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Spanish Composers within and without Borders: On National Belonging in the Work of Ramon Lazkano and Carlos de Castellarnau

Annelies Fryberger and Luis Velasco-Pufleau

This article looks at two Spanish composers active in France—Carlos de Castellarnau and Ramon Lazkano—to develop a reflection about how national belonging is used in contemporary art music, specifically for its evaluation and the discourses that are created around it. We see that despite both composers rejecting any essentialist definition of themselves as 'Spanish', 'Basque', or 'Catalan' composers, these labels are continually used to describe them and their music, even though these labels have no specific aesthetic meaning. We reflect on why national origin is used to categorise composers, even in light of their typically transnational career paths. The conclusion addresses the tension between universalism and authenticity that is present when evaluating the work of composers who have followed migratory paths.

Keywords: Aesthetic Evaluation; Carlos de Castellarnau; Cosmopolitanism; Identity; Nationality; Ramon Lazkano; Spain

Introduction

What exactly are we doing when we assign a national label—i.e. 'Spanish'—to a composer? What information does this label communicate, and how does it affect the way a composer is evaluated within the context of the international milieu of contemporary art music? Such are the questions that we will explore in this text, based on interviews with two composers originally from Spain and now living in France: Ramon Lazkano (b. San Sebastián, 1968) and Carlos de Castellarnau (b. Tarragona, 1977). These labels are largely unquestioned in the field of contemporary art music, for two possible reasons. First, the traditional division between historical musicology and ethnomusicology (Heile 2015) and second, because of the 'ideology of universalism [and] a disavowal of cultural difference, which is arguably foundational for Western classical

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music' (*Ibid.*). Thus, Sarah Collins and Dana Gooley argue that recent musicology takes an implicit and non-reflexive, cosmopolitan stance in its desire, among others, to 'liberate the field from reified national categories' (Collins and Gooley 2016, 144). Our goal here, then, is to examine precisely what is suppressed in such a stance, that is to say, the way national labels are used, negotiated, and interpreted in this context, despite the value placed on musical identity being forged in international aesthetic networks.

In one of the rare texts to take up directly the question of nationality and how it is used in the context of contemporary art music, anthropologist Yara El-Ghadban (2009), in a discussion of the postcolonial dimensions of contemporary Western art music, states that national identity is 'often used to categorize participants in competitions, to situate them, despite their transnational biographies, outside what are conceived to be the centers of Western art music' (141). Notwithstanding composers' transnational biographies and musical aesthetics, musical production is still often seen to be determined by national heritage or regional identity. However, composers themselves often challenge the determinism inherent in these national labels, and instead claim aesthetic affiliations with other, better-established, contemporary art music composers or movements, as well as with other musical traditions outside of Western art music.

The composers that we will address in the present text have common points in their trajectories: both come from Spanish regions with a strong 'national' identity (the Basque country and Catalonia, respectively, which are both cultural and linguistic cross-border regions, with territory in both France and Spain); both studied at the *Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris* after initial musical studies in Spain (respectively San Sebastián and Barcelona); both have been supported by Parisian institutions. However, de Castellarnau is at the beginning of his career. He was studying composition in Barcelona at the *Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya* when he came to Paris as an Erasmus student. He finished the Cursus composition courses at IRCAM in 2015 and at the time of this writing was about to complete a Master's degree in musicology at the University of Paris VIII. His music has been performed internationally.

Ramon Lazkano[1] is currently more established in France than de Castellarnau. After he obtained his composition degree at the CNSMDP in 1990, he went to Montreal in order to continue his studies in composition. He then came back to Paris and did a master's degree at the *École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*. He was composer-in-residence at the Villa Medici (2000–02), at the festival MUSICA Strasbourg in 1999 and with the ensemble 2e2m in 2011, and was the headline composer for the 2016 edition of the Festival d'Automne à Paris. In addition, he continues to be very active in the Basque country, where he teaches composition at the Basque Country Conservatory (Musikene—*Centro Superior de Música del País Vasco*) in San Sebastián and played an important role in contemporary music programming decisions for the Quincena de San Sebastián festival. He was the director of the Musikagileak, a nonprofit association and full associate member of the International Society for

Contemporary Music (ISCM), which develops and promotes the work of composers and performers living or involved in the musical life of the Basque country (both Spanish and French).[2] On the whole, his primary residence is Paris, but he continues to bear a strong influence on the contemporary art music scene of his home region.

In France, both are marketed with the strong regional identity of their origins, at times despite the discomfort or sense of resignation this can provoke in both. This effect is more striking for Ramon Lazkano, most likely for the simple reason that he has lived in Paris for more than 25 years and is currently more visible in the French context. More has been written about him at this point, related especially to his role as composer-in-residence for prominent festivals and ensembles, a fact that has given the field of contemporary art music in France the opportunity to settle on a niche to label him: the representative of the 'Basque soul' (Festival d'Automne à Paris 2016a, 2016b; Laborde 2011). For Carlos de Castellarnau, this identification work remains to be done as he makes a career for himself, but it seems likely that his Catalan origins will be used to distinguish him.

This article is structured as follows. We begin with a reflection on how nationality and musical aesthetics come to be confounded by evoking the theoretical frameworks developed by philosopher Giacomo Marramao (2012) and musicologist Marc Gidal (2010). Mobilising Marramao's notion of 'shared borders', we then examine how the two composers at hand have forged an artistic identity within this milieu, given the tensions created by pigeonholing based on national origins, referring in particular to nation-states, in symbolic centres of contemporary art music. This section discusses specifically musical aesthetics, education, and migration, as well as the use of native language in titles of musical pieces by the two composers studied here. An analysis of how national labels are used in the field of international contemporary art music then follows, especially when evaluating the work of Ramon Lazkano and Carlos de Castellarnau. Our conclusion highlights the inexorable paradox created by using nationality to distinguish composers in the field of international contemporary art music.

On Composer Identity: Atopicality, Belonging, and Symbolic Centres

Giacomo Marramao sees our present time as one marked by a 'double injunction, […] a conflictive co-existence or co-habitation of two imperatives: the imperative of atopicality ([…] "non-places" […]) and that of belonging (the compensatory need for community identity manifested in the claiming of stable places and dwellings)' (2012, 70). This tension is clearly present in international contemporary art music: this music exists in the 'place-events' (Van Vlasselaer 2003) of international festivals or in the international careers of performers and ensembles, while composers are asked to present an authentic, situated identity. This atopicality defines the historic centres of international contemporary art music, in that Vienna, Paris, Berlin, New York, etc. represent ideas, people, and movements that exist outside the temporality and bounded nature of these cities themselves. They are symbolic centres, in the sense

that Marramao (2012) defines them: 'a center is not a fixed point but a ubiquitous function that cannot be located: an *á-topon*, precisely a non-place, a central meaning which is never present in an absolute way, outside of a *system of differences*' (71, emphasis in the original). Hereby we encounter the crux of the argument: the centre defines the periphery, and vice-versa. This distinction in terms of centre/periphery has been maintained in contemporary art music, despite being highly problematic.[3] Thus, the predominant view is that composers approach these symbolic centres via musical affinities,[4] and maintain them through their differences to them. To be part of contemporary art music networks, composers must be affiliated, at least at one point in their careers, with one or more of their multiple symbolic 'centres', identified primarily with Western Europe and North America. This is a feature of this iteration of a transnational, occupational culture, linked to a transnational job market (Gidal 2010, 46).

Marc Gidal approaches this same issue with a toolbox that complements the theories of Marramao. He looks at the tension between multiculturalism and universalism in the self-identity of so-called 'Latin-American' composers in the United States. Aesthetic universalism represents the atopicality presented above, in that 'the discourse of universalism in art-music institutions has unhitched the canon of composers from their cultural and national contexts, and treats them as superhuman, supranational, and thus universal geniuses' (Gidal 2010, 45). This vision implies an intentional blindness to cultural differences and their possible contribution to universal aesthetics, which we can see clearly reflected, for example, in the reception of Luigi Nono's *Polifonica-Monodia-Ritmica,* premiered at the Darmstadt *Ferienkurse* in 1951 (Iddon 2013). Martin Iddon shows how Nono used Brazilian rhythms and Edgard Varèse's 'emancipation of percussion' as his primary points of departure for this piece (43). However, listeners were primed to see the links between the still, austere piece of Nono and the music of Webern (45). This comparison with Webern and twelve-tone compositional techniques was used to elevate Nono's work, and was meant as high praise, despite this interpretation being clearly misplaced upon closer analysis of the score and Nono's declarations.[5] For our purposes here, this example shows how a universalist discourse is used to bring a composer into the canon while denying the situated, cultural influences used in its creation. In Gidal's (2010) words, aesthetic universalism aims to 'evaluate all music on presumably equal terms [and] ignores the specific backgrounds of composers as well as its inherent Eurocentrism' (69). We see here a clear critique of the implicit cosmopolitan stance of recent musicology, as described by Collins and Gooley (2016).

Gidal opposes this universalising tendency with what he calls 'American multiculturalism', which 'justifies labeling composers and their music as "Latin American" (or by national origin) no matter how the composers self-identify and regardless of how "Latin American" their music sounds' (69). This kind of approach is certainly not new, and the 'Latin American' category used can be tracked back at least to the establishment of the International Composers' Guild and the Pan American Association of Composers in the 1920s and 1930s. At that time, a select few Latin American

composers, such as the Mexican composer Carlos Chávez (b. Mexico, 1899–1978), represented for American composers and critics 'new paths for a Pan-American musical identity, as opposed to the European identity from which they also wanted to be differentiated and emancipated' (Velasco Pufleau 2012, 6). Thus, in the case of Chávez, despite his short list of works with a 'native' aesthetic, he was able to forge and benefit from 'an image of a profoundly Mexican modern composer, bearer of a characteristic mestizo identity of the American continent' (*Ibid.*).

In the idea of 'American multiculturalism', Marramao's opposing imperative of 'belonging' applies: multiculturalism implies rooting music in a cultural context, regardless of how abstract it may be. Gidal provides clear examples in which reception takes the opposite turn to what we saw in the case of Nono above. In his analysis of the reception of *Livro dos Sonhos* by Brazilian composer Felipe Lara, he states:

> Everyone heard drama in Lara's piece, but it remains unclear the extent to which it reflects a Brazilian aesthetic, Lara's personality or tastes, the executions of the performers, expectations of various listeners, or the circumstances of the commission. It appears that any claim that Lara's work sounds 'Brazilian' or 'Latin American' is impossible to justify, and may merely reflect a specific agenda or unconscious bias. (Gidal 2010, 67)

Thus, for a composer in the Darmstadt 'school' in the 1950s, Brazilian influence will be continually overlooked, whereas for a Brazilian composer in the United States, this influence will be sought at every turn. Universalism can, in this sense, offer a refuge from cultural pigeonholing (Gidal 2010, 69), but for composers coming from elsewhere to the symbolic centres for contemporary art music, a constant tension is present between these two forces.

Shared Borders, Transnational Aesthetics, and Migration

With Giacomo Marramao, we will approach the subject of difference using the notion of 'border'. For him, 'alongside the meaning of final margin, of terminal line, *con-fine* [border] recalls the sense of a *shared* border […] with alterity or the extraneous. The border [*confine*] is not only the limit, but the shared limit' (Marramao 2012, 185–186). With this concept of shared borders, we avoid an essentialist perspective, and can instead examine how composers forge an identity using difference and shared borders. This process changes at different points in composers' careers, which does not mean they contradict former statements or positions; composers can and do feel affinities with multiple collectivities at any given time (Gidal 2010, 70). Thus, we will examine what kinds of shared limits and borders are relevant for Lazkano and de Castellarnau, as they consider themselves to be part of the 'Spanish' and 'composer' collectivities (and others), labels which may seem overly simplistic or confusing given their transnational biographies and the fact that they pursue their compositional careers primarily in France.

Before going further, we need to discuss the idea of the 'nation' as it is understood here. Indeed, when we refer to a 'Spanish composer', the identity that is evoked is related to the nation-state of Spain, whereas a 'Basque' or 'Catalan' composer would refer to a region. However, for many within these regions, their region is indeed a nation. Thus, calling this a regional identity is taking the perspective of the hegemonic nation-state, and does not necessarily reflect the perspective of its inhabitants.[6]

A qualitative analysis of our interviews shows that these composers refuse an essentialising identification based only on national considerations.[7] Even though they have ties with other Spanish composers established inside or outside Spain, they consider their identity to be transnational, rooted in a logic of geographic and symbolic shared borders: musical aesthetics, education, migration, and language, among others. These lines change or move in different contexts: a Basque or Catalan composer could feel or be defined first as Spanish outside of Spain, but regional identity could be highlighted in certain situations, inside Spain or outside, when regional issues matter. While 'the nation is only one among many possible entities or communities to which music can establish a sense of belonging' (Collins and Gooley 2016, 139), 'national' or 'regional' belongings constitute for both Lazkano and Castellarnau a continual negotiation in which they often actively participate. For example, despite the fact that de Castellarnau does not feel strong separatist convictions, he feels 'closer to the Catalan identity than to a general Spanish identity', as he feels closer to the Catalan network of composers. Lazkano feels a strong connection to his Basque heritage, primarily for reasons of language and emotional ties created during his childhood and youth, but he does not highlight this when talking about his music. One could argue that his use of Basque titles would contradict this, but we will come back to this point.

Furthermore, for de Castellarnau, the impossibility of classifying composers by nationality is characteristic of the musical aesthetics of our time: 'It is true that on an aesthetic level, we cannot classify composers by nationality. But that's part of musical language today: there are a thousand musical languages, each composer is almost a language'. For these two composers, musical aesthetics have a more significant role to play than nationality in their development as composers, as, more generally, they structure composers' identification to established centres of the contemporary art music milieu. By this logic, the category of 'European composer', for example, makes sense only in opposition to another category, such as that of 'North American composer'. De Castellarnau explains:

> As a composer you belong to aesthetic trends that have nothing to do with nationality. Musically I can feel more European than American, because I am less touched by American music—minimalism, for example. So I am European, in opposition to the United States.

In this sense, the category 'Spanish composer' conflates two unrelated terms, as 'Spanish' does not call to mind specific, national aesthetic schools. Thus, the use of

'Spanish' here is irrelevant, and cannot actually qualify the noun that follows, whereas 'European' does have this ability when its antithesis is either explicitly or implicitly understood. In the French context, 'Spanish composer' can best be understood as a negation ('not-French'), but seeing it this way adds very little, if anything at all, to an understanding of what our ears might perceive.

Education can be a strong link between composers, as it is related to musical aesthetics and (trans)national trajectories. Even if de Castellarnau believes that 'there is no Catalan school of composition, it is a human network, not an aesthetic one', experiencing the same education means that 'we have some things in common: for example, the music we listened to in Spain is not the same as in France'. Shared educational trajectories and friendships matter not only amongst composers, but also in their relationships with performers. Lazkano remembers how satisfying it was to work with the members of the Quatuor Diotima—which premiered his string quartets *Lurralde* (2011) and *Etze* (2017). They are friends, having met when students at the CNSMDP: 'I believe that when you have a relationship of friendship, of affection with people, they perform your music in a certain way. I really enjoy that, I find it very fulfilling'. In this case, elective affinities derive from a shared history, mutual respect, and friendship, and not from national considerations.

In the case of both Lazkano and de Castellarnau, education is linked to transnational career paths pursued in order to have access to broader resources, networks, and infrastructures of recognised music capitals or centres. However, regional or national ties can still be important, especially when a considerable number of regional composers are established abroad, creating a new transnational network. De Castellarnau asserts:

> I feel close to the people [Catalan composers] around me, such as Hèctor Parra and Joan Magrané.[8] Today, in Catalonia, and particularly in Barcelona, there is an explosion of young composers. This creates a network, even though we are almost all abroad. There are very few who stayed in Barcelona.

This transnational network of Spanish composers would constitute a Spain beyond Spain; a transnational, occupational culture which exists in different European countries and has not only aesthetic and artistic dimensions, but also creates solidarity and professional alliances.

Following this idea, we argue that migration or transnational trajectories can have at least two main repercussions in composers' careers. The first repercussion is that migration can limit access to national resources and institutions from their home country, because the composers evolve in a new milieu, forging new alliances and developing new networks. Lazkano remarks:

> [Spanish composers] who are successful abroad are not supported [by Spanish institutions] yet there is an enormous presence, a huge activity of local composers, such as in Madrid, but they are not necessarily played outside of Spain; or when they are, this activity is supported by the ministry.

Lazkano is not describing here his own situation, but rather making a more general remark on the resources available to his colleagues. This perceived loss of resources in the home country is offset by the second repercussion, which is that migration gives composers the hope of accessing new resources, networks, and professional alliances, such as international artistic residencies and collaborations with new ensembles and institutions.

Questions of migration inevitably bring up issues of language, and the relationship these composers have to their native languages impacts both private and professional spheres, as well as the way these composers are received by the public, institutions, and the media. Ramon Lazkano gives his pieces almost exclusively titles in Basque, while Carlos de Castellarnau uses Catalan, Spanish, or Latin—he is freer in his use of language. Employing their native languages for titles is seen as very natural to both, while others can be led to see this usage as a statement, especially given the minority status of the Basque and Catalan languages. As de Castellarnau says, simply, 'Titles in Catalan? It's my language. I like using titles in my language. That's it, there's no other reason'. However, a title in these languages can be perceived by actors of the contemporary art music field as much more politically charged than, say, an English-speaking composer using English (or German or French) for his or her titles. Language is highly political, and especially so in France and Spain, where the use of regional languages, Basque and Catalan among them, was scorned by officials and almost erased from the public sphere in the not-so-distant past, in an effort to standardise the French and Spanish languages. Political, but also deeply intimate, as Lazkano asserts:

> For me it's a question of feeling, because these words have a different resonance for me: it's the language I used to put words to my first feelings. It's my language of childhood. […] It allows me to have a relationship that's more intimate, more private, a bit secret, [… and] to keep a private connection between me and the names I give to the music I make.

His titles are not necessarily read this way, however, and Lazkano is acutely aware of the impact his Basque titles can have in different contexts. He notes a distinctly different perception in the Basque country as compared to Paris:

> In the Basque country, they love it that I give Basque titles to my pieces, because they see it as proof of attachment, devotion, loyalty to my roots, etc. I've never thought of it that way. […] In Paris, I have friends who have said the opposite: 'why do you use these Basque titles, which are impossible to remember, everybody forgets them, we don't know what to call your pieces' … It's more than just, 'we don't know what that means', it's 'we can't remember it, […] so we forget. When we talk about your pieces, we don't know what to call them, so we end up saying 'it was the piece for lyric ensemble'. You could also see this in ideological terms, one could say: 'we're asking you to give up something that belongs to you, […] that is part of you'.

It is significant to see how this quote belies a feeling of entitlement and an accusatory tone on the part of his Parisian audiences, who feel that the composer should give them

titles that they can use more easily. This is of course the composer's reconstruction of this sentiment, so it is difficult to say what the underlying intent of his interlocutors was, but Lazkano also refers to the Basque language as having a 'secret' quality to it, since a relatively small number of people speak it, and so perhaps there is a feeling on the part of his audience of being excluded from something to which only he has access. This quote also points to one feature of titles that is sometimes forgotten: they are often discussed regarding their ability to elucidate or muddle an interpretation of a given piece, but they also, and perhaps primarily, serve the purpose of representing the piece such that it can circulate in oral and written forms. It is this purpose that Lazkano's titles do not serve for a non-Basque-speaking audience. Minority languages by nature are not widely understood, so they exacerbate an insider/outsider division that is present with any language, and thereby their use is seen as more political than what may be intended (May 2011, 132–174).

Why Do We Need National Identity at All?

Once we have understood the constantly negotiated and contested nature of national or regional identification in the context of international contemporary art music milieu, the question arises: why do we continue to use these categories at all when describing composers? This is not the only context where the notion of the nation is questioned: Eric J. Hobsbawm (1990) goes so far as to say that notions of national identity, specifically in the form of nationalism, require 'too much belief in what is patently not so' (13). The ability of these labels to explain the musical production of different individuals is minimal, if not non-existent, so what is their role in the international field of contemporary art music? Upon analysis of the two cases at hand, it becomes clear that national identification is still given explanatory power, despite being constantly questioned. In Lazkano's words:

> A national label gives an idea of the [musical] aesthetic. When we say 'French', we think of Berlioz, Debussy, Ravel. It's as if calling someone French excludes the possibility of aesthetic plurality. And when you're a Spanish composer, people also expect something.

Part of the problem, of course, is that listening is not the only way we interact with music: we talk and write about it, too, and language has this peculiar habit of categorising and labelling in ways that are unavoidable. It is in this search to make sense of music through the medium of language that problems arise, particularly with regard to using language to market music. Publicity aims to be memorable, distinctive, and understandable, and people can easily latch onto categories such as nationality in such a context. When Ramon Lazkano was the headline composer for the Festival d'Automne à Paris in 2016, this issue came full circle:

> 'What should we write? Basque composer? Spanish composer? What should we do'? And I said, 'Nothing! Just write composer. Why do we have to be something else? Why do I have to nuance the fact that I'm a composer with geographic affiliation,

> identity, statements, why?' […] You would never ask a French composer why he says that he's French. That question only gets asked to people who are in a minority, or people whose identity is unclear or unrecognised, etc. In that case, people ask, 'Why do you say that? Why don't you accept that you're something other than what you are?' […] The person who asks that question is going to feel comforted in their closed view of the world. It's easier that way.

Lazkano was billed as a Basque composer for this festival, and that identity played heavily in the marketing and programming associated with him in the cycle *L'âme basque, espace de tous les imaginaires* (which we could translate as 'The Basque soul, a space for imagination') (Festival d'Automne à Paris 2016a, 2016b), despite his obvious discomfort with this label. He clearly sees the need to categorise people in this way as deriving from a conservative worldview that is shaken by blurred lines and the complexity of reality. It is striking, then, to see how the field of international contemporary art music deals with this complexity: it is a constant push-and-pull between efforts to shake free of labels and a strong tendency to cling to these same labels in order to make sense of the complex aesthetic subjectivities present therein. It is as if this aesthetic multiplicity and intricacy actually reinforces the use of simplifying labels (nationality, gender, institutional affiliations, etc.).

These labels are then, paradoxically, used as a lens for interpreting the music produced, music that is precisely seeking to escape the simplicity of such labels. This interpretative work can be carried to the extreme, for example:

> At IRCAM, I was introduced to a group of students, and the person said, 'He's Basque, and in his music, we can find traces of Basque folklore'. In my music, there are zero traces of Basque folklore, at least consciously—perhaps there are some unconsciously. But the simple fact […] of referring to oneself as a bearer of a cultural, linguistic, or territorial identity, that inevitably has an impact on the work one produces. It's dreadful.

It seems to be impossible to set these labels aside once the game of interpreting, explaining, and marketing a musical work begins. They indeed have an inexorable, inescapable quality, as de Castellarnau says: 'There's nothing you can do, I'm seen as Spanish'. In another context, the Mexican composer José Luis Hurtado asserts that 'Latin American composers' is a flag, an advertisement. 'Although I don't want people thinking about that, it's something I cannot avoid' (quoted in Gidal 2010, 41). These quotes demonstrate how seductive, and yet deceptive, these labels can be, and beg the question: Is it a good use of a musicologist's time to search for traces of Basque folklore in Ramon Lazkano's music? What may be the forest we are missing when looking for such trees?

There is a stark difference in how national or regional labels are used by these composers and how they are used by forces that are seen as external to them. Both Lazkano and de Castellarnau personally identify at different points and in different ways with the labels 'European', 'Spanish', 'Basque', 'Catalan', and others, but they don't use

these labels to explain their music, contrary to external interpretations. The externality of this kind of interpretation can be seen here:

> […] if you don't put anything, someone will come along and add [the Basque label]. It's an incredible reflex. […] I gave my point of view, and then it's the marketing department, journalists, not me. I don't call myself a Basque composer. I say that I'm Basque, and that I'm a composer, but that's not the same thing.

This statement reflects a desire to be evaluated using universal criteria which foreground 'the idiosyncracies of individual expression rather than social groups' (Gidal 2010, 42). This very desire seems to be essential for being included in the field of contemporary art music—the contrary, a desire to be evaluated with regional, ethnic, or cultural considerations in mind, would probably force an individual into another milieu, closer to world music or demarcated regionalist or nationalist 'traditional' folk music genres.

It is easier to make these observations when looking at the case of Ramon Lazkano, as compared to Carlos de Castellarnau, because of the fact that they are at different stages of their careers. Significantly more effort has been made to interpret, explain, and market the music of Lazkano, because of his comparably greater visibility. De Castellarnau is still looking for opportunities to have his music interpreted, and thus the effects we have discussed here are less evident in his case. He sees something different at work in the way people tend to label him as Catalan in a French, and specifically Parisian, context. His explanation is that 'people see me primarily as Catalan here, also because there's an awareness in Paris of Catalan issues, since people here are affected, too—after all, part of [Catalonia] is in France'. This remark is rather enlightening on his part, in that it shows his desire to demonstrate how his identity is not something that separates him from his Parisian colleagues, but is actually something they share, given the cross-border nature of this region.

Carlos de Castellarnau immigrated to France more recently than Lazkano, yet both still have ties to Spanish networks of composers. Lazkano, in particular, has very strong ties to networks of composers and performers there, through his teaching at Musikene and his role in the Quincena de San Sebastián festival, among other activities. De Castellarnau evoked the issue of how his work is evaluated differently in these two national contexts, especially shortly after leaving Barcelona for Paris:

> Once, when I sent my piece for Cursus II [final composition course at IRCAM] to my professor at the ESMUC, his critique was that it had a 'Parisian sound'. […] Perhaps this is because my music is very influenced by electronics—over there, there's not a lot of electronics—which is historically related to France and in particular to Paris.

The technological stamp of IRCAM is interpreted as Parisian in this case, which shows the double bind in which a composer with de Castellarnau's background and professional trajectory may find himself. On the one hand, he assimilates the codes of

his adopted professional context, and on the other, he is asked to stay true to his roots in some fashion. This kind of authenticity is something that is often required of composers from elsewhere, as Ramon Lazkano explains:

> Indeed, all else being equal, it is much more difficult to gain recognition and launch an artistic career, especially in music, when you're Spanish, as compared to being Austrian or German. […] Not only is Spain less wealthy, but people expect something different from a Spaniard, and, especially, his work is going to be judged by a different yardstick, because of his origins, his national epithet; we're going to measure differently the work of one person or another for this reason. Without these markers, his work isn't authentic, and the judgement it will receive will not be as benevolent. Either the work has the markers we expect to find or it doesn't, and in the latter case we are not going to be as generous.

The historic and hegemonic centres for contemporary art music evoked here by Lazkano bring to mind the imperative of atopicality purported by Marramao (2012). These become 'non-places' in a certain sense, because the composers from them are not required to display signs of belonging as composers from elsewhere are, also reflected in the tendency of a universalising discourse to treat canonical composers as divorced from cultural and national contexts (Gidal 2010, 45). This reality precisely describes the catch-22 in which de Castellarnau finds himself at this point in his career, where his reputation is not yet solidly established: in Marramao's terms, he is pulled between the imperative of atopicality, of circulating in the non-places of contemporary art music, and the imperative of demonstrating belonging. He can claim that aesthetics and techniques of art-music composition are universal or transnational, and thereby avoid being categorised with national or regional labels, but these labels are inevitably waiting just around the corner, ready to explain his identity and his music. We see therein the consequence of anthropologist Yara El-Ghadban's conclusion, that 'music, no matter how transnationalized, can no more escape territoriality than identity can escape politics, because the composers are presented in the forum as representatives of their countries' (2009, 156).

Closing thoughts: Paradox

We cannot choose where we are born—this is an immutable given of all our biographies, in the normal course of events. Irrespective of transnational biographies and settling outside their home countries, nationality at birth remains an essential characteristic of the aesthetic evaluation and reception of a composer's work. Furthermore, there is a generally accepted idea that this factor has an impact on the music composers write, in a similar way to gender (Gann 2009), either explicitly or in an involuntary or unconscious way. It is because the musical aesthetic of a composer, as Georgina Born argues, is generally seen 'as an essential extension of the self, almost beyond conscious reach, and integrity is gauged by the artist's determined commitment to this aesthetic' (1995, 14). Thus, we tend to judge a composer's aesthetic based on how it reflects the

composer's specific subjectivity and biography, and national origin is inevitably folded into this mix.

This point highlights an evaluative paradox, in that composers from outside the symbolic centres of contemporary art music want to exist and legitimate their position without (necessarily) being seen as exotic or foreign. This paradox is described clearly by Marc Gidal in his discussion of the Latin-American composers collective Álta Voz in the USA: 'They want to promote Latin America and advertise themselves as Latin American composers, yet [do] not want audiences to think about Latin America while listening to the music' (2010, 63). This point brings us again to the constant tension between the desire to be evaluated using universal criteria, to 'let the music speak for itself' (Gidal 2010, 63 and 66), and the need to differentiate oneself in order to have one's voice heard. We can hear a plea for the former in the words of Lazkano, for whom a composer's music is more important than the discourses built around it:

> In any case, the essential thing is the work, what is made, it's the music you compose. In the end, that's the only thing that has any meaning. If I think of giving my life meaning, that's where it comes from … trying to find the way to do so in the best way for my sensibilities, my thinking, my way of understanding the world. That's the only way, I think.

Lazkano's is an entirely coherent, necessary perspective for a composer in the field of contemporary art music, but his work, and the work of the field, is also to find a place for composers and their works. In the current state of contemporary international art music, a myriad of hardly universal criteria are used to do this work (Fryberger 2015, 2016). Lazkano and de Castellarnau have chosen thus far not to capitalise explicitly, as it were, on their origins, but this does not mean that they are not aware of the potential value of their identity as 'others' in the French new music scene. To be a member of this scene, one must eschew heteronomous criteria, such as nationality, and aspire instead to be judged by 'universal' criteria. This is part of the identity of the genre itself. The emphasis on national identity, which we have described here as coming mainly from external forces for the two composers studied, may indeed be part of a more postmodern drive to differentiate rather than to universalise, in the context of a growing awareness and/or political moves toward discourses of multiculturalism, primarily present in Europe during the period 1970–2000 (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010, 1). Regardless of where this tendency originates and how composers react to it, its existence points again to the heteronomous nature of evaluation, even in an 'autonomous' field (Bourdieu 1998) such as that of contemporary art music. Part of a composer's work, then, is to clarify how their biography should be read in light of their music, and vice versa. Composers thus actively contribute to maintaining the evaluative paradox we have identified here, which is itself a structural component of the contemporary art music field.

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Notes

[1] A note on his first name: Ramón (with an accent) is a common first name in Spanish, whereas Ramon (without accent) is this name in Basque. With thanks to Jose Luis Besada for this clarification.

[2] It is significant to note that Spain is not represented within the ISCM. Full associate members of the ISCM are 'larger organizations that promote contemporary music life in a geographical or cultural region of a country' (https://www.iscm.org/join/member-categories). For detailed information about the goals, activities, and legal structure of Musikagileak, see its statutes (http://www.musikagileak.com/en/asociaccion).

[3] '[…] behind the ostensible cosmopolitanism of the new music scene, the old thinking in terms of "self" and "other", "centre" and "periphery" seems to go on unabated. Although there is no lack of recognition of cross-cultural interactions in music, there is less awareness of the changes this implies for the whole ontology of music, and, accordingly, for our understanding of new music' (Heile 2009, 102).

[4] A moving account of this type of affinity can be found in one of Ramon Lazkano's few published writings, an essay titled "'Two Feelings' with Lachenmann" (Lazkano 2004).

[5] This aside on Nono is largely drawn from one of the author's reviews of Iddon's book (Fryberger 2014).

[6] For a more general reflection on these issues, see the classic text by Eric J. Hobsbawm (1990). The authors wish to thank Ramon Lazkano for pointing out the multiple and sometimes antagonistic uses of the idea of 'nation' and the relevance of this reference for this article.

[7] The interviews were conducted in French in Paris on 19 November 2016. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations in this article from Ramon Lazkano and Carlos de Castellarnau are from our interviews and were translated by the authors.

[8] Both Hèctor Parra (b. Barcelona, 1976) and Joan Magrané (b. Reus, 1988) live in Paris as well. Parra was de Castellarnau's teacher during his stay at IRCAM.

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