instead, it “may act independently of [sound]” (DRUCKER in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:245). However, the overlapping between the visual and the auditory aspects of a poem does not necessarily occur, and consequently the rendition through “vocal devices” (accent, intensity, pitch and duration) presupposes an arbitrary interpretation of the typographic style. In my specific case of study, I would highlight that, when analyzing both *Noigandres’* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe’s* recordings, I will be constantly keeping in mind the concept of *verbivocovisual*.<sup>214</sup> Only through this interaction, in fact, can the poems be experienced in their depth. The objective of the present study is to reassess the great value of sound in concrete poetry, not to illegitimately lessen its equally precious visual ingenuity.

### 2.1.3 The voice

The sound of voice is still massively present in contemporary *soundscape*s, in spite of the suffocating mass of new sounds that both industrial and electronic revolutions have brought to our ears. Basically seen as the medium of communication and oral transmission, the voice is often disregarded in its early, original function, namely as nonsensical, unarticulated manifestation of our impulses. The average human is unable, for example, to suppress a cry when feeling strong emotions or pain; happy shouting or calm buzzing dominate the *soundscape*s of environments like bars and restaurants; chants in stadiums and stunningly loud singing along by huge audiences are barely understandable in their meaning, but they are the sonic *keynotes* of football matches and live concerts. Briefly, the voice itself, without the support of any stipulated verbal code, is an extremely efficient means for communication, because it “shows its desire to communicate, even if without an infrastructure of meaning” (VOEGELIN 2010:186).

In this sense, Paul Zumthor’s proposal for a clear distinction between *orality* and *vocality* seems to be particularly valuable. The former is “the functioning of the voice as the bearer of language”, while the latter is defined as “the whole of the activities and

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<sup>214</sup> For some correspondent formulations in the German ambit, see for example: Riehn/Metzger (1993), pag. 5.

values that belong to the voice as such, independently of language” (quoted in CAVARERO, in STERNE 2012:528). Undoubtedly, speech represents only a part of the potentials of the voice. To reduce the voice to mere speech functions is “one of the chief vices of *logocentrism*” (CAVARERO in STERNE, 2012:529), since it denies the voice a meaning of its own, not destined to conventional speech. Also, the “musical” element is steadily present within the spoken word, and its sensorial *stimuli* actually have a linguistic value. In music, some *avant-garde* composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio experimented with phonemes in order to stimulate the recognition of the phonic-musical possibilities of each syllable of their texts.<sup>215</sup> The sound of the voice beyond verbal speech is not meaningless, it is not extra-semantic but only extra-lexical; this is, however, rarely recognized, since “the search of the speaker for meaning is rooted in the communicational conventions, which refuse or only reluctantly accept to perceive the pure materiality of the linguistic system and of its sub-structural elements” (KLEINSCHMIDT in LENTZ, 1998:14).<sup>216</sup> In brief, the linguistic system continues to be seen as a means and never as a possible subject of communication.

Thus, even if voice does not contribute to making sense, it is extremely meaningful thanks to its extra-linguistic elements. On the first level, we can identify the so-called “suprasegmental features”, like accent, intonation and intensity, which can influence the meaning of a sentence, even to the point of turning it upside down and “transforming [...] it into its opposite” (DOLAR in STERNE, 2012:544). On a second level, more specific qualities of vocal timbre and texture constitute a sort of “personal vibration” of each speaker’s voice, a language of the body that cannot be discerned by linguistics. Of course these features have a profound effect on the emotional and esthetic value of the sound of a voice, because no voice is purely semantic but each has its own *flesh*. The body speaks ambiguously through the voice, and the listening body “answers to this ambiguity” (VOEGELIN, 2010:37). The voice is in the middle, between the body of the speaker and that of the listener, simultaneously belonging to both. Barthes’ essay *The grain of the voice* (1972), by praising vocal performances which make the singing body

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<sup>215</sup> Exemplary in this sense are Stockhausen’s *Gesang der Junglinge* (1956) and Berio’s *Thema: Omaggio a Joyce* (1959).

<sup>216</sup> “Die Suche der Sprachnutzer nach Bedeutung wurzelt in den kommunikativen Konventionen, die eine reine Materialität des Systems Sprache und ihrer substrukturelle Elemente nicht oder nur ungenügend wahrnehmen wollen“.

audible, aimed at accounting for this corporeal, fleshly character of the voice, “the language lined with flesh, a text where we can hear the grain of the throat, the patina of consonants, the voluptuousness of vowels, a whole carnal stereophony: the articulation of the body, of the tongue, not that of meaning, of language” (quoted in MLOW in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:163). Barthes is perfectly right in underlining this “carnality” of speech, since its intertwinement with the human body is really deeply rooted. The primary functions of all articulatory organs are actually necessary to the organism’s survival, like breathing, drinking and eating. Articulatory activity in oral communication is a secondary step that is certainly influenced by those primary and “bestly” movements. Interestingly, Ivan Fonagy and other linguists also shed light on the affinity between the articulations used for pronouncing some phonemes, and certain spontaneous, natural movements of the body; for instance, the unvoiced occlusive /k/ implicates a movement that is commonly made by the sphincter in the act of defecation, and this may explain the frequent occurrence, in many different languages, of the phoneme /k/ within words connected with ejection:

This laryngeal occlusive, this little groan accompanies also the defecation, in case the pressure of the abdomen is supported by the closing of the glottis, the opposite pole of the sphincter ani, creating pressure on the surface of the diaphragm through the lungs (FONAGY, 1963:81).<sup>217</sup>

Further connections are showed between the liquid phonemes /l/ and /m/ and some sexually connoted acts like licking and sucking.<sup>218</sup> And it may be that because of these “scandalous” affinities, which are unconsciously perceived by any speaker, the material substance, the *fleshiness* of speech, is often rejected in favor of referential meaning. It should not be forgotten that the poetic function of language<sup>219</sup> theorized by Roman Jakobson is steadily present in all oral speech, and that, as Merleau-Ponty beautifully pointed out, to speak is above all to “sing the world”.<sup>220</sup> Our daily speech is profoundly affected by “the stutter of form” (Dworkin), that is by disfluent features like repetitions

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<sup>217</sup> “Dieser laryngale Verschlusslaut, dieses kleine Ächzen begleitet auch die Defekation, falls die Bauchpresse durch das Verschiessen der Glottis, des Gegenpols des Sphincterani gefördert wird, um durch die Lunge einen Druck auf die Oberfläche der Diaphragma ausüben zu können“.

<sup>218</sup> See on this: Fonagy, Ivan (1963).

<sup>219</sup> “The poetic function re-materializes language, returns it from ‘speech’ back to ‘sound’” (BERNSTEIN, 1998:18).

<sup>220</sup> See: Ihde, Don (2007), pag. 154.

and distortions that the talking body necessarily produces.<sup>221</sup> Thus, it must be constantly kept in mind that “a range of corporal opacities are in fact a perfectly normal part of speech production” (DWORKIN, 2009:166), and that the speech act can be defined as something “spotted even though uninterrupted” (MON, 1994:20).<sup>222</sup>

The human extra-lexical voice thus has a primary role both in the signification process and in affecting the body listening to it. This does not implicate that “the absence of voices and sounds is hard to endure” or that “complete silence is (...) immediately uncanny, it is like death, while the voice is the first sign of life” (DOLAR in STERNE, 2012:540). I am not trying to re-affirm the “rights” of the non-verbal voice in order to deny the significance of silence. The human voice is not “the first sign of life”, for silence itself contains the very uncontestable proof of our living body;<sup>223</sup> one should only learn to listen. Silence contains, namely, all the low “voices” of spaces, nature and the objects surrounding us. As Ihde efficiently resumed, “our listening experiences a multidimensional richness of things which we rarely attend to with deeper attention than ordinary consciousness” (IHDE, 2007:191).

## 2.1.4 Sound of poetry

The significant development of *sound studies* has certainly favored the recent emergence of a branch of literary criticism more explicitly focused on the *sound of poetry*. Several collections of essays have appeared over the last decades, such as Adelaide Morris’s *Sound States* (1997), Charles Bernstein’s *Close Listening* (1998) or Marjorie Perloff’s and Craig Dworkin’s *The Sound of Poetry/the Poetry of Sound* (2009), attesting to the recent increase in interest for the auditory aspect of poetry. At the very beginning of her introductory chapter, Perloff explicitly states that “however central the sound dimension is to any and all poetry, no other poetic feature is currently as neglected” (PERLOFF, 2009:1). Bernstein also underlines that “critical attention to modern and contemporary poetry performance has been negligible, despite

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<sup>221</sup> See: Dworkin, Craig: *The stutter of form*, in: Perloff, Marjorie and Dworkin, Craig (2009), pag. 166-183.

<sup>222</sup> “Fleckenhaft und doch ununterbrochen”.

<sup>223</sup> John Cage famously defined silence as “the entirety of unintended sounds” after hearing his working nervous system and his blood circulation in the anechoic chamber in 1951.



the crucial importance of performance to the practice of poetry of [XX] century” (BERNSTEIN, 1998:3). Actually, poetry has always been “the realm of speech in which the sovereignty of language yields to that of voice” (CAVARERO in STERNE, 2012:526), since it results from a sort of “intrusion” of particular acoustic qualities into the speech mode.<sup>224</sup> The relative proximity between poetry and music can be also identified thanks to structural factors. According to Haroldo de Campos, poetry “imposes a score-like reading of the text, showing that [...] in the sense of structural immanence, poetry can (always) be understood as music, an ideo-music of significant forms” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:284).<sup>225</sup>

Especially in its very origins and first developments, from the ancient Homeric tradition up to the sung poetry of the Provençal troubadours, poetry has been a primarily oral form of art, often sung or sustained by instrumental accompaniment. Until the Renaissance, the proximity between poetry and music was so evident that both forms of art could be considered indistinguishable. Only starting from the Renaissance, “the lyric has remained a verbal rather than a musical discipline” (quoted in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:5). In Europe, the development of the press and the consequent spread of written texts led to “the removal of verse from its producer and its reproducer, the voice” (quoted in MIDDLETON; in BERNSTEIN, 1998:272). However, as Paul Zumthor showed in his introductory study on oral poetical practices, poetry has continued to be a primarily oral practice within so-called “uncivilized” or “underdeveloped” communities around the world, places which have been scarcely or not at all affected by print techniques.<sup>226</sup>

Despite the little attention by literary criticism to the auditory aspect of poetry, sound has always undeniably been one of its basic, constitutive elements. Since poetry goes back to a relatively primitive, semantically undifferentiated, phonological system,<sup>227</sup> the presence of the reader’s voice, perceivable in all its *fleshiness*, creates an esthetic experience that is much more complex than silent reading with one’s “internal voice”. First, the symbolism of sound is identifiable with greater clarity in oral performance. As

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<sup>224</sup> See: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 194.

<sup>225</sup> “Ela impõe uma leitura partitural do texto, mostrando que, nesse sentido, num sentido de imanência estrutural, a poesia (desde sempre) pode ser entendida como música, uma ideomúsica de formas significantes”.

<sup>226</sup> See on this: Zumthor, Paul (1990).

<sup>227</sup> See: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 201.

many linguists have recently recognized, the meaning of a word can be intensified through its sound, because sound is able to reinforce the lexically generated meaning. In many cases, sound patterns are universal or at least common to several languages pertaining to a same linguistic group, but there are of course also the specific features of a single language or dialect.<sup>228</sup> Secondly, the poetic word acquires additional vigor through the articulation of the living body, resulting in new, endlessly potential representations. The resonating voice, contrary to the silent marks printed on a page, is able to signify differently at every new *performance*, because “the actual sounds are uncontrollable, feeble and human” (VOEGELIN, 2010:59). While a written word refers necessarily to one dominant meaning unless it is graphically modified, different sonic experiences can arise depending upon various factors, because “what is said [...] in voice is never present alone but it is amplified within the possibility of how the voice says it” (IHDE, 2007:170). A spoken verse within a poem can be intended differently depending on its tone: angry or ironic, crying or whispering.

Moreover, when read aloud by the author him or herself, a poem allows the listener to better grasp the author’s intentions and, what is more important, to gain possible insight into his or her emotions.<sup>229</sup> For example, higher or lower register or intensity, which remain unvaried during various recordings or public performances, permit the listener to get a glimpse of the poet’s personal, affective involvement in what has been read. Generally, the author is also endowed with what Ihde defines as “dramaturgical voice” (IHDE, 2007:167), which by heightening the significance of the spoken word amplifies the musical effect of poetry, the full beauty of the verbal music. In some cases, *performance* can even contradict the expected reading of a poem by “stressing unstressed syllables [...]” and thus “creat[es] synchopated rhythms, which once heard are then carried over by readers into their own reading of the text” (BERNSTEIN, 1998:15). Equally significant are further contingent variables: the possibility of polyvocal readings, which create superimpositions or dialogical contrasts of different vocal timbres, and, of course, the physical and social features of the setting within which the performance is realized. In brief, performing poetry generally entails entering into

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<sup>228</sup> See on this the following paragraph (2.2) on phonetics.

<sup>229</sup> “Tone-color is the avenue along which the emotion passes in its progress from within to outward, or from the poet to his/her listener. The mere fact is expressed by the words; the emotion is expressed by the various qualities of the voice” (MIDDLETON in BERNSTEIN, 1998:282).

realms of experience otherwise inaccessible by means of the written poem. So, if each performance of the same poem potentially produces a new experience, depending on the modalities of its realization, then the poem should be intended as a *performative* event rather than as a unitary textual entity, because it “refuses the originality of the written document in favor of the ‘plural event’ of the work” (quoted in BERNSTEIN, 1998:9).

Poetry read aloud, in light of the above mentioned implications of *performance*, must be considered as something significantly affecting our sensorial and bodily drives. For in exactly the same way as music, it is characterized by the “move to affect a listener in some sub-rational fashion, [being] in some way involved in the communication of feeling rather than of knowledge” (quoted in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:15). In this sense, I would agree with Dworkin that poetry “de-familiarizes not only language but the normalized body *within* language” (DWORKIN in PERLOFF/DWORKIN, 2009:183), because it stresses the “stuttering” character of speech and the always present imperfections.

This aspect is particularly intense in the case of XX century avant-garde poetry, which by breaking with usual syntactical conventions, shows with particular intensity the *fleshly* character of voice. Experimental works implicate intense word stress detached from its phrasal context, and also often on its syllabic and phonemic constituents, seen as the very *materia prima* for subversive poetic endeavors. When approaching avant-garde poetry, then, it is extremely valuable to shift the focus from conventional prosodic studies to the analysis of the actual, oral *performance* of poetry. For instance, E.E. Cummings’ poems dramatically intensify their perceptual effects when read aloud, with all variants and with the possible pauses and inflections resulting from a faithful reading of the written score. Finally, it is notable that even one of the main representatives of Hermeneutics, Hans Gadamer, had to recognize that meaning is not always necessarily the dominant dimension in the reading of a text.<sup>230</sup> Poems, in particular, have a “volume” which cannot be redeemed through mere interpretation (intended as the assignment of meaning), because there is always a dimension that demands the involvement of the human body in order to grasp the non-semantic, material components of the literary text.

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<sup>230</sup> See: Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich (2004), pag. 107.

## 2.1.5 Body/sound interaction

Once sound has been recognized as an aspect that has re-gained importance in Western epistemology, in daily communication and in poetical practice, it has to be made clear that it is neither a sort of metaphysical, transcendental entity, nor a “mathematical or electro-acoustic synthetic object” that exists independently (SCHAFER, 1985:181). Instead, sound is first and foremost an object of human perception, the smallest particle of the *soundscape* that we experience through our hearing body.

The body, as the instrument through which we experience the world, is actually recognized as constitutive for all sounds, either vocal or of any other nature, as it “contributes to [its] modulation, its reflection and reverberation, its volume and intensity, and ultimately to what it may communicate” (STERNE, 2012:469). It may be even said that sound is a product of the hearing body, for without a perceptive system capable to select and organize sounds<sup>231</sup> in a precise scale of values in order to distinguish them from one other, sound simply wouldn’t exist: for Voegelin, “the *sonic thing* [...] is empirical, neither formed nor deformed, but formless unless it meets the hearing body. In that sense the thing [...] only starts to sound in the ears of the thing that is the body encountering it.” (VOEGELIN, 2010:19). Indeed, the spatial relationship between sound and the body is one of chance, given the superimposition between the heard phenomenon and its audition: there is no distance between the hearing body and the sound heard.

In the Seventies, the body emerged as both a conceptual and a contemporary preoccupation in art and performance. Barthes proposed that we read “through our body”<sup>232</sup> thus launching a criticism involving the corporal experience more and more rather than the “understanding” of the work of art. The bodily affection involved in the listening act is considered a grounding principle by sound scholars. The relationship between sound and body has been described as atavistic, for humans have always

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<sup>231</sup> See also the following excerpt: “Our set of organs is not only to let in information, but also to shut out certain other kinds of information. Thus our sense organs let in light and sound waves, but shut out radio, ultra-violet and infrared waves” (TSUR, 1992:15).

<sup>232</sup> See: Barthes, Roland (1975).

organized sound and even established patterns of musical rhythms on the basis of their body, and in particular on circulation and breathing.

If the body is constitutive for sound, the latter fills the body continuously, and we cannot impede this. Differently from the objects of the world perceived visually, sounds cannot be totally erased, for there is no “ear-lid” for completely silencing sounds or noises we would like to not hear (SCHAFER, 1985:24). There is always a “physical complicity with [a sound’s] attack” (VOEGELIN, 2010:49). To plug one’s ears does not help very much, because while soundproof in relation to the external world, a simultaneous amplification of the internal noises of one’s body (like breathing and swallowing) inevitably occurs: it is just an inversion of the direction of hearing, not its erasure. Of course, one can stop listening consciously, and this is actually what most humans do with great frequency, by diverting their attention from the sonic world. This results in the above-mentioned lack of awareness we normally have in relation to the lo-fi character of our *soundscapes*. Sound never stops being in our bodies; rather, we are not always consciously listening to it. Moreover, differently from sight, hearing is directed simultaneously in all directions and it is characterized by both *surroundability* and *directionality*, so that we can switch our focus from one sound to another, without even moving our eyes.

However, hearing is not just a simple, unproblematic activity, since it implicates just a multitude of perceptive modalities. Jonathan Sterne highlighted the strong relationships between the different ways of listening (*audile technique*) and human life styles, its changing social structures.<sup>233</sup> Before him, Marshall McLuhan proposed the electric age as our “ushers into a world in which we live and breathe and listen with the entire epidermis”, after centuries of a visually-centered experience of the world wherein we were “fully clad and [...] contained in uniform visual space” (MCLUHAN, 2001:132). Murray Schafer identifies four different disciplines concerned with distinguished “ways of listening”, namely acoustics, psychoacoustic, semiotic/semantics and esthetics.<sup>234</sup> He sketches out an exemplary analysis of sound based on three different perspectives: its physical features, its referential aspects (meaning), and its emotional effect on human body. It is striking that Schafer did not maintain his theoretical scheme in the analytical section, where he did not distinguish between psychoacoustics and esthetics. This

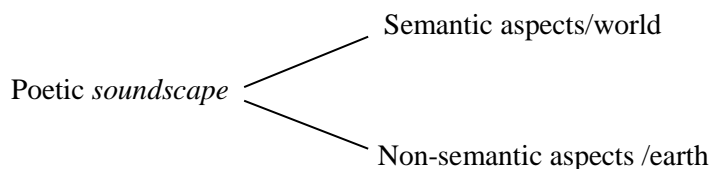
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<sup>233</sup> See: Sterne, Jonathan (2003), pag. 348.

<sup>234</sup> See: Schafer, Murray (1985), pag. 187.

apparent lack is certainly justifiable if one considers that the way a sound affects the body emotionally (esthetics), depends primarily on how it is perceived (psychoacoustic). Thus, on the one hand, a conjunction of both analytical approaches can be made without creating any theoretical issue; on the other hand, I would leave the acoustic analysis aside, which would provide numerical data relative to frequency or intensity that seems quite irrelevant for the aims of this study. Similarly to Pierre Schaeffer's "reduced listening", my approach is aimed at an account of the interaction between sounds and human perception rather than at a precise description of sound signals in merely physical terms.

After carrying out these apparently legitimate operations, what results is a "classical" distinction between esthetics and semantic/semiotic approaches to sound. What I propose, then, is to consider the sound poems as *soundscape*s that both *mean* something and *affect* the body through their sonic texture, creating feelings, emotions and associations as diverse as the number of potential listeners and the repeated listening acts. This seems to correspond to a philosophical tradition exemplified by Heidegger's model of the dialectic between the earth and the world.<sup>235</sup>



Regarding the semiotic/semantic aspect, it must be made clear that all meanings are differently understandable depending on each recipient, his/her pre-determined set of knowledge that permits him/her to decode all messages. However, the different degree of comprehensibility of a message can be given in terms of information theory: the more conventional the message is, the higher its understandability. A totally original message, one that does not obey of the conventional rules known to the listener, would not transmit any meaning at all, while a conventional message would be mostly predictable and immediately understandable. Consequently, the artistic message should always break some of the conventional rules, without renouncing, however, a steady

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<sup>235</sup> See: Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich (2004), pag. 75-76

reference to the repertory of its code.<sup>236</sup> It should be no surprise that these theoretical insights, taken from Abraham Moles' Information Theory, have been discussed by Augusto the Campos. He was, in fact, like both other founders of *Noigandres*, profoundly convinced of the importance of the steady presence of semantics in works of art. However, there is more than just meaning. The analysis of the "mechanisms" or "techniques" that the metaphysics of poetry seeks to explain is largely insufficient for accounting for any experience of it, because a corporal and irrational aspect is always present. Bodily experience is the central concern of the phenomenology developed by Husserl, which, in Ihde's words, "takes as its primary evidence the region of fulfillable experiential immediacy as a starting point" (IHDE, 2007:28). This phenomenology is based on the process of *epoché*, namely the *bracketing* of "all factors which may not be noted as 'bodily present' or actually intuitable within ongoing experience" (IHDE, *ibidem*). This way, the meaning is in the first place excluded from the experiential field.

In brief, I affirm that neither meaning nor corporeality exist for themselves; rather, between phenomenological experience and its semiotic articulation there is an engaged and fluid relationship that Voegelin beautifully compares with the image of a "wobbly and swaying bridge" (VOEGELIN, 2010:107). Gumbrecht also proposes that the esthetic experience is characterized by an oscillation between *presence* effects and *meaning* effects, which is particularly appropriate in the artistic context. Interestingly, Gumbrecht also identifies a peculiar framework, defined as "focused intensity", that seems to be a sort of general pattern for esthetic experience, in relation to which the "deep listening" I described above appears to be a specific branch of the sonic experience. Both, in fact, are characterized by *intentionality* and the simultaneous, productive tension between meaning and presence.

The conception of this perpetual oscillation is based on the acknowledgement of the communion of body and mind in the production of knowledge, first mentioned in phenomenological studies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. By further developing the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, he opposed traditional Cartesian dualism, according to which mind and body are two distinct substances, the former being uniquely responsible for conscious intellectual activity. For Merleau-Ponty, on the contrary, the body, as a *feeling* entity actively interacting with the mind, is a fully

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<sup>236</sup> See: Campos, Augusto (1986), pag. 180-181.

legitimate epistemological tool.<sup>237</sup> Quite radically, Merleau-Ponty explicitly transgresses collective in favor of individual sense making. Subjective sensation produces “an esthetic moment that is non-sense, both without rational meaning or its nonsensical opposite” (quoted in VOEGELIN, 2010:20). The traditional dichotomy between reason and emotion and the polarity between mind and body must be overcome in order to recognize that affective experience is just “as dependent upon intelligent cognition as conscious intellection” (VOEGELIN, 2010:32). Thus, thinking and feeling should not be viewed as polar opposites but rather as different manifestations of a single psychological process. The unstable encounter between presence and meaning is particularly applicable to sound, given that “sound is the solitary edge of the relationship between phenomenology and semiotics, which are presumed to meet each other in the quarrel over meaning” (VOEGELIN, 2010:27).

The following analysis should help to understand to what degree concrete poetry is, on the one hand, bodily *experienced*, and, on the other, understandable or *interpretable* through the study of a structured message. For sure, no concrete sound poem can be reduced to just one of these aspects: its sensorial complexity cannot be simply erased, since the objective vocabulary of any semiotic system is always insufficient to account for the moment of perception of each individual. On the other hand, no work of art can be taken as an inexplicable and unstructured corporal experience. Even the most apparently incomprehensible work is based on a set of rules, on some “code” that, however radically opposed to communication conventions, can at least be partly de-structured and understood through specific interpretative tools. During the XX century, structuralist approaches have undeniably contributed to a more in-depth comprehension of art, particularly of literature.

This awareness permits us to focus on the process of *meaning making* in the considered concrete sound poems, and to avoid any pretention to arrive at some supposedly “true” meaning. Of course, the swaying balance between phenomenology and semiotics is extremely valuable, as it “open[s] possibilities for production” (VOEGELIN, 2010:46). Which (if any), between phenomenology and semiotics, is a necessary premise for the other? Does semiotics preset the experience, or does experience need the help of semiotics for consolidation? Of course, there is no single, definitive verdict. It depends

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<sup>237</sup>Further research on this aspect has increased thanks to a newly oriented sociology of the body, developed starting from the Eighties. See for example: Fraser, Kember and Lury (2005) and Lash (2006).



on the contingent features of each poetic *soundscape* which one takes into account; and, given that the main subject of this study is the sound of concrete poetry of *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, my efforts will be directed towards the determination of the kind of dialectic between experience and meaning, qualitative and referential features in this specific case study.

### 2.1.6 The auditory imagination

A last, but not least element which needs to be considered as a fundamental tool for the analysis which is follow: my imaginative mode of experience. I believe that *imagination* is extremely valuable for enriching and integrating the images provided by perception. I disagree with Merleau-Ponty's idea that "the wildest imagination does not yield many of the possibilities of the perceptual world" (quoted in VOEGELIN, 2010:214). Imagination does not totally coincide with a "wild" eccentric *fantasy*, which accounts for other, "parallel" worlds, but rather helps us to better grasp *our* world, the one we live in. I do not aim at diminishing the heuristic value of perception, which constitutes one of the few permanent references for my research, but rather I propose *imagination* as a support for perception, by recalling, for example, Charles Baudelaire's definition of *imagination* as "a scientific faculty", or the crucial role it has in Levi-Strauss' structuralism.<sup>238</sup> For Fenollosa, imagination distinguishes itself thanks to its "constructive power",<sup>239</sup> while Barthes proposed the idea of a reader-subject who happens to be transported into the register of the *imaginary*. Marshall McLuhan, in turn, remarked that "any ambience that we create or assume is like a mask, whose weight can become crushing and deform our sensibility if the imagination doesn't make a comeback" (MCLUHAN, 1986:119). For Georges Didi-Huberman, imagination was the basis for his study *Images in spite of all* (2012), where he stressed that the knowledge of any experience must pass phenomenologically through imagination.

So imagination is not a *false perception*. Any object, any image I have in my hands is insignificant as far as I do not build a connection between what I perceive and what I

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<sup>238</sup> See: Didi-Huberman, Georges (2012), pag. 155.

<sup>239</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo (1977), pag. 66.

know through other means. In the auditory dimension, the capacity for imagination is not only a valuable, enriching support for perception, but is effectively inalienable. I think, in fact, that an acoustic image without imagination is an image that we didn't work on yet. The assignment of such a crucial role to imagination can be at least in part explained through the *fragmentedness* of our reality, where all fragments “explode meaning, and lend themselves to the most unsayable aspects of our corporeal existence” (VOEGELIN, 2010:40). They never constitute something coherent, but are rather auxiliary to the creation of new, multiple relationships. Consequently, to imagine means to get closer to the possibility of the event, without ever reaching it in its totality; to imagine is an endless and ever incomplete task. In the auditory sphere, imagination has also been recognized as crucial. According to Sterne, many people have become sound students in order to cultivate their *sonic imaginations*,<sup>240</sup> their “fascination with sound”, to make sense of some part of the sonic world.

I would highlight that the incomplete character of the *fragment* is even more evident when listening to sound: due to its very nature, sound disappears immediately after it appears, a fulminous passage and an immediate withdrawal. Due to its profound and extremely rapid effect on the body, sound is endowed with a complex, fragmentary character that I would tentatively define as a “fleshy flash”. In relation to the sound of poetry, the illustrious poet T.S. Eliot claimed that “the auditory imagination is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word (...)”. I would suggest that greater auditory imagination is particularly important when listening to concrete sound poems, which include, as has already been noted above, a vast range of sounds. I think that this approach can enable the listener to actively participate in the *making* of these poetic *soundscape*s. However, I also claim that stressing the importance of auditory imagination does not imply that imagining leads to knowledge. I am not proposing *the* truth, but just *one* of the possible truths which becomes evident in listening to these poems.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that allowing auditory imagination does not mean that absurd, airy-fairy interpretations will be accepted. In this sense, I was inspired by a remark expressed by John Cage. Even if he was originally referring to the musical

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<sup>240</sup> See: Sterne, Jonathan (2012), pag. 5.

sphere, it appears highly valuable also in the field of literary research: "I have to find a way to communicate with the musicians so that they understand that they have to be free but not fools".<sup>241</sup> In order to be free to listen and imagine through my personal perception, I need to situate the scientific tools which are necessary for the analysis, in a way that allowed me to propose some subjective interpretations on the basis of objectively established tools. Since the sound poems' basic elements are words, sounds and technology,<sup>242</sup> what is considered in the following three paragraphs are the general theoretical insights in, respectively, the phonetic, the musical and the technological fields.

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<sup>241</sup> See: Correa, Marina(2008)

<sup>242</sup> See: Klippert, Werner (1977), pag. 98.

## 2.2 Phonetics: general laws for the analysis

Roland Barthes, in *The rustle of language* (1989), stressed the re-approaching of linguistics and literature, the result of the development of structuralist approaches in literary criticism. Literature began to be conceived of as the science of the “human word” rather than of the “human heart”, as the means for the expression of language and of its rules, rather than the subjective interiority of the author.<sup>243</sup> Particularly in poetry, the message focuses on form rather than content. In poetry, more than in any other literary form, the totality of the phonic figures serves as fundamental structural principle, characterized by a high degree of self-determination. The word has its own autonomous reality, due to the substantial equivalence between *signans* and *signatum*. As Roman Jakobson affirmed, poetry is “the kingdom of verbal language wherein the relation of contiguity between sound and meaning is substituted by the relation of similarity” (JAKOBSON, 1987:252). Still, to reduce poetry to what Jakobson defined as the “poetic function” of language, namely the peculiar *modality* of conveying a message, would be “a misleading hyper-simplification” (JAKOBSON 2012:190). The poetic function belongs to all semiotic systems, even though its importance differs case by case. Even in conventional speech, “some perceptual quality of the acoustic signal [...] sometimes intrudes, so to speak, into the speech mode, creating the poetic mode” (TSUR, 1992:194).

Among the main representatives of structural linguistics, Jakobson acquired a particularly significant role. He focused his research especially on *phonology*, the field of linguistics aimed at establishing rules for clarifying the organizational modalities of sound within language.<sup>244</sup> Jakobson’s much-admired analyses, gathered in *Poetics and poetry*, were defined by Haroldo de Campos as “animated by a semantic-musical impulse, in a play between sound and meaning” (CAMPOS, 2006:248).<sup>245</sup> By unmasking the linguistic experiments concealed in several poetic masterpieces, Jakobson clearly showed to what degree the organization of sounds invested the poetry

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<sup>243</sup> See: Barthes, Roland (1989), pag. 3-46.

<sup>244</sup> It must be made clear that phonology is distinct from phonetics, as the latter limits its research to the field of the physical and physiological features of the sound of language.

<sup>245</sup> “Como jogo intercambiante de som e sentido é essa mesma pulsão semântico-musical que anima a poética de Roman Jakobson, inspirada nos vertiginosos experimentos linguísticos da poesia russa das primeiras décadas deste século, de Khlebnikov, Maiakovski, Pasternak.”

of all eras.<sup>246</sup> In this sense, Saussure's posthumous study on the *anagrams* possibly contained in classical Greek and Latin poetry<sup>247</sup> has also proven to be a very stimulating source for further research on the sounds of poetry.

Undoubtedly, then, these approaches must be considered when analyzing sound in concrete poetry, since the latter aspires to a "constructivist" organization based on a clear awareness of phonetic qualities and it is characterized by a profound interest in linguistic explorations. The importance of the phonic features in the creation of concrete poems is explicitly stated in Haroldo de Campos' manifesto of 1956: the search for a new structural organization of the poetic discourse must be grounded on the *phonemic* unity.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, Franz Mon commented on the attempt of the concrete poets to realize "a radical new foundation of poetry on the basis of the most elementary means of sound and syllable" (MON in KLIPPERT, 1977:55).<sup>249</sup>

This section aims at a general introduction of universally valid phonological principles that one should be aware of when listening to a concrete sound poem, in order to grasp the emotions and associations arising when listening to different sounds of concrete poetic speech. Similar to Fonagy's and Tsur's approaches,<sup>250</sup> my intention is not to connect sounds to specific themes but to more generic moods: *tenderness* vs *agressiveness*, *brightness* vs *darkness*, *heaviness* vs *lightness* and so on.

The basic phonetic distinction is obviously that between vowels and consonants,<sup>251</sup> the former resulting from an unobstructed passage of air, the latter being instead characterized by the presence of (different kinds of) obstruction. The specific branch of articulatory phonetics established a set of six factors for classifying univocally the sounds of speech; however, the place and manner of articulation constitute the very

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<sup>246</sup>The analyses were conducted, for instance, on texts of Shakespeare, Poe, Majakovskij.

<sup>247</sup>See: Starobinski, Jean (1980).

<sup>248</sup>See: Campos, Augusto e Haroldo; Pignatari, Décio (2006), pag. 74.

<sup>249</sup>„Eine radikale Neubegründung der Poesie aus den elementaren Mitteln von Laut und Silben“.

<sup>250</sup>See: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 184.

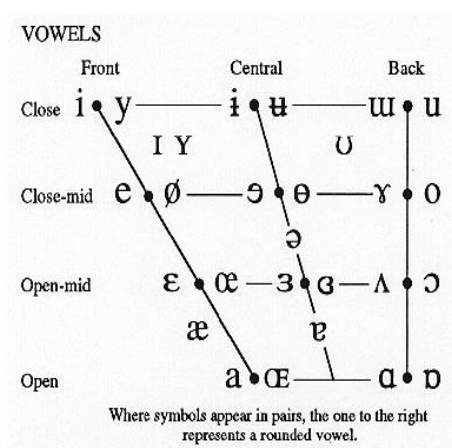
<sup>251</sup> In reality, there is a twofold opposition between the distinctive traits: *vocalic* vs *non-vocalic* (absence vs presence of a clearly defined formant structure) and *consonantal* vs *non-consonantal* (reduced vs elevated total energy). This distinction serves to make explain the hybrid nature of liquids (defined as both vocalic and consonantal) and glides (neither vocalic nor consonantal). I will maintain the basic distinction defined prior to the theorization of the distinctive traits, identifying liquids as semi-vocalic or semi-consonantal.

ground on which the IPA system (International Phonetic Alphabet) has been fixed.<sup>252</sup> Instead of reproposing the general scheme, which would account for the phonemes of all languages and therefore be useless for my aims, I have drafted a framework including exclusively the phonemes of both languages that interest me here, namely German and Portuguese. In the case of vowels, however, the universally valid outline has been provided, since these two languages (especially German) actually have a vast range of vocalic sounds

### Consonants<sup>253</sup>

	Bilabial	Labiodentals	Alveo- dentals	Palatal	Velar	Glottal	Retroflex
Occlusives	/p/ /b/		/t/ /d/		/k/ /g/		
Affricates		/pf/	/ts/ /dz/	/tʃ/ /dʒ/			
Nasals	/m/		/n/				/ŋ/
Liquids			/l/ /r/				
Fricatives		/f/ /v/	/s/ /z/ /ʃ/ /ʒ/	/ç/	/x/ /χ/	/h/ /ɦ/	

### Vowels



<sup>252</sup> In 1886, Paul Passy and Henry Sweet founded the International Phonetic Association (IPA) for constantly updating the original scheme.

<sup>253</sup> The present outline is based on the following bibliographical references: Tworek, Artur (2006:135-152) for the consonantal system of the German language, and Silva, Thais Cristofaro. (2003:137-152) for Portuguese.

The *phonemes* have different occurrences (for example, nasals and affricates are on average quite rare in world languages; or, /s/ is generally more frequent than /f/)<sup>254</sup> and create various associations (for example, the discontinuous is seen as hard, the continuous instead as soft; among the liquids, /r/ is generally seen as rough, opposed to the gentle /l/).<sup>255</sup> However, the search for an intimate meaning of the sounds of language was strongly criticized before the theorization of the *distinctive features*, on the basis of the erroneous conviction that the *phoneme* was the fundamental, indivisible constituent of oral language. Jakobson's discoveries have destroyed the conception of the *phoneme* as the smallest distinctive unit of meaning, showing its complex nature: each phoneme, in fact, is constituted by a bundle of distinctive features, on the basis of which the smallest significant units (*morphemes*) can be distinguished from one another.<sup>256</sup> The distinctive features are not determined by their own peculiarities, but instead by the *opposition principle*, which has been recognized as the basis for all logic operations of the human mind.<sup>257</sup> In practice, they are defined *ex negativo*, through their *differences* in respect to another, opposite feature.

The complex system outlined by Jakobson is grounded on a first, basic distinction between *prosodic* and *intrinsic* distinctive features, which account for the entire lexical and morphological organization of oral speech. The first class is constituted by three types of features, defined on the basis of Henry Sweet's terminology: *pitch*, *force* and *quantity*, corresponding approximately to the three basic attributes of auditory perception (pitch, intensity and duration). These features are of crucial importance for this study, since I am considering recorded performances, where different intensities and pitches of voice may contribute decisively to the identification of sound patterns and their possible meanings. The second class is by far more complicated since it is

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<sup>254</sup> See on this: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 198 and pag. 203.

<sup>255</sup> See on this: Fonagy, Ivan (1963), pag. 27. Fonagy goes deeper into the issue of the opposition between both liquids in his work. See for example the following excerpt in regard to the hardness of /r/: „Das als besonders hart empfunden gerollte /r/ entsteht, indem die Zungenspitze, die sich den Alveolen der oberen Vorderzähne nähern will, gegen den Luftstrom, durch den der Zungenmuskel immer wieder von seinem Ziel zurückgeworfen wird, ankämpft“ (FONAGY, 1963:54). [The rolled /r/, that is perceived as particularly hard, results from the fight between the tongue's end, which wants to get closer to the alveolis of the upper front teeth, and the air flow, through which the tongue muscle is continuously thrown back from its goal].

<sup>256</sup> The distinctive features have been recognized as to be the most important features of speech, but they are a part of a more complex set of features, described by Jakobson in his *Essays*. See on this: Jakobson, Roman (2012) pag. 84-87.

<sup>257</sup> See: Jakobson, Roman (1987), pag. 15-19.

made up of twelve binary oppositions, divided into two different sub-categories: the traits of *sonority* (accounting for the intrinsic intensity and duration of each phoneme) and the traits of *tonality* (accounting for their lower or higher pitch). In the present analysis I will consider only the basic oppositions, which have proven to be sufficient for my analysis.<sup>258</sup>

## Features of Sonority

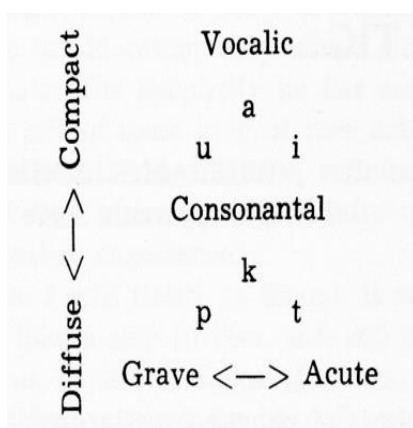
**1. Compact - diffuse:** this opposition provides us with data on the *energy* contained in a phoneme; the energetic concentration in a relatively narrow, central section of the spectrum can be *elevated* or *reduced*. In a basic scheme, the energetic charge of a phoneme depends on the distance between its main formants, the inferior and the superior (F1 and F2): when they are close to one other, the phoneme is compact, while when they are wider apart, the diffuse feature arises. Reuven Tsur underlined that “the human ear effectively fuses the two formants when they are close enough, whereas it seems to perceive them as fairly differentiated when they are sufficiently apart” (TSUR, 1992:194). The distance between both formants can be identified with great precision using spectral analysis. This permits, for example, establishing that the character of the F2 in /i/ and /u/ is significantly divergent, since the F2 of the former has a much higher frequency than the same formant of the latter. All this has an impact on the way we perceive both phonemes: the fact of /i/ being perceived as “bright” is due to the relatively wide distance between the formants F1 and F2, while their closeness in the /u/ provides to the latter its “dark” character.<sup>259</sup> The compact phonemes (both consonants and vowels) have a naturally longer duration in comparison to the diffuse ones. Among vowels, [a] is the most powerful and the most resistant, clearly distinguishing itself from all other vowels for its incomparably open, manifest sonority. Among the consonants, [k] is like [a] in terms of its resistance and its most easily perceivable explosive character. Palatal consonants are more powerful (compact) than labials and dentals, being instead weaker (diffuse) than velars. Thus, the correspondence between /p-t-k/ and /i-u-a/ on an “energetic” level has been established by Jakobson:

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<sup>258</sup> Among the traits of tonality, the opposition shrill-soft and blocked -non blocked have been left out. Among the traits of sonority, flat vs non-flat and diesis vs non-diesis have been left out.

<sup>259</sup> See on this: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 198.





**2 Tense - Relaxed:** this opposition also concerns energy, but provides more specific data about the phoneme's resonance and expansion of energy on a temporal axis. The articulatory organs are more or less deformed in respect to the resting position, and this corresponds to the opposition "tense vs relaxed" on a genetic-articulatory perspective. For Sapir, this feature belongs to "the functionally and esthetically determinant configurations" (SAPIR, 1961:146).

More easily understandable due to their theoretically less complex character or their immediate evidence on an acoustic level, the following oppositions are however no more important than the preceding ones.

**3. Voiced-unvoiced:** this opposition regards the presence vs absence of periodic vibrations of the vocal chords.

**4. Nasal-oral:** the oral resonator can be integrated vs non-integrated by the nasal cavity, and this gives rise to a propagation of the energy on a larger vs smaller frequency area.

**5 Discontinuous-continuous:** phonemes are characterized by presence vs absence of abrupt transition between silence and sound. The hard sound of discontinuous phonemes results from the initial detainment of much energy followed by its sudden and vigorous liberation, similar to the resonance of an explosion.<sup>260</sup>

Among the features of *tonality*, the *high-low opposition* alone will be sufficient for my aims, as it accounts for the fundamental opposition between low and high pitches, that

<sup>260</sup>See: Fonagy, Ivan (1963), pag.77.

is, the down vs up motion of the superior formant. Since this opposition accounts for the “musical pitch of sound” (relatively high or low), it is quite easily to distinguish.

These insights allow for much more precision in regard to the nature of the phonemes and their relationships: two phonemes that share exactly the same distinctive features but one (like /t/ - /d/) are much more strictly related than two phonemes formed by a bundle of completely different distinctive features (like /b/ and /s/). Consequently, all of the above has a fundamental role in revealing aspects of the *phonic symbolism* of language and poetry in particular, that intimates the similarity between sound and meaning, as opposed to the conception of total arbitrariness of linguistic signs. According to Edward Sapir, language has always been first and foremost an auditory symbolic system, since “the linguistic impulse manifests itself in first instance as auditory image” (SAPIR, 1980:17), and the acoustic symbols produced by the vocal organs through the above described articulation processes are the historical source of all forms of language and of thinking.<sup>261</sup> This is valid on a universal scale: all languages have operated the same (or almost the same) selection among the infinite phonic possibilities of the human articulatory apparatus (JAKOBSON, 1987:XIII).<sup>262</sup>

Contrasting characteristics like bright - dark, light - heavy, small- big, etc., belong to the elementary structures required for the differentiation of perceptions, independent from one’s cultural and linguistic background. Thus the “various sounds of a language do have certain general potentials of meaningful impression” (TSUR, 1992:182) like, for instance, the correspondence between back vowels/dark colors and front vowels/bright colors. Consequently, it is not necessary for the listener to be aware of the theoretical insights illustrated above in order to perceive the phonic effects which are instead unconsciously “grasped” by the listener. For Tsur, “readers [or listeners] have vague intuitions that the sound patterns [...] are somehow expressive of their atmosphere” (TSUR, 1992:190), while Fonagy underlines that “grammarians, mystics, poets, 5-6 years-old children, who know barely something or actually nothing about the anterior or

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<sup>261</sup> See: Sapir, Edward (1949), pag. 21.

<sup>262</sup> Fonagy has also showed to which degree the same sounds used in very different languages are generally associated with the same concepts or feelings. See on this: Fonagy, Ivan (1963), pagg. 11-37.

posterior positions of the tongue, understand without any difficulty which vowel is defined as bright and which one as dark” (FONAGY, 1963:102).<sup>263</sup>

However, phonology has the undeniable merit of searching for objective criteria, which can lead to deeper insight into the reasons for these “intuitions”. Reuven Tsur obtained valuable results in this context by considering the dichotomy periodicity - aperiodicity in addition to that of continuity – discontinuity, already included among Jakobson’s oppositions. Periodic phonemes are characterized by “the recurrence of signal portions with similar structure”, while the aperiodic ones are “randomly changing waveform” (TSUR, 1992:192); in simpler terms, it can be said that the essential distinction between sounds (periodic) and noises (a-periodic) is re-proposed in reference to human speech. Periodic and continuous sounds are normally perceived as tender and softer, while a-periodic and discontinuous sounds are defined as “optimally aggressive”. Thus, the idea that oral language is totally arbitrary, as Saussure sustained in his *Course* (1916), is generally contrasted by these deeper insights. As Fonagy rightly claimed, “the natural dependence between the object and its metaphorical designation is not neutralized by the determination, the conventionalization of the expression” (FONAGY, 1963:38).<sup>264</sup>

A summary insight on the intrinsic sounds of both languages involved in this study would present German as “ugly” due to the great frequency of affricates like /ts/ and /pf/, and for its abundance of discontinuous and unvoiced sounds,<sup>265</sup> while on the contrary, Portuguese sounds musical and “beautiful” due to the frequent presence of nasals and liquids, as well as for the predominance of vocalic and semi-vocalic phonemes. More generally, “ugliness” and “beauty” are usually assigned to languages deriving respectively from German and Latin roots, as Bouhours quite explicitly remarks: “French is infinitely distant from the rudeness of all languages from North [...]; all those double ww, double ff and double kk [...] piled together, are horrible to be pronounced and have a scary sound” (quoted in FONAGY, 1963:28).<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> “Grammatiker, Mystiker, Dichter, 5-6 jährige Kinder, die kaum etwas oder gar nichts von der vorderen und hinteren Zungenstellung wissen, verstehen ohne jede Schwierigkeit, welche Vokale als hell und welche als dunkel bezeichnet werden“.

<sup>264</sup> “Der natürliche Zusammenhang zwischen dem Gegenstand und seiner metaphorischen Bezeichnung wird durch Festlegung, Konventionalisierung des Ausdrucks nicht aufgehoben“.

<sup>265</sup> See: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 203.

<sup>266</sup> “Le Français est infiniment éloigné de la rudesse de toutes les langues du Nort [...]. Ces doubles w, ces doubles ff, ces doubles kk [...] entassées les unes sur les autres, sont horrible à prononcer, & ont un son que fait peur“.

As for the present case study, it must also be acknowledged that the Brazilian variant of Portuguese stresses the already evident musicality of the lusophone tongue even more. José de Alencar underlined the significant influence of indigenous languages on the Brazilian Portuguese, especially “its prosodic suavity, with relaxed and slow vowels, alien to the pressings of the consonants” (quoted in CAMPOS, H. 2006:135),<sup>267</sup> and goes as far to state that “all languages of musical genius possess a sonorous and abundant language. Brazil finds itself in these conditions [...]” (ibidem).<sup>268</sup> In Germany, Klippert (1977) refers to a possible “psychology” of the German phonemes proposed by Lersch: “/i/ and /ei/ are the sensory expressions of happiness, /u/ those of terror, /e/ of disgust, /o/ of regret, /a/ of the wondering opening of the soul in front of the world” (quoted in KLIPPERT, 1977:76);<sup>269</sup> Fonagy, in turn, quotes Lomonosow’s claim that “the phonemes /o/ and /u/ reflect force, anger, hate, sadness and terrific appearances” (FONAGY, 1963:39).<sup>270</sup> These are interesting proposals, but of course they should not be taken as sacred rules that are always respected; in fact, the following analysis will present some instances that clearly oppose them.

In this sense, it is extremely important to underline that, despite the undisputable usefulness of the shown patterns of phonetic symbolism, none of them is inherently meaningful. Sibilants, for instance, may represent both noise and silence, for they can both serve as “sound imitations” of natural noises or have a tender, hushing quality. The phonemes /d/ and /g/ have, on the one hand, only one distinctive feature separating them from the hard, aggressive sounds of /t/ and /k/, but on the other hand, they are very close to the sonorants /l/ and /m/, generally associated with tenderness. This is, actually, what Tsur defined as “double-edgedness” of some classes of sounds; that is, they can express extremely different, or even opposite qualities, giving rise to emotions and associations of contrasting nature.<sup>271</sup> In this sense, the phonetic context within which a phoneme is

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<sup>267</sup> “E algumas das virtudes da língua tupi se transmitem ao idioma dos civilizados, principalmente a suavidade prosódica, com vogais descansadas e lentas, alheias as empurrões das consoantes.”

<sup>268</sup> “Todos os povos de gênio musical possuem uma língua sonora e abundante. O Brasil está nestas condições; a influência nacional já se faz sentir na pronúncia mais suave do nosso dialeto”.

<sup>269</sup> „/i/ und /ei/ sind die sinnlichen Verlautbarungen der Freude, /u/ die des Grauens, /e/ des Ekels, /o/ des Bedauerns, /a/ des staunenden Öffnens der Seele der Welt gegenüber.“

<sup>270</sup> “Die Laute /o/ und /u/ spiegeln die Kraft, den Zorn, den Hass, die Trauer und schreckerregende Erscheinungen“.

<sup>271</sup> This is also sustained by Fonagy when he claims that the linguists must gradually escape from the contingent properties of each phoneme, in order to define its pertinent, invariable features. See: Fonagy Ivan (1963), pag. 108.

included is probably the most important factor in determining how it happens to be perceived by the listener. All phonemes are compared, put in contiguous relationships with each other, according to the principle of similarity and of contrast, and on this basis they transmit their possible significations. So the different potentials of the various distinctive features of the same sound may be realized.<sup>272</sup>

These are just a few examples of how speech sounds may be interpreted differently depending on the phonic context where they are found. This has a very important consequence: even if anchored on a scientifically proved phonological system, the listener is legitimated to imagine and create different possible associations when acoustically exploring a phonic context from different “auditory perspectives”. In fact, human beings have alternative cognitive strategies available, and each human may be affected differently by a same phoneme and its inclusion in a specific phonic context. Cognitive poetics has, then, a twofold, useful function: first of all, critical arbitrariness can be avoided, since it makes reference to some fixed, scientific rules, while at the same time, it endeavors to render the reader’s impression a legitimate and integral part of criticism.<sup>273</sup> In this sense, I once more claim my own perception to be responsible for a listening experience not necessarily shared with everyone, but absolutely legitimate due to the patterns and rules showed above. They will serve as guarantee for the plausibility of my readings, which is undoubtedly as necessary as its proclaimed relativity.

A last issue must be addressed: it has been pointed out (Jespersen) that the creation of onomatopoeias and phonic symbolism is a constant activity, carried out not only in the distant past, but also in the contemporary community. In this sense, I believe that concrete poetry still plays a primary role today, since its extremely unconventional message, its low redundancy and predictability can always give rise to new possible readings on the part of the listener, especially when the auditory aspect in its smallest phonic constituents is attentively evaluated, and this is what I will undertake.

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<sup>272</sup> See: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 183.

<sup>273</sup> See also: Tsur, Reuven (1992), pag. 202.

## 2.3 Musical patterns and principles in the XX century

Starting from the beginning of the XX century, most basic patterns employed in Western music until then were questioned through radically new compositional practices. The present paragraph, then, aims at introducing those structural and conceptual principles in which the concrete poets were mostly interested and which were re-adapted and transformed for use in their experimental works. I believe, in fact, that these compositional processes should first of all be explained in their original form before being identified in the analysis below. What follows shouldn't be taken as in-depth, critical exploration of the most revolutionary composers of the XX century, but rather as an attempt to provide the basic tools for understanding the analysis of the concrete poems.

It seems almost obvious that very few (if any) correspondences can be found between the complex melodic patterns of the *New music* and possibly distinguishable "melodic" structures in the performance of the poems. To speak, for instance, of the peculiarities of chromatic relations in Webern's music would be totally useless for my aims here; concrete poetry is not sung, and even if there can be some identifiably higher or lower pitch in the recordings, no structural principle as complex as, for instance, a scale with its relative degrees and intervals, can be found in any vocal performance of concrete poems. However, the atonal texture must be highlighted because, "by provoking the emancipation of the pitch and the relationships between the pitches, [it] also provoke[d] the emancipation of the timbre and of the relationships between the timbres, as well as of the durations and the relationships between durations" (DÖHL, 1976:156).<sup>274</sup> That is to say, atonalism didn't simply revolutionize the organization of pitches and their relationships, but it was conceived as a more general structural principle which may be applied to several aspects of the musical composition. This is, as we shall see, the impact of atonalism (and what derived from it in the following decades) on the sounds of concrete poetry.

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<sup>274</sup>„Indem der atonikale Tonsatz die Emanzipation der Tonhöhen und Tonhöhenbeziehungen bewirkt, bewirkt er auch die Emanzipation der Klangfarben und Klangfarbenbeziehungen sowie der Tondauren und Tondauernbeziehungen.“

## Second Viennese School

Founded by Arnold Schönberg at the beginning of the XX century, the Second Viennese School had as its main representatives, besides Schönberg himself, the Viennese composers Alban Berg and Anton Webern. Even if with notable differences, all three composers broke with the traditional tonal system, by both theorizing and putting into practice the *twelve-tone technique*, which is also generally renowned out of the strictly academic musical context. Even if its official formulation occurred in 1923, it dates back to Webern's principle of *Nichtwiederholung* (non-repetition), which was already identifiable in some notes about his *Bagatelle op. 9* (1911).<sup>275</sup> Undoubtedly, all three above-mentioned composers deserve a profound, critical appraisal that I cannot do justice to in the present study. I will focus especially on Anton Webern, who has been declared to be the most important reference for Augusto de Campos within the musical sphere,<sup>276</sup> and whose influence seems to be quite evident in the poetic realizations of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. One of the main reasons for this preference was Webern's absolute structural rigor that distinguished his music from both that of Schönberg and Berg, still connected with the Romantic tradition. In other words, they were not as interested as Webern "in completely avoiding the musical 'content' and in exclusively allowing the appearance of the material sphere and the musical structure" (DÖHL, 1976:161).<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> See on this the following excerpt: „Webern bei der Komposition seiner Bagatellen op.9 [...] dahin kommt, die einzelnen Töne der chromatischen Skala in seinem Skizzenbuch abzustreichen, wenn sie ‚schon da‘ waren. Es bildete sich eine Gesetzmäßigkeit heraus: bevor nicht alle zwölf Töne drangekommen sind, darf keiner von ihnen wiederkommen“ (DÖHL, 1976:167). [When composing the *Bagatellen op. 9* [...] Webern went as far to wipe off the single pitches of the chromatic scale, if they were already there'. A law was constituted: before all twelve tones occurred, none of them was allowed to come again].

<sup>276</sup>See: Campos, Augusto (1998), pag. 156.

<sup>277</sup> “[Webern zielt darauf], den musikalischen ‚Inhalt‘ ganz zu vermeiden and allein Erscheinungen der materialen Sphäre, der musikalischen Struktur sprechen zu lassen.“

## Anton Webern

Anton Webern was the most radical of the three composers of the Viennese school. First of all, he strongly opposed the idea of uninterrupted melody and the necessary predominance of the higher part, while both Berg and Schönberg never abandoned linear continuity and thematic form. Likewise evident is his tendency to reduce everything to the essential by eliminating all conventional elements appearing as superfluous, similar to what happens in modern architecture, which discards all simulative and decorative elements, or, more importantly for my contingent concern, similar to the creation of concrete poems<sup>278</sup> where the intermediate “passages” are often reduced to the minimum, sometimes even to a single sound or group of sounds. This minimalism is also reflected in the extremely reduced length of his 31 works,<sup>279</sup> which includes an astonishing concentration of acoustic material with awesome expressive possibilities. According to Jürgen Uhde, when performing Webern’s music “(one) attempts to produce the sensation that in the first sound or chord of a musical passage, everything that follows is already present” (quoted in ADORNO, 1969:101).<sup>280</sup> And that is why expressions like “the most sublimated music style” and “non multa sed multum” are generally accepted as efficient definitional formulas for Webern’s music.

Even if his works were composed based on the “constellation principle” already starting from 1907, Webern’s most radical compositional processes were developed especially in his late production, from op.20 onward, when his peculiar conception of the twelve-note technique was definitively formed. The most representative stylistic factors of Webern’s music will be considered here, especially in relation to his late production: beyond the twelve-tone technique, the peculiar use of the canon and the variation principle, also the concept of *Klangfarbenmelodie* (melody of timbres) and the importance of the pause as structural unit, shown to be important for the aims of this study. Even if a simplified explanation of the above-mentioned elements obviously does not do justice to the extreme genius and beauty of Webern’s compositional processes, I will do so to favor a clear grasping of their presence both in the construction of the concrete poems and in the recorded performance of them.

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<sup>278</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>279</sup> Webern’s production has been defined as the most “sublimated” in all history of music. See: Campos, Augusto (1998), pag. 84.

<sup>280</sup> See: Uhde, Jürgen, quoted in: Adorno, Theodor (1969), pag. 167



**1. Twelve-tone technique:** Contrary to that developed by Schönberg and Berg, Webern's twelve-note technique was intended as a structural device instead of a means for linear, discursive forms.<sup>281</sup> Thanks to this technique, symmetrical architectures were developed, especially starting from the symphony op.21. The texture of Webern's works acquired a particular complexity by means of the overlapping of four different *Modi* of the series. However, I will be considering here only the *Modi* indicated below:<sup>282</sup>

Original = (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12)

Retrograde = (12,11,10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1)

It is of note that the original series was not intended as unbreakable, being divided into smaller units of 2-4 pitches, and these can be, in turn, disposed in a "mirror form" thus forming symmetrical micro-series. For example:

Originals = [1,2/3,4/5,6/7,8/9,10/11,12] or [1,2,3/4,5,6/7,8,9/10,11,12]

"Double" retrograde<sup>283</sup> = [11,12/9,10/7,8/5,6/3,4/1,2] or [10,11,12/7,8,9/4,5,6/1,2,3]

What interests me in the examples above is less the twelve-tone technique for itself than the shorter series of two, three or four pitches/elements possibly resulting from it, which are moreover typical of Webern's late production (DÖHL, 1976:346). It is unlikely to find a series of twelve elements followed by its "mirror" sequence in any concrete poem, while shorter imitation figures ordered on the basis of these "structural plays" are quite common. For example:

Possible originals = 1,2,3,4,5,6

Retrograde= 6,5,4,3,2,1

Double retrograde = 5,6,3,4,1,2

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<sup>281</sup> See: Dohl (1976), pag. 186.

<sup>282</sup> The other two *Modi* are: *Inversion (Umkehrung)* and inversion of the retrograde (*Krebsumkehrung*); however, both can be used only for building symmetries through the intervalled distance from the same central pitch. Since there is no pitch system at all in concrete poetry, neither of these *Modi* interested me here at all.

<sup>283</sup> It is a "double" inversion, in the sense that the inversion occurs both in regard to the whole series and in regard to the short sequences internal to each little cell.

Roman Vlad has defined this kind of symmetries as “geometric” for their exact, rigid proportions.<sup>284</sup> However, this is not the only typology of series used in Webern’s music. He also frequently used another so-called “organic” form in his production.<sup>285</sup> The latter corresponds to the series of Fibonacci, where each term is equivalent to the sum of both terms that precede it: 1-2-3-5-8-13-21 and so forth.<sup>286</sup> This kind of series was employed by Webern for structuring various dimensions of his works (number of pitches in different instrumental passages, note values, etc.). However, the series can be “defective”, that is, any of its terms may be substituted by the number immediately following or preceding it; actually, one of the constitutive elements of this series is the “rounding up or down”, for “the ‘exactness’, the perfect identity, does not exist in nature” (VLAD in FIORENZA, 1985:105).

**2. Canon:** in Webern’s music, the canon is the second basic structure after the series, and it can be shorter, longer than or as long as the latter. However, the canon doesn’t prevail with its linear character (as still happens in Schönberg’s music), but it is interrupted in many points, so that the musical phrase is split in points (*punkthaft*) and variable. An exemplary case in this sense is *Quartet* op. 22, where the canonic action is rarely heard for more than a couple of bars at a time.<sup>287</sup> According to McKenzie, the concern with different varieties of imitation (canons) may be identified as the most evident of those “pre-existing forms” that so markedly characterizes Webern’s music.<sup>288</sup> As the following analysis will show, a comparable canonic structure can be found in concrete poems in case of poly-vocal readings, especially with the intervention of new devices allowing for the superimposition of different voices.

**3 Variation principle:** The rigorous structures mentioned above are not simply rigid formalisms in Webern’s music. Variability, which corresponds to a perpetual alternation between *imitation* and *variation*, characterized Webern’s work from the very beginning.

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<sup>284</sup> See: Vlad, Roman: *Forme geometriche e forme organiche in Webern*. In: Fiorenza, Antonino (1985), pag. 99.

<sup>285</sup> In the mentioned essay, Roman Vlad underlined the coexistence of “geometric” and “organic” forms, in the *Five Pieces* op. 5, the *Six Pieces* op. 6, the *Quartet* op. 22 and the *Quartet* op. 28.

<sup>286</sup> Anton Webern had a passionate interest for nature and its mechanisms. It is significant that Kepler showed that the series of Fibonacci numbers regulated plant phyllotaxis, namely the growth of boughs and leaves. By integrating Fibonacci’s series in the *Quartet* op. 28, Webern showed his desire to conceive of his work as an organic entity, a sort of growing plant.

<sup>287</sup> See: Döhl, Friedhelm (1976), pag. 99.

<sup>288</sup> See on this: McKenzie, Wallace: *Webern’s technique of choral composition*. In: Moldenhauer, Hans (1979) pag. 64.

To explain this idea in the simplest way, Döhl stated that “what is similar is also varied, while what is varied is also always similar” (DÖHL, 1976:99). The *Ostinatos* are frequent, especially starting from the op. 5 onward; but they are far away from the linearity of a classic sonata, giving rise to *circular* forms.<sup>289</sup> In a letter to the poet Hildgard Jone, Webern enthusiastically described his process, and presented it as a heir of Goethe’s concept of *metamorphosis*: “Imagine: there are six pitches, in a form determined by the row and the rhythm, and what follows [...] is nothing else than always this same form!!! Obviously, in perpetual metamorphosis, but it is the same again and again” (quoted in DÖHL, 1976:295).<sup>290</sup>

**4 Pause:** the massive presence of broken phrases in the texture of Webern’s music, especially starting from op. 21, is due to the structural use of the *pause*; the spatial conception of music proves to be extremely important, since within this space, *piano* and *forte*, silences and sounds create shorter or longer distances between each sonic element, and between these elements and the listener. Boulez defined Webern’s as “a counterpoint between sound and silence”.<sup>291</sup> Due to its anti-linear texture and the extreme importance given to the pauses,<sup>292</sup> Webern’s music can be properly described as one organized more markedly in *space* rather than in time, and thus radically subverting the Romantic conception of music as a “fluid succession of sounds” (COLLISANI in FIORENZA, 1985:85).

**5. Melody of timbres (*Klangfarbenmelodie*):** officially theorized by Schönberg in 1911, it began to be developed starting from late Romanticism, with the composers’ increased awareness of the timbre’s significance and the consequent gradual dissolution of functional tonality.<sup>293</sup> In Schönberg’s terms, it was described as a “melody” defined

<sup>289</sup> „Die Töne, ihrer Entwicklungsfunktion beraubt, kreisen tastend in sich selbst“ (DÖHL, 1976:162).

<sup>290</sup> „Stelle dir vor: da sind sechs tone gegeben, in einer Gestalt, die durch die Folge und den Rhythmus bestimmt ist, und was nun kommt [...] ist nichts anderes als immer wieder diese Gestalt!!! Freilich in fortwährender Metamorphose, aber sie ist es doch immer wieder.“

<sup>291</sup> See: Lanza, Andrea (1980), pag. 231.

<sup>292</sup> See also the following excerpt: “Sartre lembrou uma vez que o silêncio é um momento da linguagem, o qual, como a pausa em música, recebe seu sentido dos grupos de notas que o cercam; Boulez, como que retomando essa idéia, afirmou, em artigo de homenagem à Webern; “é uma verdade das mais difíceis de por em evidência que a música não é somente a arte dos sons, mas que ela se define melhor por um contraponto de som e silêncio” (CAMPOS, H.2006:285). [Sartre recalled once that silence is a part of language, which, like a pause in music, acquires its meaning through the group of notes that surrounds it. In an essay dedicated to Webern, Boulez, echoing this idea, affirmed: “It is one of the most difficult truths that music is not simply the art of sounds, but it is better defined as a counterpoint of sound and silence].

<sup>293</sup> Richard Wagner, in particular, was the first to introduce the principle of “melody division”, by orchestrating in such a way that a same melodic line was presented in different timbres.

by successive changes of timbre rather than of pitch; Webern further improved it in his *pointillist* compositions where he used timbre contrasts as a fundamental structuring device. The concern with timbre played a crucial role in the determination of the typically Webernian, punctual, anti-linear and anti-temporal phrase.<sup>294</sup> Timbre is, in fact “the parameter of sounds most directly allusive to spatiality” (COLLISANI in FIORENZA, 1985:91).

Webern’s music does not result as “mechanical” despite its rigorous structures and principles, but rather as constantly ambiguous: the symmetry conceals much “inexactness”, in a way that makes the aspect of possibility in his works something esthetically perceivable. Elements like the absence of univocal beginnings/ends, directionless gestures and apparently aimless *Ostinatos*, the frequency of *pianissimo* as a conclusive tool, characterize Webern’s work with a kind of “openness” that always results in new and fascinating listening experiences.<sup>295</sup>

### **Concrete and electronic music**

The Webernian principles outlined above found their most eminent heirs in the context of electronic music, developed especially by Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen at the School of Darmstadt. The profound interest they showed in Webern’s music can be explained, as Ernst Krenek proposes, with his “foreshadowing a more generalized application of the serial principle than that practiced in the “classical” twelve-tone technique up to 1950” (KRENEK in MOLDENHAUER, 1966:102). Despite the significant differences marking the compositional proceeding of Boulez and Stockhausen, both of them investigated further possibilities of the twelve-tone technique, at the same time exploring new sonorities provided by technologies and devices until then unavailable.<sup>296</sup> Boulez, more than anyone else, brought the twelve-tone technique to its most radical consequence, by pursuing the idea of a systematic and generalized application of the “classical” serial principle, not only upon durational

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<sup>294</sup>See: Döhl, Friedhelm (1976), pag. 156.

<sup>295</sup> See: Döhl, Friedhelm (1976), pag. 166.

<sup>296</sup> See on this the following paragraph (2.4) concerning the technologies allowing for new proceedings in the production of recorded poetry and *Hörspiele*. In the sphere of electronic music, the tape recorder and the synthesizer were the basis for its development.

values and timbres, but also upon the very structure of the composition.<sup>297</sup> He was, especially at the start,<sup>298</sup> extremely rigorous in trying to establish a totally objective musical language, reducible to numerical abstractions and without any emotional reflex. The gradual softening of this orthodox rigor<sup>299</sup> led, after about a decade, to the utilization of a “controlled” version of *Alea*, one deriving from the hyper-determinism of the series.

Stockhausen’s electronic music, instead, radicalized the practice of the “spatialization” of time, so that the phonic cells are disposed in the sonic space instead of being ordered within a temporal dimension.<sup>300</sup> The renowned *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956-57) is exemplary in this sense, as Stockhausen himself declared:

In my ‘Gesang der Jünglinge’, I attempted to form the direction and movement of sound and space, and to make them accessible as a new dimension in musical experience [...]; how the sounds and soundgroups are projected into space: all this is decisive for the comprehension of the work. (quoted in SEPPO, 1972:85)

Actually, the temporal progress is perceived of as spatial distance, since the words articulated by the singing voice are often split into fragments of pure sound characterized by clear timbral changes; the idea of time almost seems to be erased.<sup>301</sup> At some points, sung tones and electronic sounds are in harmony within this space, while in others the “impulse aggregations” (SEPPO, 1972:95) with a high particle density seem to prevail. The comprehension of the meaning of the text is supposed to occur only at very specific points, since verbal language is normally distorted through tape cutting and splicing practices that change the order of the basic units. A notable element of *Kontakte* (1958-60), also found in much contemporary music, is the absence of finalism, the erasure of any possible *climax*. The sounds are characterized by an ambiguous state, as if they had already started before being effectively listened to, and could continue eternally. The absence of finalism is also sustained by the frequency of

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<sup>297</sup> See for example: Lanza, Andrea (1980), pag. 127, and: Moldenhauer, Hans (1966), pag. 104.

<sup>299</sup> For example, in the famous *Marteau sans maître* (1955) or in the *Third sonata* (1958).

<sup>300</sup> See: Lanza, Andrea (1980) pag. 129.

<sup>301</sup> See: *ibidem*, pag. 131.

the circular form as a structural device in the music of both Boulez and Stockhausen.<sup>302</sup> The linear, conventional idea of starting and finishing points is substituted by the commutability of some elements and the determination of their effective order on the part of the performer. Circularity became, then, a *topos* for European aleatoric music.

The technological experimentation of the Fifties assumed specific characteristics also in Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*. Even if both movements were almost complete superimposed in the Sixties,<sup>303</sup> they diverged dramatically on some aspects. First of all, concrete music had as its starting point the sounds that were effectively existent within the real sonic world and manipulated later in the recording studio, while electronic music had as its basic material synthetic sounds created directly in the studios. In a sense, their relationship can be summarized as follows: electronic music introduced a "rigorous organizational conscience, by manipulating the unaccustomed material offered by concrete music" (LANZA, 1980:147).<sup>304</sup> Actually, the absence of a rigorous set of rules was one of the main discriminating factors between electronic and concrete music. Contrary to all preceding music, which follows a path from an abstract, mental conception to a public *performance* via theoretically ordered notation, *musique concrète* had as its starting point the unstructured, rough material of the real world, whose subsequent elaboration was the basis of several *ad hoc* proceedings: all existent noises and sounds were included in the compositions. Of course, concrete music contributed decisively to the gradual approximation between noise and sound that marked XX century music.

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<sup>302</sup> For example, the circular structure is clearly present in Boulez's *Third Sonata* (1957) and in Stockhausen's *Zyklus* (1959) and *Refrain* (1959).

<sup>303</sup> See: Lanza (1980) pag. 123.

<sup>304</sup> This is also expressed by Haroldo de Campos in the following terms: "Boulez introduz uma consciência rigorosamente organizadora na manipulação deste material inusitado oferecido pela música concreta" (CAMPOS, H. 1972:46). [Boulez introduces a rigorously organizational conscience in the manipulation of this unaccustomed material offered by concrete music].

## John Cage

However, it can be said that both electronic and concrete music were anticipated, in several aspects, by another great protagonist of XX century music: John Cage. On the one hand, already in 1937 he assigned noises a central role in music, by stating that “whereas in the past, the point of disagreement has been between dissonance and consonance, it will be, in the immediate future, between noise and so called musical sound” (quoted in PRITCHETT, 1999:10); on the other hand, in that same year he claimed the importance of electric devices for overcoming the temperate system, because they “permit to control the entire harmonic specter and to make sounds disposable at any frequency, amplitude and duration” (LANZA, 1980:120).

Moreover, as I briefly mentioned above, the representatives of electronic music came into close proximity with *Alea*. In particular, Boulez’s extreme rigor inevitably led to experimentation with chance processes. The pre-determination of all parameters in one dimension, in fact, shielded the parameters of another dimension from a similar determination. For example, a pre-arrangement in relation to pitches and duration necessarily implies the impossibility to apply the same principle to chords and harmony, necessarily established through the primary regulations.<sup>305</sup> Of course, Boulez did not share the concept of “pure chance” that Cage’s *Alea* implicated, namely the idea that the composer is no longer responsible for the resulting compositions.

Cage’s influence on the compositional practice of concrete poetry has probably been more conceptual than structural, but this doesn’t mean that Cage’s production can be resumed by assigning it a mere “philosophical” function. I agree with Pritchett in defending the claim that Cage has to be considered as a composer first and foremost, in spite of his involvement with the most diverse creative fields and the effective philosophical (and poetic)<sup>306</sup> implications of his work. Cage’s esthetic attitude has always been a musical one, since he primarily aimed at the exploration and organization of sound materials,<sup>307</sup> while it had nothing to do with the desire for self-expression of whatever nature. The point he always wanted to reach was sound, even when he began to be concerned with issues apparently detached from it.

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<sup>305</sup> See: Lanza, Andrea (1980), pag. 106.

<sup>306</sup> Augusto defined him as “the greatest poet of XX century”. See: Campos, Augusto (1998), pag. 213.

<sup>307</sup> See: Pritchett, James (1999), pag. 17.

As a student, Cage employed proto-serial techniques for a relatively short time<sup>308</sup> before dedicating an entire decade to the exploration of the possibilities of percussion instruments, which gave results of crucial importance for Cage's own development and of exceptional value for the esthetic renewal of XX century Western music. These aspects were:

**1 Silence:** The exploration of the sonic possibilities of percussion instruments resulted in the opposition to the conventional conception of percussion as something rigidly rhythmical, violent and brutal. Cage brought out unequivocal expressions of tranquility and intimacy. The listening experienced by Cage in 1951 in the anechoic chamber made him certain about his hypothesis on silence: silence was no longer the "absence of sound", but the "totality of unintended sounds".

**2 Prepared piano:** this was one of the elements that most significantly contributed to Cage's new conception of percussions. Created almost casually, as a response to logistic problems,<sup>309</sup> the prepared piano yielded many new kinds of sonorities. The *Sonatas and Interludes* (1946-48), explicitly composed for *prepared piano*, led to Cage's "discovery" of the value of brevity, making him aware that "short pieces can have in them just as much as long pieces can" (quoted in PRITCHETT, 1999:29). However, Cage never reached the paroxysmal degree of concentration and brevity achieved by Webern.

**3 Alea:** This principle was also strictly connected with Cage's new conception of silence. The term *Alea* indicates music based on chance operations, which Cage developed on the basis of several different processes<sup>310</sup> starting in 1951. With *4'33''* (1952), the disappearance of the authority of the composer was brought to its most radical consequences.<sup>311</sup> Pure *chance* was considered by Cage to be a generator of new music, as much as, in Peirce's cosmology, it was claimed to be not only the dominant element of the universe but the propelling force for its evolution and the establishment

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<sup>308</sup> Cage used the serial technique at the beginning of his studies as a composer, after his music had been defined as "formlessness" by his teacher Richard Buhlig. Serial proceedings no longer appeared in Cage's work after 1938. On this, see: Pritchett (1999), pag. 20.

<sup>309</sup> The difficult transportability of percussion instruments during the tours all around the United States stimulated the development of the prepared piano.

<sup>310</sup> Among these, the composition based on the Chinese Book *I-Ching* is probably the most well known.

<sup>311</sup> Differently to what happens in literature, where the critic Roland Barthes aimed at restoring the reader his/her crucial role, in this context, the author himself consciously renounces his/her control on the work's structure and content.



of its own law.<sup>312</sup> Differently from the “controlled” European *Alea*, the chance processes employed by Cage were consciously pre-determined, in accordance with the idea of total dominance of the uncontrolled in the determination of the sonic matter. In practice, Cage’s *Alea* is “an opening of the musical form to the universe of the existential unpredictability” (LANZA, 1980:111).<sup>313</sup>

## 2.4 Technologies

Any audio-recorded event is inseparable from the technology through which it becomes accessible, since the latter carries out a constant *mediating* role and must be considered an essential *transformative* force in relation to the quality of the perceived sound. In this sense, even the most high-tech recording system cannot be taken as neutral, and that “our reception of sound cannot escape the institutions and technologies that mediate it” (STERNE, 2012:222). Technologies are endowed with a *transparency* that only fails when some element is not working properly, otherwise technologies “are taken into [our] very sense of bodily experience” (IHDE, 2007:244). Dirty or broken eyeglasses or bumps encountered by a car driving too fast make their otherwise latent presence felt. Thanks to Bruno Latour’s *ANT (Actor Network Theory)*,<sup>314</sup> we became aware that any technology we may use is both a socially and perceptually determinant factor of our experience, that it constantly “re-invents us” as much as we invent it (IHDE, 2007:243). Thus, I agree with Latour, taking a position which is neither “materialist” nor “humanist”. I neither hand over unlimited power to technology, which would lead to absolute uncontrollability on the part of the human subject, nor do I believe technology to be a merely passive factor devoid of will. In the poetic *soundscape*s that I am going to consider below, both technology and poets are “allied” forces, equally important *actors* within the (wide) *network* of concrete sound poetry. According to McLuhan, contemporary artists are the most responsible for a fecund interplay between human sensibility and the potentials of technology:

It is the artist's job to try to dislocate older media into postures that permit attention to the new. To this end, the artist must ever play and experiment with

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<sup>312</sup> See on this: Fabbrichesi, Rossella (1993) pag. 51.

<sup>313</sup> “Si tratta, insomma, di un’apertura della forma musical all’universo dell’imprevedibile esistenziale”.

<sup>314</sup> See: Latour, Bruno (2007).

new means of arranging experience, even though the majority of his audience may prefer to remain fixed in their old perceptual attitudes. (MCLUHAN, 2001:276).

When considering an artistic work, technology assumes a crucial role in the constitution of its very *esthetic* character, since recording and reproducing technologies respectively affect the quality of the artistic creation and its reception (listening). As has been shown in the previous paragraph, technology was the basis for experimental musical productions developed especially in the second half of the XX century. In some cases, a relatively inadequate technology stood out with particular clarity, dramatically influencing the esthetic result. For example, the technologically obsolete *Studio d'essai* that Pierre Schaeffer had at his disposal before being financed by the French radio<sup>315</sup> thoroughly marked the low sonic quality of his works *Étude de bruit* (1948) and *Symphonie pour un homme seul* (1949). Another instance is Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956-57), which had to be recorded in a five- instead of in a six-channels version (as it had been originally conceived) for purely technical reasons.

As for the shaping of the receptor's way of listening, it has been rightly stated that new technologies contribute to "the formation of the sensory dispositions and aptitudes characteristic of a modern secular subject" (HIRSCHKIND in STERNE, 2012:63) and thus play a crucial role in the fashioning of modern subjectivity. Also, the very nature of recorded sounds is determined by acoustic technologies: once recorded, sounds become autonomous *sound objects* (Schaeffer), extracted from their own context, detached from their truly "original" sound. There is no chance for a recording to be equal with the "original" sound, because the transformative mediation of the recording devices never ceases to be present. In this sense, I agree with Altman in claiming that a recorded sound is not the *reproduction* of an original, but rather its *representation*.<sup>316</sup> The features of the space within which a recording was realized, as well as the effects of both position and the programming of the technical devices used are perceived differently by, respectively, the listener and the producer located *within* the original *soundscape*.

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<sup>315</sup> Thanks to these funds, the *Group de Recherche de Musique Concrète* was founded in 1951.

<sup>316</sup> See the following excerpt: "If we care about the material differences between two sounds, and the spatial configuration that causes them, then we must recognize that no recording can possibly reproduce an original sound. Recordings do not reproduce sound, they represent sound" (ALTMAN in STERNE, 2012:229).

Another peculiarity of the recorded sounds is their fixed, immutable character; contrarily to what occurs in a *live* listening to a repeated sound (or to a same musical piece), the recording provides us not only with its “general pitch and outline”, but also the “fine details that [...] render it unique” (CHION in STERNE, 2012:51). Not by chance, the invention of the first recording device, Edison’s phonograph, resulted, like embalming, from the strong human desire to preserve their body from its inevitable decadence.<sup>317</sup> This immutability, however, doesn’t implicate a rigid, univocal “meaning” of the recordings, since human listening can always grasp some new feature by returning repeatedly to a same *sound object*.<sup>318</sup>

The recording of a poetry performance, of course, is no exception: far from being realized exclusively within language, recorded poetry is full of sounds created by the necessary technological mediation. Augusto de Campos underlined how importantly “the new artifacts, made agile for the consumption, are carrier of transformative information [...] and can contribute for enlarging the horizon of sensibility and subvert the rules of the game”.<sup>319</sup> Contemporary poetry is included into a “history-of-technologies setting in which instrumental innovation plays a major role” (IHDE, 2007:256). This is true especially starting from the Fifties onward, when a number of new devices became more easily available. Several scholars defined a terminology for specifically referring to the autonomous character of poetic *sound objects*: for instance *phonotext* (Stewart) or *audiotext* (Bernstein). However, I would maintain, even hypothetically, the initially proposed term *poetic soundscape* or alternatively *sound object*, since the sounds included in recorded concrete poetry often go beyond those of verbal speech.

What follows below aims at drafting a summary of the devices involved in the production of the considered recordings, by discussing their main features and the creative practices resulting from them. The possibilities offered by radio-stations, with their set of new electro-acoustic instruments, has recognized as a crucial element for the

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<sup>317</sup> See: Sterne, Jonathan (2003), pag. 74.

<sup>318</sup> See: Ihde, Don (2012), pag. 260.

<sup>319</sup> “Os novos artefatos agilizados para o consumo são portadores de informações transformadoras -ver a revolução do "sampler" nos processos de montagem sonora- e podem contribuir para alargar o horizonte da sensibilidade e subverter as regras do jogo”. See: Gonçalves, Marcos Augusto: “Entrevista de Augusto de Campos a Marcos Augusto Gonçalves”. Available at: [http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto\\_view.php?id=10](http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/texto_view.php?id=10). Last access September 2016.

development of unprecedented poetical forms. They actually revolutionized the poetical practice in itself. The radio broadcasts for a wider audience were profoundly influenced by the experimental proceedings explored by contemporary poetry. Not by coincidence, radio broadcasting and avant-garde poetry have been defined as “the Siamese twins of modernity” (quoted in GALLO, in PERLOFF/DWORKIN 2009:205).

### **Microphones**

Differently from humans, microphones are not endowed with *directionality* (their listening is not “intentional”) but only with *surroundability*, as they collect sounds from any direction, recording without distinction all auditory stimuli disposed in the surrounding space. Thus, they need to be “oriented” towards the primary sonic sources, in a manner that guarantees clear listening on the part of the audience. In the case of a simple poetic performance, there is only one primary source corresponding to the poet’s voice, but this doesn’t mean at all that other, external sounds should not be perceived through an intentional “deep listening”, especially when the recording studio is extemporary and scarcely equipped. In other cases, and precisely in recording the *Hörspiele*, there can be up to five different types of microphones, so the poet must either count on the ability of sound-technicians, able to grasp his esthetic intentions, or he is obliged to become a skillful technician him/herself.

### **Mixer**

The channels of all microphones and tape recorders (or other devices, like record players and tuners) flow into the mixer, which performs many different functions. Generally speaking, the mixer is arranged for producing and distorting sounds. More precisely, the *filter* is specifically destined to fulfill the latter function, namely the distortion and alteration of sound, while the *synthesizer* is a more complex device that, besides modifying sounds, can produce its own sounds and perform the crucial function of assigning the definitive form and definition to all previously recorded and modified sounds. According to Klippert, the synthesizer is endowed with “an enormous variability [that] can be explained by the autonomy of its components” (KLIPPERT,

1977:46),<sup>320</sup> up to the point that “nothing seems impossible for [it] within the acoustic field” (ibidem).<sup>321</sup> Consequently, the synthesizer had a crucial role in the development of the *Neues Hörspiel*, since it allowed for an acoustic representation of objects and processes that were never available in the figurative arts.

### **Tape recorder and montage technique**

The tape recorder was probably the most innovative *gestaltungsmittel* (KLIPPERT, 1977:29) for poetry recordings produced starting from the Fifties, since it offered for the first time some tools which the recording on wax could in no way provide. Beyond overcoming of the latter’s inevitable crackling, the tape recorder created the possibility to intervene in the recording, not only by accelerating or slowing the sound of the voice on a linear axis, but also (and most importantly) by cutting the recording at any point. In this way, it became possible to either definitively cut out any undesired features (thus creating a sort of *distancing effect*) or to re-order the obtained fragments into new “artificial” sequences. The poet began to be responsible for the utilization of these sonic fragments, having the opportunity to connect them on the exclusive basis of his/her personal taste and to leap forward or backward in the text without any restriction. Consequently, the tape recorder was the ground on which the *montage-technique* came to be firstly developed in poetry. This technique already characterized all experimental art starting from the beginning of the XX century, in music, theater and film.<sup>322</sup> Duchamp’s *readymade* or Eisenstein’s films are its ideal model, since they approximate two or more essentially different elements in a space totally alien to both of them, in a way that provokes strong associative effects and affects. Actually, it may be stated that the human way of thinking is often organized like a montage<sup>323</sup>: by putting two elements together, we almost automatically come to focus on their common (or discriminating) features, so that the initial images transform themselves through the contact with each other. In this sense, Didi-Huberman spoke of the montage as an “intensification” of the image.<sup>324</sup> This conception that can undoubtedly also be applied

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<sup>320</sup>“Die enorme Variabilität des Synthesizers erklärt sich aus der Selbständigkeit seiner Komponenten“.

<sup>321</sup> “Nichts scheint dem Synthesizer auf dem akustischen Feld unmöglich“.

<sup>322</sup> See also: Vowinckel, Antje (1995), pag. 23-37.

<sup>323</sup> See: Klippert, Werner (1977), pag. 33.

<sup>324</sup> See: Didi-Huberman, Georges (2008), pag. 164.

to the “sound image”, as it describes the increasing complexity of our listening experience.

At the end of the Sixties, the montage began to be employed in experimental poetry. In Germany, this technique became one of the essential proceedings of the *Neues Hörspiel* (*New Radio Play*),<sup>325</sup> a hybrid form of art, a sort of synthesis between experimental poetry, music, theatre and radio broadcast. Distortions, integration and/or destruction of the originally recorded material were the most common processes. The development of the *Neues Hörspiel* was technically supported by several radio stations, which made a set of devices available which until then were exploited only in the sphere of electronic music. As a consequence, the poets turned themselves into *Hörspielmacher*. They separated the recorded voice from its original source and manipulated it in many different ways, and consequently they had to become familiar with the technical functioning of several new devices. However, they avoided using these new tools in a merely mechanical way, trying instead to employ them productively as an efficient support to poetic expression and the accomplishment of creative language.<sup>326</sup> An exclusive concern with technological issues might have been detrimental to the very poetic nature of the recorded work. In this sense, Franz Mon stressed that the tape-recorder must be considered “not as an automat, but rather as an instrument, the capacity and laws of which one must know, in exactly the same way as the musician knows his instrument” (MON, 2007:76).<sup>327</sup>

The great concern with acoustic experimentation on the part of the poets was one of the essential distinctive marks of the *Neues Hörspiel* in regard to the more traditional *Hörspiel* that dominated in the preceding decades.<sup>328</sup> The devices made available by the radio allowed for its development, as they freed the *Hörspiel* from all literary constrictions and made it much more dependent on the technical possibilities of the

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<sup>325</sup> See on this, for example: Frisius, Rudolf: *Musik als Hörspiel – Hörspiel als Musik*. In: Schöning, Klaus (1982) pag. 148.

<sup>326</sup> See on this: Schöning, Klaus (1983), pag. 75-76.

<sup>327</sup> “das tonband ist kein automat, sondern ein instrument, dessen reichweite und gesetzhelken man kennen muß, wie der muskier die seines istrumentes kennt“.

<sup>328</sup> The *Neues Hörspiel* grew in importance only starting from the Sixties, even though experimental *Hörspiele* had been proposed to some radio stations already in the Fifties. They were mainly rejected because of their experimental character and the low interest on the part of the average radio listener. Thus, the *Neues Hörspiel* had to fight its way until the middle of the Sixties, when the boom of the television provoked a considerable decrease in radio listeners and thus allowed for the radio broadcast of more experimental works.

radio.<sup>329</sup> In this sense, even though the tape recorder was a certainly crucial tool, it was another device that, according to Schöning, marked the beginning of the *Neues Hörspiel*: stereophony.<sup>330</sup>

## Stereophony

Differently from monophonic recordings, which must order their elements successively to avoid a chaotic linguistic mix (*Sprachgemisch*), stereophony allows for the superimposition and the interplay of several voices without provoking any “lack of information”, unless this is the very aim of the author.<sup>331</sup> Stereophonic recordings are moreover endowed with an unprecedented character of spatiality: the voices acoustically trace different movements within a sonic space that is now experienced in its profundity, in its *multidimensionality*. Of course, the temporal factor is not eradicated. The conditions of simultaneity that originated in the electronic environment create a complete interpenetration of space and time, a space-time within which any *soundscape* is more audible in both of these dimensions.<sup>332</sup> In Schöning’s terms, “spatial positions and temporal developments serve [...] for the ordering and relating of the same material”<sup>333</sup> (SCHÖNING, 1982:66). As a last point, I would highlight that stereophony fortifies the imagination, and particularly “the stereophone *Hörspiel* [...] binds the imagination to the language more stably than the monophonic *Hörspiel* has ever been able to do“ (ibidem).<sup>334</sup>

Thanks to the devices briefly described above, many different kinds of sounds could be included within a single recorded poem. The new conditions provided by the electronic

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<sup>329</sup> See on this: Specker (1986), pag. 153.

<sup>330</sup> See also the following excerpt. “Es ist sicher kein Zufall, daß die Einführung der Stereophonie fürs Hörspiel der akustischen Collage den Weg bereitete. Eine Erfindung, die – wenngleich sehr spät – dennoch wie bestellt kam“ (SCHÖNING, 1983:65). [It is certainly not a coincidence that the introduction of stereophony prepared the way for the acoustic Collage. An invention that – even though very late – came as if it had been ordered].

<sup>331</sup> Some examples in this sense are given in the analysis which follows. See chapter 3.

<sup>332</sup> See: McLuhan, Marshall (1986), pag. 98.

<sup>333</sup> “Räumliche Positionen und zeitliche Verläufe dienen dann der Ordnung und Beziehung desselben Materials“.

<sup>334</sup> “Das stereophone Hörspiel [...] die Imagination entschiedener, als es dem monophonen je möglich war, an die Sprache bindet“.

environment permitted the inclusion of sounds that normally carried out different “specialized” functions in a single space. Among the most common are:

**1 Sinus tone:** characterized by a total lack of harmonics, it is perceived as an almost totally inexpressive, anti-musical sound, and consequently it is mostly associated with artificial, mechanic objects. It is frequently used as a pause. Theodor Adorno contested the inclusion of these artificially created timbres in musical works, remarking that they would produce something resembling Webern’s music, but played by a squeeze box.<sup>335</sup>

**2 Sonic mixture (*Tongemisch*):** constituted by a series of harmonically connected frequencies, but perceived as a simple sound.

**3 White sound/noise:** noise that arises from non-periodic oscillations, perceived as a disordered mix of different sounds. It represents the most accurate expression of our real, surrounding world of life as well as the pre-linguistic material of verbal speech. According to Fonagy, the de-coding of irregular noises with extremely reduced redundancy is much more demanding for the human nervous system than the analysis of periodic oscillations.<sup>336</sup>

**4 Vocal sounds:** any sound produced by the articulatory organs, generally divided into musical sounds (vowels) and noises (consonants). They can be “emotionally occupied” themselves or constitute wordplays and nonsense sentences. The poet’s voice should be adapted to the conditions of the microphone, and to the monophonic or stereophonic quality of the recording.

After what has been said, it stands out that however equally experimental two hypothetical currents may be, their production is esthetically affected by different degrees of technological development. This is actually the case when one compares the poetic production of *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. If it is true that, both in relation to the visual and the auditory aspect, “concrete poetry had simply played itself out on the page”<sup>337</sup>, then the question was undoubtedly where to find an alternative for such an obsolete medium. While the conditions for a cutting-edge sound art were

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<sup>335</sup> See: Adorno, Theodor (1981), pag. 177.

<sup>336</sup> See the following excerpt: “Die Analyse periodischer Schwingungen [...] ist gewiß eine leichtere Aufgabe für unser Nervensystem als die Zerlegung unregelmäßiger Geräusche mit sehr geringer Redundanz“ (FONAGY, 1963:56). [The analysis of periodic oscillation [...] is certainly an easier task for our nervous system than the disassembly of irregular noises with a very low redundancy].

<sup>337</sup> See: Goldsmith, Kenneth: *From Line to constellation*. Available online at: [http://www.ubu.com/papers/goldsmith\\_command.html](http://www.ubu.com/papers/goldsmith_command.html). Last access September 2016.



optimal in Germany, in Brazil the technological lack was strongly perceived, as Augusto's 1957 statement in regard to experimental music clearly witnesses:

The difficulties that are opposed, in the present moment, to the flourishing of electronic and concrete music among us, are of purely material order, since the sound researches that it entails demand for the creation of a complete electronic Studio, like the one already existing in Köln (Germany) (CAMPOS, A. 1998:266).<sup>338</sup>

The Brazilian *Noigandres* poets needed the graphics provided by the computer as much as the devices for recording and distorting sound. During the Sixties, they especially saw their “concrete” poetics in a sort of limbo, “a displaced genre in search of a new medium”, since “an appropriate environment in which it could flourish [was missing]”.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> “As dificuldades que se opõem, presentemente, ao florescimento da musica eletrônica e concreta entre nós, são de ordem puramente material, uma vez que as pesquisas sonoras que ela implica estão a exigir a criação de um estudo eletrônico completo, como o que já existe em Colônia (Alemanha).”

<sup>339</sup> See: Goldsmith, Kenneth: *ibidem*.



## Chapter 3

### Analysis

The selection of the recordings analyzed proved to be a very complex task, due to the great diversity and qualitative non-homogeneity of the whole acoustic production of both the *Noigandres* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. The establishment of some basic criteria was essential for the definition of a suitable corpus of analysis.

First of all, only the recordings of *poems* in a strict sense have been considered. As mentioned above, many works in both the Brazilian and the German contexts were set to music, whether by popular musicians or “erudite” composers. In most of these recordings, music prevails on poetry and thus inevitably interferes with the texture of the articulations and their impact on the listener. In my opinion, the analysis of such recordings accounts for the musical esthetics of the respective composers rather than for the very *sound of concrete poetry*. I am interested in the nature of the sounds that both *constitute* and *accompany* the declamation of a poem, and not of those that *substitute* them. In general, these compositions “take the text as an open matrix for new inventory launches” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:287),<sup>340</sup> and consequently they must be considered as independent musical productions, outside the poetic text even if they maintain an isomorphic relationship with it.<sup>341</sup>

A second crucial element was the circumscription of the corpus regarding the chronological aspect. The creative activity of most members of the considered poetic groups was never interrupted and still continues today with Augusto de Campos and Franz Mon. It would be impossible to account for the production realized during such an extended time span through a qualitative, in-depth analysis like the one that follows.

Thus, I decided to include in my analysis only the poems composed over two decades, namely from the beginning of the Fifties to the end of the Sixties. This period embraces the effective development, both in Germany and Brazil, of the authentic or “orthodox”

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<sup>340</sup> “[a composição] toma o texto como matriz aberta para novos lances inventivos.”

<sup>341</sup> For example, the recordings of Augusto de Campos’ poems *Dias dias dias* and *O pulsar*, realized by Caetano Veloso in 1979, had to be excluded from my corpus, because would have raised complex questions regarding popular music and culture in the Brazil of the Sixties, clearly beyond my interest for the current study.

concrete poetry, my object of study. On the one hand, the classic phase of *Noigandres* concrete poetry occurred in the Fifties. Some critics, like Gonzalo Aguilar, believe that Brazilian *concretism* in its original form came to an end in the mid-Sixties, and more specifically with the first contacts between the poets and the singers of *Tropicalismo* (in 1967). According to Aguilar, the poetic inventiveness of the *Noigandres* group seemed to weaken simultaneously with the new phase of experimentalism triggered by *Tropicalia* in the sphere of popular music. Charles Perrone remarked on the suitability of this perspective:

In Aguilar's elaborate analysis of *poesia concreta*, the alliance with Tropicália— which despite all its intellectual input was a true phenomenon of mass media — helped to lessen the modernist punch of concretism and contributed to its dissolution qua late avant-garde.<sup>342</sup>

For other critics, like Paulo Franchetti, the end of the common *concrete* project outlined by the three founders of *Noigandres* began already after the *salto participante* (“participant leap”) of 1961, when each poet defined a more personal tendency within poetic invention.<sup>343</sup> For Charles Perrone, this phase “saw more flexible notions of creativity and invention, *Invenção revista de arte de vanguarda* being the invitingly open title of the next organ” (PERRONE, 1988:46). Moreover, the poets began to show increasing interest for other intellectual activities, like critical essays and translations.

This uncertainty in regard to the precise end of Brazilian *concretism* can be seen in the poets’ accounts: Augusto de Campos affirmed that he “did not produce concrete poetry *stricto sensu* already in the 1960s”<sup>344</sup> while Haroldo de Campos recognized that after the mid-Sixties his production was no more identifiable as strictly “concrete”.<sup>345</sup> In any case, there is a general agreement by all critics that *concretism* as such was completely surpassed in the Seventies. This was also sustained by Pietroforte, who in the semiotic

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<sup>342</sup> See: Perrone, Charles. *Versatile Vanguard Vectors*. Available online at: <http://periodicos.ufpb.br/index.php/graphos/article/viewFile/4218/3205>. Last access September 2016.

<sup>343</sup> Haroldo began to develop the hybrid form of the “Galáxias”, between poetry and prose; Augusto exhibited his satirical and politically active “popcretos” in the *Galeria Atrium* of São Paulo (1964); Décio created the “semiotic poems” in collaboration with Angelo Pinto and Ronaldo Azeredo. Other creative adventures were to follow. See on this also: Franchetti, Paulo (2012) pag. 107.

<sup>344</sup> See: Correa, Marina: *Concrete Poetry as an International movement viewed by Augusto de Campos: An Interview*. Available online at: <http://pt.scribd.com/doc/36967268/Concrete-Poetry-as-an-International-Movement-Viewed-by-Augusto-de-Campos>.

<sup>345</sup> Interview to Haroldo de Campos: “Roda Viva” (1996). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LcTkGEiV-U>. Last access September 2016. See also: Campos, Haroldo (2006) pag. 286.

analysis conducted in his book *The discourse of concrete poetry* (2012) highlighted the “return to the analytic-discursive” of Haroldo de Campos in his poetic production of the Seventies and Eighties.<sup>346</sup>

On the other side, the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* developed an effectively *concrete* poetry starting in the Sixties, during its short existence. There is much less discordance among the critics regarding generally univocal opinions expressed by all members of the group. As mentioned above, 1969 was considered the year of the definitive farewell of the “heroic phase” of *SG*, since the general feeling of the exhaustion of the esthetic possibilities of concrete poetry after 1970 made all members of *SG* to focus on other esthetic concerns, and the group itself gradually but incontrovertibly disintegrated.

On the basis of these evaluations, I decided to include only poems composed *before* the Seventies in my *corpus*. My concern is with the *recordings* of concrete poems and not only with their written scores. Some further considerations must be made. In most cases, the year of the recording of the poems doesn’t coincide with the composition, especially in the case of *Noigandres*. The recording practice began to develop with great delay in respect to the start of the group’s creative activity, roughly a decade later.<sup>347</sup> As a consequence, the production of *sound poetry* connected with authentically *concrete* esthetics was developed by both groups in exactly the same period, namely in the Sixties. For this reason, most part of the recordings considered here were made at that time, while those recorded in the following decades have generally been left aside.<sup>348</sup>

Thus far I have clarified the reasons for excluding the poems’ musically reworked versions and the chronological limit of the corpus. The reasons for choosing only two particular poetic groups, and the specific authors within each group, will be presented at the beginning of each section, in some instances repeating what I have said above. My aim is to make my methodological choices as clear and sharable as possible.

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<sup>346</sup> See on this: Pietroforte, Antonio Vicente Vicente (2004), pag 178.

<sup>347</sup> The first recordings of *Noigandres*’ poems were made in 1962, exactly a decade after the foundation of the group.

<sup>348</sup> The only significant exception is represented by the analysis of “Cidade”, which also takes into consideration the version recorded in the Nineties so as to account for the importance of technology in the esthetic evolution of Brazilian concrete poetry.

### 3.1 The *Stuttgarter Gruppe*

The *Stuttgarter gruppe* is generally considered one of the most representative groups within the wide context of German *Konkrete Poesie*. For the purposes of my research, this specific group is justified by Solt's critical remark regarding "the important link between Brazilian and German concrete poetry, developed through association with the *Stuttgart group*",<sup>349</sup> whose nature and consequences have been rarely taken into account. Secondly, this group was particularly appropriate due to the centrality of their acoustic production. A study conducted in 1997 by the studio for acoustic art at the Western German Radio showed how important several authors of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* had been in the development of new forms of acoustic art on an international scale.<sup>350</sup> In particular, the *Stuttgarter* poets contributed significantly to the history of the 'Neues Hörspiel' starting from the end of the Sixties, with more than fifty broadcasted Hörspielen. Of course, it was necessary to carry out some apparently intricate but ultimately functional considerations regarding the entirety of their radio productions, in order to constitute a restricted and coherent corpus of analysis.

The technological peculiarities of the *Neues Hörspiel*, which are the basis for the very nature of this new acoustic genre, were pointed out at the end of the previous chapter. Equally essential are the experimental, linguistic proceedings borrowed from concrete poetics. The combination of the transformative power of new technologies *plus* concrete esthetics distinguishes the *Neues Hörspiel* from all conventional radio plays. Thus, the considerations made above regarding the chronological aspect of both *concretism* and *Neues Hörspiel* resulted in the following critical reflection: the final period of the truly *concrete* esthetics coincides with the initial phase of the *Neues Hörspiel*, namely the period 1968-69. This means that the most "concrete" among the *Neues Hörspiele* were produced in this short span of time. It was relatively simple, then, to select two *Hörspiele* that have been recognized, by general consent, to be among the most representative of the entire production: Ernst Jandl's *fünf mann menschen* (1968) and Franz Mon's *das gras wies wächst* (1969).

Moreover, both these authors were interesting in another aspect. Differently from the other members of the *SG*, they also produced quite a substantial corpus of

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<sup>349</sup> This same excerpt was quoted already in chapter 1.

<sup>350</sup> The mentioned authors are, more specifically, Bense, Döhl, Heißenbüttel, Jandl, and Mon.

*Lautgedichte*.<sup>351</sup> This element allowed for the inclusion of both *Lautgedichte* and *Hörspiele* in my analysis, making it suitable a more complete account of sound in the concrete poetry of the *SG*, in spite of the impressively diverse styles of its members. Even if *Hörspiel* and *Lautgedicht* are different from one other in some aspects, they actually have just as many (or even more) points of convergence. Klaus Schöning identified this affinity in the experimentation with non-verbal language and the collecting of materials, and took Franz Mon as an exemplary case for the continuity between both poetic genres:

For Mon, as much as for other Hörspielmacher [...] whose relationship with the *Lautgedicht* is evident, it was just coherent to also experimentally explore non-verbal language (SCHÖNING, 1983:76).<sup>352</sup>

Friederike Mayröcker expressed the necessity to surpass the traditional, formal models of literary genres in favor of a unitary field of the “Sprech-Hör-spiel”,<sup>353</sup> or alternatively of “Tonbandliteratur” (tape-recorder literature).<sup>354</sup> The former expression underlines the importance of human “corporal devices” (articulatory organs and breath) for the achievement of peculiar sound effects, while the latter stresses the crucial role of new devices in constituting the definitive sonic texture of the poetic ‘sound object’. In both cases, the profound concern with *sound* can be considered as the *trait d’union* between *Lautgedicht* and *Hörspiel*.

The printed scores of both Jandl’s and Mon’s poems are certainly valuable, but undoubtedly accessory, reading tools, and this is also confirmed by the common practice of both poets to print the poems’ score only after many sound-experimentation sessions had been conducted in the studio. Finally, it must be remarked that the idea of proximity between both of these subgenres was proposed also by Jandl himself, when he defined his *fünf mann menschen* as a “sequence of *Sprechgedichte*”.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>352</sup> “Für Mon wie für einige andere Hörspielmacher [...], deren Beziehung zur Lautpoesie offenkundig ist, war es nur konsequent, sich auch auf die nicht-verbale Sprache experimentell einzulassen“.

<sup>353</sup> The wordplay result untranslatable in English; what is meant is that there is a unique genre resulting from the conjunction between *Sprechgedicht* and *Hörspiel*.

<sup>354</sup> See: Schöning, Klaus (1983), pag. 80.

<sup>355</sup> See: Specker, Andreas (1986) pag. 122

### 3.1.1 Franz Mon

Most of Mon's acoustic production consists of *Hörspiele*. Contrary to Jandl, Mon recorded a relatively limited number of *Lautgedichte* during the Sixties, corresponding in practice with the so-called "Artikulationen". Of course, the quantitative scarcity doesn't mean that the sound poems effectively produced are esthetically insignificant; on the contrary, the mentioned collection constitutes an exceptionally original poetic product for its radical play with language and meaning.

#### Artikulationen

The "Artikulationen" form a collection of phonetic-articulatory pieces that were recorded between 1960-62. The integral version has never been published in a LP (or CD), only a montage, 11'45" long, about half of the original version, included in the LP "LAUTPOESIE" (1985). A few pieces were published separately in LPs like "Konkrete Poesie – Sound Poetry – Artikulationen" (1966) and "Futura. Poesia Sonora" (1989). However, these LPs are difficult to access, so Mon's *Artikulationen* are generally unknown also within the less conservative literary spheres. The version I will be briefly considering here is the integral one, and includes the following pieces: "haim", "seks", "henk", "se", "e", "eje" and "was". All of them were born as spontaneous articulations, as they were performed by Mon with no reference to any effective written score, although they were based on some previously selected phonetic material gathered in a printed edition, also entitled *Artikulationen* and published in 1959.

All *Artikulationen* consist of a single, mono- or disyllabic word, whose phonetic material is explored by means of the articulatory possibilities of the human speech organs. Minuscule gradual changes, often corresponding to the alteration of a unique distinctive feature (for instance, from /p/ to /b/), let the listener perceive more clearly the *gestures* needed for producing a determinate phoneme, the disposition of this or that organ (the lips, the tongue etc.) and its influence on the air flow and on breath itself. The latter is actually considered as the very unit of measure, the basic structural



principle of these pieces:<sup>356</sup> only once all available air has been exhausted does a sound come to its end, while another begins after a new inhalation. The centrality of breath in the *Artikulationen* decisively contributes to the corporal involvement of the listener, given that “clinicians observed that panting produces anxiety [...] and that breathiness tends to convey a sense of intimacy” (OSTWALD, 1973:168). While Mon’s own articulatory organs and breath served as a truly constitutive element for the sound of the pieces, new technical means were completely absent in the production of these pieces. The only devices used consisted in the bare minimum: a microphone and a tape recorder.

For Mon, syllables are the basic units of oral language,<sup>357</sup> the very “substratum of the vocal gesture” (BUSCH/COMBRINK, 2009:418),<sup>358</sup> since they always maintain some “traces of meaning” (ibidem) and are often emotionally charged, as they recall laughs, cries and exclamations that may become intolerable after a short time<sup>359</sup> and are thus generally tabooed in conventional communication. Indeed, the significance of these phonetic pieces is found mainly in their return to a pre-literary and pre-verbal communicational system<sup>360</sup> connected to a symbolism intrinsic to some specific sounds. As Mon claimed:

It is fascinating to observe how, within sequences (*Sprachsträngen*) tied by means of consequent articulations, episodic word meanings leap out suddenly, and how through gradual parametric differentiation - like when an intonation bow is moved in or the voice becomes emotionally occupied - a gesture is built, that is already significant, even before any determined meaning emerges (MON in SCHÖNING, 1970:99).<sup>361</sup>

However, Franz Mon was not the first one who “played” with non-conventional language and its symbolic aspects; even Dada or the Futurists had, according to Mon

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<sup>356</sup> Lentz reported Maurach’s definition of the caesuras determined by Mon’s breath as “segregation factors”. See on this: Lentz, Michael (1998), pag. 804.

<sup>357</sup> See on this: Busch/Combrink (2009), pag. 418.

<sup>358</sup> „Die silben (mit ihren bedeutungsanflügen) wurden zum substrat der stimmungsgestik“.

<sup>359</sup> See: Mon, Franz (1994) pag. 267.

<sup>360</sup> See: Schöning, Klaus (1983), pag. 69.

<sup>361</sup> „Es ist faszinierend zu beobachten, wie in konsequent artikulatorisch angelegten Sprachsträngen punktuell Wortbedeutungen anschießen und wie durch allmähliche parametrische Differenzierung, etwa indem eine Intonationskurve eingezogen oder die Stimme emotional besetzt wird, eine gestik sich bildet, die bereits bedeutungshaft wird, ehe noch bestimmte Wortbedeutungen auftauchen.“

himself, eminent predecessors in such writers as Stephan George, Elsa Laske-Schuler or Christian Morgenstern. Actually, Mon further developed the research carried out by Raoul Hausmann, who, by experimenting with “articulation gestures”, investigated the extreme refinement of articulatory possibilities and, most importantly, managed to bring about an evolution from a level of articulation gesture to one of body gesture.<sup>362</sup> Thus Hausmann can effectively be seen as the most important reference for Mon’s *Artikulationen*, even though the latter have an original peculiarity, namely their “minuscule” and barely perceivable articulatory variations that gradually make the initial “chief-articulations” no longer recognizable.

However, while listening I had the impression that all subsequent variations of each piece, no matter how distant from their respective “chief-articulation”, always referred back to it. The first mono- or disyllable remains steadily in the listener’s mind, as if Mon had tried to concentrate all the phonetic material used in each *Artikulation* in the first sonic input. This process is quite similar to the principle of repetition/variation used by Webern in his works, where the first sequence or chord is always repeated with very slight variations.

It is very important to state that the predominance of the *physicality* given by the articulatory mechanisms does not implicate that semantics are absent from these pieces. In the middle of a nonsense sound texture, a clear meaning can unexpectedly emerge, in the form of a so-called “semantic island”.<sup>363</sup> After experiencing this sudden emergence of a possibly significant unit for the first time, an interested listener remains “on the alert” by focusing differently a single sound image, trying to recognize other figures. Indeed, the listener’s active perception and imagination are crucial elements in the experience of Mon’s *Artikulationen*. An exemplary case in this sense is given by “eje”, during which the final /e/ is gradually substituted by an /a/, so that a sequence “eja” emerges, which is immediately associated with the word “Ejakulation”. This happens for two reasons: firstly, the absence in the German vocabulary of lexemes beginning with “eja” that are *not* linked with the concept of “ejaculation”, and secondly, the articulatory modalities employed by Mon in his performance, evidently aimed at recalling a sexually connoted moan: the articulation passes from a long and aspired /a/ to “eja” and then to “ahi”, before flowing into an unequivocal shortness of breath.

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<sup>362</sup> See for example: Mon, Franz (1994), 25.

<sup>363</sup> See: Lentz, Michael (1998), pag. 805.

## Erge erekt

The version of *erge erekt* analyzed was published on the LP *Phonetische Poesie* (1971). Considered as “paradigmatic” for all *Artikulationen*,<sup>364</sup> it is the result of a montage of two different recordings: the first was recorded at a live performance in 1962, while the second was produced especially for the LP. According to Lentz,<sup>365</sup> the first sequence consists of eight 5-10 second segments, while the second is the exact repetition of the first, but articulated in a palindrome structure (that is, in a perfectly inverted sequence). A short, barely perceivable caesura is located at its center. This structural device results inevitably in a circular form, and thus approximates *erge erekt* to Webern’s compositional proceedings based on the crab-series.

As for the phonemic material used, Mon employs articulations generally included in the German system. The absence of posterior and roundish vowels, which are indeed typical for the German language, seem to be the only exception in this sense. In general, the vowels are much more varied in regard to the initial model “*erge erekt*” than the consonants. The vowels /e/, /o/, /u/ are continually alternated, and their contact with varied consonantal “environments” decisively influence their phonetic features; for example, Mon’s employment of the larynx effects a process of de-vocalization (*Entstimmung*) of the vowels. These are shifted from opener/darker to closer/clearer sounds, even if often some already articulated vowels or the so-called “semantic jumps” interrupt this linear evolution. As for the consonants, the allophones /k/-/g/ and /r/-/R/ are undoubtedly the most present ones, and their frequent alternation suggests the most common process employed during the entire piece, namely allophonic variation. The contrast between velar and palatal consonants is evident in the title itself “*erge erekt*”, wherein they are perfectly alternated. The general impression is that the articulatory organs move from an “open/luminous” position to a “half-closed/dark” one, confirmed by the roundish and narrow position of the lips at the end of the first section. In the second part, a resounding breath accompanies the consonantal texture and its intensity gradually increases until it comes to occupy the acoustic foreground.

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<sup>364</sup> See: Lentz, Michael (1998), pag. 802.

<sup>365</sup> See: Ibidem.

## Das gras wies wächst<sup>366</sup>

Mon's first *Hörspiel*<sup>367</sup> was the result of a multilateral collaboration between three German radio-stations (Saarländische, Bayerische and Westdeutsche), broadcasted for the first time in October 1969. Two separate phases were needed to achieve the final version of *Das gras*, namely the recording of all material and its acoustic ordering in the definitive radio-version;<sup>368</sup> thus, Mon became aware with this *Hörspiel* for the first time that his role as an audio-director was an indispensable premise for achieving a satisfactory acoustic result.<sup>369</sup> According to Schöning, all Mon's *Hörspiele* can be seen as "attempts of acoustic communication, that make a productive use of the multiplicity of [...] linguistic articulations and of advanced technical devices" (SCHÖNING, 1982:59).<sup>370</sup> For Mon, however, the exploration of the whole *palette* of possible human articulations and timbral nuances was the primary element in the elaboration of *Das gras*. For this reason, two children's voices (boy and girl) were included in the recording.<sup>371</sup> The six actors' voices were acoustically arranged in four different positions (microphones) through which they moved without any kind of pre-set limitation. That is, any voice could be found in any position. The inclusion of Mon's poems among those defined by Schöning as exemplary *radio*-plays (SCHÖNING, 1983:61)<sup>372</sup> confirms that new technical devices were crucial in determining the sound of Mon's *Hörstücke*. The most common practices allowed by new devices and employed by Mon were, for example, the parallel recitation of the same text with different manipulations (vibration, echo effects), and the superimposing of many voices in an undistinguishable sonic "accumulation" where the clear identification of any meaning is a practically impossible task. The latter proceeding, defined as a

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<sup>366</sup> The title will be reduced to "das gras" in the following pages.

<sup>367</sup> Schöning quotes an excerpt where Franz Mon defines *das gras* as "[his] first hörspiel". See: Schöning, (1983), pag. 75.

<sup>368</sup> The same sentences and articulations were repeated in several different versions. What would come out of some phonetic articulations was unpredictable; quite often, what was theoretically intended could not be realized in practice during the recording session.

<sup>369</sup> See on this: Mon, Franz (1994), pag. 254.

<sup>370</sup> „Entwürfe einer möglichen akustischen Kommunikation, die produktiven Gebrauch macht von der Vielfalt [...] sprachlicher Artikulation und avancierter technischer Apparatur“.

<sup>371</sup> See on this: Mon, Franz (1994) pag. 255.

<sup>372</sup> „Sind in exemplarischer Weise Stücke des Radios, die autonom gleichermaßen außerhalb stehen.“

“specifically radiophonic form” (SCHÖNING, 1983:79),<sup>373</sup> was also present in Mon’s first *Hörspiel*, that I am now going to analyze.

A first, superficial glimpse makes it apparent that the theme of *Das Gras* is the Holocaust. Hannah Arendt’s remark on the *role* of reflection on a problematic past<sup>374</sup> enlightens the importance of this *Hörspiel* in tackling the arduous task of making poetry in the Fifties and Sixties (especially in Germany). As Schöning highlighted, Mon “is one of the authors [...] for whom, until today, Adorno’s statement ‘poetry after Auschwitz is impossible’ still belongs to the questioning of artistic work” (SCHÖNING, 1982:71).<sup>375</sup> However, Mon doesn’t consider the Holocaust to be the “true” theme of his work. As he made clear in his *Bemerkungen*,<sup>376</sup> he would consider as the main theme the general act of “asking” and its effects.<sup>377</sup> As explicitly expressed, Mon’s idea was that the “listener of the following *Hörspiel* won’t learn any story”, but would instead “recognize the used linguistic material” (MON in SCHÖNING, 1969:*vorbemerkung*)<sup>378</sup> and “collect the clues, and thus may recall a story that interests him” (MON, 1994:254).<sup>379</sup> In this sense, I would stress Schöning’s recognition that the very sense of this *Hörspiel* (as much as Mon’s following ones) consists in “taking the understanding potential and the learning ability of humans seriously” (SCHÖNING, 1983:83). The influence of typical “concrete” proceedings is crucial for achieving this aim. Their musical character and their possible reference to specific compositional principles of contemporary music is one of the main aspects I will be focusing in the following pages. Lastly, a practical remark needs to be made: in the analysis below, the references to specific places will occur by means of the numbers provided in the written score<sup>380</sup> since the page numbers are totally absent.

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<sup>373</sup> „Eine spezifisch radiophone Form“.

<sup>374</sup> See: Schöning, Klaus (1983) pag. 71.

<sup>375</sup> „Er [Mon] für die bis heute die Feststellung Adornos ‘nach Auschwitz ist kein Gedicht mehr möglich’ immer noch zur Fragestellung künstlerischer Arbeit gehört.“

<sup>376</sup> See: Mon, Franz (1994) pag. 253-255.

<sup>377</sup> See: Ibidem, pag. 254.

<sup>378</sup> „Der Hörer der folgenden Hörspiele erfährt keine Geschichte“; „das Sprachmaterial wiedererkennt“.

<sup>379</sup> „Sammelt der Hörer die Indizien, die auf eine Geschichte verweisen, die ihn interessieren mag.“

<sup>380</sup> The “written score“ considered here is the version transcribed by Mon and later included in the collection: Schöning, Klaus (1969).

According to Maurach,<sup>381</sup> the entire *Hörspiel* is divided into four phrases, in a way that assigns it a “musical” character.<sup>382</sup> The prolonged vocalic utterances /a/ and /i/, also thanks to their uninterrupted features, are used by Mon as acoustic signals with the purpose of tracing precise limits between each of the four phrases;<sup>383</sup> they are, in practice, fundamental structural devices for the whole *Hörspiel*. The final /n/ is the unique non-vocalic sound conducting this function, but I disagree with its inclusion in the consonantal group,<sup>384</sup> since its distinctive features typify it as a semi-consonant (or semi-vowel). Thus, it may be said that this *Hörspiel* is grounded, in its general structure, on musical organizational patterns. However, as several examples will show, the references to musical principles are also evident in more specific proceedings throughout the *Hörspiel*, profoundly marking its acoustic character. *Das gras..* opens up with a series of verbs with “ab” as prefix, followed by a list of names beginning with /ai/ diphthong, and then by a sequence of repeated *außerdem* (“moreover”), with an evident accentual stress on the initial /au/ diphthong. Thus, the most clearly perceivable sounds articulated by the three voices are /a/, /i/ and /u/, the three vertexes of the vocal triangle;<sup>385</sup> they are further underlined by a slight but permanent phase shift between the three voices, which in most cases impedes any acoustic superimposition when the first syllable of each word (/ab/ /ai/ or /au/) is articulated.

Moreover, the limpid resonance of the communal /a/ seems to tie together the three voices in a “harmonic” interdependence. These voices appear rhythmically separate from one other. As if in a counterpoint, the three voices are strictly related with regard to harmony and dynamics,<sup>386</sup> but they develop independently from one other in terms of rhythm. I would, then, hypothesize Mon’s awareness of the importance of the

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<sup>381</sup> See: Maurach, Martin: *Das experimentelle Hörspiel: eine gestalttheoretische Analyse*. Wiesbaden: DUV, Dt. Univ.-Verl. (1995), pag. 118. Maurach also distinguishes between three different types of sounds: 1. Emotionally signifying articulations (contributing to the sense expressed by the verbal intervention)- 22, 37/38, 41/42. 2. Long duration articulations at the intervention limits- 65, 81/82 3. Complex textures made of many different voices superimposed on each other. 44, 60, 70.

<sup>382</sup> „das groß [...] gliedert sich grob in vier Abschnitte, sozusagen musikalische “Sätze“.

<sup>383</sup> The second phrase is contained between the a-articulation (22) and the i-articulation (40); the third phrase is closed by the thickest sequential superimposition of voices, and the fourth (and last) is closed by the final /n/.

<sup>384</sup> Maurach, in fact, defines it explicitly as a “consonant”. See: Maurach, Martin (1995), pag. 119.

<sup>385</sup> See Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.

<sup>386</sup> All three voices begin in a whisper, as if coming from nowhere; then, after the crescendo they all remain on a neutral tone at normal voice intensity, and end with a diminuendo that brings them back into silence.

contrapuntal technique in contemporary music, and his desire to explore its possibilities when applied to so called “speech music”.

A further aspect, which I pointed out already in regard to the *Artikulationen*, regards the opening of this *Hörspiel* in relation to the beginning of some of Webern’s works: the tendency to concentrate all materials that are later going to be arranged horizontally in the first chord. In fact, the three initial interventions present both vowels /a/ and /i/, as well as the velar /u/ that acoustically resembles the semi-consonantal /n/ articulation that closes the *Hörspiel*.<sup>387</sup> It must be highlighted that the correspondent graphemes seem to be related, since the [u] visually appears as a clear inversion of [n].<sup>388</sup> In practice, the phonemes concentrated in the first three (1-2-3) interventions are the same as the basic structural units for the whole *Hörspiel*. A similar procedure is even more evident, for instance, in the *Hörspiel* “ich bin der ich bin die” (1970). This entire text consists of permutations of the phonemic material derived from its title.<sup>389</sup>

The immediately following “wo” (“where”) departs from the preceding three voices in terms of at least two important acoustic elements: first, it is whispered and not articulated in a normal and neutral tone, and secondly, it comes from nothing and goes on with an uninterrupted crescendo, instead of fading out gradually. Because of these peculiar features, it can be identified as having a different function: it is an onomatopoeia possibly referring to the hot steam engine of a departing train, as the whispering voice and the substitution of /v/ with /f/<sup>390</sup> suggest. This idea is also supported by a specific consideration by Fonagy on the metaphorical function of the fricative phonemes: “The friction noise of the fricatives remembers the whistle or hiss of pouring out steam. In this way W.S. Allen explains the name of the fricative (hot, indistinct) in the ancient Indian phonetics” (FONAGY, 1963:51-52).<sup>391</sup>

By means of this sound, the listener is invited to reflect on the semantics of the preceding articulations, so that a clear sequence of images emerges: the German prefix

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<sup>387</sup> This hypothesis is corroborated by the absence of these phonemes in the structure connecting together interventions 12-13-14-15.

<sup>388</sup> More precisely, it is the inversion of the retrograde.

<sup>389</sup> On this, see: Maurach, Martin (1995), pag. 124-127. ,

<sup>390</sup> These two phonemes are very close to one other, as they are distinguished only by the “voiced-unvoiced” distinctive feature.

<sup>391</sup> „Das Reibungsgeräusch der Engelaute erinnert an das Pfeifen oder Zischen des entweichenden Dampfes So erklärt W.S Allen den Namen der Engelaute (... heiß, dampfend) in der altindischen Phonetik”.

“ab”, that expresses the idea of break and abandonment, is used here to represent the anguished farewell of Jews from their houses and activities. The following list of names is most probably of prisoners leaving for a concentration camp. The articulation modalities, in turn, are not unimportant. The “ab” is pronounced separately from the root of the verb, in such a marked way that it efficiently expresses a vague premonition: what is being abandoned will never return. The list of names starts from the diphthong [ei] (pronounced /ai/), so that the name “Eichmann”<sup>392</sup> gradually appears. This seems to suggest, through acoustic similarity, the proximity of victims and their executioners, their communal belonging to humankind. Lastly, it seems that Mon’s ingenuity in using two semantic levels of “wo” (the acoustic and the lexical) allows for the expression of simultaneous occurrences: while its sound accounts for the image of the leaving train, its meaning evokes the uncertain wondering of the passengers: where are we going? Actually, Mon’s claim about the act of “asking” as the *Hörspiel*’s central theme allows for a reading of all monosyllabic w-adverbs as posing basic questions rather than as affirmations; questions to which no one wants to respond, responsibilities that no one wants to share.<sup>393</sup>

The peculiar sound of the following “wann” (when) and “wie” (how), seems to support the idea of a connection between the sounds and meanings of these adverbs. The “wann” articulation is pronounced in a mumble and with an extremely low voice, and can thus be seen as expressing the exhaustion of the people squeezed in the train carriages. While wondering *when* they will finally come to their destination, they open their mouths only the bare minimum for letting the lightest airflow come out. In this sense, it is significant that precisely the /a/, the most compact and powerful among all articulations, is deprived of all its force; by means of this phonetic metaphor, the expression of the prisoners’ thorough corporal exhaustion is perfectly conveyed. The phonetically feeble “wie” is, on the contrary, spoken with a very high pitch, so that it remains more clearly perceivable than the other superimposing voices (12-13-14). However, its relatively high energy sounds weird, somehow “false”. This impression is most probably given by the *false* *setto*, which inspires the idea of artificial, forced strength:

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<sup>392</sup> Adolf Eichmann was the inventor of the extermination camps; the name of Eichmann is often present (or alluded to) throughout this *Hörspiel*.

<sup>393</sup>See also: Vowinckel, Antje (1995), pag. 186.



the strength of despair, the expression of the prisoners' incredulous attitude in front of what they see once they arrive at the camp.

This reading is supported also by the connotative function of the /i/ articulation, which according to Maurach is commonly used in German as an expression of disgust;<sup>394</sup> and the frequent appearance of /i/ in correspondence with sentences expected to provoke a sense of rejection in the listener also seems to reinforce this idea. For instance, in (37/38), the /i/ articulation is located in a direct auditory relationship with a series of repugnant questions regarding different possible transplantations of human organs. Also the /i/ of "nicken" at (70) is made more evident through its lengthening; the nodding, the silent acceptance of any humiliation on the part of human-beasts, is also perceived with disgust. However, even if the /i/ maintains a particularly sinister tone in the whole *Hörspiel*, its most nefarious moment is at 37/38: there, its sound impacts directly on one's senses, creating emotional and even corporal involvement as if in a spontaneous expression of revulsion.

According to Maurach, /i/ is unique among the long articulations with structural functions that also has an emotional aspect, seen as "integrating" or "responding to" the meaning expressed verbally.<sup>395</sup> I agree only in regard to 22, while I think that in 42 the /a/ can easily be considered, because of how it is pronounced, as an expression of satisfaction and/or as a laugh on the part of the executioners for what was said in 41: "Motions and reactions are slowed down, unsure, the sensory is limited, the tone of the throat muscles are decreased, the head oscillates under the blows" (MON, 1969).<sup>396</sup> Beyond the violence, there is humiliation and derision.

I would say that Maurach seems to be exclusively focused on sound itself, in its verbal or purely sonic expressions. He doesn't allow for any other image to emerge from those sounds, erasing any possible space for imagination. When considering the /i/ articulation in 37/38, he affirms that it begins to conduct a semantic-emotional function only in correspondence to a precise word, namely the "affen" (monkey) included in the

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<sup>394</sup> See: Maurach, Martin (1995), pag. 19. Maurach opposes Lersch's connection between /i/ and the feeling of joy and happiness, thus agreeing with Tsur's theory of the relativity of a sound's meaning, its dependence on its phonemic or auditory context (see 2.2).

<sup>395</sup> See: Maurach, Martin (1995) pag. 120.

<sup>396</sup> „Die bewegungen und reaktionen sind verlangsamt, unsicher, das sensorium ist eingeschränkt, der tonus der halsmuskulatur ist herabgesetzt, der kopf pendelt unter den treffern.“

question regarding the transplantation processes.<sup>397</sup> Thus, Maurach denies that the /i/ preceding that question responds to the same (or an even greater) uncontainable disgust, that does not depend on a verbal expression but more concretely on an image, a situation or object that is visually accessible to the camp prisoner. Maurach is overlooking the potential of our imagination skills, and he is correspondingly denying the emergence of images that we are not able to come into direct contact with, but that may be imagined in all legitimacy. Verbal language is not the only vehicle for meaning, and even Mon seems to sustain this point when he affirms: “I also had to create imagined situations as motivation for the expected declarations” (MON, 1994:268).<sup>398</sup> That is, some audible sounds were provoked by situations that Mon had imagined; the listener must also do the same. A further interesting aspect is a kind of variation principle, according to which some acoustic structures recur several times throughout the *Hörspiel*, but each time presents some kind of more or less evident difference. Speaking about two later *Hörspiel* productions, Mon affirmed that “the repetition of the same sound that became something else is the dominant organizational principle of both pieces” (quoted in SCHÖNING, 1983:79).<sup>399</sup> I would say, however, that this concept was, at least in part, already present in *Das gras*, as the following example may show.

The superimposition of four voices (12-13-14-15) proposes a pattern that significantly resembles the one employed in the *Hörspiel*'s opening (1-2-3). Moreover, a same word (*außerdem*) is articulated in two different manners, being pronounced with a plain stress on the first syllable in its first occurrence, and with a marked “military” stress on each syllable (*au/ßer/dem*) when appearing for the second time. The variation also occurs on two distant levels, namely the acoustic and the semantic: for instance, almost all interventions in the first interview (45) are conceptually/semantically the same, re-proposed in 48, but in the latter case they are mostly expressed using a different lexicon, thus resulting totally independent in the acoustic aspect.

At 19, the variation principle dominates: the same phonemic sequence “*eich*” is repeated many times, but each time it is followed by a different suffix. It always recalls the same basic form even though it sounds differently each time.

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<sup>397</sup> See: Maurach, Martin (1995) pag. 119.

<sup>398</sup> “Ich musste also imaginative Situationen als Motivation für die erwarteten Äußerungen herstellen“.

<sup>399</sup> “Die wiederholung desselben, das anders geworden ist, das dominierende organisationsprinzip beider stücke ist”.

The communal root „eich-“ (oak) is directly linked with the name of Eichmann, so that the combination of this root with different suffixes generates many possible associations. “Eich-maul”, if considered in its two constitutive sections, may indicate the following impressions: “maul” is a pejorative denomination for “face” since it refers primarily to an animal’s muzzle; and, since a simple metonymy of “eich” would indicate the particularly hard wood of an oak, “Eichmaul” can be intended as expressing a “stony-faced” personality, impassive and cynical. If the animal-like connotation is added, the resulting figure would be similar to that of a “cynical muzzle”, a suitable definition for Adolf Eichmann. The following “eichlaub” (oak fronds) and “eichkatz” (squirrel)<sup>400</sup> may refer to the environmental context around the camps, the German and Polish countryside that is later defined as “eichplatz”, both in the sense of oaks’ and Eichmann’s place.<sup>401</sup> The word “eichmarks” (calibration mark) and “eichmaß” (measurement) seem to refer to the extreme precision needed for managing a concentration camp. The exact calculation of any value was actually one of the main activities of the Nazis within the concentration camp; the systematic measurement of live and dead prisoners and (no less important) of their remains was essential for the functioning of the camp. This has always been seen as one of the most impressive, inhuman aspects of the Holocaust.

While listening, it appears evident that both female voices articulating the words and the responding “hier” (here) are sexually marked. This impression, however explicit due to the tone of the voices, is also supported by a phonetic factor, namely the significant presence in the whole passage of the bilabial /m/, which according to Fonagy “has [...] certain relationships with ‘genitality’, since the wilting of the soft palate in the ecstasy produces a nasal groan. Through the simultaneous occlusion of the lips appears a twisted /m/. Thus, the nasal vowels and consonants in poetry can express “a sensuous longing” (FONAGY 1963:90).<sup>402</sup> The frequent occurrence of /l/ further reinforces the impression of sensuality. However, the vocalic sequence of “hier” is the element that

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<sup>400</sup> The exact word is in reality “Eichkätzchen”.

<sup>401</sup> In German, the strict connection of the squirrel with the oaks is expressed in the word itself, for the squirrel is the “oak’s little cat”.

<sup>402</sup> „Der bilabiale /m/ laut hat [...] gewisse Beziehungen zur Genitalität, da die Erschlaffung des Gaumensegels in der Extase ein nasales Stöhnen erzeugt. Bei gleichzeitigem Lippenverschluss entsteht ein verzogener /m/-Laut. Darum können die nasale Vokale und Konsonanten in Gedichten eine wollustige Sehnsucht zum Ausdruck bringen“.

provides the most explicit reference to sensuousness, due to its proximity to an aspirated “ja” (yes) that actually resembles an excited vocal expression during a sexual act.

Stereophony also supports this impression, by highlighting the perfect symmetry between the phonemic sequence of “eich” (/aiç/) and of “hier” (/çia/), as if in an inverted echo.<sup>403</sup>

The latter is not the only symmetrical structure introduced in this point. On the contrary, the presence of a macro-structure organizing this entire section (19) is identifiable thanks to an attentive “deep” listening, also confirmed by the written score. Three words (maul, laub, baum)<sup>404</sup> appear in three different sequences: the first one is uninterrupted, while the second and the third ones present an alternation with, respectively, one and two other words. The following draft may help to better understand this complex scheme:<sup>405</sup>

- 1) A-b-c            2) A-(d)-b-(e)-c            3) A-(f-d)-b-(g-e)-c

Moreover, the second section is perfectly symmetrical to the first one. By proceeding from the last to the first line, in fact, an identical structure emerges:

- 1) A'-b'-c'            2) A'-(g)-b'-(f)-c'            3)A'-(e-g)-b'-(d-f)-c'

The three basic words are not the same as in the first section, while the other ones are, instead, unchanged. However, the order of both sequences (d-f) and (e-g) is also inverted, so that the permutations assume an even more complex character. In general, I would suggest that such a peculiar structural pattern may refer to Webern’s highly convoluted architectures, whose mathematical principles are hardly distinguishable but vaguely perceivable while listening. A further element may be identified as referring to

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<sup>403</sup> The same words are later “militarily spoken” (MON, 1969:9), in a way that makes them clearly hearable; but the sexually connoted voices don’t cease, so that both tones are superimposed. It may be that this approximation is not a coincidence, as it may refer to Godard’s statement about his movie “*Cinema’s History*”: “the two great stories have been sex and death” (quoted in DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2012:188). If one admits that such a military tone can be a legitimate way of representing death, then it could be that Mon intended to refer here to the harassing endured by women in the concentration camps. The case described by Leib Langfus and mentioned by Didi-Huberman is horribly exemplary: “the SS Forst standing in front of the gas-chamber for fondling the sex of a young woman who was entering there” (quoted in DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2012:50).

<sup>404</sup> Of course, all these words are preceded by the root “eich”.

<sup>405</sup> In the following formula, each different letter corresponds to a different word.

Webern's compositional procedure: similarly to what occurred at the very beginning, the vocalic phonemes /a/, /i/ and /u/ are in strict sonic interaction.<sup>406</sup>

Another, equally important issue is that the *Hörspiel's* production consisted in the "building of heterogeneous materials- without knowing which final result was to be expected" (quoted in SCHÖNING, 1983:75).<sup>407</sup> As a direct consequence of this process, the element of *chance* began to influence the *Hörspiel's* acoustic texture more profoundly. A direct connection with Cage's music and its philosophical foundation on "art made by all" was also claimed by Schöning,<sup>408</sup> but in some specific points, chance assumes the function of a structural element, as for example in 44. While listening, the impression is of an extremely chaotic sound texture. Even if some sounds are quite frequently recognizable, the superimposition of many voices in all four positions is predominant. The indications of the score confirm an impression that emerges vaguely during the listening: the principle of chance is introduced, according to which the actors continually change their position while articulating sentences chosen *arbitrarily* among the 16 provided in the score, until the whole text (all 16 sentences) is read four times. As a consequence, the noisiest articulations,<sup>409</sup> like the /ʃ/ of "arschback"<sup>410</sup> and "erschossen" come to the foreground. At some point, the distortion of the *synthesizer* is also clearly perceivable, as it provokes the emergence of a monstrous, animal-like cry; some articulations are prolonged artificially, imposing their presence on non-manipulated articulations such as /a/ and /i/, which would otherwise dominate the poetic *soundscape*.

However, an element contrasting with chance processes is correspondingly inserted in the acoustic elaboration at this point (44), namely the determination of the repetition speed on the basis of a very *rigorous* mathematical principle.<sup>411</sup> Briefly, Mon used evidently opposing compositional proceedings (chance and mathematical rigor) to create a unique sound texture, as if in homage to, respectively, John Cage and Pierre Boulez. References to great contemporary composers are also made in several other

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<sup>406</sup> /a/ appears both alone and in the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ that profoundly mark all three basic words of the first section (Eich-maul, -laub, -baum). /ai/ also appears inverted /ia/ in the continuously repeated "hier".

<sup>407</sup> "Herstellen von heterogenen Materialien- ohne Kenntnis des zu erwartenden Endergebnisses".

<sup>408</sup> See: Schöning, Klaus (1983) pag. 68.

<sup>409</sup> In this auditory context, the /ʃ/ sounds as extremely noisy, while in a silent or very low *soundscape* it would be associated with a call for silence. This is an example of the relativity of the meaning of sounds proposed by Tsur (see 2.2).

<sup>410</sup> See: Maurach, Martin (1995), pag. 122.

<sup>411</sup> See: Schöning, Klaus (1969).

occasions. For instance, at 46, the organization of pauses and silences is based on a serial principle; the duration of the spoken text diminishes gradually (5-3-1 seconds), while on the contrary, the duration of the pause increases gradually (1-3-4 seconds). In this way, a mini-series of the durations is constituted, and moreover it is shaped in a mirror-form (even if imperfect): 5-3-1/1-3-(4).<sup>412</sup> A similar process is also present in 61, where the pause duration gradually diminishes (from 7'' to 2''), this time in opposition to a gradual increase of intensity and pitch. The combination of both factors provokes an evident tension, also supported by the increasingly anxious tone of the speaking voice. The mirror-form is used also as a macro-structural device, as happens at 48, where the long previous interview (at 45) is re-proposed in its entirety in a perfectly inverted sequence. Both the interviewer and the interviewee start from what had been their last interventions in the former dialogue.

Mon also includes the *canonical form* as a structural device. An example of this is clearly present at 7 (three-voice canon), but the most noteworthy case is provided at 60, where the canonical form develops for a quite long time, in all its extension and with all its implications. The entire canon is constituted by six cells (called "sequences" in the score) pronounced in the four positions, according to the following pattern:

1-2-3-4-5-6

1-2-3-4-5-6

1-2-3-4-5-6

1-2-3-4-5-6

The superimposition of several voices makes the sound gradually more confused. In the middle, the voices from all four positions are mixed creating a conglomeration of many resounding fragments where only a few recurrent sentences and words are clearly audible: the conjunctions "entweder/oder" (either/or), the most frequent are "nickst du immer noch so schön wie damals",<sup>413</sup> "halten sie nicken für gesund", both focusing on

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<sup>412</sup>However, the impression of specularity emerges quite clearly in the listening, because a little 4-second pause is added after the last silence. This is just one of the many unconformable elements between the written score and the recorded version.

<sup>413</sup> "Do you always nod so beautifully now as then?"; "consider the nodding as healthy".

that idea of “nicken” (nodding) that Vowinckel has identified as one of the Hörspiel’s *keywords*.<sup>414</sup>

The last element to be considered is the pause/silence, for instance at 60, there is a really peculiar employment of silence. While a relatively long pause (7’’) generally divides two different sound images, here the opposite occurs: the complex texture resounds before the pause, totally unaltered, returns, as if the sound had continued to flow while becoming inaccessible exclusively to the listener’s ear. The surprise one feels at the end of the pause is accompanied by the odd impression that one should have been able to hear something during that apparent silence. It may be that Mon, by including this longer pause, was thinking to Cage’s definition of silence as the “entirety of unintended sounds”, and aimed at exploring the sounds produced by the tape recorder, making that silence secretly full of sound. In fact Schafer also claimed “if the silence interrupts or follows the sound, this same silence reflects the texture of the past sounds, and this state continues until the memory conserves it” (SCHAFER, 1985:354).

The *Hörspiel* ends with a /n/ articulation that presents peculiar features. Beyond its unexpectedly long duration (about one minute), what affects the listener most intensely is its artificially fluctuating sound, that evidently results from the superimposition and technical manipulation of two different voices. The absence of a *physical* yielding of the breath at the basis of both voices provokes a weird feeling, similar to an acoustic distancing effect. In this way, the listener is invited to immerse himself in a sort of sub-rational state, in order not to lose patience while waiting for the /n/’s lingering end. The final /n/ articulation decisively contrasts the shorter /o/ articulation at 65. The latter, in fact, is produced only through the breath and begins to waver gradually once the breath of the child pronouncing is exhausted.

Even if neither sound is directly connected to the expression of a specific feeling (as happens for example with the /i/ or /a/ considered above), a thorough involvement of the listening body is undeniably present in both cases. In the latter, the clear perception of the “naturalness” of the long /o/, which only counts on the finite energy of human breath, induces a sort of corporal exhaustion once the waver begins. In the former, the ear almost immediately senses that the sound is produced by means of some electronic

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<sup>414</sup> See: Vowinckel, Antje (1995), pag. 184.

device and thus aims at bringing the listener (if s/he allows the sound to do so) into a state of peaceful oblivion, a sort of hypnosis similar to an “om”. A reference to John Cage may also be hypothesized here, since the American composer established a profound bond with Buddhism especially starting from the late Fifties, and took its principles as the basis for developing new inspiring compositional processes.

### 3.1.2 Ernst Jandl

For Ernst Jandl, the *Lautgedicht* “appears like any other poem as a readable score, but needs the vocal realization to achieve its full unfolding” (quoted in WULFF, 1978:148).<sup>415</sup> In fact, it is characterized by an intrinsically musical nature, thanks to the substitution of traditional meter with a rhythmically more weighty ‘beat’, and this way it turns into “almost music, if one has some imagination and doesn’t demand too much from music” (JANDL, 1976:35).<sup>416</sup> Among the many poems gathered in Jandl’s collections published during the Sixties, three have been identified by critics as particularly suitable for performance: *Im reich der Toten*, *Ode auf N*, *schtzngrmm*.<sup>417</sup> The recorded version of these poems will be considered here, with references to other recordings as well.

#### Im Reich der Toten

**Nnnnnnnntschn**

**Nnnnnnnntschn**

**Nnnnnnnntschn**

**Glawaraaaaaaaaa**

**Üoooooooooooooooooooo**

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<sup>415</sup> “[das Lautgedicht] erscheint wie jedes andere Gedicht als lesbare Schrift, bedarf zu seiner vollen Entfaltung aber der Realisation durch die Stimme”

<sup>416</sup> “[...] So war es das Laugedicht, das fast wie Musik war, wenn man einige Phantasie besaß und an Musik nicht zu hohe Ansprüche stellte.“

<sup>417</sup> See: Specker, Andreas (1986), pag. 106.



**Glawaraaaaaaaaa**

**Blauuuuuuuruuuuuruuuuuuuu**

**Glc-----h**

**Dnnnnnnnnnn**

**Dnnnnnnnnnn**

**Dnnnnnnnnnn**

**s----c---hffffs-c---hffffs----c----hffffs-----c----hffffs---c---h**

**glrrrrrrrrrr**

**glrrrrrrrrrr**

**schllllltnnn**

**fffffds-c—h**

**nnrrrrrrrrrrrr**

**nnrrrrrrrrrrrr**

**nnrrrrrrrrrrrr**

**nnrrrrrrrrrrrr**

**nnrrrrrrrrrrrr**

The written score of this poem was published in the collection “Sprechblasen” (1968), while the specific recorded version I will analyze here was included in the international collection “Phonetische Poesie” (1971) published by Franz Mon. According to Jandl himself, this poem is the most representative of the *Laugedicht* genre within his whole production, and it is one of the best examples of the intervention of the musical ‘beat’ mentioned above in poetry, a rhythmic breath substituting a traditional metrical pattern. In this specific case, some clear acoustic indications for the reading were fixed in an “audio-score” *before* the text itself was printed,<sup>418</sup> making this poem defined as “textually more abstract, musically more concrete” (SPECKER, 1986:107). Moreover, the theme of the kingdom of death allows the listener’s imagination to soar<sup>419</sup> and thus leads to numerous possible readings. We have many images of the afterlife, because we

<sup>418</sup> See: Specker, Andreas (1986), pag. 107.

<sup>419</sup> See: Wulff, Michael (1978), pag. 122.

do not have any real witness to this inaccessible space, thus all interpretations must be considered as legitimate as they are arbitrary,<sup>420</sup> even those provided by Jandl himself.<sup>421</sup>

The recording opens with the consonant group “nnnnntschn” repeated three times, that I associated with the trailing march of the damned on the muddy shore of the Acheron.<sup>422</sup> The nasal /n/, held at length before the drastic falling of the /tʃ/, expresses the immense effort of the damned to take even a single step. The up-down movement of their feet is phonetically expressed in the transition from the /n/, resounding in the nose (upper position) to the /tsch/ which is instead articulated at the opposite side of the apparatus, namely in the anterior part of the mouth, in addition to the rounded lips (lower position). It can be hypothesized that the /n/ is held as long as possible in order to resist the humiliating, but inevitable fall in the mud, that correspondingly approximates the souls to their eternal damnation. The phonetics sustain this interpretation: the palatals are defined as “wet [...] consonants”, because when they are articulated “the wet surface of the back of the tongue touches on a large zone the equally slimy palate” (FONAGY 1963:57);<sup>423</sup> the /tsch/ results as a perfectly efficient articulation for expressing the slipperiness of the mud. This reading seems to conform to Jandl’s explicit intention to use the sound “nnntschn” for indicating a peculiar pronunciation of the word “Mensch” (Human)<sup>424</sup>: the human being who is sinking in the filthy mud with no possibility for redemption. The absolute equality of all humans before death is expressed here and confirmed in line 8, where the articulation “glc---h” corresponds, in Jandl’s intentions, to the word “gleich” (equal). Lastly, Jandl’s association of “nnntschn” with sneezing<sup>425</sup> also sustains my interpretation; humans catch colds, if they remain in direct contact with an icy, wet surface for a prolonged time.

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<sup>420</sup> Of course, by “all interpretations” I mean thoughtful and qualitatively valuable readings, which comply with the basic rules I drafted in the previous chapter.

<sup>421</sup> See: Wulff, Michael (1978), pag. 125 (footnote 3).

<sup>422</sup> In the Greek mythology, Acheron is the name of some rivers generally associated with the kingdom of death.

<sup>423</sup> „Bei der Aussprache von feuchten, palatalen oder palatalisierten Konsonanten berührt die nasse Fläche des Zungenrückens auf einem weiten Gebiet den ebenfalls schleimigen Gaumen“.

<sup>424</sup> “Nnnntschn verbindet sich für mich mit einem auf eine ganz bestimmte Weise gesprochenen ‚Mennn-(t)schn‘ [...]“ (JANDL, 1976:39) [Nnnntschn is connected, for me, with “Mennn-(t)schn” spoken in a really peculiar way].

<sup>425</sup> “...wenn es auch beim Anhören des Gedichtes vielleicht eher an Niesen erinnert” (JANDL, ibidem). [...even though, while listening to the poem, it maybe recalls primarily a sneeze].

The desperate cry that follows, “glawaraaaaa”, may express the feeling of the damned souls seeing the terrifying, infinite darkness waiting for them on the other shore of the Acheron for the first time. The immediately following “üiiiiiiiiiii”, instead, was intended by Jandl as a reenactment of a scared call in a gallery of horrors.<sup>426</sup> In this environment, the horrific figure may well be that of the approaching ship conducted by the famous “Caron dimonio” with firey eyes, the ferryman for the souls and lord of the entrance to the underworld. The strong /i/ articulation uttered in a high pitch may express disgust and revulsion, in the same way as in Mon’s *Das gras*. When first seeing Charon, the desperation of the damned increases further, as the intensity and the second “glawaraaaaa” suggest. The gradually descending pitch and the decreasing intensity of all three cries are probably aimed at acoustically recreating the empty, resonant space of the infinitely vast kingdom of death. The apparently lessening intensity indicates movement of sound towards distant territories, until it cannot be perceived anymore. The idea of an accurate reproduction of the cries of the damned seems less likely to me. Specker proposed that “the falling glissandi recalls sighs, resignation and complaints” (SPECKER, 1986:107),<sup>427</sup> without considering that such a prolonged and energetic /a/ articulation, because of its intrinsic phonetic features, is more appropriate for the expression of desperation and pain than for the relatively lower resonance of sighing resignation. The recording supports this impression since both intensity and pitch, in the performance by Jandl, do not resemble a sigh but rather an anguished cry.

The “sch-fffs” sequence at line 12 refers both to the substantive “Schiff” (ship) and to its soft noise while sailing on the Acheron: a contemporarily lexical and auditory designation of the object, a perfectly realized onomatopoeia. This line also closes a particularly “quiet” section of the recording, corresponding to four lines (7-11) performed by Jandl with low pitch and low intensity. From the following line (13), on the contrary, the emerging image is that of a terribly resonant space: the polyvibrant /r/, with its immediate connotation of anger and violence, dominates the whole last section, resounding aggressively in seven of the last nine lines. The *soundscape* of the hell’s core is thus imagined by Jandl as one resonating with an immense noise, possibly produced by the bedlam of machinery or the continuous, infinite impulses of anger.

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<sup>426</sup> See: Jandl, Ernst (1970), pag. 35.

<sup>427</sup> „Die absteigenden Glissandi [...] an Seufzen, Resignation, Klagen erinnern.“

For this very reason, the “Schllllltn” sound, associated with words like “schlucken” (swallow) or “schelten” (grumble) by Jandl, seems to me more intimately connected with a description of the surrounding environment. In fact, the mentioned articulation is very close to “schallten”, a conjugated form of “schallen” (resound). I agree with his proposal to connect the “ffdsch” articulation with the word “futsch” (gone/dead) that also imitates the sound of a switch switching off. The comic-grotesque side that characterizes most of Jandl’s production is reproposed here. Closing with the vibrant, furious “Nrrrrrrrr” evokes the word “Narr” (crazy), which may represent the eternal reproach to the insane behavior of humankind, or, perhaps it alludes to the diabolic figure of Charon. Wulff also proposes a provokingly self-critical interpretation, seeing the repeated “nrrrrr” as a raillery addressed to the critic trying to build a model of the extra-real through worldly deductions.<sup>428</sup> I share this hypothesis and recognize that I may have been as “narr” as any other potential commentator of this recording.

The frequent references to words taken from the common German lexical repertoire<sup>429</sup> make it evident that the semantic level is not abolished in this *Lautgedicht*; rather, paralinguistic material is utilized for developing the textual process, and the onomatopoeic device is clearly predominant. According to Wulff, the closeness of the material used to the shared lexical repertoire expresses the impossibility to represent the non-linguistic.<sup>430</sup> I agree with this perspective, since the poem is primarily aimed at recognizing the impossibility of expressing the reality of the underworld through conventional linguistic means.

Wulff, however, also argues that “precisely through the materiality of sound [...] units, the reference to the non-material substance or its linguistic impossibility [...] seems to be, even if not directly perceivable, however indirectly understandable” (WULFF, 1978:124).<sup>431</sup> This is an exemplary case of the drastic exclusion of perception from the domain of the esthetic experience, which in this case also induces an incorrect interpretation. The perplexing idea of the poem’s “reference to a non-material

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<sup>428</sup> See: Wulff, Michael (1978) pag. 125.

<sup>429</sup> Beyond “Glaser”/“Glaserer” and “Mensch”, several other words are also clearly identifiable, like “narr” nut “Schiff” (ship), “Blau” (blue) and “ruh” (calm).

<sup>430</sup> See: Wulff, Michael (1978), pag. 123

<sup>431</sup> „Scheint [...] gerade an Hand der Materialität der Ton- [...] Einheiten der Verweis auf das Nicht-Material oder seine sprachliche Unmöglichkeit [...] als – wenn auch nicht direkt wahrnehmbar, so doch - indirekt verstehbar durch.“

substance” is the result of an “indirect” understanding that leaves “direct perception” aside. The *non-materiality* of the afterworld is signified, in Wulff’s perspective, by the inconsistency of the used language; and Wackernagel goes even further, explicitly affirming that the protagonists of the poem are “only shadows, sort of inconsistent remains (since death has consumed their flesh and their legs)”, which also “lacks the force of thought and the conscience” (quoted in WULFF, 1978:122-123).<sup>432</sup> It is on these premises that Wulff grounds his conclusion that “Jandl’s text can be intended as the language of these shadows, a shadow-language” (WULFF, 1978:123).<sup>433</sup>

I decisively oppose both Wackernagel’s premises and Wulff’s conclusions about the poem’s general sense, and on the basis of my perception, a more attentive “deep listening”. In regard to the former, the poem gives us an image of damned souls with a markedly corporal presence: they are not deprived of their legs, since one can hear them sink in the mud, the contact of their feet with the morass, nor their flesh, since we get their sneezing and their fearful calls, and lastly their definitive being swallowed by the immense noise (“rrrrr”) of the kingdom of the dead. Moreover, they are still endowed with conscience and thought, as their frightened cries witness; and the flowing of time is still perceived, as the sounds clearly connected with temporal adverbs like “now” (gleich) and “later” (dann) reveal.

The use of paralinguistic material thus corresponds to the impossibility of describing the *bodily* pain of the damned through conventional lexical means. Their bodies are so intensely affected by pain that their physical condition cannot be grasped by humans. In the same way, their awareness of the beginning of their eternal damnation is such a boundlessly desperate feeling, that none of the words included in any human lexicon can begin to express it. The conventional lexical repertoire is substituted here by paralinguistics in order to express the non-expressible character of the kingdom of the dead, not its (erroneously) supposed inconsistency or immateriality. The fact that the hearable sounds in the recording are not subject to the rules of *our* language does not implicate at all that they are not in accord with *any* language; on the contrary, a pre-verbal, material language is used here, one produced by the talking body, addressed to

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<sup>432</sup> “Sie [sind] eben nur Schatten, nur ein traumbildartiger Überrest sind (denn Fleisch und Bein hat den Leichenbrand verzehrt)“ [...], auch die Kraft des Denkens und das Bewusstsein [mangelt] ihnen.

<sup>433</sup> “Jandls Text kann als Sprache dieser Schattenwesen verstanden werden, als Schattensprache“.

the listening body. This alternative way of communicating the incommunicable through the body is, in my opinion, the very aim of this poem.

## Ode auf N <sup>434</sup>

The utilization of material derived from a single name is particularly suited for realizing various permutations which can be interpreted from many different perspectives. The written score consists of one hundred and one very short lines, whose phonemic material has been entirely extracted from the name of the “celebrated” hero, Napoleon:

Consonants: /n/-/p/-/l/-/n/

Vowels /a/-/o/-/e/ -/o/

The poem opens with three sequences “nepl-lepn”. The extremities of both monosyllables continuously exchange their position, while the central section /ep/ remains stable. The image quite explicitly expressed here is that of a marching column, characterized by rigid and precise movements. The phonemic distribution of “nepl-lepn” phonetically recreates the moving body of the troops: the /ep/ would correspond to their stable trunk, while /l/ and /n/ to their moving legs. The peculiarity of the relationship between the intrinsic distinctive features of both /l/ and /n/ reinforce this impression: both are alveolar phonemes, and are consequently articulated in that same spot of the palate, but each implicates a different position of the tongue in respect to the palate. While, in fact, the articulation of /l/ entails that only the tongue’s end touches the palate, the /n/ needs instead an almost full contact between both; in practice, the tongue imitates the motion of the soldiers’ column, perfectly respecting the rhythmical pattern of the military “1-2”. Jandl’s highly emphatic reading is essential for suggesting this interpretation; the extremely compact and quite rapid rhythm, together with the inflexible tone and the total absence of pauses between the lines are the most valuable devices for achieving Jandl’s narrative aims.

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<sup>434</sup> Text available at:

[http://wwwuser.gwdg.de/~ptrilck/tagung/geschichtsllyrik\\_tagung\\_tischvorlagen\\_v1.1.pdf](http://wwwuser.gwdg.de/~ptrilck/tagung/geschichtsllyrik_tagung_tischvorlagen_v1.1.pdf) . Last access September 2016

The first 31 lines are all constituted by a maximum of two syllables, and thus acoustically represent the subsuming of all soldiers to the rigid organization of the army and its communicational pattern (order-execution). Later, in correspondence to lines 32-33, an interruption of the military attitude and its precise movements unexpectedly occurs. The mentioned lines consist respectively of three and four syllables. For the first time, the perfectly synchronic movements of the marching column are ruined by an uncoordinated, disobedient move. The coincidence of this broken rhythm with the articulation of a decisively repeated “no” supports this hypothesis. The clear expression of refusal already appears for the first time in line 26, but it is still compliant to the march, since it is articulated in a monosyllable. Perhaps it is an initial, hesitant refusal, immediately contrasted by the official’s “paaa” and “papaa” corresponding to an affirmative “ja”,<sup>435</sup> aimed at re-establishing the order by imposing the regular conduct of the march. In this way, the false dialectic typical of the military sphere is rebuilt acoustically; the only relationship possible within the army is to submit to the authority and its rhetoric.

But in the following lines (30-33) the intensity of the refusal grows consistently, until it becomes an evident rebellion. The “no” is repeated in four subsequent lines, thus impeding the official from duly reacting with his “paa”. Moreover, it is pronounced twice in the discordant rhythm described above: the rebel soldier is definitively out of the ranks. The official reacts not only with the stubbornly affirmative “paaa”, but he does not repress his impatience, manifested through the repetition of a snorting “plll”. Finally, the following “oon” is intended to declare his aversion to the rebel’s “nooo”.<sup>436</sup>

Then, starting from line 59, the pitch of the repeated “naaaa” goes gradually up in an escalation that prepares for the culminating moment of the “pooleon” (line 63). From this moment on, only the sequences “naaaa” and “pooleon” are repeated: Napoleon, the

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<sup>435</sup> Wulff hypothesizes that the “paaa” are intended as substituting the “ja” and the “pl” the “ph” (that would correspond to a scornful expression), since [j] and [h] are not included in the name “napoleon”. See on this: Wulff, Michael (1978), pag. 135.

<sup>436</sup> I don’t agree with Wulff when he affirms that this “oon” doesn’t express affirmation, since the phonemes /n/ and/o/ are always semantically occupied by a negative expression, based on the considerations by Tsur on the relativity of the meaning of any phoneme and its dependence on the phonetic context surrounding it. Moreover, the sequence “on” is easily associable to the English lexeme, that includes among its semantic categories also that of “starting”, quite evidently connected with the idea of affirmation/proposition; and Jandl was most probably aware of this wordplay, given his interest in linguistic hybridizations and especially with English.







strong sound groups” (quoted in WULFF, 1978:130).<sup>437</sup> The manipulation of the phonemic material of ‘schutzengraben’ into “schtzngrrmm” corresponds to its dialectal pronunciation with the Austrian accent, and may refer to the generally conservative attitude of Austrian society.

The exclusively consonantal sequence “schtzngrrmm“ is split into its constituents all along the poem. The dense texture of sibilants and occlusives, polyvibrant and nasal phonemes resound with no interruption in the irreducible hardness; in particular, the frequent occurrence of rapidly articulated sequences of voiceless occlusives /t/ and of long polyvibrants /r/ is extremely efficient for the expression of aggressiveness and force, closely connected with the full-blown violence of war. Jandl’s declamation, then, further stresses the phonetic symbolism already conveyed by the intrinsic distinctive features of both /t/ and /r/. The total absence of vowels and the consequent reduction of “schützengraben” to its consonantal fragments further strengthen the already hard sound of the trench battle. Interestingly, this process corresponds to the peculiar passage from music to noises/dissonances operated at the highest degree in the sphere of *musique concrete*.<sup>438</sup> Here the dominance of the articulatory *white sound* and the absence of a vocalic “melody of speech” is an efficient means for expressing the idea that “the war doesn’t sing” (quoted in WULFF, 1978:143).<sup>439</sup>

Precisely by means of these phonemic features, the poem succeeds in representing the war more vividly than through any verbal description, with its syntactically and lexically ordered means. Jandl showed the use of coincidental phonemes (in Saussure’s sense) for the composition of an entire poem, even if the choice of the specific word “schutzengraben” necessarily required a pre-determination of the phonemic material.

The phonemes weren’t freely chosen within the German alphabet, but established by the choice of a specific lexeme. Below I re-propose the outline of the possible associations drafted by Specker:<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> “ Die Zerlegung des Wortes ‚Schützengraben‘ und die Zusammenfügung seiner Elemente zu neuen, ausdrucksstarken Lautgruppen“.

<sup>438</sup> The work *Ionisation* (1931) by Edgard Varese seems to be the most representative in this sense. *Ionisation* has been considered the first “noisy” composition, and for this reason the parallelism with the considered poem appears particularly appropriate. Its author also belonged to the *musique concrète* movement developed primarily by Pierre Schaeffer (see 2.3)

<sup>439</sup> “Der Krieg singt nicht!”

<sup>440</sup> See: Specker, Andreas (1986) pag. 124.

t-t-t-t: fusillade

schtzn: defense shots

grrrrmmm : grenades

tssssssssss : noise of flying bullets

Schtzngrmm : flame thrower/ artillery detonations

Some other reflections on the sounds of these phonemes in the recording must be briefly made. The recurrent element “grmm” refers to the word “Graben” (trench) spoken in the Viennese dialect, or as Praver proposed, as a very efficient articulation for “Grimm” (anger) or “Gram” (affliction), or also as the act of clenching one’s teeth, due to pain, fear, or the fury of war, the vibration in the soldier’s body. In the penultimate line, there is a sort of obstruction, a rhythmical block that aims at highlighting the last line (t-tt). It is a moment of great tension, possibly referring to the jamming of the soldier’s weapon and his consequent total vulnerability, in turn followed by the enemy’s shots hitting him. The soldier is “tot” (dead), and the only possible result of war is thus achieved. This idea is also visually accompanied by the “t” recalling the cross on the soldier’s grave. As Praver claimed, in this poem “Jandl select[ed] individual words, charged with emotional associations and overtones, and attempt[ed] to convey and strengthen these overtones through grotesque displacements of phonemes and morphemes” (quoted in WULFF, 1978:131). In semiotic terms, the poem is less symbolic than *iconic*, since the presented sounds refer to easily identifiable noises, whose concreteness give the listener the impression of being directly involved in the trench war. Of course, the mimetic ability on the part of the performing poet decisively contributes to the creation of such emotions and associations, which would never emerge with such vividness from the phonemes alone.

A peculiar musical aspect is represented by the interval between the last two lines of the poem. The pitch of the very last line is in fact higher than in the penultimate one, the precise interval being a major third.<sup>441</sup> Thus, the final pitch melodically suggests jazz music, since one of the main peculiarities of jazz is to end with a major third<sup>442</sup>. It also put the poem into contrast with the patterns of XVII century classical music, popular

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<sup>441</sup> See on this: Wulff, Michael (1976), pag. 141. Of course, to make these considerations Wulff had to find out, by listening to the recording, which was the tonic. He identified it in line 21, which is recited in the same pitch as 34. The intensity also increases simultaneously with the rise in pitch.

and soldiers' songs, with their conventional, naïve endings. This "anti-classical" closing is also a way to make clear that the final resolution or the tension is not resolved after the last line, because the war is destined to be eternal. Differently from most of Jandl's poems, irony or a lighter approach to the topic of the poem is absent. The play with phonemes is not aimed at amusement but at inspiring a shocked awareness of the grotesque drama of war. This feeling is clearly expressed in Jandl's recorded reading, from its tone, pitch and rhythm; no words would achieve the same effect.

## **Fünf mann menschen**<sup>443</sup>

This *Hörspiel*, produced by the Südwestfunk (South-Western radio), was broadcast for the first time in November 1968. One year later, *FMM* was awarded the prestigious "Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden",<sup>444</sup> considered to be a perfect example of the integration of proceedings borrowed by concrete poetry in the *Hörspiel* genre, and thus promoted its renewal. Critics also acclaimed the character of contemporary *Gesamtkunstwerk*:

With *FMM* a new era begins: the *hörspiel* of the future is a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), within which the noises of the world and the human language have the same expressive force (LEIER, 1969).<sup>445</sup>

The fact that "a new literary movement, that of concrete poetry, adapted itself to radio" (SPECKER, 1986:157)<sup>446</sup> contributed decisively to reinforce the intimate relationship between *Lautgedicht* and *Hörspiel*, was particularly evident in *FMM*. It should be clarified, however, that concrete poetry was, in the late Sixties, quite the contrary to a being "new" movement, instead very close to its end.<sup>447</sup> Consequently, *FMM* has the peculiarity of being, at the same time, the initiator of the *Neues Hörspiel* and one of the last works considered "orthodox" concrete poetry, before this poetry movement was gradually abandoned during the Seventies. *FMM* also received warm reception from the public, becoming relatively popular especially with young people<sup>448</sup>. It also received

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<sup>443</sup> From now on, the acronym *FMM* will be used.

<sup>444</sup> The "prize of the war-blinds" was an award assigned to the "Hörspielmacher" from 1950 to 1994.

<sup>445</sup> "Mit *FMM* beginnt eine neue Ära: Das Hörspiel der Zukunft ist ein Gesamtkunstwerk, in dem der Lärm der Welt und die menschliche Sprache die gleiche Aussagekraft haben".

<sup>446</sup> „eine neue Literaturbewegung, die der Konkreten Poesie, war rundfunkfähig geworden“

<sup>447</sup> See Chapter 1

<sup>448</sup> See on this: Specker, Andreas (1986), pag. 156-159.

some attention on an international scale, and it was translated into English (with the title of “five men humanity”) and broadcast in 1984, thanks to a collaboration between radios in Koln and Berkley.

My first considerations regard the *Hörspiel*'s foreword. The technical aspects of stereophony are shown, in order to make the extremely precise organization of the acoustic space clear, considered to be an independent and crucial parameter of the whole composition. The space is divided into five different “sections” corresponding to as many channels (microphones), where the speakers' positions are not fixed but can change. The only exception is the “narrator”, whose voice is always positioned in the sonic center (position 3).<sup>449</sup> This does not mean, however, that a sound (or a cluster of sounds) cannot be distributed simultaneously in all five positions. This proceeding is used quite frequently throughout the *Hörspiel* to create an echo-effect. The potentials of stereophony are utilized extensively, from the first to the last scene. I will consider here just a few of the numerous possible examples.

In the first scene, stereophony allows for a complex sonic texture of babies wailing, whose cries create a sort of counterpoint and provide a particularly realistic effect. The wailing also remains clearly perceivable during the dialogue between the obstetricians and the five new fathers, where the contrast between the obstetricians' perfectly synchronic voices and the chaotic babies cries, as well as the evident location of each of the five men's voices on a different channel, resound with extreme clarity. In the second scene, the acoustic superimposition of the war noises imitated by the children perfectly reproduces their simultaneity in the *soundscape* of a real battle. Stereophony allows for a multifaceted sonic space that would have been perfect for the recording of the *Laugedicht* “schtzngrmm”. Also, the articulations used in both cases are curiously alike, for the “bumm” and the verb “schiessen” (shoot) sound similar to, respectively, the “mmm” and the “scht”, while the “t-t-t” is perfectly coincident. Another example of the importance of stereophony is provided in scene 11, where the prisoners' senseless pacing within their jail cells is perfectly emulated by the resonance of their footsteps.

In general, it can be stated that the effect of spatial profundity (*tiefeneffekt*) provided by stereophony results in a faithful imitation of the corresponding real *soundscape*s. In this context, the noises acquire a particularly dynamic character, often acoustically imitating

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<sup>449</sup> See: Jandl, Ernst. *FMM*. In. Schöning, Klaus (1969).

the motions of objects and bodies through the five available positions. In scene 4, the distribution of noises in the whole resounding space assumes a crucial narrative function. Different kinds of noises coexist here: those representing specific objects, but also those acoustically describing violent acts involving the human body (punches and sniffing drugs). In scene 4, the function of noise is also supported, by means of its dialogue with musical interventions. Music and noise continuously interact, alternating and superimposing one another. Thus, a reference to the approximation between noise and music developed during the XX century seems suggested here.

The music played initially by resounding brass instruments turns suddenly in quite into indefinite noises, maybe sirens or squeaking doors. The noise of the footsteps, possibly belonging to the gangster, is absolutely unequivocal, as it slows down immediately before the narrator's intervention. One possible image arising from these sounds is the gangster's entrance into the boss' refuge; once he is inside, after passing the squeaking door, the (police) sirens disappear along with his quickened stride, substituted by a steady, confident step. The latter also establishes the rhythmical basis for the following musical intervention: the gangster's mellow pace is reflected in the music.

The effects of the considered technical tools would not be so efficient without a solid base of specific structural factors, which in many cases seems to approximate *FMM* to the compositional proceedings of the Viennese school and particularly Anton Webern. *Circularity* is a first and very significant example. The whole *Hörspiel*, in fact, is organized on the basis of this principle. Its opening (scene 1) and its closing (scene 14) perfectly coincide; not only are the situation and the place the same, but exactly the same sounds heard in scene 1 are re-proposed in the final scene. However, circularity is also identifiable on a micro-structural level, and may assume additional peculiarities, like the symmetrical mirror-form, as happens in an exemplary way in the following sequence in scene 4:

**K.o. /O.K./koks/O.K/k.o./**

Several critics considered this mirror-structure (1/2/3/2/1) as a "typical proceeding of concrete poetry", without considering its (intended or not) closeness to Webern's mini-series. This is not the only case within this *Hörspiel*: in the fifth scene, there is a list of professions, and the second part is also structured on the basis of a mirror form:

8/5/11/5/8. However, in the fourth scene, the symmetry is also recreated on the micro-level, that is in correspondence with each phoneme of the sequence:

**1.2/2.1/1.2.1.(3)/2.1/1.2.**

What is realized here, then, is not only a retrograde structure, but a double-retrograde sequence, even though only based on the minimal material of only two elements. This is not mere musical theory, but it is a pattern that is clearly *perceivable* when listening with some attention. Its emotional effect, also thanks to other sounds and semantic features accompanying this specific scene, is one of accomplishment, a coming full circle.

Jandl used often similar structural devices intimately connected with the circle. For example, if we go back for a moment to “schtzngrmm”, a quite hidden but (apparently) unequivocal reference to a precise form can be vaguely perceived within the great chaos of sounds, later confirmed with the help of the written score. The poem consists of 34 lines, and can be thus divided in two sections of 17 lines each; all sounds present in one section are absent from the other, with the only exception of the sequence “tzngrmm”. This sound is repeated, respectively, three times in the first section and twice in the second, located in the *sonic midpoint* of both sections. All other sounds dispose themselves around this nucleus, in a quantitatively symmetrical structure.<sup>450</sup> The following scheme should help in understanding this hidden structure:

First section	Second section
7 sounds	8 sounds
3 tzngrmm	2 tzngrmm
7 sounds	8 sounds

The possible interpretations of these hidden circular macro-forms can be multifarious. I would suggest interpreting them figuratively, as sonic representations of the opposition

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<sup>450</sup> Even if only in part, the symmetry is also qualitatively constituted in the first section of the poem; its first four lines are in fact re-proposed, in a perfectly inverted sequence, in the last four lines.

between the narrow space of the trench and the vast enemy front surrounding it. The dynamics of the battle are also identifiable if one considers the reduction of the trench's space (from 3 to 2) and the corresponding expansion of the enemy area (from 7 to 8). The accent stress, in the recording considered above, on the last syllable ("grmm") instead of on the first ("tzn") may be read as the soldier's consciousness that the space around him will become his grave ("graben"), since it cannot protect (schützen) him anymore.

Similarly to the circular form, another serial principle can be used as an organizational device in relation to macro-structures. An example is in the fourth scene of *FMM*. Beneath the superficial sonic layer that provides different kinds of acoustic occurrences in an evidently chaotic order, there is a hidden, rigorously structured series. The acoustic events are distributed on five levels: musical interventions, dialogues, noises, noise made by individuals and comments by spectators.<sup>451</sup> As Frisius points out,<sup>452</sup> a series accounting for the number of occurrences of each sonic category leaps out:

- 1 individual noise (drugsniffing)*
- 2 noises (punches) + 2 musical interventions*
- 3 dialogues*
- 5 acronyms pronounced by the audience<sup>453</sup>*

Frisius suggests that, if one considers both noises and musical interventions as includable in a unique group that he defined as "secondary elements of the movie", then the number 4 is provided, and the series would be complete: 1-2-3-4-5. I would stress instead that, without carrying out this doubtful operation, another equally (or more) significant series would emerge: 1-2-3-5, namely the beginning of Fibonacci series, which fascinated Anton Webern and was frequently used as the basis for his complex musical architectures.

In the sixth scene, the series serves as structural device on a macro scale. The scene consists of ten interventions, organized as follows: a popular song is repeated four times; a same demoralized comment 'Scheiße' (shit), articulated by a single soldier, is

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<sup>451</sup> In fact, scene 4 acoustically describes the events occurring at a cinema, where the sounds of the movie and those produced by the public (spectator comments) continuously interact.

<sup>452</sup> See quotation in: Specker, Andreas (1986), pag. 164.

<sup>453</sup> Specker also reports the diagram outlined by Frisius. See: Specker, Andreas (1986) pag. 163.



repeated three times; the harsh order “Maulhaltenvorne!” (shut up in front!) twice; lastly, the closing order to put on the gas-mask occurs only once. What results is the sequence 4-3-2-1.

Music has, moreover, a high representational value in several scenes. In scene 5, the “long and melancholic pitches, with legato” may be intended to express the author’s disappointment for the wastefulness of the potentials and abilities of young people in the capitalistic system, where numbers are the only important issue, while people are subjected to an obtuse, entrepreneurial mindset. In the following scene (6), the soldiers sing a popular *lied* that, as is typical for old German popular songs, sounds very easy in both its rhythmical and harmonic structures.<sup>454</sup> This elementary musical pattern is intended to create a precise psychological effect, namely the soldiers’ accord with the same, uniform sociological and behavioral attitude, in a similar way to that presented in “ode auf n”. Moreover, the weird fact that the song is realized in G flat (instead of in the original, easy G major) may be seen as an acoustic metaphor for the soldiers’ absolute humiliation and submission, which reaches paroxysm when the soldiers are obliged to sing with their gas masks on. The dynamic character of the soldiers’ singing and of the military step is acoustically very convincing, thanks to both the technical devices that recreate the illusory effect of the continued marching and to Jandl’s precise indications on their utilization.<sup>455</sup>

The recurrence of a same music played by an accordion in both scenes 8 and 13 functions as a *motif* accompanying the unfolding of the action in the same situation, namely during the men’s spree at the saloon. Its resemblance to a specific popular song entitled *Ein schwarzbraunes mädchen*, in turn related to the soldier’s song in scene 6, illustrates the web of connections between apparently distant social contexts, which are instead intimately intertwined. The most peculiar feature in the accordion’s solo is its occurrence both at the beginning and at the end of each of the two scenes, which thus creates a circular form. Specker also highlighted this aspect, proposing a circular outline of the accordion’s interventions in both scenes: 1,7,1 (scene 8) and 1,4,1 (scene 13), where the extremities refer to the occurrences of the accordion’s *solo*, while the central

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<sup>454</sup> See: Specker, Andreas (1986), pag. 172.

<sup>455</sup> Indications such as the following can be read on the written score: “The officer should be perceived as positioned at the end of the column, on the left” or “The dialogues are perceived directly in front of the listener”. See: Jandl, Ernst, *FMM*. In: Schöning, Klaus (1969).

number to the accordion's accompanying interventions, audible in the sonic background.

However, Specker is quite imprecise in drafting this acoustic structure in both scenes. In scene 8, the accordion's introductory intervention is played as a solo three times (and not only once), while throughout the scene the same melody it repeated in the sonic background only five times (and not seven). As a consequence, the outline he proposed is not valid, since the effectively resulting pattern is 3,5,1. Even more incorrect is the outline that Specker proposes in relation to scene 13, since the accordion's *solo* is alternated with its accompanying interventions twice; moreover, the last repetition does not occur as a *solo* but it is in the background of the soldiers' dialogue.<sup>456</sup> The resulting outline is, then, an absolutely non-circular 1-1-1-3, where the first and the third numbers refer to the solo interventions, and the second and the fourth ones to the background interventions. A circular form is actually created only by their respective intensities: in scene 8, the presented pattern is decrescendo-crescendo, while in scene 13 it is the exact opposite, crescendo-decrescendo.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> In the last repetition, only the last notes of the sequence come to the sonic foreground.

<sup>457</sup> See also: Specker, Andreas (1986), pag. 175.

### 3.2 *Noigandres*

The *Noigandres* group has always been the indisputable “jewel in the crown” of Brazilian *concretism*, due to its development and its internationalization by means of contacts with important *avant-garde* personalities all over the world and the uninterrupted primary role within the group of its three founders, namely the Campos brothers and Décio Pignatari. Determining which authors were suitable to be considered for my analysis turned out to be quite simple, especially if compared with the German sphere. However, the choice of the poems to be analyzed was slightly more complex; the criteria for limiting the corpus were partly given in the first chapter in regard to the nature of the *Noigandres* group and to the specific features of each author.

Regarding the first aspect, it has been pointed out that the esthetic concepts developed by *Noigandres* were equally shared by all its three founders. This unitary character reached its apex in the “orthodox” phase (1956-60), during which the fourth issue of the *Noigandres* review, without any authorial indication, was published (1958). Indeed, the very idea of *individual* authorship was abolished in favor of the modern concept of a *collective* poetic product. These elements led me to select two poems published in this period with no concern for the authorship, as if they were collective products of the whole group: *Caracol* and *Pluvial*.

Regarding the second aspect, it has been underlined that Augusto de Campos, much more than the other founders, was concerned with music and with sound in general. The recordings of the Sixties were always made on Augusto’s initiative, while Décio Pignatari did not participate at all.<sup>458</sup> For a study concerned with sound, it was natural to dedicate more attention to Augusto de Campos’ poetic production, even though some references to works of both Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari are included. The poems considered are *Lygia Fingers* and *Cidade*, which were published a decade apart and thus ideally embrace the whole of the authentic “concrete” production of *Noigandres*, from its very beginning with the collection “Poetamenos” up to its gradual conclusion. In this way, a “poetic chronology” of Brazilian *concretism* has been provided, that should be a sufficient guarantee for the representativeness of the selected corpus.

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<sup>458</sup> Augusto de Campos wrote me in an e-mail that Décio Pignatari didn’t participate in the recordings of 1962/63 at his home for some “personal reasons”.

Finally, it must be underlined that the recordings of all four considered poems were published in a CD entitled “Grupo Noigandres” (2002) to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary from the foundation of the group. This collection provided a further element of coherence in the definition of my corpus, since it made available only those recordings that had been elaborated and performed by the concrete poets themselves, with no intervention on the part of any “external” artist.

## Caracol

The written score of this poem was included in the section “Ovo Novelo” (1954-1960) of the anthology *Viva Vaia*. It consists of fifteen lines, each including eleven graphemes regularly distributed on a single page; on the contrary, the sequence “caracolocaramas” that functions as a basic unit of the whole poem, is repeated eleven times and consists of fifteen graphemes. In practice, instead of distributing the fifteen graphemes of each basic unit on eleven lines, Augusto created a sort of dialogue between the line and the basic unit.



As it can be easily noticed, the bold type of “caracol” is crucial for highlighting not only the poem’s “main character” (the snail) but also, and more importantly, its behavior: the

snail is moving, along a slow and long path. Of course, had the length of the line and of the basic unit coincided perfectly, this visual effect wouldn't have been possible: the snail would have remained immobile in the same place. But the absence of the snail's movement would mean the loss of the fundamental meaning of the poem that, according to Haroldo de Campos, aims at representing "the masking and unmasking of the poem's process. Like a snail slowly unfolding its going" (quoted in WILLIAMS, 1967).<sup>459</sup> This reading is also provided, even if indirectly, in Emmett Williams' international collection of concrete poems, where he translates some possible keys for approaching the meaning of the poem into English:

Colocar a mascara = to put on the mask

Mascara = mask, (it) masks

mas = but

cara = face

Caracol = snail

However, a simple reading of the written score would leave out some other significant aspects. The poem has been, in fact, recorded several times and included in three different CDs<sup>460</sup>. I will consider the first recording (1968), realized by Augusto in collaboration with his wife Lygia on the radio at Bloomington University. First of all, further meanings can be found through attentive listening, aimed at distinguishing varied accent stresses. For instance:

Colo = I glue, stick

Ramas = branches and boughs of a tree

Caram= grama<sup>461</sup> = grass

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<sup>459</sup> No page number is provided, but the poets' names are in alphabetical order.

<sup>460</sup> Besides the first version recorded in 1968 and included in the CD attached to the book "Grupo Noigandres" (2002), another version was recorded and included in the CDs "Poesia è risco" (1994) and "Viva Vaia" (2014).

<sup>461</sup> This operation consists of two different passages: the anagram and the slight variation from /k/ to /g/ by means of the substitution of the unvoiced with the voiced distinctive feature; both proceedings are very common in concrete esthetics.

Moreover, if one considers the multi-linguistic character of some of Augusto's poems,<sup>462</sup> also the English word "col" (intended as a pass in mountain ridge), can be easily identified; the listening provides a more complete image of the effective ambience where the snail is moving. However, the recorded performance provides some peculiar sound effects, given by the reader's articulation and the clearly perceivable phonemic nature of the poem. Even if only both vowels /a/ and /o/ are present, they constitute a very significant part of the poem's phonemic substance. Within the basic unit, in fact, /a/ and /o/ are repeated, respectively, five and two times, thus occupying practically the half of the entire "poetic *soundscape*." Moreover, both liquids /l/ and /r/ also appear quite frequently, respectively twice and once in each basic group, thus decisively supporting the poem's marked vocal sound. Among the other present consonants, the occlusive /k/ is clearly distinguishable, not only for its constant inclusion in tonic syllables, but also for its strongly discontinuous and compact character. It is, in fact, the vertex of the consonantal triangle. If we consider the entire phonemic material of the basic unit "caracolocaramas", it is possible to identify the following occurrences: 1 /l/, /m/, /s/; 2 /r/; 3 /k/; 2 /o/; 5 /a/ = 1,2,3,5. Like in Jandl's *FMM*, a reference to Webern may be present. In this case, the initial part of Fibonacci's series is employed for the determination of the phonetic material of the poem's basic unit. Moreover, it can be said that the poem's general sound is markedly musical, due to its evident vocalic and semi-vocalic character. If the complete erasure of vowels in Jandl's "schtzngrmm" served to affirm that "the war doesn't sing", then the vocalic nature of "Caracol" could be meant to express a "singing" purpose. This impression is further supported by the presence of different pitches in correspondence of each syllable, that assigns an undeniable melodic temper to the reading. A monotone declamation is performed only by Augusto when he pronounces "caracol", while Lygia's voice is always markedly melodic.

The listening to Augusto's (and Lygia's) recorded performance is crucial, not only for grasping the poem's musical character, but it is absolutely indispensable for perceiving an important subliminal message that wouldn't be accessible by simply reading the written piece. In the latter case, in fact, one would suppose an absolutely regular rhythm; in fact, all syllables of the basic unit are constituted by a uniform and quite pedantic sequence 'consonant + vowel', and the acoustically more evident /k/, always

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<sup>462</sup> An exemplary case in this sense is *Lygia Fingers* (1953).

positioned at the beginning of the tonic syllables, which further increases the rhythmic regularity. Indeed, the recording follows the written score perfectly, so that the impression of a general recurring pattern undoubtedly dominates. There is even a constantly present pause after “mas”<sup>463</sup> in regard to which the printed score offers no clue at all. This guarantees the maintenance of a same accent system that otherwise would be compromised. However, some other sonic elements emerge from the performance: only Lygia repeats the lexeme “Caracol” with an always identical rhythm and “melodic” pattern<sup>464</sup> while Augusto pronounces all sequences <sup>465</sup> with many slight, but clearly hearable changes in accentual stresses and caesuras, so that in practice not even one single repetition is really identical to any other. In this way, the listener is affected by a general impression of uncertainty and irregularity, further sharpened by two quite weird interventions on the part of both Augusto and Lygia: namely, every time Augusto pronounces “caracol”, he does so in a low voice (both in terms of intensity and pitch), and he appears unsure whether he should intervene or not; Lygia, articulates a barely perceivable /o/ in correspondence with the initial “col” pronounced by Augusto, that sounds like an unintended articulation.

This all serves to hypothesize the existence of an element that is not traceable in the written score: the dialogical relationship between continuity and discontinuity, repetition and variation, seen in the continual alternation between Lygia’s and Augusto’s voices, with their respective features of pitch and rhythm. If the poem intends to represent “a snail slowly unfolding its going”, then these aspects are possibly readable as revealing a secret aspect of that same unfolding: the apparently uniform and smooth motion of the snail is in reality highly arduous, full of uncertainties and hesitations. If this is so, then an integration of the meta-discourse proposed by Haroldo on the poem’s process would also be valid: the poem’s making is as hard and slow as the snail’s going, and it occurs similarly silent and unnoticed, as if it were hidden behind a mask. If we consider the poem’s vocalic, “singing” character along with this discontinuity-continuity dialectic, it is possible to suggest that this poem is a (certainly

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<sup>463</sup> The pause is exactly as long as all other unstressed syllables: cà-ra-cò-lo-cà-ra-màs(-). If this pause were absent, in fact, the accent would be shifted to the next syllable each time, so that the homogeneous rhythmical pattern would be lost.

<sup>464</sup> The second syllable is articulated with a lower pitch in respect to both the first and the third pitches, which perfectly correspond.

<sup>465</sup> The only exceptions are the very first “Caracol” and the last two syllables of the poem (“ca-ra”) that are pronounced by Lygia alone.

unconventional) hymn to both nature and poetry, dedicated in particular to all those minimal changes that, even if rarely noticed, are the very basis for their cyclical continuation.

The written score also suggests this circularity, because it opens with a “col” that is intended as the continuation of the last sequence of the poem “cara”. When the latter is articulated in the poem, it remains dangling and incomplete, and the listener is automatically tempted to integrate it with its missing “col”, this way re-beginning the same, infinite circular process. Thus a markedly dynamic character animates the only apparently static graphemes, by means of this circular motion.

### **Cidade-city-cité (1963)**

“The shortest long poem, or the longest short poem,  
about this city”

The printed score of this poem, also published in the collection *Viva Vaia*, is extremely peculiar, since it consists of a unique but very long *portmanteau* word. All its 150 letters are disposed on a unique line, so that the text had to be printed on a long sheet of paper strip folded into three sections, which must be opened in order to read the poem: a quite evidently inadequate format for publication. Because of this, the poem’s score could not be transcribed here without compromising its unique graphic features.<sup>466</sup>

The long *portmanteau word* gathers the roots of 29 different terms chosen on the basis of the *chance* criterion borrowed from John Cage: their spelling had to coincide in Portuguese, French and English. Actually, as Augusto explained in an interview published on the *Noigandres*’ official website,<sup>467</sup> the poem can be said to be aleatory under another aspect, namely, the chosen words have been set in alphabetic order, their respective meaning being instead completely disregarded. The words *Cidade-city-cité* are inserted only at the very end of the sequence, and thus serve two separate, simultaneous functions: namely that of a suffix creating different words and that of an autonomous noun. The insertion of French and English suffixes can be intended in a

<sup>466</sup> A digital version of the poem is available in the official website of *Noigandres*: <http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/poema.php?id=53>.

<sup>467</sup> Available online at: <http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/imagem.php>. Last access September 2016



political-cultural sense; they placed Portuguese among the most representative languages of modern Western culture,<sup>468</sup> claiming at the same time the proximity to the rapidly developing city of São Paulo to the huge American and English industrial centers. As for the poem's auditory aspect, it is most probably intended as the representation of the many different kinds of sounds occurring daily in a big city, recalling things and processes, relationships and effects that characterize it.

I will consider two different recordings, realized respectively in 1968 at Indiana University and in 1992 in the new studio MC2. This comparison shows the possibilities provided by some technical devices for creating more complex sound textures, and consequently their significant influence on the listener's esthetic experience. In the first version,<sup>469</sup> the entire *portmanteau word* is read in as a single element. Beyond the recorder, the only "technologies" Augusto had at his disposal were his speech organs and his breath, used for realizing the desired articulatory *gestures*. By means of this uninterrupted reading, Augusto managed to account for the *simultaneity* of all half-mentioned processes/feelings, for their coexistence within the space of the city. This way, Augusto seems to share McLuhan's conception, according to which the conditions of communicational simultaneity must be intended as the direct consequence of the electronic ambience dominating in modern world.<sup>470</sup> The fact of reading the whole poem in a single go is aimed at reinforcing the idea of a temporal unity, within which the whole contemporary universe is contained. A fundamental aspect of this first recording that has instead been completely ignored by the critics is the poem's extension by means of the addition of twelve roots to those already included in the written score. This factor radically changes both the length and the poem's sound texture. For instance, it provokes the duplication of the number of /e/ (increasing from 9 to 17), as well as the number of tonic accents on them (increasing from 6 to 10).

A faithful reading of the written text would have maintained a phonetic play based on the vocalic phonemes: the most frequent (with about 40 occurrences) would have been /a/ and /i/, respectively the most open and the most closed vowels in the phonetic system established by the IPA. The place of articulation also sustains the opposition

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<sup>468</sup> It can be noticed, for example, that all four of the most important poets of the *paideuma* (Mallarmé, Joyce, Pound, Cummings) were French or English native speakers.

<sup>469</sup> For a better understanding of the proposed analysis, it is recommended to combine the reading with the listening of both considered recordings, available online on the official website of concrete poetry: <http://www.poesiaconcreta.com/audio.php?page=2&ordem=asc>. Last access September 2016.

<sup>470</sup> See: McLuhan, Marshall (1986), pag. 98.

between both vowels, since the air flow in articulating /a/ is concentrated in the throat (posterior position), while in the /i/ articulation the flow is shifted to the anterior part of the palate, the alveoli. The mid-vowels /e/ and /ɛ/, where the air flow remains in the central/posterior section of the palate, appeared only nine times in total. All this could be interpreted as a phonetic representation of the city's character, where opposites coexist in continual tension, without finding a definitive balance, a reciprocal integration resolving their contrast in a “neutral” space (represented by /e/). In the recording from 1968, even if the occurrence of /a/ and /i/ remains the most frequent, the auditory impression of a contrast between articulations with opposed distinctive features is significantly weakened.<sup>471</sup>

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The version recorded between 1992 and 1994 was realized in the experimental studio MC2, inaugurated in São Paulo by Augusto's son, the guitarist and composer Cid Campos. It was included in the CD *Poesia é risco* and in Augusto's most important poetic collection, *Viva Vaia* (in the last edition of 2014). This recording presents much more complex sound textures, created thanks to technological resources that the *Noigandres* poets could only dream of in the Sixties. For the first time, they had the possibility to employ distortions and superimpositions of voices, interacting with the phonic texture of the poem and thus perfectly integrating the articulatory ability in the reading of the poem. This is what will be tentatively classified and interpreted in the following pages.

We hear first a very acute sound realized by a digital synthesizer, followed by a lower but even more annoying noise similar to that of a saw or of a pneumatic drill. The latter shifts then to a cicada's call and finally unfolds as Augusto's voice pronounces “ci”, the first syllable of “cidade”. The approximation of sounds produced by machines, animals (insects) and humans can be read as an acoustic reconstruction of the coexistence of these three “subjects” in the urban space. In the last part of this first syllable, Augusto's voice adds a quite undefined consonantal articulation, that becomes gradually closer to the /d/ of the following syllable “da”, and contemporarily shifts the tonic accent on the /a/; by means of the same process, the last syllable “de” (=gi/) also becomes more

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<sup>471</sup> The /a/ are only a few more than in the written score (increasing from 18 to 23 units), while the number of the mid-vowels increases from 9 to 17.

clearly audible, so that the word “cidade” appears for the first time in its entirety. Immediately after, the repetition of this same word is articulated, each time more slowly and limpidly, revealing the poem’s unique and true “protagonist”: the modern city.

By means of these devices, the space of the city is put together gradually, as if reconstructing the stages of its history: starting from a “primitive” state of pure nature (since the word’s first syllable is superimposed by the cicada’s call) up to the contemporary city, profoundly marked by new electronic technologies, via the first appearance and subsequent development of human civilization. One phonetic element seems to be crucial for sustaining this idea: the first syllable “ci” presents the unvoiced fricative /s/, the second one “da” a voiced occlusive /d/, and the third one an affricate /dʒ/ that is constituted exactly through the junction of both preceding articulations.<sup>472</sup> Thus, the phonetic symbolism is built as follows: /s/ + /d/ = /dʒ/. In this way, the syllables of the *significant* /ci-da-de/ recount the history of the *signified* concept “cidade”, while the urban space [dʒ], dominated by the new technologies, is intended as the result of the interaction between, on the one hand, pure nature (/s/), the principles ruling it and the resources it offers, and, on the other hand, the human being /d/, with his ingenuity and his creative capability. It is, actually, a positive vision of the city and the technological progress characterizing it, especially during the period Post-WWII, with the *boom* of radio and television.

The simple reading with one voice in this version absolutely respects the written text, and thus realizes the phonetic play described above, which is absent from the first version from 1968. The dialectic between /a/ and /i/ reinforces the phonetic character intrinsic to the word “cidade”, characterized by the alternation /i/-/a/-/i/ of the three syllables that constitute it. In this sense, it is important to remember that the *contiguity* between contrasting or similar elements is crucial for the conveying of the phonetic symbolism. The distinctive features of each phoneme are not sufficient for transmitting its possible signification, because any phoneme is always “double-edged” (Tsur) and thus constantly needs its phonetic context in order to be correctly interpreted. It would have been impossible to hypothesize the idea of a “coexistence of the opposites” in the modern city without the proximity of opposite phonemes. Between the sequence of all

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<sup>472</sup> It is important to specify that /dʒ/ actually results from the union of /d/ with /z/ and not with /s/. In any case, both these phonemes are very close to each other, as they are distinguished through a single distinctive feature (voiced/unvoiced).

the roots and the final suffixes, a brief pause makes the peculiarity, the distinguished nature of the following articulation clear: “cidade”- the key of the whole poem. This pause was absent in the 1968 version, probably due to the strictly physiological need to finish the declamation before the breath was completely exhausted, and also because of the absence of any device that could erase or at least conceal the sound of a new, necessarily potent inspiration.

The following four-voice canon shows Webern’s influence on the assembly of this recording. This choice does not merely serve as a homage to the Austrian composer, but it is perfectly functional in terms of the esthetics of the recording. The superimposition of four voices, which repeat the same articulations with an evident temporal gap, creates an acoustic multi-dimensionality that represents the chaotic *soundscape* of a big metropolitan city with extreme accuracy. As Schafer highlighted, the modern city drastically reduces our listening capability in relation to remote sound sources, since its sound is perceived as something undifferentiated with a particular feature: its annoying and invasive *presence*.<sup>473</sup> After the first complete execution of the four-voice canon, it is repeated several times, but in each repetition, one of the *comes* (normally the second or the third) is somehow distorted,<sup>474</sup> at the same time prevailing acoustically on all other three voices of the canon. The other voices create a texture, a sonic background that never disappears, where nothing is clearly identifiable.

Since each voice ends with the articulation of both suffixes “City” and “cité”, the two consonants /s/ and /t/ stands out in the acoustic foreground, especially when all four voices of the canon are superimposed. Augusto reinforces this effect by adding several more /s/ and /t/articulations, so that their presence is very marked in some specific points. In spite of the vocal superimposition, they are clearly recognizable, and create opposite effects on our perception, because the occlusive /t/ sounds like a blow, while the fricative /s/, with its continual air flow, sounds like an uninterrupted sound. Beyond this, the intermediate /i/ results as almost totally indiscernible, since it is articulated exactly in the same point of both consonants (that is, in the alveoli), thus is “squeezed”

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<sup>473</sup> These features result in the concept of “schizophony”. See on this: Schafer, Murray (1985) pag. 129.

<sup>474</sup> The first distortion is realized with a low voice; the second one with a non-distorted, but more limpid and clearly audible voice; the third one seems the result of an acceleration that reproduces the sound of a rapidly moving tongue that produces undefined articulations; the fourth one is slower and sounds as more “oily”; the fifth one is similar to the first one, as it is also articulated by a low voice.

by them. This contributes to reinforcing the opposition, through a unique distinctive feature (continuous-discontinuous), between both consonants /t/ and /s/. Consequently, they may convey a further unresolved “coexistence” occurring within the modern city, namely that between continuous and discontinuous sounds/noises.

This is connected with the change of the *soundscape* after the industrial revolution, described by Schafer in his book “The tuning of the world” (1977). According to his research, one of the most evident differences between the urban *soundscape* before and after the industrial revolution is the existence, in the latter case, of many uninterrupted sounds, which have a clear “superbiological”, almost immortal character. They are characterized by disproportionately long acoustic length, in relation to both the beginning and end of the sound, and lack any internal change in pitch. And, since these acoustic features need to be created artificially, the long uninterrupted sounds are typical of machines. Their presence has further increased with the electronic revolution, after which they began to dominate the *soundscape* of the contemporary world (especially in urban contexts) while on the contrary, the sounds of nature and of pre-industrial civilizations have been almost completely extinguished.<sup>475</sup> By means of the superimposition of continuous and discontinuous phonemes, Augusto seems to aim at expressing, on the one hand, his awareness of the impressive increase of the former in the urban space following the electronic revolution, and on the other, his disagreement with the total extinction of the latter, which instead interacts dialogically with artificial, electronic sounds. It seems that, for Augusto, the contemporary city is more alive than ever, and the noises of the machines don't act as a “narcotic for our brain” bringing us to acoustic indifference,<sup>476</sup> but can also be listened to and evoke some kind of emotion.

The last factor, the cicada's call, is immediately associated with the sounds of nature. Schafer chose this sound as rare example of continuous sounds in the natural context. This amazing coincidence (it cannot be otherwise) seems to suggest that the cicada's chirp is something peculiar, drawing the listener's attention to its hybrid features. It distinguishes itself from both natural sound and mechanical noise, while showing at the same time some common aspects with both. Maybe for this reason, Augusto put it at the

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<sup>475</sup> See on this: Schafer, Murray (1985) pag. 114-115.

<sup>476</sup> See on this: Schafer, Murray (ibidem).

beginning of this recording, intending it as a sort of acoustic icon of the dialogue between nature and machinery within the contemporary city.

## Lygia Fingers

*Lygia Fingers* is the third of six poems gathered in the collection that marks the beginning of Brazilian concrete poetry: *Poetamenos* (1953). The whole collection was profoundly influenced by Anton Webern's music, with which Augusto came in contact for the first time in 1951.<sup>477</sup> In fact, the collection's most striking feature derived directly and explicitly from the Webernian *Klangfarbenmelodie*; that is, the poems' score in color print is not an ornamental but rather an inalienable functional element, aiming at translating particular musical principles into visual terms.

A reference to the peculiarity of this operation and its impact on *Noigandres*' poetics seems to be present in one of Augusto's later poems, "corsom" (1958), which has as basic constituents both elements (color and sound) that so strictly interact in *Poetamenos*. While at the beginning "cor" and "som" are divided by both prepositions "com" (with) and "sem" (without), they gradually come closer by means of the always more infrequent occurrence of those mediating elements. In the end, they achieve a complete identification, fused together in synesthetic, "ideogrammic" units. This idea was also sustained in the performance of the poem in 1968, where Augusto gradually increased the speed of the reading in correspondence with the growing infrequency of the prepositions. Lastly, a probably fortuitous, but undoubtedly intriguing element is the amount of monosyllables that make up the poem "Corsom": there are 31, the exact number of the works composed by Webern in his whole career.

Among the six poems in *Poetamenos*, *Lygia Fingers* is certainly the one that shows the greatest proximity to Webern's music, not only for the general principle mentioned above, but also due to a more complex re-elaboration of specific musical material. In this poem, in fact, Augusto visually transposed the first five measures of Webern's Quartet op. 22 for saxophone, violin, clarinet and piano.

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<sup>477</sup> In particular, Augusto listened to Webern's selected works, performed by René Leibowitz and recorded on a *Dial* LP published in 1950. See the interview in Appendix 2.



Augusto used five different colors for establishing a direct correspondence between the verbal elements of his poem and the five<sup>478</sup> instrumental parts of Webern's score. Starting the analysis from the beginning of both works,<sup>479</sup> a first element can be identified: the correspondence between, on the one hand, the three pitches of both violin and saxophone in the first two measures of the quartet, and on the other hand, the three syllables of "Ly-gi-a" and "fin-gers-ser" in the poem. The correspondence is realized also visually, since "Lygia" is printed in red and "fingers ser" in green, while the following word "digital" contains all phonemes of "lygia" printed in red (i-g-i-a-l) and both dental phonemes (d-t) printed in green; consequently, "digital" is aimed at visually reconstituting the overlapping between the last pitch of the saxophone and the first of the violin, at the beginning of measure 2 of the quartet's score.

The same correspondence (syllables-pitches) is proposed again immediately after: both pitches of the violin and saxophone in the fourth measure of the quartet (with the first pitch of the violin in upbeat) correspond to the two syllables of the three words forming line 4 (de-dat, il-la, gry-pho). The quantitative correspondence between syllables and pitches is also here supported visually: while "dedat" is printed in green, "illa" is printed in red, and the bicolor word "grypho" has exactly the same function of "digital", namely to visually re-propose the overlapping between the pitches of violin and sax, this time at the beginning of measure 4. Moreover, the same mirror-structure developed in the composition regarding the order of the instrumental interventions (sax-violin, violin-sax) is also re-proposed in the poem through visual means (red-green, green-red). Other symmetrical patterns are also realized within the poem on the acoustic level, as in the case of the sequence "rs"- "ser" (line 2).

Another point that merits some consideration is the entrance of the clarinet at measure 4. With its two notes, the clarinet is the instrument with the shortest passage in these first five measures; nevertheless, its entrance has been recognized as a balancing structural element, that "completes the violin-saxophone sequence" (CLÜVER, 1981:392).

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<sup>478</sup> Both of the hands performing the part of the piano must be considered, in fact, as an autonomous instrument.

<sup>479</sup> It is highly recommended to keep the score provided in the previous page at hand for facilitating the comprehension of the following analysis.



In the poem, two monosyllabic words printed in yellow are situated in the same line with two green and two red word fragments, reconstituting perfectly, on a visual plane, the structure of the fourth measure in its entirety. But, in the following line of the poem (line 7), two more monosyllabic words are printed in yellow, this time being pulled together with three word fragments printed in red and three in green. Even if it seems that, by doing so, the poet failed to respect the quartet's structure, it could be hypothesized instead that he sought to assign the yellow elements with the same balancing function guaranteed by the clarinet's intervention in the quartet. In fact, all four yellow monosyllables are located at the very *center* of the poem (lines 6 and 7), and put in contact with both disyllabic and trisyllabic words, thus functioning as a structural landmark for both binary and ternary rhythms.

Even if it must be clearly stated that the structure of *each* instrumental part is faithfully recreated in Augusto's poem through visual devices, the correspondences between music and poetry are often hidden and need a highly trained eye to be recognized. This is due to Augusto's need to create a specific narrative, connected with his own sentimental life.<sup>480</sup> *Lygia Fingers* is dedicated to Augusto's wife Lygia de Azeredo, and most "hidden" references to persons or situations have been clarified by mutual consent of the critics: the beginning of the love story with Lygia, an intense passion also marked by erotic references, is narrated through warm and bright colors, while the end of his relationship with his ex-girlfriend Solange Sohl is represented by cold and dark tonalities assigned to syllables and word fragments semantically connected with Solange's name, as well as with concepts like "loneliness" or "solitude".<sup>481</sup> Because of space constraints, however, the thick tangle of correspondences between the words external features and their possible meanings cannot be reposed here. Nor can I consider Claus Clüver's analysis in greater depth on the relationship between the score of Webern's Quartet and the printed text of *Lygia Fingers*. This would mean, in fact, that I would be obliged to focus mostly on the poem's visual aspect, drifting away from my main concern: the poem's *sound*. The considerations on the poem's visual aspect, in fact, are legitimized by their questionability that arises once the first recording made in 1968 in Bloomington, was listened to. In fact, even if Augusto's *solo* reading does not

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<sup>480</sup>*Poetamenos* was the first and the last "lyric-sentimental" collection.

<sup>481</sup> The chromaticity is actually just one of the processes, which also include eidetic aspects, functionality of blanks and semantic correspondences.

present particularly significant acoustic features, it provides a few clues that seem to contradict some accomplished critical interpretations.

I am specifically referring to some remarks made by Claus Clüver about the structural correspondences between Webern's Quartet and the poem *Lygia Fingers*, in particular when he affirms: "the line 'digital', where the simultaneous presence of both colors [green and red] in one word corresponds to the simultaneous sound of saxophone and violin at the point of transition from one pitch sequence to the next, would have to precede rather than follow the "fingers ser" complex if the text were meant to reflect the structure of the composition as precisely as possible" (CLÜVER, 1981:391). Clüver refers here to the fact that "digital" should be located at the *connection point* between these first two verbal groups, and not after; and, if one only considers the printed score, it would be impossible to disagree with this statement. However, in the recording, Augusto pronounces the word "fingers" two times in one breath, as if they were one thing, before he articulates the following "ser". The first time, he omits the final "rs" and pronounces the phoneme /z/ with the same articulation (palatal fricative) used in "Lygia", while the second time it sounds the same as the velar occlusive /g/ of "fingers" (as it is pronounced in English). If the first group corresponds to the sax and the second to the violin, then, the point of transition from one pitch sequence to the next is represented precisely by the repetition articulated by Augusto in this recording. In this way, Augusto was able to recreate the composition's structure on an auditory level.

The plausibility of this reading was also confirmed by the recording realized in 1992. The technical devices available at the MC2 studio made it possible to improve the desired effect of superimposing the two different articulations of "fingers", that in the previous version had to be realized only by means of Augusto's articulatory ability. The same device is also employed later in the version of 1992, when the first syllable "So" of "Solange" resounds several times with a clear echo effect, meant to represent the intimate connection between that person and the idea of loneliness and sadness.<sup>482</sup> The reading recorded in 1992 is worthy of consideration also due to the peculiar features of the musical texture audible in its acoustic background, which may be defined as "musical pointillism". Several different instruments, with their respective timbres, alternate their very short interventions, consisting in most cases of a single sound,

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<sup>482</sup> The semantic reference here is clearly present: "so" in Portuguese means "alone" and thus refers to the solitude of both Augusto and Solange after their separation.

continuously. A *melody of timbres*, rather than of pitches, is thus reposed, further highlighting the close connection between this poem and the punctual, anti-linear character of Webern's music.

Another important acoustic clue is also given in lines 6-7, where the correspondence between the poem and the quartet is recreated, as shown above, on the visual level. The poet reads both these lines much faster than all the others (both preceding and following ones), since he aims at representing the triple instrumental overlapping (violin, saxophone and clarinet) occurring *exclusively* in the fourth measure of the quartet, which is the most dynamic and texturally thick of the five measures.

The clues provided by the recording of the poem should lead to a reflection on Augusto's ingenuity in achieving the *verbivocovisuality* of his poem; that is, in creating correspondences with Webern's score, not only on a visual level, but *simultaneously* on a vocal one. By focusing the poem's written score while systematically excluding any evaluation on its oral realization, Clüver simply missed some more information; and he did so, despite the fact that he was certainly aware of the existence of the recording. In fact, after listening to it, he suggested that the poet had "a multi-vocal performance" (CLÜVER, 1981:393) in mind, which however wasn't realized because "it would [have] be[en] by far more difficult (and less effective) to produce a multi-vocal reading of *lygia fingers*; but we are certainly meant to hear the different colors as so many different voices in our minds" (CLÜVER, *ibidem*).

I do not know the reason that lead Augusto to renounce a multi-vocal reading,<sup>483</sup> but I believe it is highly improbable that he simply found it too "difficult". If Augusto was not most concerned with the "difficult", he would have done something other than concrete poetry.<sup>484</sup> As for the "less effective" features of a potential multi-vocal reading, I believe that Clüver's claim remains unclear, since instead of offering some further explanation in this regard, he claims that "it is by inviting us to explore the interaction of the semantic qualities of the verbal elements designated by the colors that the text engages our interest" (CLÜVER, 1981:393). A multi-vocal reading would not have been any "less effective" for this kind of exploration; on the contrary, it would be much

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<sup>483</sup> In fact, another version of "Lygia Fingers" realized in the Nineties when stereophony was certainly available at the MC2 studio, is a mono-vocal reading.

<sup>484</sup> Let me recall that Augusto explicitly stated his constant fascination with "things he didn't understand" (see the excerpt quoted in chapter 1).

easier for the listener to associate the various levels if the text were read with different voices.

Lastly, in the last quotation Clüver seems to insist on finding the only value of *Lygia Fingers* in the printed score, as if its recorded performance were insignificant. I wonder whether the fact that this recording is not “multi-vocal” as (probably) Augusto would have liked it to be, should be taken as a sufficient reason for merely ignoring the results that a valuable *solo* reading was able to yield.

## Pluvial

f l u v i a l  
 f l u v i a l  
 f l u v i a l  
 f l u v i a l  
 f l u v i a l  
 f l u v i a l  
 p l u v i a l  
 p l u v i a l  
 p l u v i a l  
 p l u v i a l  
 p l u v i a l  
 p l u v i a l

This poem was published in 1961, later also included in the anthology *Viva Vaia* (1979). The peculiar distribution of graphic signs on the page is immediately noticeable. Only the longest series presents two different graphemes ([p] and [f]), while all others consist of the repetition of the same. Under a different perspective, the vertical disposition of the graphemes forming the word “pluvial” stands out as clearly as the horizontal set of those creating the word “fluvial”, so that the visual aspect clearly sustains the respective semantics of both words involved. While “pluvial” includes the vertical movement among its basic semantic constituents, “fluvial” necessarily entails a horizontal motion.

Both the topological categories of “verticality” and “horizontality” are expressed *ex negativo*; that is to say, given that the word “fluvial” does not include the category of “verticality”, it is never readable in its entirety if considered vertically, while in turn the word “pluvial”, whose semantic level excludes the category of “horizontal”, cannot be read entirely in a horizontal evaluation. When considering the score in a vertical reading, starting from the right (and highest) extreme, the block formed by the repetitions of “pluvial” occupies the widest section of the available surface, in the form of a rhomboid. A little triangle, constituted by the graphemes of “fluvia”, appears at the bottom. These elements *sustain the meaning* of the word pluvial on a visual level; the action shown here is the rain falling on a river, so the rain acquires an active role with respect to the “passive” surface of the river. Of course, these same parameters are perfectly inverted when a horizontal reading is carried out. In this case, “fluvial” is the one taking up the most space and constituting the rhomboidal form at the bottom, thus cutting out the little triangle of “pluvia” at the top. The horizontality of the flowing river is highlighted, so that the river becomes the “main character”, with the active role in relation to the secondary, passive “pluvial” element. The fact that the latter never appears in its entirety in a horizontal reading, may be an indication of the fragmentary nature of the rain in the clouds, where the raindrops are gathered but still inactive. The rain is only a possibility, but it is not yet real, it still has to happen. Thus, the effective action is the flowing of the river and maybe also the evaporation process, that creates the clouds where the raindrops are gathered. The category above-below never changes, referring to the position of river-clouds in the real world.

The *performance* of “Pluvial” was recorded in 1962/63 in Augusto’s house, later included in the CD attached to the anthology *Grupo Noigandres: Arte concreta Paulista* (2002). The poem is read by Augusto himself and by the poet José Lino Grünwald in an environment that was primitively equipped and scarcely soundproof. During the listening, in fact, some children’s voices and laughs are easily identifiable, and they significantly affect the performance, as happens in several recordings realized that same year in Augusto’s house. For instance, an unintended intervention of children’s voices is present in the background of *Tensão* and *Uma vez*, while the crackling noise of a passing truck in *Cristal* “disturbs” the poetic declamation. It would be wrong to ignore these unwanted sounds that lack any meaning, since they highlight the onthology of these recordings, giving us a glimpse into the space where the recordings were made: in an acoustically dispersive location, with open doors and windows, where the consistency of the poets’ voices was dispersed for the most part. In such an open space, the technological features of obsolete microphones (*non-directionality* and *surrondability*) are obviously enhanced, so that any kind of sound was included within the sonic texture of the recording. The low quality of the technology was, in these instances, a very significant element in the determination of the hearable *soundscape*. Even though they occupy the sonic background, these unintended sounds are immediately perceivable and become an integral part of the esthetic experience of the poems. Because they are devoid of meaning related to the meaning of the poem, they are experienced corporally, because their presence affects the listener’s body. However, the corporal involvement emerges with particular intensity in the poems of Décio Pignatari. Some of them are sexually characterized, similar to some passages in Mon’s works. This happens, for instance, in recordings like “um movimento” (1956) or “organismo” (1960), where Pignatari stresses the distinctive features of the phoneme /m/, which is generally linked with a “longing sensuousness”, and inserts it in acoustic contexts clearly recalling voluptuousness. The sensual characterization is further sustained by semantics. In the first case, a repeated and aspirated /o/ precedes the articulation of the final lexeme “orgasmo”, while in the second, both the visual and the acoustic centrality of the /m/ throughout poem accompanies sentences like “a movement composing a battle field” or “in a live moment”. In other cases, like in “beba coca cola” (1957), the corporal reference is different, but equally or even more impudent. In fact, Pignatari stresses the predominance, in the name of the famous American drink, of the /k/, universally connected with the idea of anal dejection. The compact ad discontinuous

phoneme /b/ is really close to the unvoiced /p/, one of the three vertexes of the consonantal triangle; thus, the /b/ is also strictly connected with the idea of an explosion after a long retention, this time realized through the lips: drool or vomit. The consonantal texture of the poem is constituted almost exclusively by /k/ and /b/, as if Pignatari aimed at identifying Coca Cola exclusively as something to be expelled. Also in this case, semantics sustain the clues given through phonetics, namely with the lexemes “babe” (do drool) “caco” (I shit) and “cloaca” (sewer).

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After this short excursus on corporality in Noigandres’ poems, let us go back to the recording of *Pluvial*. The printed score does not give any clue on how to read this poem. In fact, while conventional Western rules would impose a horizontal reading, conducted from left to right and from top to bottom, here we find either a horizontally readable word at the bottom of the page, or a vertically readable word at the top. In the former case, one would have to continue reading from bottom to top, while in the latter, conventional horizontality would be compromised. In both cases, our reading habits would be at least partially upset. For this reason, a certain curious expectancy arises before listening to the recitation of the poem.

Augusto starts his reading from the right extremity at the bottom of the figure forming the poem, namely with the articulation of the /f/, and then he proceeds vertically by pronouncing all fragments that build up the incomplete word “fluvia” and that are gathered in the little triangle at the bottom of the page; the resulting sequence is then: *f-fl-flu-fluv-fluvi-fluvia*. These utterances are immediately followed by Grünewald’s voice, who articulates the word “pluvial” several times in its entirety, respecting the pattern of a vertical reading. Then, all parameters and positions are perfectly inverted and a horizontal reading is carried out: Grünewald articulates all fragments of the word “pluvial” disposed horizontally in the triangle at the top of the page (*p-pl-plu-pluv-pluvi-pluvia*) while Augusto this time repeats the word “fluvial” in its entirety. The expedients employed in the recording of this poem allow for both the valorization of the onomatopoeic character of the phonemes assembling “fluvial” and the maintenance of the semantic level in “pluvial”, which is the first to be read in its entirety and thus effectively affirmed. This could correspond to a claim about the chronological precedence of rainfall in the hydrologic cycle. A symmetrical outline, possibly definable

as “timbral chiasmus” is then constituted in relation to the interventions of, respectively, Augusto (A) and Grunewald (B): A:B, B:A. This is contrasted by the pattern regulating the alternation between the fragmentary/onomatopoetic words (1) and integral words/semantics (2), which instead occurs as follows: 1-2, 1-2.

Thus, in this reading the two poets developed some efficient devices for maintaining the semantic qualities of the words used, while simultaneously using their initial phonemes as phonic icons (or onomatopoeias), taking advantage of their respective distinctive features. The unvoiced occlusive /p/ has a markedly explosive character, being one of the three vertexes of the consonantal triangle. Its repetition constitutes a necessarily discontinuous texture. The fricative /f/ is the result of friction between teeth and lips, and thus produces a continuous sound. Thus, the sound of /f/ is easily associable with a flowing river, and the /p/ is directly connected with sound of the raindrops hitting a surface. However, both phonemes resemble each other, as a short analysis of their distinctive features would clearly show, and the existence of the affricate /pf/ where they are unified may also be considered proof of their affinity. Their phonemic vicinity can be considered an indicative element of the indissoluble relationship between both phenomena and their essential “water” nature, and this is also sustained by the constant presence after both /f/ and /p/ of the liquid phoneme /l/, which is “light and fluid” (RAMUS quoted in FONAGY, 1963:52).<sup>485</sup>

All of the above can be concluded even without listening to this recording. The latter, however, doesn't simply intensify this acoustic impression, but it also produces an unexpected element that is not accessible in the written score and that actually induces further impressions and reflections. In perfect *simultaneity* with Grunewald's articulation of “pluvia”, Augusto begins to repeat the word “fluvial” in its entirety, so that both voices are superimposed for a brief moment. Apparently, there was no necessity to do so, unless the poets aimed at expressing some other meaning. A possible interpretation is that the superimposition of both voices at this point was intended to indicate the *contact* of the falling raindrops with the horizontally flowing, most superficial layer of the surface of the river. This image effectively corresponds to occurrences in nature, which would implicate at least a partial revision of what has been said above in regard to the only potential occurrence of rain in the little triangle

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<sup>485</sup> „Die Liquida klingen sanft und fließend“



positioned on the top of the page. I would propose that the gaseous state of the raindrops is realized at its most in the highest layers of the triangle, while their progressive approximation towards “fluvial” brings them closer to the liquid state. The same device of the superimposing voices, if used during the first, vertical reading, would not have given any meaningful image of our nature: in fact, the rain is always perpendicular to the horizontal surface of the river, while the river never happens to be arranged on a vertical axis in order to come into contact with the rainfall. The recording ends with both poets simultaneously articulating all fragments “fluvial” (Augusto) and “pluvial” (Grünewald), until the words are read in their entirety. At this point, a further element arises that underlines the low quality of the technology available at that time: the “simultaneous” reading is realized in a rough way. The voices are not superimposed but they “miss” each other, failing to express the total complementarity of rain and river-flow.

Of course, this interpretation needs to be sustained by the visual score, and indeed, the interaction between the verbal, visual and acoustic characteristics of the text serves to reproduce the whole hydrological process in an efficient and poetical manner. What Claus Clüver stated in relation to concrete texts in general seems to be particularly valid in this specific case:

Concrete texts do not curtail the referential qualities of the verbal material of which they are composed. They communicate primarily their own structure, which is their proper ‘content’ (CLÜVER, 1982:138).

This poem in particular primarily communicates the materiality of all the elements involved in the text, from the single utterance to the syllable, to the word, but at the same time it brings them into strict contact with the ever-present semantic level.



## Chapter 4

### Results of the analysis

However relative and “incomplete” the analysis conducted on the selected *corpus* of poem recordings may be, it provides sufficient material for some final evaluations. They pertain to two different levels: the first one regards the *discourse* on the kind of *esthetic experience* created by sound in the concrete poetry of *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe*; the second develops a *meta-discourse* regarding the new critical perspectives that the *discourse* effectively produced. *Discourse* and *meta-discourse* needed to be clearly separated, in order to avoid confusing the results of the analysis conducted in the previous chapter with the critical considerations *deduced* from those results. Consequently, this chapter is divided into two sections, regarding these two levels of discourse.

#### 4.1 The esthetic experience of sound in concrete poetry

##### 4.1.1 The core-horizon model: a theoretical proposal

The *presence* of sound is what is primarily, immediately perceived when listening to recordings of both *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe* poems. A vague, blurred *corporal* awareness is evident from the first listening, and affects the listener without providing him any truly univocal *rational sense* of what is being heard. A quite undetermined *feeling* emerges in relation to the “internal” phonemic character and to the “external” auditory features (rhythm, tone and dynamic) of the utterances, as well as in relation to sound distortions created through specific technological devices. However, beyond the acoustic *substance* of each sound or noise, the *forms* within which these substances are disposed and ordered in the sonic *texture* of the recording profoundly affect the listener’s body. Consequently, the frequent occurrence of “musical” structures or principles, as well as the spatial relationships between phonemes with contrasting or similar distinctive features, were investigated in the previously conducted analysis. It is no coincidence that concrete poems have been explicitly defined as “an objectification

that would foreground *shape* and the other *physical properties* of working materials” (my stress), where both the *materiality* of all perceivable sounds and the *relationships* they have with other sounds are crucial, not only for identifying possible meanings, but also for accounting for the general esthetic experience provided by concrete sound poems.

Thus, these recordings are firstly *perceived* and only subsequently *interpretable*. Listening to concrete sound poems implicates an only *gradual understanding*, a lengthy *construction* of the possible referential values of more or less perceivable utterances, noises and sounds in general. Of course, I am not affirming here that the perceptual dimension is completely absent in listening to different kinds of poetry. I am rather underlining that grasping the semantic aspect of concrete poems is not as immediate as it is for a “traditional” poem grounded on verbal language, because it is *mediated*, since the signification process mainly occurs on the basis of *non-verbal* devices. A patient study of these aspects is essential to discover the possible intertwinings and correspondences of sound with *meaning*. On the contrary, “traditional” poems grounded exclusively on verbal language require to the listener to “make up his mind about nothing”, impeding the referential meaning from “usurping” his/her attention,<sup>486</sup> which is generally “diverted from the sign and directed towards the designated facts” (FONAGY, 1963:116).<sup>487</sup> In this sense, it is important to recall the following remarks by Reuven Tsur:

“We have a speech mode and a non-speech mode of listening, which follow different paths in the neural system. We seem to be tuned, normally, to the non-speech mode; but as soon as the incoming stream of sounds gives the slightest indication that it may be carrying linguistic information, we automatically switch to the speech mode (TSUR, 1992:190)

This “automatic switch” occurs also when listening to concrete sound poems, since the presence of a speaking voice in the sonic foreground seems to implicate a speech mode of listening. But it is a sort of trap, since the hearable utterances make the recipient reflect on their sonic texture instead of transmitting an immediately graspable meaning.

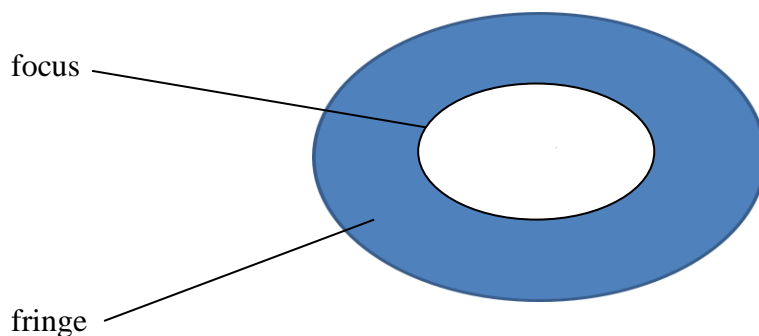
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<sup>486</sup> See: Tsur, Reuven (2002), pag. 204.

<sup>487</sup> "Unsere Aufmerksamkeit [wird] von den Zeichen abgelenkt und den bezeichneten Sachverhalten zugeführt“.

Of course, this doesn't implicate that "hidden" significations are absent from the first listening, but rather that no listener understands them fully at the first listening. The contemporarily *concerned* and *open* approach of "deep listening" must be re-proposed several times before a relative understanding effectively occurs. However, it must be clarified that not all perceivable sounds can be *interpreted*. Many of them do not provide any clue that may help to further clarify the referential values of the poem. Some impressions provoked by unexpected shouts or diminishing breaths are devoid of sense, and remain "unexplainable" even after scrupulous analysis. For example, Mon's quite noisy breathing in his *Artikulationen* simply "introduces" the listener to the poet's body. Other sounds allow the listener to grasp the situation where the recording was made, like the noises perceivable in *Noigandres'* "unprotected" recordings of 1962 (children's shouts, the sound of turning pages in *Lygia Fingers*, a passing truck in *crystal*). Still, they do not offer "meaning" regarding the referential aspects of the poem, since they are *not* destined to be understood but rather felt "body to body". Of course, the lack of external references does not make these sounds unimportant for the outline of the effective aesthetic experience provided by these poems. On the contrary, they are most intensely experienced by listeners.

Based on these considerations, I propose to reconsider a model developed in Husserl's phenomenology in order to reflect on the relationship between *presence* and *meaning*, qualitative and referential features in recorded concrete poems: the *core-horizon structure*. Husserl employed this model for describing human visual perception, organized in two sections: a *focal core*, the central object or process directly before a subject, and the *peripheral fringe* situated around the focus and more indefinitely perceived. Together, they constitute the totality of the field.



Don Ihde transposed this model into the acoustic sphere focusing on a central *sonic* occurrence, surrounded by all secondary sounds scattered in the horizontal area of the acoustic field. Now, if one employs this same model in the context of the conventional oral communication, in order to account for the relationship between sound and meaning, *significant* and *signified* (Saussure), it is quite clear that the focal core would be occupied by the *meaning* of the flowing words, the fringe by their material features, their *sound*. In other words, although any kind of oral communication is normatively embodied in sound and voice, the listener's attention is *de facto* always directed to the *signified*, the message, and only rarely to its qualitative features, on the *body* of the word.

This is valid also in relation to any "traditional" poem. Of course, all poetry is profoundly intertwined with the sound texture of words, and the phonemic symbolism is its most essential, irrevocable element. Still, the general observance of syntactical rules and the constant reference to established linear-discursive organization puts the message as a focal, central occurrence, while the sound qualities remain in the fringe and are only secondarily (if at all) taken into account. Don Ihde expresses clearly this perspective when he affirms that "ordinary experience is normally so focally concerned that it even forgets the implicit field that situates the central phenomenon" (IHDE, 2007:106).

However, the meaning can be *decentered*. This is what occurs when listening to recordings of concrete poems. The qualitative features of the sounds occupy the focal core, while their semantic aspect is dislocated to the peripheral *fringe*. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the primary, predominating *presence* of the qualitative features of sound does not implicate the *erasing* of their possible meanings. Consequently, I disagree with what has been identified as "the most widespread proposal on how to read a concrete poem" defended by Clüver, Nadin, and Weaver. According to them, concrete poetry invokes the "*abandonment* of what is usually taken as 'interpretation' and its *substitution* by a more useful activity: *perception*" (my stress). I oppose such a perspective, as perception is an insufficient tool for approaching any kind of concrete poetry. The gradual assignment of *meaning* to any of the poems considered in this study, however uncertain, should be never excluded. The attention to the non-verbal signification levels, also sustained by the *imagination* as a valid epistemological tool, served me in building some certainly personal- but not

illegitimate- interpretations, images of places and occurrences that were possibly outlined or supported by the sounds of the poems.

By affirming the necessity to *abandon* the interpretative function, the above mentioned critics seem to disregard the “implicit field that situates the central phenomenon”, described by Ihde as a quite common approach to ordinary experience. The esthetic experience of concrete poetry owes its *extraordinary* character to the above described inversion between core and horizon within the field, without the total erasure of semantics. Such a perspective, according to which the *focus*, now occupied by the qualitative features of the poem, completely blots out the *horizon* of semantics, provides a clearly incorrect account of concrete esthetics as a whole.

The point of view expressed by Mike Weaver in a different occasion when he claims that “the act of perception itself is the first preoccupation of concrete poetry”<sup>488</sup> is much more appropriate. The material features of the text dominate the foreground, they do not cover the whole field. I would agree that there is close interaction between reason and sensitivity, decoding and perception, in the construction of meaning in concrete poetry. This interdependence, however, does not implicate temporal simultaneity, since “concrete poems ask us to *think about* how meaning is made out of sounds and shapes, and that offers as much in the way of immediate experience as it does of ideas or arguments”.<sup>489</sup> Clearly enough, meaning-making is a process that requires us to “think about” all possibly used semantic devices, and thus it cannot be as immediate as the unconscious act of perception.

It is undeniable that the core-horizon model presented above can serve as a valuable general model. It shows the advantage of efficiently accounting for the primary importance of sensory experience, without blotting out the certainly secondary and mediated, but in no way irrelevant, semantic function of concrete poems. Meaning is always there, and it just requires more effort to be grasped. The crucial role of non-verbal elements in the esthetic framework of concrete poems constitute, in Haroldo de Campos’ words, an “antagonistic contradiction that forces an extra-linguistic, [...]”

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<sup>488</sup> See: Greene, Roland: *The concrete Historical*. Available online at: <http://www.ubu.com/papers/greene.html>. Last access September 2016

<sup>489</sup> See: *Ibidem*

semiotic opening”.<sup>490</sup> This subversion of the conventional hierarchies is, in my view, very adequately described by the proposed core-horizon model. Still, semiotics can help us to further understand the nature of the “concrete” esthetic experience of these sound poems.

## 4.1.2 Semiotics

The term “semiotics” refers to the science of signs developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, while “semiology” corresponds to its European counterpart founded by Ferdinand de Saussure. Both are, in effect, substantially separate from one other and not a simple, slight terminological nuance.

As for the latter, *signifiant* and *signifié* are *abstract categories* included within the *sign*, so that the “things of the world” are totally removed from the signification process.<sup>491</sup> On the contrary, Peircian semiotics is an extremely complex system, which can barely be sketched here apart from a very general outline. I aim at highlighting a few elements that sustain the legitimacy of the core-horizon model proposed above for accounting for the experience of concrete poetry recordings. Contrarily to Saussure, Peirce theorized a signification process based on the relationship between *sign* and *object*, integrated by a “third dialectic pole”<sup>492</sup> represented by the *interpreter*. These are the three basic terms involved in the complex, reciprocal relationships in signification.

In this system, all elements of experience are organized into three different classes, defined as *firstness*, *secondness* and *thirdness*. *Firstness* is the “way of being of what exists, positively and with no references to any other thing” (quoted in PIGNATARI, 1974:23). In practice, the level of *firstness* coincides with an awareness that can be defined only *ex negativo* (Knight), as “non-relational, undifferentiated, [...] inexplicable”. It corresponds to sensations and feelings and to the indetermination of the

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<sup>490</sup> “O ideograma oriental e o poema concreto, introduzindo e alimentando uma contradição antagônica no discurso, forçam uma abertura extralinguística, vale dizer, semiótica”.

<sup>491</sup> See: Pietroforte, Antonio Vicente (2011), pag. 160.

<sup>492</sup> See: Pignatari, Décio (1974), pag.11.



physical world. The *icon* corresponding to this level is a sign that expresses an *analogical* relationship, a *similarity* with its related object. *Secondness* accounts for states of “shock, surprise, action and perception” (quoted in PIGNATARI, 1974:24) that arise from the contact between ego and non-ego. The *index* corresponds to this level and expresses the “here and now” of a single experience, and it consequently cannot be generalized. The task of generalization and law is realized on the last level of *thirdness*. This corresponds to knowledge, to the effective definition of a “meaning”. The *symbol* is the sign corresponding to this level, and establishes an arbitrary, conventional relationship with its object.

This pattern is to be extremely valuable in determining very precisely the type of esthetic experience provided by listening to a concrete poem recording. At the first stage, only an undetermined “quality of feeling” arises, a *presence* that doesn’t entail any univocally determined object; since the qualitative, physical features of sound are dominant in that first moment, only the listener’s body is affected while the connection between sounds and meanings is still completely lost in the unconscious. At a second stage, the listener becomes aware of some particular sonic features, which attract his/her attention and provoke a *reaction*. The signs at this level are perceived in their *almost becoming “symbols”*, for they elude a complete awareness on the part of the receptor, though they leave behind some traces in his/her consciousness. At this point, certain physical qualities of the acoustic signals enter consciousness. Still, a generalization of that single experience occurs only at a third and last level, when a more general relationship between a sound/acoustic structure and a possible “meaning” is clearly identified.

However, once the last stage has been reached and the poem has been *interpreted*, the newly constituted “symbols” are still profoundly rooted in the non-symbolic, in the *iconic*, and thus maintain the possibility to awaken in the listener’s perception some “*sensations* analogue to the object they resemble” (Haroldo de Campos). Moreover, as was already affirmed above, many “acoustic signs” possess an exclusively qualitative character, being totally deprived of any referential value. Briefly, the qualitative features of a sound dominate even when a possible meaning has been grasped.

The primary role of the qualitative features and the possibility of accounting for the listening experience of concrete poems’ recordings as I described above is confirmed by the *Noigandres* poets’ affinity to Peircian semiotics. Haroldo de Campos refers

explicitly to the three Peircian classes, when he defines poetry as “the permanent recapitulation of *firstness* in *thirdness*, of the iconic side of the world of concreteness in the symbolic-digitalizing face of the world of abstraction [...]” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:284).<sup>493</sup> The concrete poems bring this iconic nature of poetry to the sharpest level, since they are based, as Haroldo himself affirmed, on an “analogical organization that makes them strictly connected with the physical world.”<sup>494</sup>

As a consequence, *Noigandres* poets dismissed both Barthesian and Greimasian semiology, that is, the most significant developments in European semiology, firmly rooted in Saussure’s theoretical outline. Barthes was criticized for his “verbocentrist” penchant, on the basis of which semiotics is conceived as a specific section of linguistics (instead of the latter being considered as a sub-category of the former). For Barthes, in fact, “the translation to the verbal, the most structured code, would be essential for any kind of non-verbal message” (quoted in CAMPOS, H. 2006:123).<sup>495</sup> Greimas’ methods were rejected with particular decisiveness by Haroldo de Campos, who defined them as “orthodox, dogmatic structuralism [...] which reduces the concrete *thickness* of the literary object to simplifying and self-sufficient schemes, dispensing with the work of art that served as departure point, substituted by a hypothetical elementary combinational matrix” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:125).<sup>496</sup> Actually, also from a superficial point of view, semiology is quite an unsuitable approach for dealing with concrete poems, that have been firstly defined as *objects*, as something “present, in [their] direct, positive, being present”.

But this unsuitability is exemplified in the analysis conducted by Antonio Vicente Petroforte, who approached concrete poetry by means of Greimasian semiology. Coherently with this theoretical outline, he always speaks of relationships between *categories*, whether visual/plastic, semantic or phonetic. The undeniably valuable readings that the analysis grounded on these premises guarantees, however, show an

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<sup>493</sup> “A poesia é permanente recapitulação da primeiridade na terceiridade, do lado icônico do mundo da concreção na face simbólico-digitalizante do mundo da abstração (valho-me das categorias signicas de Peirce)”.

<sup>494</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo (2006) pag 195.

<sup>495</sup> “A tradução para o verbal, o código mais estruturado seria indispensável para quaisquer outras mensagens de tipo não-verbal.”

<sup>496</sup> “O estruturalismo ortodoxo, dogmático [...] que reduzia a espessura concreta do objeto literário a esquematizações simplificadoras, que prescindiam, no limite, da própria obra de arte que lhes servira de partida, substituída por uma hipotética matriz combinatória elementar”.

irremediably problematic implication. Pietroforte insists that everything has been said once a poem has been analyzed, once the semiotic rectangle has been traced.<sup>497</sup> Any involvement of concrete poetry with feeling and perception that I have tried to highlight in the present study, is thus completely lost- everything except meaning is simply swept away, since abstract “categories” are considered sufficient for accounting for a complex esthetic experience. Pietroforte rightfully contests those who, blinded by verbal logic, consider concrete poems as simple, short verses. Yet his definition is insufficient, since poems do not just express one meaning, they are not understandable, but also *experienced*. That is why I would rather define them as a way of *experiencing* something.

This idea is particularly clear when the *sounds* of recorded concrete poems are considered, since they create a particularly physical involvement when heard. It is no coincidence that the recordings were totally neglected in Pietroforte’s study. There is much, in the recordings, that is not “said” at all, that has no meaning, and is still an essential part of the esthetic experience provided by concrete poetry. This perspective is opposed by Pietroforte, who explicitly declares that “a word [...] is not a sound which refers to a thing, but a *semiotic relationship* between a significant – of phonological nature - and a signified - of semantic nature” (PIETROFORTE, 2011:16). At least in the recordings, however, it cannot be denied that *sounds* rather than “phonic categories” are presented.

The issue for Pietroforte is not “of revealing the relationships between sounds and ‘things of the world’, but rather to describe the ingenious solutions for the formal mechanisms of language in poetical discourses”. With his semiological approach, Pietroforte forgets that even poetry in its traditional form “distinguishes itself from prose, in that in prose words are signs whereas in poetry they are ‘things’” (Sartre), and that poetry “must turn to emotions, with the charm of the direct impression, flashing in regions where the intellect can barely fumble” (Haroldo de Campos). This is what concrete poetry, and especially its acoustic production, expresses to the highest degree. Peircian semiotics, through the constant presence of indeterminacy and sensuousness at the *firstness* level, or when a symbolic relationship has been established, entrusts an essential role to bodily experience. This makes it particularly adequate for accounting

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<sup>497</sup> See for instance: Pietroforte, Antonio Vicente (2011), pag. 67.

for acoustic experiences. Décio Pignatari highlighted this aspect by criticizing the interpretation of Peircian semiotics proposed by Umberto Eco, which “is limited to the field of *visual* imitative codes in relation to the perception of the objects” (PIGNATARI, 1982:32). The limitation to visual codes is recognized by Pignatari as a serious lack of understanding a system that was conceived of for dealing with any kind of sign; in fact, no icon necessarily expresses a *visual* similarity but also functions in relation with sound.

## 4.2 Criticism

The proposal of the above described core-horizon model as communal to *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe* gives rise to a few critical considerations, some of which quite clearly oppose certain evaluations regarding the differences between both concrete movements. In particular, they question some critical accounts by the *Noigandres* poets about German concrete poetry.<sup>498</sup>

### 4.2.1 Social aspect

The predominance of the qualitative aspects at a detriment to meaning causes great disorientation in any listener. The unprepared listener “looks 'through' a text rather than 'at' it” (RV 140), becoming disconcerted after listening as to what is “supposed to be” a poem. As Greene rightly affirmed, “the very label 'poem' may arouse many expectations that the text will not fulfill” (ibidem), since the *intentionality* of most listeners is directed towards the conventional verbal aspect and the immediate grasp of a clear meaning.

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<sup>498</sup> I believe it important to highlight that, to my knowledge, not a single critical essay that considers the *Noigandres* production with some profundity has been ever written by Franz Mon or Ernst Jandl.

As also occurs also in the visual sphere,<sup>499</sup> general disorientation arises when the background features come to displace the *center* that is always focused on in ordinary experience. The unavoidable consequence is the drastic refusal of the hearable sounds as being even vaguely connected to poetry, and the rushed judgment of concrete poems as more or less entertaining jokes.

Rather, concrete poem recordings offer *new information*, since they contradict the relational patterns of conventional communication. In Haroldo de Campos' words:

The newness of this production tends to make it mostly isolated, since it is unintelligible at first (...) its absorption is realized on the basis of the interpreter's repertory and dynamics (CAMPOS, H. 2006:71).<sup>500</sup>

The introduction of new signs is aimed at the enlargement of the repertory of the receptor's perceptual and intellectual sphere, while the linguistic, verbo-centric pattern corresponds to the maintenance of fixed scales of value. The subversion of hierarchies that never happen to be questioned<sup>501</sup> requires an effort that most people cannot or do not want to make. This is basically true for the poetic production of both *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter gruppe*.

Concrete poetry always remained an unfamiliar artistic product, often misunderstood or trivialized within the context of mass culture. It has an incontrovertibly elitist nature due to the difficulty of its inter-semiotic character, although *Noigandres* poets explicitly claimed its nature of *produssumo* (Pignatari), namely its accessibility to the masses, as if it were a product of invention for large consumption. This fundamentally anti-Adornian perspective presents several theoretical contradictions that were appropriately analyzed by Paulo Franchetti in his book entitled "Some aspects of concrete poetry theory" (2012). It is quite evident that the relatively considerable fame of the three founders of the *Noigandres* group in Brazilian popular was due to their intellectual support and intense collaboration with the great personalities of *MPB*, rather than with their almost inaccessible (in all senses) poetical production. Translations and essays activity pointed towards the most variegated cultural and communicational issues, and

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<sup>499</sup> See: Ihde, Don (2007), pag. 88.

<sup>500</sup> "Já o signo novo tende a produzir isolamento, é "ininteligível" à primeira abordagem. (...) Sua absorção se faz com base no repertório e na dinâmica do interpretante"

<sup>501</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo (2006) pag. 22.

this also contributed to their popularity more than their “poetic products”. In Germany, Eugen Gomringer and Franz Mon were almost completely unknown to the general public, and were relegated to profound obscurity where only rarely did anyone attempt to shed some light. In the case of Ernst Jandl, it can be said that his public readings and the quite significant collaboration with several musical groups created a popularity that he would have never enjoyed by means of his poetic activity alone.

## 4.2.2 The importance of semantics

The *a-semantic* character that Augusto de Campos assigned to German sound poetry<sup>502</sup> was contradicted by the analysis in the previous chapter and the considerations in the first section of this chapter. Indeed, semantics is an irrevocable aspect of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*’s concrete poetry, which can in no way be defined as “non-referential”. This appears undisputable if we consider themes such as war or the Holocaust in both *Lautgedichte* and *Hörspiele*. By characterizing German concrete poetry as *a-semantic*, Augusto seems to confound it with the “sonorist” practices of the historical *avantgarde* Dada poets (Schwitters, Hausmann, Ball) and Russian *Zaum* (Khlebnikov), where the *exclusive* presence of the materiality of sound was explicitly conceived of as *substituting* a semantic level that was categorically refused. Haroldo de Campos was perfectly aware of this peculiarity when considering Kurt Schwitters’ exclusive concern with the phonetic texture of primordial sounds, that is, sounds preceding symbolic language:

Schwitters is irresistibly led to the search of the very fundamental elements of poetic expression, and, by aiming at the *thing* itself [...] he only holds back, in his linguistic speleology on sound, on the phoneme [...], on the radials of language: not of some determined language, but of a vocal substratum that could characterize any language (CAMPOS, H. 41:2006).<sup>503</sup>

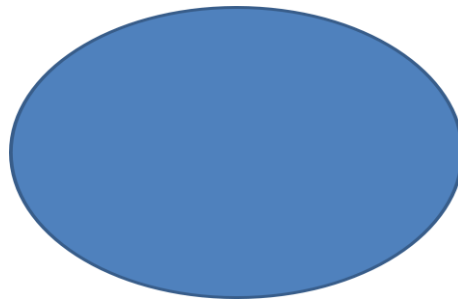
When referred to Schwitters, this claim cannot but appear as absolutely correct; however, a great distance separates those “sonorist” practices from German concrete

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<sup>502</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>503</sup> “Schwitters é conduzido irresistivelmente à pesquisa dos próprios elementos fundamentais da expressão poética, e, visando à coisa em si, dessa expressão, so se detém em sua espeolologia lingüística no próprio som, no fonema, na sílaba, nos radiais do idioma: não de um certo e determinado idioma, mas de um substrato vocal que poderia informar qualquer língua“

poetry developed in the Sixties and exemplarily represented by Mon and Jandl's sound poetry. The core-horizon model proposed above is of help for clarifying the nature of the gap between both poetics. In the case of Dada poetry, in fact, the relationship between referential and qualitative features would be rightly described by the following figure:



Here, the whole field is “invaded” by the materiality of sound, lacking any referential value. On the contrary, German concrete poetry did not neglect the semantic level, not even at its most “extreme” experience of the *Artikulationen*, which according to Mon himself were based on the same principle of gradual syllabic permutation employed in Hausmann's and Schittwers' work (for example in the *Sonate in Urlaute*),<sup>504</sup> and thus were apparently very close to their poetics. But in the *Artikulationen*, the so-called “semantic islands”, however secondary, were always present.

We can identify a more frequent employment of *non-lexical* oral language in Mon's and Jandl's sound poetry with respect to that of *Noigandres*, namely of many different types of emotionally occupied utterances, shouts and laughs, detached from the conventional lexicon.

However, as Zumthor clarified, the lack of an immediate lexical reference does not necessarily implicate total *a-semanticity*. The acoustic predominance of the phonetic texture of the voices and their frequent arrangement on the basis of musical structures does not lead to the absence of all referential values. Some “content” is transmitted even when the semantic aspect is apparently absent, since “[concrete poetry] includes the language as word and sentence on the one side and as emotional sound gesture on the other side, and this shows that the a-semantic is also semantic and the semantic is also

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<sup>504</sup> See: Mon, Franz (1994), pag. 248.

a-semantic” (MON, 1994:276).<sup>505</sup> In a way, Mon conceived of his poetry as being at the same time musically organized and clearly semantic.<sup>506</sup> The semantic character of the *Hörspiele* is claimed explicitly by Mon in another excerpt:

These *Hörspiele* are not music, they remain, even when they appear totally a-semantic, combined with the meanings of language. The score that arises during the work in the recording studio always reflect also the meanings, the contents, although they are formally deconstructed (MON, 1994:276).<sup>507</sup>

The claim for an equally semantic nature of the sound poetry developed by both *Noigandres*’ and *Stuttgarter Gruppe* is probably the most significant remark resulting from this study. However, several further aspects can be pointed out.

### 4.2.3 The *Baroque* nature

As it noted in the first chapter, the *Noigandres*’ production was identified as markedly “baroque” for its kinetic and open character, for “the combinatory and ludic policulturalism, the parody-like transmutation of sense and values, the open and multilingual hybridization” (CAMPOS, H. 2006:251).<sup>508</sup> Even the poems of the “orthodox” phase, although more directly connected with mathematical and geometrical principles,<sup>509</sup> might be identified by some critics as “baroquist” (with either positive or pejorative intentions). Haroldo de Campos further specified the peculiarities of this “baroque aspect”, highlighting them moreover as discriminating factors between *Noigandres*’ poetry and Gomringer’s production:

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<sup>505</sup> „Sie bezieht die Sprache als Wort und Satz auf der einen Seite und als emotionale Lautgeste auf der anderen Seite ein- die beweist, dass das Asemantische auch semantisch und das Semantische auch asemantisch ist“.

<sup>506</sup> See: Mon, Franz (1994), pag 255.

<sup>507</sup> „Diese Hörspiele sind keine Musik, sie bleiben, auch wenn sie total asemantisch erscheinen, an die Bedeutungen der Sprache gekoppelt. Die Partitur, die während der Arbeit im Studio entsteht, reflektiert auch immer die Bedeutungen, die Inhalte, obwohl sie formal dekonstruiert wird“.

<sup>508</sup> “[...] o policulturalismo combinatório e lúdico, a transmutação paródica de sentido e valores, a hibridização aberta e multilíngüe [...]” This same excerpt has been quoted integrally in the chapter 1 (paragraph 1.5).

<sup>509</sup> See chapter 1.



Beyond the peculiarities of a more playful syntax, the semantic dimension-contextual satire, inclusively political- was present from the very beginning (Coca-cola of Pignatari, for example, that dates back to 1957) as well as the erotic [...]. Nothing is more distant from the neutrality and the asepsis of the School of Zürich (CAMPOS, 2006:249).<sup>510</sup>

For sure, Haroldo's evaluations are totally correct if the *Noigandres'* and Gomringer's productions are compared. The "pureness" and the diamond-like nature of the latter's poems are incontestably limpid when compared with the polychromatic series of *Poetamenos* (1953), which fully realized Augusto de Campos' *verbivocovisual* ambitions. Moreover, Gomringer's disinterest for music and the auditory aspect in general was made apparent in his manifesto<sup>511</sup>. This provides quite a significant example of the more restricted sphere of his poetic experimentation. Thus, the *non-baroque* character of Gomringer's poetry can be taken as a matter of fact. What seems to constitute a puzzling issue is the representational role that the *Noigandres* group assigned to the Swiss poet regarding concrete poetry in general within the whole European context. Augusto de Campos affirmed for example that Gomringer "represents [...] more than any other European poet, the fundamental concept of concrete poetry".<sup>512</sup> This extreme approximation between Gomringer's production and the "typical" European concrete poetry may have unconsciously created, in *Noigandres* conception, an (almost) total identification, which distorted their understanding of the esthetic identity of European concrete poetry on a broader scale.

The suspicion that the poets were not so familiar with the developments of German concrete poetry starting from the Sixties seems more and more likely when their essay production regarding German concrete poetry is considered. In fact, it stands out quite clearly that the Brazilians never confronted themselves deeply with the German concrete poets of the Sixties. In Haroldo de Campos' essay "Brazilian and German

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<sup>510</sup> "Além das peculiaridades de uma sintaxe mais lúdica, a dimensão semântica: a sátira contextual, inclusive política, presente desde o começo (coca-cola de Pignatari, por exemplo, que data de 1957) [e] a erótica. Nada mais distante da neutralidade e da asepsia da Escola de Zurich.

<sup>511</sup> See chapter 1 (paragraph 1.5).

<sup>512</sup> See: Correa, Marina: *Concrete Poetry as an International movement viewed by Augusto de Campos: An Interview*. August 2008, São Paulo. Available online at: <http://pt.scribd.com/doc/36967268/Concrete-Poetry-as-an-International-Movement-Viewed-by-Augusto-de-Campos>.

avant-garde poetry”,<sup>513</sup> the names of several different personalities within the context of German concrete poetry are summarily mentioned. Just a few lines are devoted to Ernst Jandl and Franz Mon, their artistic profile being drafted with some superficiality. The former is depicted as an interesting “cabaret-poet”<sup>514</sup>, while Mon’s creative activity is reduced to the graphic aspect, his esthetic research described as directed towards the fusion between image and poem. Had Haroldo de Campos undertaken an in-depth comparison with these only hastily mentioned German authors of the Sixties, he would have probably noticed that what he was claiming as a profound difference between Brazilian and German concrete poetry was actually a difference between *Noigandres* and a single author, Eugen Gomringer. *Noigandres*’ lack of information on European *concretism* of the Sixties was definitively confirmed by Augusto de Campos himself, who admitted with admirable intellectual honesty:

I would like to make it very clear that I do not know, in detail, all of the numerous international productions, including the one in German language—where the concrete poetry had great impact and development—so that I could express judgments, since I am informed mostly by scattered poems I read in anthologies, rather than by books or topical products.<sup>515</sup>

The knowledge of the German production by means of “scattered poems” gathered in some international anthologies cannot be considered as sufficient to accounting for the quality and the complexity of German concrete poetry. The scarce comparison between *Noigandres* and the later developments of European *concretism* was provoked by several factors.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the exchange with Max Bense, the founder and main “philosophical” representative of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, was the only channel through which its variegated production of the Sixties came to be known among the Brazilians. It is undeniable then, that the scarce uniformity of that group and the tendency of Max

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<sup>513</sup> This essay was included in: Campos, Haroldo (1972), pag. 155-184.

<sup>514</sup> This perspective is also shared by Augusto de Campos, who defined Jandl’s poetry as “theatrical minimalist satire” (See the interview in appendix 2).

<sup>515</sup> See Correa, Marina: *Concrete Poetry as an International movement viewed by Augusto de Campos: An Interview*. August 2008, São Paulo. Available online at: <http://pt.scribd.com/doc/36967268/Concrete-Poetry-as-an-International-Movement-Viewed-by-Augusto-de-Campos>. Last access September 2016.

Bense to deal more profoundly with theoretical and philosophical issues than with actual poetic production, may have resulted in a limited reception of the creative activity being developed overseas. Probably, the experimental acoustic productions that personalities like Mon and Jandl were developing remained mostly unknown to the Brazilians.

This hypothesis is also sustained by an historical data, namely the concentration of Max Bense's four trips to Brazil in a short period between 1961 and 1964. At that time, the inconvenient situation occurred in Brazil with the rise of the dictatorship in 1964 may have seriously contributed to a lessening of *Noigandres*/Bense contacts, and also created more difficult access to German concrete poetry. In particular, the development of the *Neues Hörspiel* in the late Sixties may have well remained overlooked. The dictatorship ended in the mid-Eighties, when the "concrete" *Hörspiel* had reached its final stage. A more detailed comparison between *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, is necessary to fill in this critical gap.

As has been discussed above, semantics was a basic aspect also for the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. The references to both erotic and political aspects, that were mentioned as constitutive elements of *Noigandres*' poetics in the above quoted excerpt, were often present in Jandl's and Mon's poetry. It would be sufficient to recall the sexualized female voices in Mon's *Das gras wies wächst* or the sexually marked utterances in some *Artikulationen* (especially in "eje") or, on the other hand, the ridiculing of military rules and obtuse conformation to social requirements in *FMM* and in *Ode auf N*, as well as the recreation of the tragic trench war in *Schntzgrmm*.

A further issue is connected with the interconnection between poetry and music. In fact, one of the basic elements that triggered the development of a "polymorphic" poetic object was identified by Haroldo de Campos in the inter-semiotic inclusion of parameters borrowed by the practice and the theory of new music in the poems' syntax. In this sense, contact between the *Noigandres*' poets with the main composers working in São Paulo must be considered, in Haroldo's perspective, as extremely significant.<sup>516</sup> By stating this, he seems to downplay the fact that the German poets were also profoundly interested in the employment of musical structures and principles for the

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<sup>516</sup>See: Campos, Haroldo (2006), pag. 249.

organization of their works, and this impression is particularly strong in a commentary regarding his meeting with Stockhausen in 1959:

“He [Stockhausen], at that time, [...] preferred to compose, in montage style, the texts he needed (see for example the *Gesang der Jünglinge*, with excerpts from Daniel’s book): in Brazil, in turn, a whole group of poets worked with texts that inter-semiotically incorporated parameters taken from the practice and theory of the new music that was then developing (CAMPOS, H. 2006:249).<sup>517</sup>

Even if indirectly, Haroldo seems to affirm that the German concrete poets were not as interested in musical “incorporations” as the Brazilians, and apparently maintains that a dialogue with different artistic contexts, resulting in the “polymorphic” nature of the work of art, occurred in Germany only starting from the musical sphere (Stockhausen).

However, the present analysis shows that music, and especially “new music”, was present in the *texture* of German poems. It may even be affirmed that the musical principles were integrated into the poems of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* in a more profound and “secret” way, without the support of musical criticism or the collaborations with great masters of experimental music. Music was an *internal*, more intimate element of German concrete poetry. Actually, the general character of *hybridism* significantly marks the works of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, especially when a specific aspect of its creative activity is considered: the *Neues Hörspiel*, where concrete poetry, theatrical, musical and technological devices intertwine closely in the context of a hybrid literary genre that thus is everything but a “pure” form. Lastly, the interpretative openness pertains to the esthetics of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. In this sense, it is worth highlighting once more that my interpretations in relation to the considered works are in no way the only possible ones. This is due to that “open matrix of readings” that the Brazilians claimed only for their works. The receptor of German concrete poetry is as much profoundly involved in building hi/hers own meanings through his/her perception and imagination then when s/he is dealing with the Brazilian ones. The Cagean concept of an “art made by all” is equally crucial for the poets of *Noigandres* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*.

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<sup>517</sup> “Ele, àquela altura, [...], preferia compor, ao estilo montagem, os textos de que necessitava (ver, por exemplo, *Gesang der Jünglinge*, com linhas extraídas do livro de Daniel): no Brasil, por seu lado, todo um grupo de poetas trabalhava em textos que incorporavam, à sintaxe do poema, intersemioticamente, parâmetros hauridos na prática e na teoria da nova música que despontava”.

All of these elements (semantics, polymorphism/hybridism, open readings) constitute the “baroque” character that Haroldo de Campos identified as a distinctive element of the Brazilian concrete poetry.<sup>518</sup> But, since those same elements have been recognized as substantially present within the poetry of the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* as much as in that of *Noigandres*, it can be stated that the “baroque” character, at least in the terms described by Haroldo de Campos, would appear as absolutely suitable for defining the poetic production of both concrete movements. Yet some substantial differences must be pointed out. As I showed in the first chapter, the process of “baroquization” of the poetic object of *Noigandres* was the effect of a renewed “anthropofagic act”, namely the devouring of the artistic and intellectual heritage of the most “civilized” European communities, aimed at the creation of new, universally valid esthetic products. Through the anthropofagic act, the *Noigandres* poets “re-thought poetics in a Brazilian way, in national and *universal* terms” (my stress) (CAMPOS, H. 2006:247). Décio Pignatari expressed the meaning of the anthropofagic act in more explicit terms:

The underdeveloped countries, like Brazil, cannot allow themselves the luxury of perfecting and improving achievements and contributions of the developed countries, waiting for a supposed universal *placet*. Only one way is left to them: to devour the useful radicalism that they can distinguish within what is offered to them – and return new creations, original inventions to the world (PIGNATARI, 1971:117).<sup>519</sup>

The post-colonial trait of the “baroquization” on the part of *Noigandres* is evident, while it is completely absent in the German sphere.

Another aspect that deserves further reflection is the temporal relationship between both processes of “baroquization” and the comments that this factor generates. In fact, the baroque mark of the poetic object appeared in Germany for the first time about a decade later than in the Brazilian context, since German concrete poets remained mostly faithful to Gomringer’s “pure” style throughout the Fifties. This an important element, especially if the above quoted claim for the *universal* validity of *Noigandres*’ poetics is taken into account. It can be hypothesized, in fact, that the poets of the *Stuttgarter*

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<sup>518</sup> See Chapter 1 (paragraph 1.5).

<sup>519</sup> “Os países subdesenvolvidos, como o Brasil, não podem dar-se ao luxo de aperfeiçoar e aprimorar conquistas e contribuições dos países desenvolvidos, no aguardo de um suposta *placet* universal. A eles só lhes resta um caminho: devorar a radicalidade útil que possam discernir no que se lhes oferece- e devolver ao mundo criações novas, originais, invenções.” See also: Pignatari, Décio (1971), pag. 126.

*Gruppe* took advantage of all of the esthetic values produced by the *Noigandres* group and turned into *universals*, absorbing in particular the “*baroque*” characterization of the poetic object.

However, it would be incorrect to state that the German concrete poets were “influenced” by the *Noigandres* group, since, as highlighted in the first chapter,<sup>520</sup> the traditional concept of influence has to be substituted, according to the poets of *Noigandres*, by the idea of a “dialogue” that results in the sharing of a common *universal* patrimony. What can be affirmed, then, is that for the first time Brazil contributed to this patrimony instead of making use of it. The “originals” created by the *Noigandres* group were not simply a “Brazilian product”, since they lost their *local* character and gained *global* validity. The fact that the “baroque” character cannot be identified as a prerogative of *Noigandres* does not diminish its importance. On the contrary, it is a witness of the achievement of the second phase of the “anthropophagic act”, namely the production of new “originals” that resulted as valid and profitable for all creators on a *universal* scale.

The usual delay “of one or more decades” that Brazilian culture always suffered from in respect to the more developed Western countries relapsed regarding German and European culture in general. In this sense, some other exemplary instances should be mentioned. Décio Pignatari highlighted that “Bense elaborated his theory of the concrete *text* when the Brazilians were already on the way of a poetry of *context*, with the [so called] ‘participant leap’ of 1961” (PIGNATARI, 1971:85).<sup>521</sup> Even more significant results the appearance of Haroldo’s essay “The open work of art” (*A obra de arte aberta* - 1959) before the publication of the more well-known work by the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco (*Opera aperta* - 1962), which at the time of its publication emerged as a breaking point in European literary criticism and is still today a fundamental reference point in the debate on literature.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> See Chapter 1, pag. 18.

<sup>521</sup> “Bense elaborava sua teoria do texto quando a poesia concreta já partia para uma poesia de contexto, com o *salto participante*, de 1961”.

<sup>522</sup> See the following excerpt, quoted in the original Italian version: “è poi curioso che alcuni anni prima che io scrivessi *Opera aperta*, Haroldo de Campos, in un suo articolo, ne anticipasse i temi in un modo stupefacente, come se egli avesse recensito il libro che io non avevo ancora scritto e che avrei scritto senza aver letto il suo articolo (quoted in CAMPOS, H. 2006:248) [It is curious, then, that some years before I wrote *The Open Work*, Haroldo de Campos, in a little essay, anticipated the themes in a surprising way, as if he had read the book that I hadn’t yet written and that I was going to write without reading his article].

#### 4.2.4 Ideogram, brevity and structure

As already remarked in the first chapter, the *Noigandres* poets considered the ideogrammic structure<sup>523</sup> as one of the basic elements on which their concrete aesthetics was established. In several critical essays, both Augusto and Haroldo de Campos exalted the “esthetics of fragments”, showing themselves to be particularly interested in the Japanese *haikai*<sup>524</sup> and in the epigrammatic lyrics of Ungaretti, and they praised Webern’s extremely sublimated work, recognizing it as the best representative for a highly valuable art, liable to be resumed in the prestigious formula “*non multa sed multum*”. Consequently, the authentic concrete poem had to resemble a fragment grounded on complex inter-semiotic and simultaneous relationships, thus contradicting the “obsolescence of mental habits grounded on verbal patterns” (PIGNATARI, 1981:15).<sup>525</sup> In practice, the aim of the concrete esthetics was intended as effectively realized only once concision and rigorous internal structure were reached. Both elements are strictly connected, since to be concise implicates the possibility of “promoting relationships between semiotic forms in the depuration of the text’s structure” (PIETROFORTE, 2011: 137), avoiding diverting the poetic focus on external elements. In other words, *brevity* and *rigorous structure* occupy, as a whole, a primary role among the main features of concrete poems.

The *Noigandres* poets also claimed this ideogrammic character as their peculiar trait, and branded the German *Hörspielen* of the Sixties as “long discourses” that didn’t interest the *Noigandres* “precisely for their lack of structural organization” (see Appendix 2). However, some critical considerations may help us to understand that such an analysis, suggesting the excessive length and the consequent structural lack of the *Neues Hörspiel*, is quite erroneous.

Of course, it cannot be contested that they are very long in absolute terms. Still, when considered in relative terms, they appear as anything but excessively extended. In fact, the traditional *Hörspiel*, developed in Germany starting from the Twenties, normally lasted much longer than the *Neues Hörspiel* proposed by the concrete poets. What

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<sup>523</sup> See: Campos, Haroldo (1972) pag. 55-92.

<sup>524</sup> Other Brazilian concrete poets were also extremely interested in this aspect. For example, Pietroforte proposed the definition, for some works of Pedro Xisto, of “subversion of the haikai”. See Pietroforte, Antonio Vicente (2011), pag.113-132.

<sup>525</sup> “a obsolescência crescente dos hábitos mentais apoiados em esquemas verbais”.

emerges is that a traditionally long-duration genre was made drastically shorter. *FMM* is without doubt an exemplary case in this sense. When first presented at the *Sudwestfunk*, where it was later produced, the shortness of that *Hörspiel* appeared as highly problematic and inapt for the radio broadcast: “Where and how should one place an 10-minute long *Hörspiel* in the institutionalized frame of the program outline?” (SCHMITTHENNER in JANDL, 1982:105).<sup>526</sup> This extreme shortness was due, as Schmitthenner rightly claimed, to Jandl/Mayröcker’s fidelity to a basic principle of concrete poetry:

Similarly to the request, that the ideal concrete poem should consist of a single word, Jandl/Mayroecker have reduced extremely the Hörspiel’s whole plot and its single scenes (ibidem, 102).<sup>527</sup>

It should also be considered that beyond the *Hörspielen*, the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* handled a range of *Lautgedichte* and *Artikulationen* that also constituted a significant part of their poetic creation/production. As for most *Lautgedichte*, brevity was one of the constitutive characteristics: the recordings of twenty-one different poems are collected in just one CD, about fifteen minutes of total duration, so that most of them last far less than a minute. As for the *Artikulationen*, they can hardly be classified as “long” or “short”. On the one hand, it is true that in the original versions (recorded between 1960 and 1962), only seven “articulations” are collected in a recording of about twenty-five minutes. On the other hand, all *Artikulationen* consist in the phonemic variations of a single utterance, and thus giving expression to quite radical rejection of any “length”.

Moreover, I find that the impression of a lack of structural principles identified by Augusto de Campos in the German *Hörspiele* of the Sixties is contradicted substantially enough by the analysis conducted in this study. Be it through symmetric, circular or canonical arrangements (both on micro and macro levels) or through the strict inter-semiotic relationships between phonemic and semantic aspects, it cannot be denied that structures are constitutive devices of both *Hörspielen* and *Lautgedichte*. For sure, it must be recognized that their rigorous internal organization is scarcely fulfilled on the

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<sup>526</sup> „Wo und wie sollte man im institutionalisierten Raster des Programmschemas einer Rundfunkanstalt ein nur 10 minuten langes Hörspiel plazieren?“

<sup>527</sup> „Analog zu der Forderung, daß das ideale, konkrete Gedicht nur aus einem einzigen Wort bestehen soll, haben Jandl/Mayröcker die Gesamthandlung und die einzelnen Szenen des Hörspiel extrem verkürzt“.



visual level. Contrary to *Noigandres*' markedly *verbivocovisual* production, most of the written scores of both *Laut und Luise* and *Sprechblasen* appear quite "traditionally" organized, deprived of all plastic, chromatic or topological elements possibly suggesting some additional meaning. For some reason, both Jandl and Mon developed their design and figurative ability in expressly visual productions, which in most cases were not conceived for oral performance. In this sense, a significant example is the sharp division between *Sehtexte* (visual texts) and *Hörttexte* (listening texts) that Mon employs in the arrangement of his *Essays*. However, this may account for a less articulated, less synasthetic poetical object rather than for a general lack of structures within the German production. All the above considerations have been made possible by the analysis of sound in concrete poems, and this proves that an thorough comparative study between *Noigandres* and *Stuttgarter Gruppe* should not dismiss their respective acoustic productions. Critical evaluations regarding sound in concrete poetry are crucial for stimulating a more complete critical perspective on the esthetic character as a whole.

It is irrefutable, however, that the "esthetics of structures" proposed by Max Bense in his *Aesthetica* is a first and fundamental, but still non-sufficient stage for developing a more adequate approach to the literary product. Once a work's internal structural configuration has been clearly outlined, the *vehicle* through which it comes to be communicated and the possible effects of its combination with the *structures* on the receptor's *body* should be also investigated. In the case of concrete poetry, the framework of the sound poems alone cannot account for the complex esthetic experience provided by recordings and *Hörspiele*. The primary role of perception when dealing with these structures in listening to concrete poems should be highlighted, since they affect the body much more profoundly than in a visual approach. And the general dismissal of strong bodily character of this poetry is mostly due to the consideration of its concreteness as a merely visual expression. Visuality, in fact, as was already remarked, implicates a irreducible distance between the perceiving body and the perceived object, while sound necessarily remains *within our body*. Listening to concrete poetry means to come in contact with its *body*, its *flesh*.

Thus, concrete sound poems can be legitimately defined as "poetic soundscapes", as I hypothetically proposed in the second chapter. Beyond the highlighted bodily affection that the primary role guaranteed by the qualitative features of sound, it must be considered that most of the analyzed poems actually succeeded in recreating processes,

real or imaginary situations and places where the listener finds him/herself completely immersed. Moreover, concrete sound poems show that linearity as a metaphor for the listening experience is misleading, since it results in a simplification of the spatial dimension that is constituted by both succession and simultaneity of acoustic events. Technological elements, such as stereophony and the tape recorder, resulted as particularly apt for conveying the acoustic depth of space.

Highly structured and inter-semiotic, physically present without lacking referential and symbolic elements, sound concrete poems are a valuable heritage of universal literature that should be more carefully interpreted and more highly appreciated.



## Conclusion

This study is a critical refocusing on the *sound* of concrete poetry, by showing how important, how constitutive *sound* was for such notable concrete movements like *Noigandres* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. Thanks to the *corpus* of recordings that made the poets' declamatory performances available, it can be noticed that an important part of their poetic production was shaped on the influence of musical structures and principles, characterized by a constant concern with the acoustic texture of phonemes and syllables. It must be recognized that concrete poetry cannot be defined as a primarily or even a merely "verbivisual" form of art, as it may seem at a superficial glance.

However, I would like to restate that the valorization of sound in concrete poetry does not lead to the diminishing of the importance of its visual aspect, but rather the need to consider both factors as complementary for the constitution of the concrete 'poetic object' characterized by an "equality [of] material, visual, audio parameters".<sup>528</sup> What follows from such a valorization is the profound corporal involvement on the part of the listener, and consequently the important role of an irrational factor in the esthetic experience provided by concrete sound poetry. The interpretation of a "decoding" based on a conventional and arbitrarily established code is insufficient for describing such an experience, since semantics is actually a secondary aspect in respect to the material, qualitative features of sound. This opposes the prevalent definition of concrete poetry as a mere application of mathematical-geometrical principles in the poetic sphere, which deprives it of an emotional/affective component. Concrete poetry must instead be recognized, when its auditory aspect is taken into account, as a poetic genre that produces a great interpretative openness, precisely due to the *physical presence* of the acoustic material and its effect/impact on each listener's body and imagination.

The core-horizon model proposed in the last chapter takes these issues into account. The centrality of the qualitative features of sound and the consequent peripheral position of its referential values, as well as the gradual construction of the possible meanings of each recorded poem, implicate the need to recognize the listening body and its

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<sup>528</sup> See: "Questionário do simpósio de Yale sobre poesia experimental, visual e concreta desde a década de 1960" (1995) Available online: <http://www2.uol.com.br/augustodecampos/yaleport.htm>. Last access September 2016.

associative and affective potentials as a crucial factor in the experience of the recorded concrete poems and in the production of new possible interpretations of them. This is valid for all poems considered in the present study, even though they are extremely diversified: some of them consist of a-lexical articulations and utterances whose sense cannot be grasped at all in a first listening, while others present words or even sentences that may possess their own lexical, conventionally fixed (and thus immediately identifiable) meanings. However, also in the latter case, a more profound, “authentic” meaning is given by other factors, such as the word/sentence position within a more complex macro-structure, its relationships with other sounds, its own acoustic features - elements that cannot acquire meaning except in a mediated, gradual way that must firstly pass through the body. The core-horizon model thus still appears to be valid.

On the other hand, it must be made clear that I proposed the core-horizon model to *exclusively* account for the auditory production of *Noigandres* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*. However, if an analysis similar to that conducted in this work is adopted for studying other concrete currents, it may be perfectly possible that the same phenomenological model result as a valuable framework also for their recordings. The centrality of the qualitative features of sound - given by the massive presence of musical structures, the various acoustic textures of hearable sounds and the involvement of new technological devices - may be acknowledged within the sound poetry of any concrete group. Of course, if such an analysis is carried out on a sufficiently wide corpus, the core-horizon model may even prove to be a credible framework for describing the kind of esthetic experience provided by concrete sound poems ingeneral, and could consequently serve as a peculiar, distinctive mark of concrete esthetics. This is, with all evidence, something that I cannot affirm by now, since only a limited number of sound poems produced by two specific currents could be properly analyzed in this study. Thus, further studies focused specifically on the *sound* of concrete poetry would be very welcome for developing, on a vaster scale, an analytical approach whose basis was tentatively established by the present research, which is simply a first step.

Moreover, the relationship between the qualitative and referential features of sound, between presence and meaning, may produce interesting critical insights on the nature of a certain concrete currents and on their relationships with other literary groups. In this study, the comparison between the sound poetry of *Noigandres* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe* has revealed a few similarities that oppose *de facto* some critical perspectives

expressed by their respective founders: for instance, the semantic aspect as a constantly present element within the acoustic production of both groups and the communality of a peculiar ‘baroque’ character. The lack of information about these similarities on the part of the members of both groups witnesses a deficient exchange between them, due to historical factors as much as to evident disinterest or superficiality.<sup>529</sup>

Finally, this study has shown that the focus on *sound* can produce new knowledge on concrete poetry by providing sparks for more profound reflections, not only on its esthetic nature, but also in regard to other issues connected with its evolution, like for example the historical or socio-political environments. Two possible paths for further studies have been opened by the present study: on the one hand, a technical analysis regarding the *sound* of poetry produced by other concrete groups, and, on the other, the development of critical perspectives on esthetic, political, social or cultural issues that somehow derive from the more technical discourse on sound. After all, sound can always trigger new and unexpected perspectives on any object of study when it is more attentively listened to. This is the basic idea of *sound studies*, which have already produced a number of striking studies and appears to be a very promising tool for any academic investigation.

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<sup>529</sup> See the interviews granted by Franz Mon, available in appendix 2.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Short chronology of the contact between the *Noigandres* Group and *Konkrete Poesie*

This chronology exclusively refers to the contact and the intellectual exchange between Brazilian and German concrete poets in a relatively brief span of time, from the first contact between Pignatari and Gomringer in 1955 until the publication of Bense's book *Brasilianische Intelligenz* (1965). The apparent lack of documents witnessing direct contact between the *Noigandres* poets and the two German authors focused on in this study - Ernst Jandl and Franz Mon – is, in my opinion, quite exemplary of the *Noigandres*' inadequate awareness of the new developments in German concrete poetry, and in particular with its auditory production. The most intense dialogue was undoubtedly developed with Max Bense. This is also significant in light of the insufficient discussion regarding concrete poetic production in the Sixties. The dialogue with Max Bense in Brazil, in fact, went far beyond the sphere of concrete poetry, focusing in particular on issues connected with design and architecture.<sup>530</sup>

#### 1955

Décio Pignatari meets Tomas Maldonado and Eugen Gomringer in Ulm in the *Hochschule fur Gestaltung* (School of Design). In the *Synopsis of the movement of concrete poetry*, it is specified that “the surprise and the mutual interest determined a fruitful approach on both sides” (CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006:261)<sup>531</sup>

#### 1956

The idea of publishing an international anthology of concrete poetry first emerges. The term “concrete poetry” is proposed as a possible title by the *Noigandres* group and is

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<sup>530</sup>See: Bense, Max (2009), pag. 104.

<sup>531</sup>“A surpresa e o interesse recíprocos determinaram uma aproximação proveitosa para ambas as partes”



accepted by Eugen Gomringer, as seen in an excerpt of a letter (written in French) sent by Gomringer to Pignatari.<sup>532</sup>

## 1959

- Gomringer publishes some poems of the *Noigandres* group in the review *Spirale*, n. 6/7, of Bern.
- Haroldo de Campos travels to Europe to establish new contacts and reinvigorate the old ones. He meets, among others, the poets Max Bense and Helmut Heißenbüttel and the composers Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel and Hans Helms. The exchange with Max Bense, in particular, appears extremely intense and useful for both parts.
- The journal *Nota* in Munich presents poems by the *Noigandres* group and a German translation of the Pilot Plan (1958). Stockhausen speaks of the Brazilian concrete movement in a conference at the *Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* (Summer school for new music) in Darmstadt.

## 1960

- Max Bense promotes the exhibition “concrete texts” in the *Technische Hochschule* of Stuttgart, presenting the *Noigandres* group and poems in German language. This was one of the rare Brazilian-German exhibitions.
- Gomringer talks about Brazilian concrete poetry in Stuttgart, during a series of lectures dedicated to experimental poetry sponsored by the journal *Nota*. Later, he begins to publish *Konkrete Poesie / Poesia concreta*, and a *Kleine Antologie Konkreter Poesie* (*Little anthology of concrete poetry*) sold with the journal *Spirale*, which includes texts of seven Brazilian poets.
- Haroldo de Campos publishes texts by Max Bense in the *Correio Paulistano* (namely “Fotoestética” and “Teoria do texto”), two months after the publication of his own essay regarding the esthetics of Bense (“A nova estética de Max Bense”) in the journal *O Estado de São Paulo*.

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<sup>532</sup> “Votre titre *poésie concrète* me plaît très bien. Avant de nommer mes ‘poèmes’ constellations, j’avais vraiment pensé de le nommer ‘concrète’. On pourrait bien nommer toute l’anthologie ‘poésie concrete’ quant à moi” (quoted in CAMPOS and PIGNATARI, 2006 :261-62) [I really like your title *concrete poetry*. Before calling my ‘poems’ constellations, I actually thought of calling them ‘concrete’. For me, we could entitle the whole anthology ‘concrete poetry’].

## 1961

- The poster-poems in *Noigandres 4* are presented at the exhibition *Internationale Manuskript Ausstellung Konkreter Poesie* (International exhibition of manuscripts of concrete poetry) in Wuppertal.
- Max Bense travels to Brazil for the first time - accompanied by his assistant Elisabeth Walther –and visits the MAM (Museu de Arte Moderna) in Rio de Janeiro and the Biennale of São Paulo. He remains particularly fascinated by the new capital Brasilia (completed in 1960).

## 1962

- Max Bense and Elisabeth Walther publish the anthology *Noigandres / Konkrete Texte*, with a preface by Helmut Heißenbüttel and an afterward by Haroldo de Campos, in the seventh issue of *Rot* (Stuttgart). The whole issue is entirely dedicated to the Brazilian concrete poets.
- Second trip by Max Bense to Brazil. The particular fascination and the intellectual concern with the city of Brasilia led him to visit it again.

## 1963

- Julio Medaglia organizes, with the sponsorship of the *Lateinamerikanischer Kreis* (Latin American Circle), The University of Freiburg, the exhibition “Konkrete Dichtung aus Brasilien” (Concrete Poetry from Brazil) presented by Max Bense.
- Max Bense promotes a new exhibition of the Brazilian concrete poetry, in the Eggert bookshop of Stuttgart, including some recorded poems put into music by Julio Medaglia).
- Third trip by Max Bense to Brazil.

**1964**

- invited by Max Bense, Haroldo de Campos is Professor for Brazilian literature in the *Technische Hochschule* in Stuttgart. New encounters occur with Gomringer in Ulm and with Stockhausen in Koln.
- Max Bense publishes *Brasilianische Konkrete* in the eleventh issue of *Manuskripte* (Graz)
- Max Bense travels to Brazil, for the fourth (and last) time in four years.

**1965**

- Max Bense publishes *Brasilianische Intelligenz*, which can be considered the outcome of this intense personal exchange with Brazil in a short span of time. The main concern of the book is the design and the architecture of the new capital Brasilia. Regarding the literary sphere, only the prose of Guimarães Rosa and concrete poetry are considered in some depth.

## Appendix 2

### Interviews

The following interviews were granted by two of the most important representatives of *Noigandres* and the *Stuttgarter Gruppe*, namely Augusto de Campos and Franz Mon. As for the latter, the exchange was indirect: I sent two letters with some comments and questions to the poet's current postal address and I received short (typewritten) replies to both. As for the former, the intellectual dialogue was more substantial. The exchange of e-mails was quite frequent during the year 2014, and Augusto's thorough answers, presented below, are the result of two different interviews realized via email. The first dates to June 2014 and the second - partly triggered by the answers provided in the first interview - to October 2014. It was extremely thrilling for me to meet Augusto on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014 at his house in São Paulo, where he demonstrated his extreme availability and his always lively curiosity for new dialogues.



Both interviews are reported in the original language, preceded by their respective translations into English. My thanks for the possibility to include these unpublished documents to my work goes to both poets as much as to the Professors who allowed me to enter in contact with them, namely Prof. Ines Oseki-Depré of the *Université Aix-*

*Marseille* (for Augusto de Campos) and Professor Lutz Dittrich of the *Literaturhaus Berlin* (for Franz Mon).

## Interview with Augusto de Campos

### First part

#### Relationship with *Konkrete Poesie* and with the cultural and socio-historical context

1. In an interview from 1956, you mentioned the meeting between Décio Pignatari and Eugen Gomringer, defining it as a “confrontation of experiences and an undeniable demonstration of how, independent from longitude, latitude and language, the process of transformation and the qualitative evolution of forms in the cultural domain operates”. How did this confrontation come about during the Sixties, during the most intense period in the development of the German *Neues Hörspiel*? Is there any esthetic principle or compositional process that significantly influenced your practice of composing the sound poems?

*I do not believe that the sonorist practices of European poetry influenced the Brazilian concrete poets, especially because most of these practices were connected with a “non-referential language”, without semantics, which did not relate to what we intended as “verbivocovisual” poetics, where the semantic level was as necessary as the visual and the vocal ones. We saw the removal of semantics as a simplification, a facilitator, that exonerated the poet from a functional structuration, where it wouldn’t be possible to add a word without destroying or diluting the poem. Thus we got interested in the approach of musicians, like Stockhausen, Boulez, Berio, Nono, Cage and Brazilian composers like Gilberto Mendes and Willy Correa de Oliveira. Of course, we knew and admired some “classic” pieces of sonorist poetry, like Schwitters or Hugo Ball and the Russian zaum poetry, which we also translated; Khlebnikov, for example, was very*

*important to us because he maintained the semantic level together with phonological explorations, like in the poem “Incantation by Laughter”, which Haroldo translated into Portuguese. But, in terms of poetry reading, we tried to improve with people like Joyce (the short but extraordinary musical cadence of his fantastic reading of an excerpt of Anna Livia Plurabelle from Finnegans Wake), Pound, Cummings, Dylan Thomas, Edith Sitwell and other great readers of poetry, searching for new modalities of vocal emission for concrete poems that evidently demanded new approaches*

2. However, a close relationship exists between the different experimental forms developed by both movements and their respective cultural and socio-historical context. In Brazil, which were the “typical” elements of the Sixties that may have fostered the development of certain experimental forms, especially in a comparison with the German context? For example, do you identify some “cultural” reason for the brevity of the Brazilian poems contrasting with the more articulated German *Hörspiele*?

*The answer to the first question actually contains an answer also for the second. We pursued extremely rigorous poetics, where poems could not have anything “extra”, expletive sonorities, rhetoric elements. Our main model was *Un Coup de DésJamaisn'abolira le Hasard* by Mallarmé. The experiments of the Futurist and Dada poets, though valuable, appeared to us as more vulnerable and circumstantial. The long discourses of the German *Hörspielen* did not impassion us, because of their lack of structural consistency. We always had more affinity with the terser forms of Gomringer, although – I believe – his experiences within the auditory sphere were limited.*

### Relationship with avant-garde music

3. At the end of the event entitled Poemusic in 2010, you declared that you read, John Cage's book *Silence* in 1968, and that it had an influence on the composition of some sound poems, especially *Cidade*. At the same time you declared that you were already familiar with the American composer already. When and how did this occur? Do some specific principles exist, beyond the use of chance, that influenced your works, like for example the conception of silence, not as the "absence of sound" but rather as "the entirety of all unintended sound"?

*Yes, I read Silence around 1968. At that time, it was really difficult to get LPs and books by Cage in Brazil. I essentially knew his "sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano", from an LP that Haroldo and Décio Pignatari purchased in 1952. I associated this composition, on the one hand, to the concept of "spatial" music, that is to say music with prolonged musical pauses which created a sort of non-temporal structure and, on the other hand, to a discontinuity of discourse, a percussive "klangfarbenmelodie"— two characteristics that likened him to Anton Webern, who occupied the position of the Mallarmé's "Coup de dés" in my poetic pantheon. However, before entering in closer contact with other texts by Cage, we were already part of the dialogue around aleatoric (Boulez, Stockhausen) or indeterminate music (Cage), that converged the themes the "Coup" and the drafts of "Le livre" revealed by Jacques Scherer. In 1963 I composed my poems "cidadecitycité" e "acaso", Haroldo his "alea 1 – variações semânticas" and Décio his "torre de babel", all them influenced by the use of "chance" in poetic composition.*

4. What other composers besides Cage were important for you? You quote the Second Viennese School. Beyond Webern's *Klangfarbenmelodie*, is there any other specific principle developed by this School that actually effected your work?

*In Música de Invenção which I published in 1998, the focus was on the most radical composers of contemporary music. I listed the most important composers for me. It is not a "little history of music" nor a systematic book, but rather a*

*“stop-gap” intervention, as Pound called his non-orthodox writings where he tried to emphasize the work of little-known and scarcely divulged authors. For this reason, Debussy or Mahler were not included, although they were certainly very important for modern music, but Webern, Schoenberg, and the anti-operas of Pound and Gertrude Stein (with music by Virgil Thomson), Antheil, Varèse, Luigi Nono (his last works), and the lately discovered Scelsi, Nancarrow and Ustvolskaya. I must integrate this book with a second volume of “music of invention” that is still being prepared. The contact with the work of composers and interpreters of popular music was also important, especially João Gilberto and Caetano Veloso, who were discussed in *Balanço da Bossa e Outras Bossas* (1968-1974).*

5. Haroldo de Campos met Karlheinz Stockhausen in 1959 in Koln. Did this encounter have any consequence or influence? Did the experimental electronic music developed in the studios of Koln and Milan provide any new element in the compositional practice of the Sixties?

*Both of Haroldo’s encounters were casual. They didn’t have any significant consequence, since we always followed and knew the work of Stockhausen very well. Contact with Pierre Boulez, whom we met in 1954 when he came to São Paulo, and to whom we presented some poems in colors of my collection “Poetamenos“, was more intense. Like us, he worshipped Webern and Mallarmé. When we asked him whether any French composer was putting into music of the “Coup de Dés”, he answered: “Yes, me”. Of course, electronic music thrilled us, and we took the Stockhausen’s “Gesang der Junglinge ” as one of the most successful examples of the use of the word with electronic devices.*



## The relationship with technical devices

6. With which media did you first enter into contact with these composers? Books, theoretical essays and journals, or mostly LPs and radio broadcasts? Which works of the mentioned authors did you first listen to, and thanks to which devices?

*After the Second World War, there was certainly a generalized atmosphere of optimism and relief. In São Paulo, the richest and most industrialized city of Brazil, there was a period of great cultural growth. Two museums were created - the Museum of Modern Art, and the Museum of Arts MASP - at the end of the Forties, and in 1951 the first Biennale of Modern Art, sponsored by the MAM, was realized. In this museum there was also a cinema, where the whole range of avant-garde films from the beginning of the XX century was shown. From Eisenstein, Fischinger, Hans Richter, to Maya Deren and Norman McLaren. There were bookstores specialized in importing books from foreign publishing houses, and a record store hell-bent on importing modern and jazz music. (Schoenberg, Webern, Varèse and Cage); in the French bookstore, we bought books and magazines which contained the first articles by Boulez, and others like, for example, studies on dodecaphonic music by René Leibowitz and the book "A la recherche d'une musique concrète" by Pierre Schaeffer.<sup>533</sup> In the Free School of Music, created by Hans Joachin Koellereuter, the atonalism and the dodecafonism were introduced. We heard conferences and listened to "tapes" regarding the latest news in contemporary poetry. There we listened to, among other things, conferences by Boulez, Krenek and Meyer-Eppler, who were invited there by Koellreuter.*

7. What is the relationship of the *Noigandres* group with the electronic devices in the Sixties for recording and acoustic reproduction? How did they change your compositional practice? That is, was there any technical feature of the devices used for the recordings that allowed for the realization of otherwise impossible effects?

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<sup>533</sup> Interview by the author via email on 25 June 2014.

*When we created our poems and the composer of the group “Música Nova”, whose manifesto was published in the second issue of our review ‘Invenção’ – began to set them to music, an electronic music studio didn’t exist in Brazil. For this reason, the first compositions of these musicians (Gilberto Mendes, Willy Correa de Oliveira, Rogerio Duprat, Julio Medaglia and others) were conceived of as choral works, so that they could explore the poly-tonality and the micro-tonality beyond other harmonic and chromatic investigations. In my personal case, it was only in the Nineties, when my son, the musician Cid Campos, assembled a Studio with digital resources, that I began to develop the acoustic or electro-acoustic treatment of the poems, beyond the natural parameters of vocal emission. The same thing happened with Décio Pignatari, in the poems in which his voice received acoustic treatment by Cid and the others, like Livio Traktenberg and Wilson Sukorski. The first recording of “cidade city cité” and of other poems of mine and of Haroldo’s happened in 1968, at the Bloomington University radio station in Indiana, when we met Mary Ellen Solt. Only a few recordings were made before or after. One of the first was made by Julio Medaglia, with choral arrangements performed together with his students in 1961 or 1962.*

## **Second part**

- 1) In the interview granted to Marina, in answer to the first question regarding the differences between Latin American and European poetry, you declared:

It seems to me that differences have existed from the beginning, but not of a fundamental kind. Fundamental and appalling were, however, the affinities. And in such a way that made us believe that the new poetic language that we were looking for did reflect a necessity that was collective, historical, and not just some kind of idiosyncrasy or individual exhibitionism.

Thus, it appears evident that this poetic language wasn’t a simple extemporary choice of some poets, but the reflex of a “shared” sentiment. Could you explain a bit more what these “collective” and historical necessities were? And, in

regard to the strictly acoustic sphere, would you say that in the post-war period there were new approaches (for example, the way to listen or regarding auditory perception) that you were interested in?

*Collective necessities emerged in the post-war era, that is, after both great World Wars (1914-1918/1939-1945). The cultural “updating” originated by the avant-garde movements at the beginning of the XX century (futurism/cubism/cubofuturism, dada, etc.), had been anticipated by Mallarmé and his inter-centurial poem (1887-1914), UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD, which had been marginalized, not only for the vicissitudes suffered by humanity but also for the fact that both defeated dictatorships, Nazi-Fascism and Stalinist Communism, had banished the modern art and pursued many of its protagonists, functioning as defenders from what they called both “degenerated art” and “decadent art”. It was necessary to recover the mutilated, lost or suffocated information. This is what happened in the Fifties with the most cutting-edge poetry and with all other arts. In music, this meant the salvaging of the Second Viennese School, with particular attention on the radical figure of Anton Webern, and the performance of the electro-acoustic and aleatory works. In the visual arts, this happened with the retrieval of experimentalism with artists like Maliévitch (and all the Russian avant-garde art concealed in basements of Soviet museums), Mondrian, Duchamp and others, the architecture of Gropius and Le Corbusier, the design of the Bauhaus, which had been closed by the Nazis. The reason why it was recovered, basically, in the most sophisticated artistic reflections which took place in several parts of the world, was to recuperate the threads of the revolution broken by the factors that I mentioned, and to continue the work started at the beginning of the century. The idea was to prepare the arts to confront themselves with the new technologies that were destined to emerge in the Sixties and Seventies with the advancement of the electronic era ,TV, video and finally in the new technological phase that we have been experiencing in the last decades with the full development of the digital communication.*

2) However, when answering my and Correa's other questions, you seem to identify some basic differences:

- a. The *Konkrete Poesie* was much more connected to the auditory aspect than to the semantic one, while the esthetics of *Noigandres* tended towards the valorization of the semantic aspect of the poem, in relation to sonority and visuality.

*I don't believe that the Konkrete Poesie was connected with acoustic more than with visual and semantic aspects. On the contrary. The poems of Gomringer were always essentially visual and with clear signification, while the preoccupation with the sonorism emerged only later with poets like the Austrian Ernst Jandl. In this case, with the intent of theatrical minimalist satire, peripheral authors with respect to concrete poetry, like Henry Chopin and the followers of "poésiesonore", wrote poetry that was more rooted in the Dada tradition where the semantic and the visual aspects have less importance than the sound. The "verbivocovisual" poetics that we postulated from the very beginning didn't aim at making the lexical sound independent or at creating a voco-gestual performance, but searched for the tridimensional materialization of the poetic word in its visual, vocal and semantic dimensions simultaneously. The first experience in this sense was the "poetamenos", performed with four voices combined with projected "slides" of the poems at the Teatro de Arena of São Paulo in 1955.*

- b. The poetry of *Noigandres* was extremely rigorous, while the *Konkrete Poesie* was far from having a rational structure and the "luminosity" of the fragment.

*Also in this case, this is not the correct interpretation of my thought. The poetry of Gomringer (the European poet with whom we most identified) was always very rigorous and functional. The expansion of the movement is what determined the greater dispersion of formal needs that we postulated at the beginning, as much as the trivialization of the texts.*

- c. *Noigandres* began to compose more complex poems starting from the beginning of the Sixties, using the chance principle under the influence of the aleatoric music of John Cage, Peircian semiotics, and the re-appropriation of Duchamp's *readymade*.

*Yes, there are numerous examples of this evolution. Aleatoric poems, under the influence of Cage, Stockhausen, Boulez and especially of Mallarmean “chance” and the revelation of the handwritten “Le Livre”, the permutational program by Mallarmé divulged by Jacques Scherer. Examples: my “acaso” e “cidadecitycité” from 1963, the “torre de babel” by Décio, the “aleas” by Haroldo. Readymades were among the “profilogramas” and “intraduções” of my authorship, the dollar-poem “Cr\$isto é a Solução” by Décio and his “disenformio”, an announce of a pharmaceutical poem for avoiding intestinal problems, that he created in an ad agency and presented as a poem in one of the issues of the journal Invenção (and also in his definitive book POESIA POIS É POESIA). The semiotic poems by Décio, Luiz Ângelo, Ronaldo Azeredo, as much as our numerous, inter-semiotic poems, account for the interest in the work of Peirce.*

- 3) Is there any other fundamental difference that you could identify between German and Brazilian concrete poetry? (Considering specifically the Sixties, that followed the “orthodox” phase of the *Noigandres* movement).

*I don't see so many differences. We all belonged to the same family, and the others are more casual considerations, due to temperament, style, the qualities of each poet. But without a doubt, the Sixties and Seventies led to a different development in our own poetic experience.*

- 4) Could you make some hypotheses in relation to historic-cultural influences, or ethno-anthropological reasons that brought the Brazilian poets to develop – as far as specifically concerns the sound poems - certain poetic forms (more structured, fragmentary, isomorphic, linked with the semantic aspect) that you intended as different from the German ones?

*This is a very complex question that would require time and field research to answer. What I can say is that from 1964 to 1985, Brazil was in the hold of the violence of a military dictatorship, and this circumstance profoundly affected our production and let us move away from a purely structural, Mallarmean attitude,*

towards a more participatory position, under the aegis of Mayakovski's affirmation: "without revolutionary form there cannot be a revolutionary poetry".

- 5) You talked about the interest on the part of a few Brazilian "contemporary musicians" (like Gilberto Mendes and Willy Correa de Oliveira), who tried to find structural isomorphism in the setting they elaborated for your poems - BEBA COCA COLA and UM MOVIMENTO, by Décio, NASCE MORRE, by Haroldo, VAI E VEM, by José Lino Grünewald. Is there any trace of the same kind of interest on the part of foreign authors with whom you were dialoguing, like Boulez, Stockhausen or Cage? If not, was there any particular reason?

*I think that the ignorance of the language — that is, Portuguese, a less international language — was certainly an inhibitory factor for the setting to music of our texts by foreign composers. A rare exception was the Italian composer Salvatore Sciarrino, who set my poems "Pulsar" and "Quasar" to music in his work L'Alibi della parola.*

- 6) How did the idea of "concrete" poetry emerge? Was it a simple translation in poetry of Schaeffer's *musique concrete* and of the avant-garde visual arts, or also the very sound of the word "concrete", which contains only unvoiced consonants (except for the uvular /r/) and thus gives the idea of the hardness and rudeness of the poem as a *present* object, of the materiality of the used word? Or, maybe, the fact that the word "concrete" is practically identical in many languages, from the German to the Russian, and thus accounted for the international connotation of the movement?

*Before Schaeffer used the word "concrete" for his music, we [Noigandres Group] were already connected with the Paulista painters and sculptors of Ruptura group, whom we met in 1952 and who called themselves "concrete" or "concretists", from the expression "concrete" introduced by Van Doesburg and put into circulation by Max Bill in the Forties, with the specific goal of distinguishing it from "abstract" art. It was from that point that we came closer to this definition. We knew the work of Schaeffer, but we preferred Boulez and Stockhausen, who*

were more demanding and rigorous, and not only intuitive researchers, as the creators of the “*musique concrète*”. The word was in the air. In a letter from 1955, Décio, who was then in Europe, wrote me that the poetry of Cummings seemed “concrete” to him.

It was the run-up of what was called NATIONAL EXPOSITION OF CONCRETE ART (Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, December of 1956), where we exhibited poems like “*Tensão*” and “*Movimento*” next to paintings and sculptures. Actually, I had already used the expression in the announcements of the presentation of the poems of “*Poetamenos*”, made by the Grupo Ars Nova, in the Teatro de Arena in December of 1955, where three poems from *Poetamenos* were presented, performed with four voices, with the poems projected on slides. I also proclaimed it in the text that I read before the presentation, and published it in a literary journal for students of the PUC called “*Fórum*” (October 1955). I couldn’t exemplify with texts of *Poetamenos*, since they required colors, and this made the publication more expensive. I suggested to Décio to call our new productions “concrete poetry”. Pignatari was in Europe and visited the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm. There he met Eugen Gomringer in 1955, not by coincidence the secretary of Max Bill, who in 1951 won the prize for sculptors in the first Biennale of São Paulo with the sculpture *Tripartite Unit*. Gomringer exchanged his “*Constellations*” for our “*Noigandres 2*” (with the poems in colors of *Poetamenos*). Later, the Swiss-Bolivian poet told him his idea to publish an international anthology including our poetry. Décio proposed to him to call it “concrete poetry”.

Gomringer accepted the proposal in a letter, saying that he already thought of using the expression, but that he preferred to call his poems “constellations” (initially we called them “ideograms”). This is the short bio-history of “concrete poetry”. Some years later, in 1968, Mary Ellen Solt, in her anthology of concrete poetry, published a manifesto from Sweden from the 50s, in Sweden by a poet born in São Paulo, our city — like a character of Borges — named Örvind Faelstrom... His manifesto, however, although it had some common references and the lexical roots in Schaeffer, appeared confused to us and without the precision and the proximity that we found in Gomringer. Later on, Faelstrom became generally known more for painting than for poetry.

## Entrevista com Augusto de Campos

### Primeira parte

#### Relação com a *Konkrete Poesie* e com o contexto cultural e sócio-histórico

1. Em entrevista de 1956, o Sr menciona o encontro de Décio Pignatari com Eugen Gomringer e fala de uma “confrontação de experiências e demonstração iniludível de como, independentemente de longitude, latitude e língua, opera o processo de transformação e evolução qualitativa de formas no domínio cultural”. Como esta confrontação se dá ao longo dos anos ’60-’70, período de maior desenvolvimento dos *Hörspielen* alemães? Há algum princípio estético ou processo de composição que influenciou de maneira significativa a sua prática compositiva dos poemas sonoros?

*Não creio que as práticas sonoristas da poesia européia tenham influenciado os poetas concretos brasileiros. Até porque a maioria dessas práticas estava ligada à linguagem “não-referencial”, sem semântica, que não interessava ao que entendíamos como poética “verbivocovisual”, na qual o nível semântico é tão exigido como o visual e o vocal. Achávamos que a supressão do semântico era uma simplificação, um facilitador, que desobrigava o poeta de uma estruturação funcional, onde não se poderia usar uma palavra a mais sem destruir ou diluir o poema. Por isso nos interessamos, desde logo muito mais pela abordagem dos músicos, como Stockhausen, Boulez, Berio, Nono, Cage e os compositores brasileiros como Gilberto Mendes e Willy Correa de Oliveira. Claro que conhecíamos e admirávamos alguns clássicos da poesia sonorista, como Schwitters ou Hugo Ball e os russos da poesia zaum, que chegamos a traduzir, dentre os quais Khlebnikov era o que mais valorizávamos e que era justamente o que mantinha o nível semântico junto às explorações fonológicas, como no poema “Encantação do Riso”, que Haroldo traduziu para o português. Mas, em termos de leitura poética, procurávamos aprender com gente como Joyce (a breve mas extraordinária cadência musical de sua fantástica leitura de um trecho de Anna Livia Plurabelle, do *Finnegans Wake*)[riascalto com testo Allá mano], Pound, Cummings, Dylan Thomas, Edith Sitwell e outros*



*grandes leitores de poesia, buscando novas modalidades de emissão vocal para os poemas concretos, que demandavam, evidentemente, novas abordagens.*

2. No entanto, há provavelmente uma estreita relação entre diferentes formas experimentais desenvolvidas pelos dois movimentos e o respectivo contexto cultural e histórico-social. Quais são os elementos típicos do contexto brasileiro dos anos 60-70, que influíram sobre o desenvolvimento de certas formas experimentais, sobretudo considerando-os numa comparação com o âmbito alemão contemporâneo? Por exemplo, o senhor consegue identificar um motivo “cultural” para a brevidade dos poemas brasileiros em comparação com os mais articulados *Hörspielen* alemães?

*A resposta à primeira indagação já traz embutida uma resposta a esta pergunta. Perseguíamos uma poética extremamente rigorosa, onde o poema não pudesse ter “gorduras”, sonoridades expletivas, elementos retóricos. Nosso principal modelo era o *Un Coup de Dés Jamais n'abolira le Hasard*, de Mallarmé, diante do qual os experimentos dos poetas futuristas e dadaístas, embora valiosos, nos pareciam mais vulneráveis e circunstanciais. Os longos discursos do *Hörspielen* alemães não nos entusiasmavam, exatamente pela falta de consistência estrutural. Sempre tivemos mais afinidade com as formas enxutas de Gomringer, embora — creia eu — ele tenha limitado as suas experiências no campo sonoro.*

### Relação com a música de vanguarda

3. No final do show *Poemusica*, acontecido em 2010, o Sr. declara ter lido, em 1968, o livro de John Cage, *Silence*, que influenciou a composição de uns poemas sonoros, (sobretudo *Cidade*). Mas ao mesmo tempo, o Senhor declarar ter conhecido o compositor americano já antes. Quando e como esta experiência aconteceu? Há princípios específicos, além do uso de acaso, que influenciaram as suas obras, como por exemplo, a concepção do silêncio não como “ausência de som” e sim como “the entirety of all unintended sound”?

*Sim, li Silence por volta de 1968. Àquela altura, era muito difícil obter discos e livros de Cage no Brasil. O que eu conhecia dele era, principalmente a composição “Sonatas e Interlúdios para Piano Preparado”, da qual eu, Haroldo e Décio Pignatari adquirimos as primeiras gravações em LP em 1952. Eu associava essa composição, por um lado, ao conceito de música “espacial”, ou seja música onde a pausa musical prolongada, criava uma espécie de estrutura não-temporal, e, por outro lado, a uma descontinuidade do discurso, uma “klangfarbenmelodie” percussiva — duas características que a aproximavam das inovações de Anton Webern, que ocupava a posição do Mallarmé do “Lance de Dados” em meu panteão poético. Antes porém de travar maior contato com outros textos de Cage, já estávamos informados da discussão sobre a música aleatória (Boulez, Stockhausen) ou indeterminada (Cage), que vinha ao encontro da tematização do “Coup de Des” e dos esboços do “Livre” permutacional, revelados por Jacques Scherer. Em 1963 eu compunha os meus poemas “cidadecitycité” e “acaso”, Haroldo o seu “alea 1 - variações semânticas” e Décio o seu “torre de babel”, todos eles influidos pelo questionamento do uso do “acaso” na composição poética.*

4. Quais outros compositores além de Cage foram importantes para o Senhor? O Senhor cita a segunda escola de Viena. Além da *Klangfarbenmelodie* de

Webern, tem outros princípios específicos desenvolvidos por esta escola que afetaram seu trabalho?

Em *Música de Invenção*, que publiquei em 1998, com o foco nos compositores mais radicais da música contemporânea, passei em revista a maior parte dos compositores que foram importantes para mim. Não é uma "pequena história da música", nem um livro sistemático, é antes uma intervenção "stop-gap", como batizava Pound os seus escritos não-ortodoxos, onde procuro enfatizar a obra de autores pouco visitados e pouco divulgados. Por isso, lá não estão Debussy ou Mahler, certamente muito importantes para a música moderna, mas Webern, Schoenberg, as anti-óperas de Pound e Gertrude Stein (com música de Virgil Thomson), Antheil, Varèse, Luigi Nono (o das últimas obras), e os tardiamente descobertos Scelsi, Nancarrow e Ustvolskaya. Devo complementar esse livro, com um segundo volume de *Música de Invenção*, ainda em preparo. Importante também foi o contato com a obra dos compositores e intérpretes da música popular, especialmente a de João Gilberto e de Caetano Veloso, que foram objeto de estudo no livro *Balanço da Bossa e Outras Bossas* (1968-1974).

5. Haroldo de Campos encontrou Karlheinz Stockhausen em 1959 na Radio de Colônia. Este encontro teve alguma consequência ou influência? A música eletrônica experimental desenvolvida no estúdio de Colônia e de Milão, acrescentou alguma coisa na prática compositiva nos anos 60-70?

*Os dois encontros de Haroldo foram ocasionais. Não tiveram maiores consequências, porque a obra de Stockhausen sempre foi muito conhecida e acompanhada por nós. Mais intenso foi o contato com Pierre Boulez, que conhecemos em 1954, quando veio a São Paulo, e a quem fizemos a apresentação de alguns poemas em cores da minha série "Poetamenos". Como nós, idolatrava Webern e Mallarmé. Perguntado se algum compositor francês se havia interessado em musicar o "Lance de Dados" ele respondeu: "Sim, eu." Claro que a música eletrônica nos entusiasmou muito, e tínhamos o "Gesang der Jungische" de Stockhausen como um dos exemplos mais bem sucedidos do uso da palavra com recursos eletrônicos.*

## Relação com os dispositivos

6. Quais foram as mídias através dos quais vocês conheceram primeiramente estes compositores? Livros, tratados teóricos, revistas, ou, sobretudo discos e rádio? Quais foram as primeiras obras destes autores que vocês escutaram, e com quais dispositivos?

*Após a Segunda Grande Guerra, houve seguramente um fluxo de alívio e otimismo generalizado. Em São Paulo, a cidade mais rica e industrializada brasileira, tivemos um grande incremento cultural. Criaram-se dois museus, o Museu de Arte Moderna, e o Museu de Arte - MASP, em fins dos anos 40, e em 1951 realizou-se a Primeira Bienal de Arte Moderna, patrocinada pelo MAM. Neste museu funcionava uma Cinemateca, onde se exibia toda a gama dos filmes de vanguarda do início do Século XX. De Eisenstein, Fischingerou Hans Richter a Maya Deren e Norman McLaren. Tínhamos livrarias especializadas em importar livros de editoras estrangeiras e uma casa de discos voltada para a importação de discos de música moderna e jazzística. Nessa casa de discos adquirimos, entre 1952-53, os primeiros LPs (selo Dial) da música de Schoenberg, e Webern (selo Dial), além de Varèse e Cage. Na Livraria Francesa, comprávamos os livros e revistas que continham os primeiros artigos de Boulez, e outros como os estudos sobre dodecafonismo de René Leibowitz e o livro “A la recherche d'une musique concrète” de Pierre Schaeffer. Na Escola Livre de Música, criada por Hans Joachin Koellereuter, que introduziu o atonalismo e o dodecafonismo entre nós, ouvíamos conferências e escutávamos “tapes” sobre as últimas novidades da música contemporânea. Lá ouvimos, entre outras, conferências de Boulez, Krenek e Meyer-Eppler, que aqui vieram convidados por Koellreuter.*

7. Qual é a relação do movimento *Noigandres* com os dispositivos eletrônicos presentes nos anos 60-70 para a gravação e reprodução sonora? Como eles mudaram a própria prática compositiva? Ou seja, há características técnicas

dos dispositivos usados nas gravações, que permitiram a realização de efeitos anteriormente impossíveis?

*Quando criamos nossos poemas e começamos a musicalizá-los os compositores do grupo “Música Nova”, cujo manifesto foi publicado no nº 2 de nossa revista ‘Invenção’, não havia um estúdio de música eletrônica no Brasil. Por isso mesmo as primeiras composições desses músicos (Gilberto Mendes, Willy Correa de Oliveira, Rogerio Duprat, Julio Medaglia e outros) foram concebidas como obras corais, onde podiam explorar a politonalidade e a microtonalidade além de outras perquirições harmônicas e cromáticas. No meu caso pessoal somente nos anos 90, quando meu filho, o músico Cid Campos, montou um estúdio com recursos digitais, é que começamos a dar tratamento sonoro ou eletroacústico aos poemas, fora dos parâmetros da emissão vocal natural. O mesmo aconteceu com Décio Pignatari, nos poemas em que a sua voz recebeu tratamento sonoro de Cid e outros, como Livio Trajtenberg e Wilson Sukorski. A primeira gravação de “cidade city cité” e de outros poemas meus e de Haroldo só ocorreu em 1968, na Rádio da Universidade de Blooming, Indiana, em diálogo com Mary Ellen Solt. Poucas gravações ocorreram antes ou depois, sendo uma das mais antigas a que Julio Medaglia fez, em arranjos corais com suas alunas, em 1961 ou 1962 (anexo trecho de partitura de sua autoria).*

## **Segunda parte**

- 1) Na entrevista a Marina Correa o Senhor, respondendo à primeira pergunta, sobre as diferenças entre poesia latino-americana e européia, declara:

It seems to me that differences have existed from the beginning, but not of a fundamental kind. Fundamental and appalling were, however, the affinities. And in such a way that made us believe that the new poetic language that we were looking for did reflect a necessity that was collective, historical, and not just some kind of idiosyncrasy or individual exhibitionism.

Assim, fica evidente que esta linguagem poética não era simplesmente uma escolha extemporânea de alguns poetas, mas o reflexo de um sentimento “compartilhado”. O senhor poderia discorrer mais sobre quais seriam estas necessidades “coletivas” e históricas?

E ainda, considerando o âmbito estritamente sonoro, o Senhor acha que, a partir do pós-guerra, havia novas abordagens (maneira de escuta, percepção auditiva, por exemplo) que estavam lhe interessando?

*As necessidades “coletivas” surgiram no pós-guerra, isto é, no pós-duas-grandes guerras-mundiais (1914-1918/1939-1040). O “aggiornamento” cultural encetado pelas vanguardas do início do século 20 (futurismo/cubismo/cubofuturismo, dadaísmo, etc), antecipado por Mallarmé e seu poema inter-séculos (1887-1914), UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD, havia sido marginalizado não só pelas vicissitudes sofridas pelas Humanidade mas pelo fato de que os dois regimes ditatoriais derrotados, o nazifascismo e o comunismo stalinista, havia proscrito a arte moderna e perseguido muitos dos seus protagonistas, como defensores do que chamavam seja de “arte degenerada” seja de “arte decadente”. Havia que recuperar a informação mutilada, perdida ou sufocada. Foi o que ocorreu nos anos 50 com a poesia de ponta e com as demais artes. Em música, a recuperação da 2ª Escola de Viena, com relevo para a figura radical de Anton Webern, e a projeção das obras eletroacústicas e aleatórias. Em artes visuais com a ressurreição do experimentalismo e de artistas como Maliévitch (e toda a vanguarda russa, escondida nos porões dos museus da URSS), Mondrian, Duchamp e outros, a arquitetura de Gropius e Le Corbusier, o design da Bauhaus, fechada pelos nazistas. O que se procurou, basicamente, nas mais conscientes reflexões artísticas de várias partes do mundo, foi recuperar os fios da revolução rompidos pelos fatores que mencionei e continuar o trabalho iniciado no início do século, preparando as artes para confrontar-se com as novas tecnologias, que iriam eclodir nas décadas de 60 e 70, com o avanço da erra eletrônica, a TV, o vídeo, e por fim na nova fase tecnológica que estamos experimentando nas últimas décadas, em pleno desenvolvimento da comunicação digital.*

2) Todavia, respondendo a outras perguntas de ambas as entrevistas, o Senhor identifica claramente algumas diferenças básicas:

- a) A *Konkrete Poesie* era ligada muito mais ao aspecto sonoro do que àquele semântico, enquanto a estética de *Noigandres* tendia à valorização do aspecto semântico do poema, na sua relação com sonoridade e visualidade.

*Não creio que a Konkrete Poesie fosse ligada mais ao aspecto sonoro do que ao visual e ao semântico. Ao contrário. Os poemas de Gomringer sempre foram essencialmente visuais e de clara significação, e a preocupação com o sonorismo só surgiu mais tarde em poetas como o austríaco Ernst Jandl, neste caso com propósitos de sátira teatral minimalista, ou em autores periféricos em relação à poesia concreta, como Henry Chopin e os adeptos da “poésie sonore”, que passaram a praticar uma poesia mais radicada no dadaísmo, onde a semântica e o visual têm menor importância do que o som. As poéticas “verbivocovisuais”, que desde o início postulávamos, não pretendiam tornar independente o som vocabular ou fazer do poema uma performance voco-gestual, mas buscavam a materialização tridimensional da palavra poética nas suas dimensões visual, vocal e semântica simultaneamente. A primeira experiência nesse sentido foi o “poetamenos”, apresentado a quatro vezes combinadas com “slides” projetados dos poemas no Teatro de Arena de São Paulo em 1955.*

- b) A poética de *Noigandres* era extremamente rigorosa, enquanto a *Konkrete Poesie* estava bem longe de uma estruturação racional e da “luminosidade” do fragmento.

*Também não é esta exatamente a interpretação do meu pensamento. A poesia de Gomringer (o poeta europeu com quem mais nos identificamos) foi sempre muito rigorosa e funcional. A expansão do movimento é que suscitou de muitos autores (não de todos) a maior dispersão das exigências formais que postulávamos no início, assim como a banalização dos textos.*

- c) *Noigandres* começou a construir poemas mais complexos, a partir do início dos anos 60, utilizando o princípio do acaso, sob a influência da música aleatória de John Cage, a semiótica peirciana, e a reapropriação dos *readymade* de Duchamp.

*Sim, há exemplos numerosos dessa evolução. Poemas aleatórios, sob a influência de Cage, Stockhausen, Boulez e acima de todos do precedente “acaso” mallarmeano e da revelação dos manuscritos de “Le Livre”, o projeto permutacional de Mallarmé, divulgado por Jacques Scherer. Exemplos: os meus “acaso” e “cidadecitycité”, de 1963, a “torre de babel” de Décio, os “aleas” de Haroldo. Readymades eram vários dos “profilogramas” e “intraduções”, de minha autoria, o poema-dólar “Cr\$isto é a Solução” de Décio, e o seu “disenfórmio”, um anúncio de um poema farmacêutico para evitar problemas intestinais, que ele criou numa agência de publicidade e apresentou, como poema, num dos números da revista Invenção (e também em seu livro definitivo POESIA POIS É POESIA). Os poemas semióticos de Décio, Luiz Ângelo, Ronaldo Azeredo, assim como os nossos numerosos poemas inter-semióticos, respondem pelo interesse na obra de Peirce.*

- 3) Há outras diferenças fundamentais que o Senhor poderia identificar entre a poesia brasileira e aquela alemã? (considerando especificamente o período dos anos 60-70, sucessivo a fase “ortodoxa” do movimento paulista).

*Não vejo tantas diferenças. Pertencemos, todos, à mesma família, e o resto são considerações mais casuísticas, que têm a ver com o temperamento, o estilo, e a qualidade de cada um. Mas, sem dúvida, o período dos anos 60-70 deu um rumo diferente à nossa própria experiência poética.*

- 4) Enfim, o Senhor poderia fazer alguma hipótese sobre influências histórico-culturais, ou motivos etno-antropológicos específicos pelos quais os poetas brasileiros chegaram a desenvolver, considerando especificamente os poemas sonoros, certas formas poéticas (mais estruturadas, fragmentarias, isomórficas, ligadas ao aspecto semântico), diferentes das alemãs?

*Essa é uma pergunta muito complexa e que demandaria tempo e pesquisa de campo para responder. O que posso dizer é que de 1964 a 1985 o Brasil enfrentou a violência de uma ditadura militar, e que esta circunstância afetou profundamente a nossa produção e nos fez sair de uma postura puramente estrutural, mallarmaica, para uma posição mais participante, sob a égide da colocação de Maiakóvski: “sem forma revolucionária não pode haver poesia revolucionária”.*



- 5) O Senhor fala do interesse de alguns poucos “músicos contemporâneos” brasileiros (como Gilberto Mendes e Willy Correa de Oliveira), que procuraram encontrar isomorfismos estruturais para as composições que fizeram sobre seus poemas — BEBA COCA COLA e UM MOVIMENTO, de Décio, NASCE MORRE, de Haroldo, VAI E VEM, de José Lino Grünewald. Há algum registro deste mesmo interesse de musicalização por parte de autores estrangeiros com os quais vocês estavam em dialogo, como Boulez ou Stockhausen ou Cage? Se não, há um motivo particular para isso?

*Creio que o desconhecimento do idioma — no caso, o português, língua menos internacional — foi certamente um fator inibitório para a musicalização de nossos textos por autores estrangeiros. Uma rara exceção foi o compositor italiano Salvatore Sciarrino, que musicou os meus poemas “Pulsar” e “Quasar” na sua obra L'Alibi della parola.*

- 6) Como nasceu a ideia da poesia “concreta”? Foi somente uma translação em poesia da *musique concrète* de Schaeffer e das artes visuais de vanguarda? Ou foi importante também o próprio som da palavra “concreta”, que contém só consoantes surdas (além da uvular r) e dá assim a ideia da dureza e rudez do poema *presente* como objeto, da materialidade da palavra utilizada? Ou, talvez, o fato da palavra “concreta” ser praticamente idêntica em várias línguas, desde o alemão até o russo, respondendo assim à vontade internacionalista do movimento?

*Antes de Schaeffer ter usado a palavra “concrète” para a sua música, já estávamos ligado aos pintores e escultores paulistas do Grupo Ruptura, que conhecêramos em 1952, e que se intitulavam “concretos” ou “concretistas” a partir da expressão “concreta” introduzida por Van Doesburg e reposta em circulação por Max Bill, nos anos 40, com o objetivo específico de distingui-la da arte “abstrata”. Foi por aí que nos aproximamos desse título. Conhecíamos a obra de Schaeffer, mas preferíamos a de Boulez e Stockhausen, que eram mais exigentes e rigorosos, e não apenas pesquisadores intuitivos como o criador da “musique concrète”, de cuja exploratória chegaram a participar inicialmente*

aqueles dois compositores. A palavra estava no ar. Numa carta de 1955, Décio, que estava na Europa, me escreveu que a poesia de Cummings lhe parecia “concreta”. Estávamos nas vésperas do que se chamou EXPOSIÇÃO NACIONAL DE ARTE CONCRETA (Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, dezembro de 1956), onde exibimos poemas como “Tensão” e “Movimento” ao lado de pinturas e esculturas. Na verdade, eu já tinha feito uso da expressão nos anúncios da apresentação de poemas do “Poetamenos”, pelo Grupo Ars Nova, no Teatro de Arena em dezembro de 1955, onde se apresentaram três poemas do Poetamenos, executados a 4 vozes, com projeção dos poemas em slides — como pode ver do documento anexo, que os traz. Além disso, proclamei-a no texto que li em público antes da apresentação, e também num jornal literário de alunos da PUC chamado “Fórum”(outubro 1955). Não pude exemplificar com os textos de Poetamenos, porque exigiam cores, e isso encarecia a publicação. Sugeri ao Décio que chamássemos de “poesia concreta” às nossas novas produções. Pignatari estava na Europa e fora visitar a Hochschule für Gestaltung, em Ulm. Lá se encontrou, ainda em 1955, com Eugen Gomringer, não por acaso secretário de Max Bill, que em 1951 ganhara o prêmio de escultura da primeira bienal de São Paulo, com a escultura Unidade Tripartida. Gomringer lhe deu as suas “Constelações”, em troca de “Noigandres 2” (com os poemas em cores de Poetamenos). Mais adiante o poeta suíço-boliviano lhe falou da sua idéia de publicar uma antologia internacional com a nossa poesia. Décio propôs-lhe então que se chamasse “Poesia Concreta”. Gomringer acolheu a proposta, em carta, dizendo que pensara em utilizar a expressão, mas que antes preferira chamar os seus poemas de “constelações” (nós inicialmente os chamávamos de “ideogramas”). Essa é a pequena bio-história da “poesia concreta”. Anos depois, em 1968, Mary Ellen Solt publicou em sua antologia de poesia concreta um manifesto publicado, em sueco e em mimeógrafo, nos anos 50, por um poeta nascido em São Paulo, a nossa cidade — como um personagem de Borges — chamado Örvind Faelstrom... Seu manifesto, no entanto, embora com algumas referências comuns, e radicação vocabular em Schaeffer, nos pareceu confuso e sem a precisão e a proximidade que encontrávamos em Gomringer. Mais adiante Faelstrom se tornou mais propriamente conhecido pela pintura do que pela poesia.

## Interview with Franz Mon

### First letter

1. In 1955 the first encounter between E. Gomringer and the poets of the Brazilian *Noigandres* Group occurred. In 1959 the Brazilians also met Max Bense, the founder of the "Stuttgarter Gruppe". Did you ever come in contact with them?

*I knew the authors of the Noigandres group only indirectly. Eugen Gomringer started this connection in the Fifties and agreed with Haraldo (sic) de Campos on using the common term "concrete poetry" to define their works. Through Gomringer, the Noigandres group also became familiar to us.*

2. Which among their works do you know and which roused your interest the most?

*The first poems of the group that I came to know were the following:*

*Augusto de Campos:*

*De Poetamenos  
Sem um numero  
LUXO  
vonovelo  
colocaramas*

*Haraldo (sic) de Campos:*

*crystal  
Se nasce  
branco  
si len cio*

*Décio Pignatari:*

*Ra terra ter  
Beba coca cola  
LIFE  
Um movi  
hombre  
'organismos*

3. Could you identify any clear difference between your poetic production and that of the Noigandres Group?

*I have never reflected upon the “clear difference” in respect to the Noigandres group. Each poet makes his own things. The knowledge of the poems of other authors, who make something similar, confirms one’s own path. There is an international network of the authors of concrete poetry that Emmett Williams listed for the first time in 1967 in his “anthology of concrete poetry”.*

4. Which processes/principles of contemporary music (Cage, Stockhausen) most influenced you in the elaboration of your *Hörspiele* and *Lautgedichte*?

*John Cage was then a renowned stimulator for the approach to acoustic material.*

5. After 1964, the contact between the Brazilian and German concrete poetry groups definitively came to an end. Would you confirm this? Do you think that the dictatorship that began in Brazil in 1964 significantly contributed to this situation?

*The contact of German “concrete authors” was always parenthetical in the later years. This also depended on the external circumstances, and especially on the great spatial distance that made it difficult for personal exchange.*

*PS: regarding point 1, it could also be that Pignatari was the one through whom Gomringer came in contact with the Noigandres Group for the first time and with whom the common concept of “concrete poetry” was agreed on.*

## Second letter

Dear Professor Mon,

I was really pleased by your kind reply. Since you are interested in my work and you answered my previous letter quickly, I would like to pose you a few more questions.

- 1) Your “Sehtexte” are quite clearly distinct from your “Hörtexen“. The *Hörspiele* and *Artikulationen* have few or no graphic-visual peculiarities, while the “Sehtexte” were only rarely performed and recorded. However, it seems that the idea of a “verbivocovisuality” (Joyce and *Noigandres*), a poetic synesthesia, would be inapt to describe the nature of your poetic production. Would you agree with this statement? Would you say that the tendency to separate acoustic and visual aspects characterizes German *Konkrete Poesie* in general?
- 2) The poets of *Noigandres* repeatedly complained that the acoustic aspect of concrete poetry was quite often identified by critics as secondary with respect to the graphic/visual aspect. Would you affirm that this was the case also in the sphere of German *Konkrete Poesie*? In your opinion, was the actual importance of sound recognized?
- 3) The fact that sound is so essential for the description of the esthetic experience of concrete poetry implies intense corporal, perceptual participation by the listener. This seems to oppose the idea that *Konkrete Poesie* was a purely rational/mathematical poetic genre. Do you think that these physical and “irrational” features were significant aspects of *Konkrete Poesie*? How important is the body in the experience of your *Hörspiele* and *Artikulationen*?

\*

*My poetic works always had three phases: the verbal one of the texts, the vocal one of Lautgedichte and Hörspiele, the visual one of the word-images and Collages. In the performances they were always combined, and two compositional forms were always used.*

- *As for the “artikulationen”, some textual sequences were spoken live by mein addition to passages of Lautpoesie recorded on audiocassette and simultaneously playedback. The first performance occurred in Paris, at the Polyphonix Festival on June 14th 1985. 24 further performances later occurred in many cities, from Berlin and New York.*
- *During the public performances, some visual work was occasionally projected between the readings of the poems, so that the listener became at the same time a spectator. From this resulted the performance of the verbivocovisualized “Alphabetdiagramme”, an example of which I send you in a copy. In total, 15 performances of these works occurred.*

*The tradition of German concrete or experimental poetry has often been related to Futurism, Dadaism or Surrealism which were movements simultaneous to concrete art. The acoustic, sound-poetry processes were always already present. Hausmann and Schwitters were present. The poetry readings organized in numerous places in the Post WWII Germany also always served in the acoustic realization of poetry.*

*This is also connected with your 3<sup>rd</sup> question. Concrete/experimental poetics are actually based on rules, which in principle must be strictly followed and must be perceived in their peculiarity; but in the reading and/or listening of them, their materiality is also always present, which transforms the regularity in an associational, phantasmic way. Also, this poetry is sensual.*

*The Lautgedichte were recorded on tape. When two of these devices were available, some acoustic modifications were possible, which made a new perception of the piece possible. Other devices at that time were not available to us. The Hörspiele were recorded in the studios of radio stations.*

## Interview an Franz Mon

### Erster Brief

1. Im Jahr 1955 kam das erste Treffen von E. Gomringer mit den Dichtern von der Brasilianischen Noigandres-Gruppe zustande. Im Jahr 1959 trafen die Brasilianer auch den Begründer der „Stuttgarter Gruppe“ Max Bense; sind Sie mit Ihnen nie in Kontakt getreten?

*Die Autoren der Noigandres-Gruppe habe ich nur indirekt kennengelernt. Die Verbindung in de 50er Jahren hat zuerst Eugen Gomringer hergestellt und mit Haraldo (sic) de Campos vereinbart, gemeinsam den Begriff „konkrete Poesie“ für ihre Arbeiten zu verwenden. Durch Gomringer wurde die Noigandres-gruppe auch bei uns bekannt.*

2. Welche ihrer Werke kennen Sie und welche haben Ihr Interesse am meisten geweckt?

*Die ersten Poeme, die ich von der Gruppe kennenlernte, waren folgende:*

*Augusto de Campos:*

*De Poetamenos  
Sem um numero  
LUXO  
vo novelo  
colocaramas*

*Haraldo (sic) de Campos:*

*crystal  
Se nasce  
branco  
si len cio*

*Décio Pignatari:*

*Ra terra ter  
Beba coca cola  
LIFE  
Um movi  
hombre  
'organismos*

3. Könnten Sie irgendeinen klaren Unterschied zwischen Ihrem poetischen Schaffen und dem der Noigandres Gruppe konstatieren?

*Über den "klaren Unterschied" zur Noigandres-Gruppe habe ich mir nie Gedanken gemacht. Jeder macht seine Dinge. Die Kenntnis der Poeme anderer Autoren, die Ähnliches machen, bestätigt den eigenen Weg. Es gibt ein internationales Netz der Autoren konkreter Poesie, das Emmett Williams 1967 in seiner "anthology of concrete poetry" zum ersten Mal bekannt gemacht hat.*

4. Welche Prozesse/Grundlage der kontemporären Musik (Cage, Stockhausen) haben Sie bei der Ausarbeitung Ihrer Hörspiele oder Lautgedichte am meisten beeinflusst?

*John Cage war damals ein bemerkenswerter Anreger für den Umgang mit tönendem Material.*

5. Nach 1964 haben sich die Kontakten zwischen den Vertretern der Brasilianischen und der Deutschen konkreten Poesie definitiv verlaufen. Könnten Sie das bestätigen? Meinen Sie, dass die Diktatur die 1964 in Brasilien begonnen hat, im Wesentlichen dazu beigetragen hat?

*Der Kontakt deutscher "konkreter" Autoren war in den späteren Jahren immer sehr beiläufig. Das lag auch an den äußeren Umständen, vor allem an der großen räumlichen Entfernung, die persönlichen Austausch erschwerte.*

*PS: zu Punkt 1, es könnte auch sein, dass es Pignatari war, mit dem Gomringer damals den ersten Kontakt zur Noigandres-Gruppe hatte und den gemeinsamen Begriff konkrete Poesie vereinbarte.*



## Zweiter Brief

Sehr geehrter Herr Professor Mon,

ich habe mich sehr über Ihre Antwort gefreut. Und da Sie sich für meine Arbeit interessiert haben und meinen Brief so schnell beantwortet haben, würde ich mir erlauben, Ihnen noch ein paar weitere Fragen zu stellen.

- 1) Ihre „Sehtexte“ sind von Ihren „Hörtexten“ ziemlich klar abzugrenzen; die *Hörspiele* und *Artikulationen* haben wenige oder überhaupt keine graphischen/visuellen Besonderheiten, während die „Sehtexte“ nur selten deklamiert und aufgezeichnet wurden. Doch es scheint so, als würde sich die Idee einer „verbivocovisualität“ (Joyce und *Noigandres*), einer poetischen Synesthesie, als ungeeignet erweisen, um die Natur Ihres poetischen Schaffens zu beschreiben. Können Sie dem zustimmen? Würden Sie sagen, dass die Tendenz zur Aufteilung zwischen Hör- und Sehtexte die deutsche Konkrete Poesie allgemein kennzeichnet?
- 2) Die Dichter von *Noigandres* haben mehrmals beklagt, dass der akustische Aspekt der Konkreten Poesie oft von der Kritik als sekundär gegenüber dem graphischen/visuellen identifiziert wurde. Würden Sie behaupten, dass dasselbe auch im Bereich der deutschen Konkreten Poesie passierte? Wurde die eigentliche Wichtigkeit des Klangs ihrer Meinung nach erkannt?
- 3) Dass der Klang zur Beschreibung der ästhetischen Erfahrung der Konkreten Poesie so wesentlich ist, impliziert eine starke körperliche, wahrnehmende Beteiligung des Empfängers. Das scheint der Idee zu widersprechen, dass die Konkrete Poesie so etwas wie ein rein rationales/mathematisches poetisches Genre sei. Meinen Sie, dass die Konkrete Poesie wichtige körperliche und „irrationale“ Merkmale hat? Wie wichtig ist der *Körper* beim Erfahren Ihrer Hörspiele und Artikulationen?

\*

*Meine poetischen Arbeiten sind immer in drei Phasen verlaufen: eine verbale der Texte, eine vokale der Lautgedichte und Hörspiele, eine visuelle der Wortbilder und Collagen. In Performances sind sie immer wieder kombiniert worden, dabei sind immer wieder zwei Kompositionsformen verwendet worden:*

- *Bei den „artikulationen“ wrden live von mir Textsequenzen gesprochen zu simultan im Plazback-Verfahren verlaufenden, auf Kasette gespeicherten Lautpoesiepassagen.*

*Die erste Vorführung war beim Festival Polyphonix am 14.6.1985 in Paris. Es folgten im Laufe der weitere 24 Vorführungen in vielen Städten zwischen Berlin und New York*

- *Bei öffentlichen Lesungen sind immer wieder gelegentlich visuelle Arbeiten zwischen die Poeme projiziert worden, so dass die Zuhörer zugleich Zuschauer wurde. Daraus ergab sich auch die Performance der verbivocovisualisierten „Alphabetdiagramme“, von denen ich Ihnen in Kopie ein Beispiel beilege. Insgesamt haben sich 15 Vorführungen dieser Arbeiten ergeben.*

*Die poetologische Tradition der Deutschsprachigen Autoren der konkreten bzw. experimentellen Poesie bezieht sich in vielen Fällen auf futuristische, dadaistische, surrealistische Vorbilder neben den Modellen der konkreten Kunst. Dabei waren die akustischen, lautpoetischen Verfahren schon immer mit dabei. Hausmann und Schwitterswaren präsent. Die im Deutschland der Nachkriegszeit an zahlreichen Orten veranstalteten Dichterlesungen dienten immer auch der akustischen Vergegenwärtigung der Poesie.*

*Damit hängt auch Ihre 3. Frage zusammen. Die Poetik der konkreten/experimentellen Poesie basiert zwar auf Regelvorgaben, die im Prinzip strikt zu verfolgen sind und in ihrer Eigenart wahrgenommen werden sollen, doch ist immer auch ihre Materialität beim Lesen und/oder Hören mit im Spiel, die die Regularität assoziativ, phantasmisch transformiert. Auch diese Poesie ist sinnlich.*

*Auch die Laugedichte sind mit Hilfe des Tonbandgeräts fixiert worden Wenn zwei dieser Geräte verfügbar waren, ließen sich akustische Veränderungen herstellen, die eine neue Wahrnehmung des Stückes ermöglichten. Andere Apparaturen standen uns damals gar nicht zur Verfügung. Die Hörspiele sind in den Studios der Rundfunkanstalten entstanden.*



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