



Musicological subversions Identifying Derridian graft in musical analysis

Brigida Migliore

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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI “L’ORIENTALE”

DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI LETTERARI, LINGUISTICI E COMPARATI

DOTTORATO IN STUDI LETTERARI, LINGUISTICI E COMPARATI

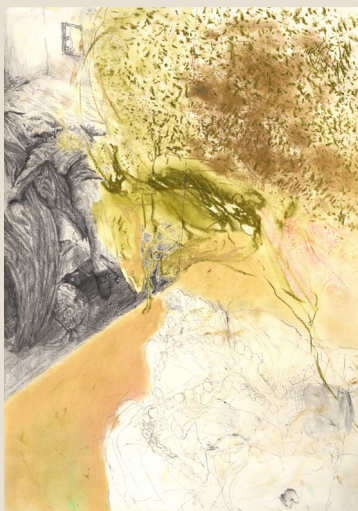
Quaderni della ricerca - 6

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Indagine su processi di sovversione

Upside-Down

Investigating subversion processes



a cura di / edited by

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Musicological subversions
Identifying Derridian graft in musical analysis

Abstract

This paper initially questions the position and the use of subversion in musicology. Among the different possibilities, we will consider the concept of *graft*: the beginning of this subversive concept can be found in Jacques Derrida's philosophical reflections. From the biological field, the French philosopher applied this word to describe a necessary and integral condition of writing and creating literary texts. On this basis, we propose a further application of the same (enriched) notion to music, proved as a subversive and innovative interpretation of musicological language and reflection, that is generally considered as a less important lexical possibility in this field. Through a theoretical and etymological approach, our study will demonstrate that music incorporates graft elements in musical writing as well as in cultural interactions. Nevertheless, these abstract considerations will be used in a concrete analysis of musical grafted texts, particularly in works by Zad Moultaka. In his first composing period, it is possible to single out his purpose of union and meeting between Occidental contemporary music technique and the sonorities of his Arab roots.

Questo contributo si interroga inizialmente sulle modalità di sovversione appartenenti alla musicologia. Tra le diverse possibilità, si prenderà in considerazione il concetto di *innesto*. Le prime origini sovversive di questo termine risalgono alle riflessioni filosofiche di Jacques Derrida. Infatti, il filosofo francese traspose e applicò il significato scientifico del concetto alla descrizione di una necessaria e integrale condizione di creazione e scrittura del testo letterario. Sulle orme di questa operazione derridiana, proporremo un'estensione della nozione (di conseguenza arricchita) alla musica, considerandola dunque lettura innovativa e sovversiva nell'ambito del linguaggio e dell'analisi musicale, ambito in cui è ritenuta come possibilità minore (o spesso inesistente). Attraverso un approccio teorico ed etimologico, questo studio dimostrerà altresì che, in fondo, la musica incarna degli ideali di innesto già all'interno della scrittura o anche riguardo le interazioni culturali che spesso contempla. Ad ogni modo, le considerazioni astratte proposte saranno corredate da analisi di testi musicali, in particolare alcune delle opere di Zad Moultaka. Agli inizi della sua carriera compositiva, si può osservare un orientamento di incontro tra la tecnica della musica contemporanea (occidentale) e le sonorità delle sue radici arabe.

How can the notion of subversion in musicology be defined¹? This question seems hard to answer. Nevertheless, the explanation can be found within the definition of musicology and its functions. Although humans have always taken interest in understanding music by way of different points of view, the official birth of musicology dates back to the late 19th century². Before this historical moment, it was not considered an autonomous science as it is nowadays. On the contrary, it was often thought as an appendix of culture, of other disciplines. This marginal role of musicology (or rather, the ancient *discipline to study music phenomena*) derived from its specificity and the difficult to approach musical art³, even with the lack of particular means to undertake research into it. From Romantic ideals, the intellectual study of music started to become closer to the investigation of other arts⁴. This revolutionary thought can be considered an important step for its independence as a science. From the second half of the 19th century, slowly, it overcame the simple resemblance to history or analysis of music⁵ and it started to be studied as a multi-

¹ It is important to note from the beginning of this article that it represents a parallel reflection to another research that we have carried out. In this paper, we will consider the original (and not often explored) point of view of the subversion. As such, we will sometimes refer to some basic ideas and theories that were introduced in previous (published and not yet published) articles. It is indispensable to consider these premises, as well as some introductory topics that have already been discussed, to facilitate the understanding of further deductions that we will present on different aspects of subversion. See B. MIGLIORE, *Une relecture métaphorique de la greffe dans La Scala del Cielo de Zad Moulata*, in «Euterpe: la revue musicale», XXX, 2018, pp. 18-28 and B. MIGLIORE, *L'interprétation aux frontières de la création: le rôle de porte-greffe et greffon(s) dans la métaphore de la greffe en musique*, in «Les ontologies du CLeMM», Paris, L'Harmattan (in press).

² The reasons for the late development of musicology as an independent discipline can be explained considering the role of music in history. According to Enrico Fubini: «la storia della musica sino al XIX secolo è stata una storia di fatto e di diritto separata rispetto a quella delle altre arti [...]. In realtà la musica, ad un esame anche superficiale, appare effettivamente per più di un motivo come un'arte con problemi del tutto specifici, non paragonabili a quelli di nessun'altra arte [...]. Praticamente, fino alla fine del XVIII secolo, nessuno ha contestato questa diversità della musica [...]». E. FUBINI, *Estetica della musica*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003, pp. 15-16.

³ «La marginalità storica della musica e soprattutto dell'esecuzione musicale trova un puntuale riscontro nella marginalità sociale del musicista e dell'esecutore [...]», *ivi*, p. 40.

⁴ See *ibidem*.

⁵ In particular, the year 1885 is an emblematic date, according some scholars, for the birth of musicology as a discipline in the modern, complex and complete sense. In that period, in Leipzig Guido Adler e Friedrich Chrysander directed the publication of the first volume of the

faceted discipline⁶, seeing its natural interests and the support that it seeks in other sciences. As Jean-Jacques Nattiez wrote:

Ce qu'étudie la musicologie, ce ne sont pas seulement les sons et les structures d'une sonate, d'un opéra, d'une chanson rock ou d'une musique africaine, c'est aussi l'étude de ses contextes (historique, social, culturel) et de ses stratégies de production (composition, interprétation) et de perception auditive.⁷

According to this scholar, musicology can be defined as «total musical fact»⁸, given that it concerns not only the auditory representations but also the circumstances of its development. Consequently, this implicates other disciplines, and musicology must learn to collaborate with them to enrich its analytical action. Therefore, musicological terminology seems to be original and exclusive only in part since it has to feed itself on extra-musical materials. Contemporary musicology is aware of the need for working in conjunction with «les sciences dites annexes [...] qui apportent un éclairage nouveau pour la compréhension du phénomène et du milieu musical»⁹. Among these disciplines, we can find hard sciences as well as human sciences¹⁰.

This collaboration can be observed in different aspects, not only in analyzing music or investigating the representation of music: its real interest lies in

periodical «Vierteljahrschrift für Musikwissenschaft» (Trimestral Periodical of Musicology). This event is considered the important and introductory moment for this science. B. NETTL, *The Institutionalization of Musicology*, in N. Cook, M. Everist (eds.), *Rethinking Music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 288-289.

⁶ In this study we will not provide an in-depth analysis of the notions of musicology, seeing that this is a discussed question that can receive different definitions, as we can observe in J. M. WARZAWSKI, *La musicologie et le mystère du logos*, in «Itamar, revista de investigación musical: territorios para el arte», I, 2008, pp. 121-130.

⁷ J. J. NATTIEZ, *Profession musicologue*, Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2007, p. 10.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ P. BACHMANN, *La musicologie en France entre impasse et mutation. Etat des lieux et enjeux politiques*, Paris, Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1992, p. 11.

¹⁰ «[...] le musicologue complet serait celui qui serait capable de parler, à égalité de niveau, de musique avec ses confrères musiciens [...] non seulement l'histoire et la musique, mais encore la philologie, la philosophie, l'archéologie, l'astronomie, la physique, l'anatomie, les mathématiques [...]», J. CHAILLEY, *Précis de musicologie*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1958, p. X.

the propensity that musicology often shows in using words taken from other scientific lexicons to explain its own phenomena. For instance, in its branch of music theory, it is possible to find some words clearly deriving from other contexts like *ictus* (from medicine), acephalous rhythm¹¹ (from visual arts or poetry), accent (from grammar), tonality (from visual arts) and many others. In these examples, the original meaning of the words has been completely adjusted to the musical description.

This is the first great subversion that musicology achieves, a semantic appropriation¹² where it borrows not only single words to readapt but also images, representations, and processes to use for the definition and the explanation of musical events. As the Latin sources state, *subversion* indicates a change of perspective, breaking a previous order to create a new one. Subversion is also de-construction: it means depriving a word or a concept of its ordinary guises to acquire new ones by joining it to a different context. Musicology can widen its expressive means (and above all, carry out subversion proposals) thanks to a descriptive device, metaphor¹³. It can make subversion extreme and provoke a deep transformation in the concepts involved. Finally, metaphor can be defined as an «instrument en mesure de reconfigurer un domaine différent de celui où il [le mot, l'expression] appartient à l'origine»¹⁴.

In this research, we want to consider a specific case of subversion in musicology that is achieved through metaphor: *graft*. This concept was born in the hard scientific domain, developed particularly in the biological branches¹⁵.

¹¹ This expression is more common in Italian than in English or French, where the term *anacrusis/anacruse* is preferred.

¹² «La musica è sempre stata considerata tradizionalmente un'arte asemantica, o comunque un'arte la cui semanticità è problematica e difficilmente definibile». E. FUBINI, *Musica e linguaggio nell'estetica contemporanea*, Torino, Einaudi, 1973, p. 153.

¹³ Some studies on metaphor applied to the musical context state that two categories of metaphor exist: the musicological metaphors, where verbal speech refers to a musical experience, and musical metaphors that concern music designed as language and speech. See F. SPAMPINATO, *Les Métamorphoses du son. Matérialité imaginative de l'écoute musicale*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2008, p. 23.

¹⁴ Ivi, p. 25.

¹⁵ Plants were the first organisms where this technique was applied. Later, it was applied to the human body, so the concept was also exported to medicine. In this regard, it is interesting to note some linguistic precisions: in English (as in Italian), it is more common to call medical

Graft indicates a particular production process that consists of implanting a foreign tissue in a body, joining them together so that they can continue the growth and become one. This technique can be practiced thanks to its two main components: the *rootstock*, that is the base, the foundation, the element that receives, the implantation of the process, and the *scion*, the element to insert, to integrate into the other¹⁶. The aim of this union represents, in its origins, the human will to handle life and its development. Nevertheless, this inner purpose is in conflict with the direct consequence of the union between rootstock and scion, the unpredictability of the result. In this respect, E. Morin wrote:

Ce n'est pas tant la multiplicité des composants, ni même la diversité de leurs interactions, qui caractérisent la complexité d'un système (...) C'est l'imprévisibilité potentielle (non calculable a priori) des comportements de ce système, liée en particulier à la récursivité qui affecte le fonctionnement de ses composants ("en fonctionnant ils se transforment"), suscitant des phénomènes d'émergence certes intelligibles, mais non toujours prévisibles.¹⁷

Outside the biological domain, in other disciplines, graft can be identified, as we mentioned above, thanks to metaphor, a linguistic expedient that allows the transposition of a concept besides its origin fields. It is a phenomenon where visual representations do not really need a translation in words, since «images are immanent in words»¹⁸. The borrowing of terminology in a metaphor is an operation that refuses symbolic and scientific conventions. To make this point clear, it is useful to define the concept of *vocable* as a linguistic device to implement metaphor. It does not have the same limited nature as the

graft a *transplant*. The French language proposes a different linguistic solution: it uses the word *greffe* to indicate both botanic and medical processes.

¹⁶ This is the terminology used for the botanic process. In medicine, its components are called *donor* and *recipient*. Despite this, in our musicological application, we will use the botanic words, since they are also used by Derrida (as we will explain in the following pages) in its literary representation of the phenomenon.

¹⁷ E. MORIN, *Complexité*, in S. Debolt (ed.), *Petit lexique de la complexité*, Réseau intelligence de la complexité, internet site of the association APC / MCX, <http://www.intelligence-complexite.org/fr/documents/lexique-de-termes-de-la-complexite.html> [last access on 09/01/2019].

¹⁸ W. J. T. MITCHELL, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 99.

symbol¹⁹ that is linked to an exact idea. On the contrary, it is an open reality that can receive in its sense different possibilities. *Vocable* is thus the element whose result (meaning) can change according to the context. That is why the *vocable* has a double or multiple life²⁰: it has in itself a plurality of levels that can refer to different domains, for which it represents a reference. It shows a signifier that is unique and an infinity of signified/meanings that increase through the arbitrary associations that can develop. This feature causes not only a loss of the word/*vocable* original image, but rather a contortion, an extension of its meaning giving an enrichment to the discipline where it is applied. These effects are a result of the appropriate adaptation that it has to carry out in order to obtain a new existence in a different context.

Consequently, graft, as *vocable* in a metaphor, has shown that its field goes alongside the biological one. In fact, it can achieve more linguistic shades²¹: by the application in linguistics to describe a notable articulation of the language²², to illustrate some types of literature, to reference the mixed creations in visual arts and stage arts²³.

Thanks to Derrida's reflections, this concept was also exported to philosophy. «To write means to graft»²⁴ is the statement that opens the last chapter of *Dissemination*. The intention of this short sentence is clearly subversive. The center of Derridian thought acquires a larger definition: the sense of this word is now

¹⁹ J. SCHLANGER, *Les métaphores de l'organisme*, Paris, Vrin, 1971, p.11.

²⁰ Ivi, p. 12.

²¹ See B. MIGLIORE, *Une relecture métaphorique de la greffe*, cit., p. 19. As our research is developed in a French cultural milieu, in this article, we will consider all the possibilities of the French language (with its loanwords) about the word *graft*.

²² In the domain of Linguistics, graft can describe three distinct fields: lexicon, syntax and idiomatic expressions. It is defined as: «L'amalgame de deux ou plusieurs unités linguistiques de sorte que la physionomie de chacune soit plus ou moins directement identifiable. L'amalgame repose sur la base partielle d'une homophonie ou/ et d'une dimension sémantique». D. LEGALLOIS, *Les greffes phraséologiques – ou quand la syntaxe se compromet*, in «Langages», CLXXXIX, 1, 2013, p.106.

²³ We mean as *stage arts* theater and cinema. About graft in cinematography: See J. VAUDE, *Grefte, fusion, hérédité. L'hybridation dans le cinéma expérimental contemporain*, in «Corps», VI, 2009, pp. 109-114, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-corps-dilecta-2009-1-page-109.htm> [last access on 13/11/2016].

²⁴ J. DERRIDA, *Dissemination*, London, The Athlone Press, 1981, p. 355.

subverted by a metaphor applied to the text and to its configuration. In the aforementioned chapter, he refers above all to literary text²⁵, describing it as «[a] tree [...] ultimately rootless»²⁶. This image can be explained for the reason that a text cannot be analyzed (nor conceived) as a unique body²⁷: Derridian notion defines «an authentic subversion about what was always considered [...] the Occidental metaphysical thought [...]»²⁸. It is like an open reality where, under the apparent unitarity, multiple texts meet, get in touch, and influence each other²⁹.

The French philosopher explains (and this is the real innovation) that writing (or reading) a text does not represent a cre-a[c]tion, an act of creation, it does not mean inventing something new, but it corresponds to a reconstruction from different texts³⁰.

Therefore, the main text can be considered as a particular texture without its own clear identity. It is open towards its «surroundings»³¹; while the involved texts, or rather their plurality, submit to a transformation that leads, through development, to a harmonious union. The way to connect these different texts that consequently give birth to the main text, is found by Derrida evocating the images of «overcast seam» and «quotation»³². The first word, which comes from the medical and couture contexts, defines a system to link two edges of tissue, of material. This is exactly what happens in the production of a text, according to the French philosopher: «the texts [...] pass elliptically one into the other and become regenerated in the repetition, along the edges of an *overcast seam* [*un surjet*]»³³.

²⁵ As we will consider later, these Derrida's reflections are about the literary text, but they can also be extended to other kinds of arts or creative acts.

²⁶ J. DERRIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

²⁷ «[Its] thickness [...] in that each of its layers harbors another layer [...]», *ivi*, p. 357.

²⁸ P. D'ALESSANDRO, *Oltre Derrida. Per un'etica della lettura*, in P. D'Alessandro, A. Potestio, (eds.), *Su Jacques Derrida: Scrittura filosofica e pratica di decostruzione*, Milano, LED, 2008, pp. 13-35, p. 29 [transl. mine].

²⁹ See J. DERRIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

³⁰ A text that refers to another text.

³¹ See S. KOFMAN, *Lectures de Derrida*, Paris, Galilée, 1984, p. 16.

³² See J. DERRIDA, *op. cit.*, pp. 355-357.

³³ J. DERRIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 355. Italics in original.

For this reason, a text is always composed of external insertions that generate movement, which Derrida calls «quotation», referring to the Latin root of this word³⁴. This feature of the text defines it as not static, holding a deep dynamism and keeping heterogeneity in its inner nature. In this regard, Derrida wrote: «the motif of homogeneity, the teleological motif par excellence, is decidedly the one to be destroyed»³⁵.

Moreover, for this philosophical thought, *greffe*³⁶ turns out to be not only an essential condition belonging to the nature of the text, but also something necessary for its production. It flows unconsciously but is strictly linked to the way the text is structured. *Greffe* can also become a necessary and integral condition for all types of writing, a kind of *pan-greffism*.

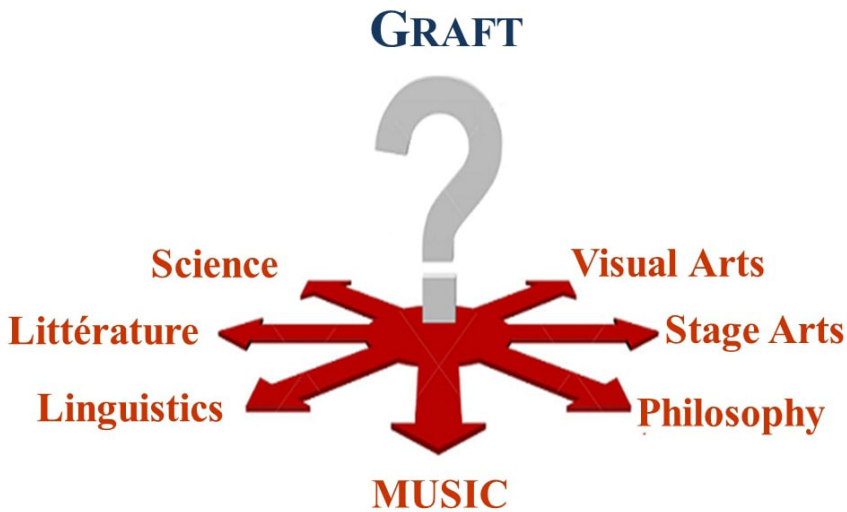


Figure 1. Semantic enlargement of the word *graft*.

The possibility of identifying all kinds of arts and creative acts raises the question of extending this idea to music, or rather to musicology, since in this

³⁴ From the verb *cĭĕo-cĭĕre*; its original meaning is *setting in movement*.

³⁵ J. DERRIDA, *Positions*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 64.

³⁶ We use the word *greffe* from this point forward to refer precisely to Derrida's philosophy.

case graft represents an interpretation to observe and explain artistic production activities. Musicology is a science that often uses concepts from other disciplines to conduct its studies, for this reason, among the collaborative domains, it could also interact with botany and medicine, as in the case of the graft that we have demonstrated.

At this point, it is also interesting to illustrate the reasons why we propose the word *greffe* to explain some musical processes. In this domain, this concept can be used to analyze some musical meetings of different types. Nevertheless, the musicological language does not often consider the use of this word (in the Derridian sense), or rather its general sense is considered as a less important lexical possibility. In fact, it is common to find other kinds of linguistic solutions that express definitions that are too large and vague. For this reason, the concept of *greffe* can be a useful interpretation to precisely observe the heterogeneity of the elements of a composition and their quantity.

We previously explained how subversive the interpretation of a text (or a kind of language) through the concept of *greffe* could be: a word that comes from biology to the linguistic/literary field (thanks to Derrida), and to the musical one (from the Derridian metaphor), updating the process of the composition of the literary or musical text. Nonetheless, when analyzing the etymology something surprising happens. As Derrida wrote: «[it] appears to be a simple etymological coincidence uniting the graft and the graph [...]»³⁷. The linguistic origin of the graft leads to both Latin and Greek sources. It derives from the Latin *graphium* that means *stylus* and from the Greek γράφω [*grapho*], a verb that denotes the act of *engraving, cutting into, writing*³⁸. Thus, *greffe* keeps in itself the sense of generating by hand. Consequently, the subversion, that we (thanks to Derrida) observed for this notion, seems to disappear as result of that analysis. In a metaphor, its worth stands in its being a *vocable*, keeping the unity of the signifier and the infinity of the signified.

Indeed, since we realized that *greffe* is no more a real subversion in its application as metaphor, we should also add that it continuously exists as sub-

³⁷ J. DERRIDA, *Dissemination*, cit., p. 202.

³⁸ In French, this relation about words can be extended: *greffe* returns also towards another word, *griffe*. This one indicates a scratch, illustrating the same act of incision (cutting), expected during the process of the graft. See J. DERRIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

version in musicology (as well as in the theory of the text by Derrida) for being an innovative interpretation, different from the various existing approaches, to explain some musical structures, resulting as a less considered and less known practice.

We recognize Derridian reflections as a powerful instrument that can allow musicologists to read and interpret music indicating its different parts with a specific terminology. This application of the *greffe theory* represents an innovation as well as a deep need of the analytic process, in order to allow a more detailed description of distinct kinds of music phenomena and to acquire a consciousness about the construction (even if we admit its unconsciousness - about being *grafted* in its creation). At present, we have not found any type of musical analysis that includes the consideration of music as the graft of different elements. Besides this aspect, in musical analysis its components are often referred to with vague expressions (like «element A, element B» etc.). Thanks to the adoption of Derridian reading of the text, also in the musical field we could *express* using a specialized imported lexicon to indicate all the elements.

The ascertainment of the existence of a musical *greffe* can be observed from what we could call *endogenous*³⁹ and *exogenous* aspects⁴⁰. With regards to the exogenous aspect, it can be observed studying cultural interactions that are present in some kinds of music. In this situation, graft, through its constituents of the rootstock and the scion, can act on the participating elements, transforming and re-interpreting them. It subverts their original balance.

How can we use *greffe* in practice to analyze this kind of music? That is not an easy question to answer, as for this case, we cannot find any previous

³⁹ About this aspect regarding the inner observation on graft in music, we find it in the nature of musical writing: it incorporates different types of signs and besides its specific symbols (like notes values and keys), it also uses other kinds of indications taken from other contexts (for instance, letters to express dynamics and agogics or numbers to indicate metrics).

⁴⁰ We have used the expression *endogenous* to indicate the graft that can be found inside the structure of music, contemplating its natural heterogeneity; while *exogenous* is used to define the graft that comes from the external relations between different kinds of music. See B. MIGLIORE, *L'interprétation aux frontières de la création*, cit., in particular about the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of rootstock and scion.

specific examples of analysis. Derrida⁴¹ proposes a theory, some observations about writing creation process, about the genesis of a text, but does not put these reflections into practice, giving a concrete study of a literary text through his deductions⁴². The best context we found to analyze music through Derrida's reflections is about compositions based on cultural interactions. To lead a musical analysis construction, with notions coming from graft theories (the biological⁴³ and the Derridian ones), we will use some more reflections about cultural interferences in music. For instance, during his lessons about interculturality, the musicologist Nicolas Darbon theorizes: «Il faut déterminer la culture de base (a) et la culture extérieure (b), quels sont les éléments ajoutés et de quelle manière ils le sont»⁴⁴. This statement can be useful to introduce and set up an analysis about the (exogenous) graft. In fact, it is necessary to point out the rootstock (the *bearing* element) and the scion[s] (the insertion[s]). Consequently, how can we distinguish the rootstock and the scion[s] and how to measure and quantify them? They can be found and appraised according to their presence rate.

As such, we propose a detailed example focusing on works by the Lebanese composer Zad Moultaq. Our choice fell on this musical personality for different reasons. As we will explain later, we found in his composition creative actions that support an ideological center and then temporarily move away to explore also other aspects: a dissemination⁴⁵. It could be considered a music made of *movement*, the same dynamism that Derrida saw in the (natu-

⁴¹ As well as other linguists and philosophers such as Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes.

⁴² It is also important to specify that in our modest exploration of Derrida's philosophical works (related to this subject), we did not find any specific explanation about neither the two components of the *greffe* nor their relation. In conclusion, we imagine that his reflections stop in conceiving and describing the text as a complex multi-sided reality. This is why in our application of graft on music, we will always consider its biological derivation.

⁴³ We will also consider the biological theory, as Derrida also takes from it the idea of the two components: the rootstock and the scion.

⁴⁴ N. DARBON, *Penser les métissages: une anthropologie du contemporain* [class], Aix-Marseille University, musicology departement, y. 2015/2016.

⁴⁵ «Even while it keeps the texts it culls alive, this play of insemiation-or grafting---destroys their hegemonic center, subverts their authority and their uniqueness». J. DERRIDA, *Dissemination*, cit. p. 344.

ral) citations of a text⁴⁶. This oscillation develops between the two geographical and cultural references that Moulataka has in his life.

Born in Beirut in 1967, Moulataka started his music education in Lebanon and then during the 80's moved to France to study at CNSMD in Paris. He started composing, being an autodidact. Thanks to his particular style, he is appreciated in France and abroad. In his first composing period, it is possible to single out his purpose of synthesis between contemporary music technique and the sonorities of Arab musical roots⁴⁷. We will analyze some of his compositions through the application of the concepts that we have explained above. We will lead this evaluation presenting and pointing out its advantages and its more accurate descriptive effects, comparing the ordinary types of analysis of this kind.

At first, we will consider *Ikhtifa*⁴⁸, composed by Zad Moulataka in 2008, for an ensemble of twelve singers. It is based on Arabic texts⁴⁹ by Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī⁵⁰. The core of this composition is founded on repetition about formal shape and melody. In particular, the melodic line develops through chromaticism and small intervals, since the melody repeats itself and always goes back

⁴⁶ «Never will any citation have so aptly meant both *setting in motion* (the frequentative form of to move--*ciere*) and, also since it is a matter of shaking up a whole culture and history in its fundamental text, solicitation». J. DERRIDA, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

⁴⁷ Describing the main differences between Occidental and Arab music would be too complex for the aims of this research. We briefly outline some elements of difference, for example: the horizontality (in other words, the centrality of melody) of Arabic music vs the verticality of the occidental one (with the importance that polyphony and counterpoint gained in the centuries); the *maqām* system organization vs occidental tonality; the importance of repetition in Arab music vs the search for the progress and the development. These are just a few of the differences, a deeper analysis could put in evidence other interesting elements on this subject.

⁴⁸ This composition is divided in two parts *Ikhtifa* I and *Ikhtifa* II; in this contribution, we will consider only the first part. It belongs to the album «Rituels» that gathers some of the vocal works, by Zad Moulataka, questioning rite and mystery. The word *ih̥tifā* means *disappearance* or *erasure* and the composer tries to put into music the explanation of this concept, through the words by al-Ma‘arrī. See Z. MOULTAKA, *Ikhtifa, pour douze chanteurs*, sheet music Marseille, Onoma, 2008; Z. MOULTAKA, *Rituels*, CD, Marseille, l’Empreinte digitale, 2016.

⁴⁹ The text of this composition is taken from the poem collection *Luzūmmā lam yalzam*.

⁵⁰ Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (973 – 1058), Arab poet.

on the same turns⁵¹. This feature recalls traditional Arab⁵² melodies, presenting the same monotony and reiteration. Melody seems to be the key element of the composition that is also evidenced by the fact that there are no instruments for the accompaniment, voices sound *a cappella* and consequently, all the attention is focused on what they sing. The rhythmical variety follows and supports the peculiar accentuation of the Arabic verses; this represents an important difference (or rather a contradiction) towards the melodic repetition⁵³. Voices sing in homophony with short moments of heterophony. This balance is sometimes broken by some interventions: participation of different groups of voices, polyphonic and imitation⁵⁴ episodes, pedal sounds, emphasis of special phonemes, contemporary *silent sounds*. Through this short and general analysis, we can propose different observations.

If we examined the composition by an ordinary method, we would consider the existence of almost two different cultural influences that contribute to the construction of this music. Usual approaches do not seem to focus on or appraise the way through which interactions can be built, nor on the evaluation of the presence rate of the elements. An interpretation supported by the graft theory can explain this aspect, indeed, in this case, we can state that this music consists of an Arab rootstock that often moves away from itself to reach some occidental scions⁵⁵. The general setting of the composition leads us to

⁵¹ For instance, the first fifty bars present a voice range that develops in a major third.

⁵² In this case, the melody is clearly inspired to the Lebanese traditional music, since the composer during his youth could listen and learn something about it in Lebanon, his birthplace.

⁵³ Rhythm in this composition is organized in cycles, as according to the theory of the Arabic *īqā'*. In this case, differently from the ordinary situations in traditional Arabic music, the cycles are quite long.

⁵⁴ We should underline that counterpoint processes are a typical technique in occidental art music (also in the contemporary one). Traditional Arabic music does not present any similar technique.

⁵⁵ When we analyze Zad Moulataka's work through graft theory, we always search in its (first) compositions the elements that belongs to Arabic culture or to the Occidental one, something related to traditions. We also know that Derrida thought that it would need «*écarter finalement [tous les concepts philosophiques de] la tradition*», and that his graft theory is about texts. Regardless, it is important to consider the traditions that we can identify in Moulataka's compositions not only as cultural influences but above all as text. Because this kind of information enters his musical knowledge in the form of (written/visual or oral/sound) texts. See J. DERRIDA, *Lettre à un ami japonais*, in *Psyché. Invention de l'autre*, Paris, Galilée, 1987, p. 10; J. DERRIDA, *Dissemination*, cit. p. 355-358.

confirm this reflection. In fact, it is assembled keeping the natural features of Arabic language, of Arab monodical melody and, partially, of rhythm: this clearly represents the rootstock. The sporadic insertions that we listed above change the flux of the conception, they constitute the *foreign* elements. We can also note the quality of this graft, as it concerns elements from traditional music and artistic music, in other words oral and written music. A deeper study on this work could strengthen and corroborate what we have demonstrated.

33

S.1 yè - lèN m'n - hou mouN - tè - bè mA DA_ mA-DA mA-DA mA-DA m_

S.2 yè - lèN m'n - hou mouN - tè - bè mA DA_ mA-DA mA-DA mA-DA m_

S.3 yè - lèN m'n - hou mouN - tè - bè mA DA_ mA-DA mA-DA mA-DA m_

A.1 yè - lèN m'n - hou mouN - tè - bè mA DA_ mA-DA mA-DA mA-DA m_

A.2 yè - lèN m'n - hou mouN - tè - bè mA DA_ mA-DA mA-DA mA-DA m_

A.3 yè - lèN m'n - hou mouN - tè - bè mA DA_ mA-DA mA-DA mA-DA m_

T.1 m_ mA DA_ mA-DA

T.2 m_ mA DA_ mA-DA

T.3 m_ mA DA_ mA-DA

B.1 m_ mA DA_ mA-DA

B.2 m_ mA DA_ mA-DA

B.3 m_ mA DA_ mA-DA

Figure 2. An example of imitation⁵⁶, Z. MOULTAKA, *Ikhtifa*, bars 33-38.

⁵⁶ This image does not represent the whole imitation passage (it would have been too long), because at the bar 36 the male voices (Tenors and Basses: T 1-2-3 and B 1-2-3) propose the

Another example can clarify the explanation. *Ya ghazali*⁵⁷ is a composition belonging to a song cycle, *Zarani*, a redrafting of traditional Lebanese songs, called *muwashshahāt*. For the popular tradition, these melodies are performed by different voices and ensembles, but in this case, Zad Moultaqa chose to interpret it through a specific group of instruments accompanying a solo voice⁵⁸: oud, percussion (zarb) and piano. We can observe primarily an organology graft, because of the presence of some instruments that come from Arabic-Lebanese tradition, such as the oud or the zarb, and then their crossing and fusion with the occidental presence of the piano. The structure of this composition proposes important changes towards the original version. For example, the choice of an occidental formal aspect through different sections⁵⁹ where, besides the accompaniment of melody, instruments (above all the oud and the piano) show virtuoso passages. The composer presents different instrumental techniques, like clusters, harmonic sounds and strings playing for piano, nail plucking sounds and glissando for oud. Piano often represents a harmonic sustain, playing chords: this is a strong occidental⁶⁰ element, supporting and underlining the melody. The original melodic line is extended through the different sections, it is always preserved, keeping the traditional Arabic singing, with particular small intervals like the quarters of tone. This fleeting description leads to the conclusion that the Arabic soul of this music maintains a central role, consequently it can be considered as the rootstock of

melodic line that female voices (Sopranos and Altos: S 1-2-3 and A 1-2-3) have sung since the first bar.

⁵⁷ See Z. MOULTAKA, *Zarani, pour piano oud percussions et voix*, Marseille, Onoma, 2002; Z. MOULTAKA, *Zarani*, CD, Marseille, l'Empreinte digitale, 2003.

⁵⁸ It is an alto voice.

⁵⁹ We should consider that this composition, in the first part, is written in metrics like 9/4 or 10/4. Each bar is very long and sometimes a single section can be composed of few bars. These sections are different, irregular in length and quality but based on similar materials. The whole composition structure represents a cyclic form, since it repeats its beginning at the end, as the last section.

⁶⁰ It is important to note that Arabic traditional music does not present any form of harmony. As Zad Moultaqa said in the documentary film by Leila Khillani, his aim for this music (referred to as his first composition period, until the first year of the 2000's, where the purpose to graft occidental music with his Arabic roots was very strong) was: «apporter la verticalité tout en respectant l'essence de cette musique, c'est-à-dire [...] mettre accords sous mélodie, harmoniser avec une harmonie qui garde la sensation de cette musique [...]». See L. KHILANI, *Zad Moultaqa*, Paris, La Huit, 2003.

this work⁶¹. All sporadic actions of redrafting (the formal structure, the instrumental insertions, and the piano chord accompaniment) represent the scions⁶².

Figure 3. Occidental- Arab graft, MOULTAKA, Zad, *Ya ghazali*, bars 90-91.

A further example shows other aspects of graft analysis. We will consider another work by the Lebanese composer, for solo voice⁶³ and electronics: *Neb Ankh*⁶⁴,

⁶¹ Describing Zad Moulaka's style is not easy. With regards to this subject, we can highlight a short excerpt of a press conference he held in 2010. A journalist observed that «Certains musicologues contemporains critiquent d'ailleurs un tel travail de métissage [...]» and Moulaka answered: «A vrai dire, je ne cherche pas à effectuer un métissage, mais à identifier des espaces de cohésions [...]». The idea of cohesion that he expresses is a something very close to the concept of graft. Indeed, he seemed to appreciate this explanation of his art (he confirmed this possibility in an interview we held at Festival de Chaillol, during summer 2017) above all because he admitted the unconsciousness of a big part of the compositional interior process (that flows in himself with the particular features we mentioned, through naturalness). See P. C. LANGLAIS, *Zad Moulaka: J'ai abordé la musique en compositeur*, <https://www.qobuz.com/fr-fr/info/magazine-actualites/%2Frencontres/%2Fzad-moulaka-j-ai-aborde-la44362> [last access on the 15/01/2020].

⁶² Regarding the traditions and the texts: «Il est alors acquis dans l'esprit de Derrida, que le langage tout entier est un texte ; même le monde est un texte, l'existence est aussi un texte. Tout est texte, dira-t-il [...]». J. I. MOULENDA, *Par-delà le sens, l'écriture et le texte. Jacques Derrida*, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01504272/document>, p. 12.

⁶³ In this case, it is a soprano voice.

⁶⁴ See Z. MOULTAKA, *Neb Ankh, pour voix et électroacoustique*, Marseille, Onoma, 2007; Z. MOULTAKA, *Visions*, CD, Marseille, l'Empreinte digitale, 2007.

^aC = M.C.; \bar{E} = 1; IP₀ = 1.7; IM₀ = 1; CD₀ = 11; SZM₀ = 18.

The condensed examples that we have examined describe an idea about what graft is and how to find its elements in order to analyze a musical composition. Throughout the history of the culture and branched evolution, graft has become an instrument to recognize the heterogeneity of music and its effects. The real subversion consists of its utilization in musicology, where it has not yet found its extensive use.

This metaphor describes the many-sided development of musical composition and at the same time, it ensures that the original sense of graft is never forgotten, that is to say grafting to extend existence, that in music could also mean expanding the boundaries of creation.

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