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La vida en cópias oder *Musica Reciclata*: Migration of Meanings, Transmediation, Self-citation and Musical Ekphrasis in Hybrid Electroacoustic Composition

La vida en cópias oder Musica Reciclata: Migração dos Sentidos, Transmedialização, Autocitação e Écfrase Musical em Composição Eletroacústica Híbrida

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Abstract: This article investigates the interrelations between migration of meanings, transmediation, self-citation and musical ekphrasis as applied to contemporary musical creation. Through the analytical study of two hybrid electroacoustic works—*The Eerie Stillness of Desolation* for piano and fixed media and *Ghost Words* for double bass and fixed media—composed during an artistic residency with Da_Sh Ensemble, Madrid, the paper examines how acoustic writing and electroacoustic materials jointly construct the architectural, semantic, and affective dimensions of each work. Central to this investigation are processes of self-citation, recycling, and transformation of pre-existing materials, alongside newly created sonic elements conceived specifically for each composition. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks of intertextuality (Bloom, Straus, López-Cano), musical ekphrasis (Bruhn), and contemporary theories of transmediation and migration of meanings, the study proposes an integrated analytical model for understanding hybrid musical practices within a multisemiotic and multimediatic cultural environment.

Keywords: migration of meanings; transmediation; musical ekphrasis; self-citation; hybrid music;

Resumo: Este artigo investiga as inter-relações entre a migração dos sentidos, a transmediação, a autocitação e a écfrase musical aplicadas à criação musical contemporânea. Por meio do estudo analítico de duas obras eletroacústicas híbridas — *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation,* para piano e suporte fixo, e *Ghost Words,* para contrabaixo e suporte fixo — compostas durante uma residência artística com o Da_Sh Ensemble, em Madrid, o artigo examina como a escrita acústica e os materiais eletroacústicos constroem, conjuntamente, as dimensões arquitetônicas, semânticas e afetivas de cada obra. No centro desta investigação estão os processos de autocitação, reciclagem e transformação de materiais pré-existentes, juntamente com elementos sonoros recém-criados, concebidos especificamente para cada composição. Com base em estruturas teóricas de intertextualidade (Bloom, Straus, López-Cano), écfrase musical (Bruhn) e teorias contemporâneas de transmediação e migração dos sentidos, o estudo propõe um modelo analítico integrado para compreender práticas musicais híbridas dentro de um ambiente cultural multissemiótico e multimediático.

Palavras-chave: migração dos sentidos; transmedialização; écfrase musical; autocitação; música híbrida;

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1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches have become essential tools for understanding the complexity of contemporary cultural phenomena. In music studies, such approaches have proven particularly productive in revealing how musical works operate not only as autonomous sonic objects, but also as nodes within dense networks of cultural references, media interactions, and sensory exchanges. Within this context, the present paper investigates intertextuality, migration of meanings, transmediation, and musical ekphrasis as interconnected analytical and creative paradigms for contemporary musical composition.

The author's research trajectory has focused on intertextual relations between music and the visual arts, while also engaging literature, architecture, poetry, dance, and, more recently, digital arts generated by artificial intelligence. The theoretical foundations of this research draw primarily on the work of Harold Bloom, Joseph N. Straus, and Rubén López-Cano in the field of intertextuality, as well as on Siglind Bruhn's expanded concept of musical ekphrasis. These frameworks are further articulated with the concepts of transmediation and migration of meanings, which together provide a comprehensive analytical lens for examining contemporary hybrid musical works. This study positions composition not merely as a creative act but as a mode of artistic research, in which the creation of works functions as a method of inquiry into intertextuality, media transfer, and the phenomenology of listening.

In an era marked by multisemiotic and multimediatic experiences, artistic creation increasingly unfolds across media borders. Music no longer exists solely within the acoustic domain but interacts dynamically with visual, textual, performative, and technological dimensions. As Luciano Berio famously observed, contemporary creation is characterized by

a dialectical relationship with tradition: artists simultaneously inherit, transform, and reconfigure historical materials. The two works analyzed in this article exemplify this dialectic through processes of recycling, self-citation, stylistic allusion, and media transfer.

2. Literature Review: Intertextuality, Transmediation, and Ekphrasis in Contemporary Music

2.1 Intertextuality: From Literary Theory to Musical Analysis

The concept of intertextuality emerged in the late 1960s through the work of Julia Kristeva, who, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, proposed that every text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations and absorbs and transforms other texts. Bakhtin's ideas on heteroglossia and dialogic interaction laid the groundwork for understanding artistic works not as autonomous entities but as sites of continuous cultural dialogue. Roland Barthes further radicalized this notion by proclaiming the "death of the author," shifting interpretative authority toward the reader and emphasizing the plurality of meanings generated through textual interaction.

In musicology, intertextuality gained prominence as scholars sought alternatives to formalist and purely structural approaches. Kevin Korsyn and Michael L. Klein were among the first to systematically adapt literary intertextual theory to Western art music, arguing that musical meaning arises through networks of stylistic, historical, and cultural references rather than isolated compositional innovation. Klein's work, in particular, emphasizes intertextual listening as an active process shaped by memory, cultural knowledge, and embodied experience.

Joseph N. Straus's (1990) Remaking the Past occupies a central position in musical intertextual studies, especially in relation to twentieth-century modernism. Straus reframes

Harold Bloom's theory of poetic influence, replacing the composer's psychological struggle with analytical strategies such as marginalization, fragmentation, compression, and harmonic displacement. These strategies demonstrate how modernist composers engage critically with tonal traditions, not by rejecting them, but by reshaping them under new aesthetic and ideological conditions.

Methodologically, the study adopts a parameterbased analytical approach, emphasizing timbre, texture, temporal organization, gesture, and spectral behavior as primary carriers of meaning in hybrid electroacoustic contexts. By integrating analytical reflection with compositional practice, the research aims to illuminate how hybrid electroacoustic works generate meaning through the interplay of memory, media, and sonic materiality. Ultimately, the study argues that hybrid electroacoustic composition constitutes a privileged arena for exploring the fluidity of contemporary artistic expression, in which sound serves as a medium for negotiating identity, memory, and affect across shifting media landscapes.

Hybrid electroacoustic composition occupies a liminal space between acoustic performance, fixed media, and intermedial reference. As such, it requires analytical frameworks capable of addressing the circulation of materials and meanings across media. The literature on intertextuality, transmediation, and multimodal artistic practices provides essential tools for understanding these processes, though the terminology is often applied inconsistently.

2.2 Types of Intertextuality and Analytical Tools

Building on these theoretical foundations, contemporary scholarship generally distinguishes between vertical intertextuality (diachronic relations with historical repertoires), horizontal intertextuality (synchronic relations with contemporary works or parallel practices), and paratextuality,

which encompasses titles, program notes, staging, and media framing. Gérard Genette's theory of transtextuality, although developed in literary studies, has proven particularly useful for musical analysis, especially in understanding how paratexts guide reception and interpretation. In other words, *intertextuality* refers to relationships between musical texts.

The analytical tools associated with intertextuality include quotation, allusion, parody, pastiche, stylistic modeling, adaptation, and transformation. Scholars such as López-Cano and Straus emphasize that these tools should not be understood hierarchically but as flexible strategies that can coexist within a single work. Importantly, intertextuality in contemporary music often operates implicitly, relying on gestural, timbral, or procedural resemblance rather than explicit quotation.

2.3 Transmediation and Intermediality

The concept of transmediation has been developed within media studies, semiotics, and interart theory to describe the transfer and transformation of content across media borders. Lars Elleström and Niklas Salmose conceptualize transmediation as a communicative process in which meaning is reconfigured when it moves from one medium to another, rather than merely translated. Karin Wenz (2023) further refines this idea by emphasizing transmedialization as an interart transfer that foregrounds transformation, loss, and gain as intrinsic components of the process.

Intermediality, by contrast, focuses on the simultaneous interaction of multiple media within a single artwork or performance. Scholars such as Claus Clüver and Stephanie Glazer have emphasized how intermedial works challenge traditional disciplinary boundaries, creating hybrid forms that demand new analytical frameworks. In contemporary musical practice, intermediality is evident in multimedia performances, installations, audiovisual works, and digitally mediated

environments where sound, image, text, and movement coexist and mutually inform one another. To sum up, *intermediality* concerns structural interactions between different media within a single work.

While closely related, transmediation and intermediality emphasize different processes. Transmediation focuses on transformation across media boundaries, whereas intermediality emphasizes coexistence and interaction among multiple media within a single work or experience. In contemporary hybrid compositions, both processes often operate simultaneously: acoustic instruments interact with fixed media, while literary, visual, and historical references are transformed into sonic structures. Thus, *transmediation* designates the transfer and transformation of meaning across media boundaries**.**

2.4 Migration of Meanings or Sensory Transfer

The migration of meanings intersects with both intertextuality and transmediation by foregrounding the mobility of sense, symbolism, and perception. Drawing on cultural studies and semiotics, this concept emphasizes that meanings are not fixed but are continually reshaped through processes of displacement, translation, and recontextualization. In music, migration of meanings becomes particularly salient in contexts of globalization, migration, technological mediation, and cultural hybridity.

Scholars in sound studies and media theory, such as Carol Vernallis, Holly Rogers, and Joana Freitas (2022), have shown how contemporary listening practices are shaped by repeatability, digital circulation, and audiovisual convergence. These conditions intensify the migration of meanings, as musical gestures acquire new associations when encountered across platforms such as concert halls, streaming services, social media, and immersive installations. This way, *migration of meanings* describes the semantic drift that occurs when materials are displaced into new cultural or affective contexts.

The concept of migration of meanings also provides a unifying framework for understanding how sonic materials acquire new associations when displaced across media, contexts, or works.

2.5 Self-citation and Compositional Memory

The contemporary understanding of intertextuality originates in Julia Kristeva's seminal formulation in *Semeiotiké* (Kristeva, 1969), where she argues that every text is constituted as a "mosaic of quotations," emerging from a continuous process of absorption and transformation of other texts. This conception displaces artistic creation from a paradigm of absolute originality toward a regime of circulation, rewriting, and reconfiguration of cultural materials. Roland Barthes intensifies this shift by proclaiming the "death of the author" (Barthes, 1977), emphasizing that meaning does not reside in an isolated creative consciousness but arises from the network of textual relations that traverse the work. Gérard Genette later systematizes these relations under the concept of transtextuality, distinguishing modalities such as quotation, allusion, hypertextuality, and self-transformation (Genette, 1982), thereby providing a theoretical space in which self-citation be understood as a legitimate intertextual practice. Within this framework, the reuse of one's own materials is not a redundant or self-referential gesture but a productive aesthetic strategy capable of generating continuity, commentary, and reflexive meaning. Selfcitation has emerged as a significant compositional strategy in contemporary music, functioning as a form of internal intertextuality. Composers such as Berio, Sciarrino, and Lachenmann have used selfcitation to create continuity across works, to recontextualize earlier materials, or to interrogate their own stylistic identities. In hybrid electroacoustic contexts, selfcitation often intersects with media transformation: an instrumental gesture may reappear as a spectral residue in fixed media, or a recorded fragment may be reinscribed into live performance.

2.6 Musical Ekphrasis: Theory and Contemporary Perspectives

Musical ekphrasis occupies a central position at the intersection of intertextuality and transmediation. While the term originates in classical rhetoric as a vivid verbal description of a visual object, its contemporary usage encompasses a wide range of interart relationships. Bruhn's definition of musical ekphrasis as a composer's response to a specific artwork—literary, visual, or architectural—has become foundational in musicological discourse. Bruhn distinguishes several modes of ekphrastic engagement, including *integration* (close structural alignment), *inflection* (selective emphasis), *adaptation* (free reinterpretation), and *staging* (dramatic or performative enactment). Musical ekphrasis is treated not only as an object of analysis, but as a compositional and epistemological strategy.

3. Methodology

This research employs qualitative and comparative analytical methods. Through close reading of scores, electroacoustic materials, and programmatic elements, the study identifies patterns of intertextuality, transmediation, and ekphrasis. Comparative analysis situates the works within broader contemporary practices, highlighting both shared strategies and individual compositional solutions. The analytical approach adopted in this study is grounded in a parameter-based framework specifically designed for hybrid electroacoustic composition. Traditional analytical models—centered on pitch, harmony, or formal schemata—prove insufficient for works in which meaning emerges primarily through timbre, texture, gesture, spectral behavior, and the interplay between acoustic and electronic layers.

The methodology is informed by the principles of artistic research, in which creative practice functions as a mode of inquiry. This orientation allows the analysis to move beyond

descriptive commentary, engaging instead with the epistemic potential of composition. The works themselves become analytical tools, revealing how meaning is constructed, displaced, and transformed through sonic processes.

3.1 Integration of Listening as Analytical Evidence

Given the multisensory nature of hybrid electroacoustic works, listening plays a central role in the methodology. Listening is treated not as a passive act but as an analytical instrument, enabling the identification of spectral nuances, microtemporal fluctuations, and textural interactions that may not be fully represented in notation.

To support this approach, listening links are provided for each composition:

- *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation* — https://youtu.be/hxLsB2BKqZk
- *Ghost Words* — https://youtu.be/O-8yVXa3eT4

These links allow the reader to engage directly with the sonic phenomena described in the analysis, reinforcing the methodological emphasis on auditory perception.

4. Case Study I: The Eerie Stillness of Desolation (Piano and Fixed Media) - 2025

4.1 Conceptual Framework

The Eerie Stillness of Desolation (2025) is a hybrid electroacoustic work for piano and fixed media that explores themes of memory, ruin, and affective displacement. The piece exemplifies how intertextuality, transmediation, and migration of meanings operate within a multisemiotic compositional environment.

The Eerie Stillness of Desolation for piano and fixed media is a meditation on the human cost of the ongoing war between two unnamed countries, focusing on civilian experiences rather than political narratives. The work exemplifies musical ekphrasis through its response to literary texts, historical musical forms, and imagined visual scenarios of destruction. The migration of meanings will be discussed in detail for each section of the composition, presented in two distinct parts: one for the audio track and one for its relationship with the piano score. Rather than depicting battles or political narratives, the work turns its gaze toward the private worlds shattered by missile strikes: the lives lost, the homes reduced to rubble, and the fragile persistence of those who continue to create meaning amid devastation. Among these stories is that of a pianist who returned to her ruined apartment to play Chopin as a last farewell on her damaged piano — a gesture of dignity, mourning, and defiance that echoes throughout the piece.

The Eerie Stillness of Desolation is not a narrative but a vigil — for musicians who can no longer play, for homes that can no longer shelter, and for the quiet, persistent human voice that survives even within the most desolate soundscape.

4.2 Formal, Transmediated, and Ekphrastic Analysis along the migration of meanings

A technical and musicological analysis of the audio recording and the piano part will be addressing the following subjects: a) temporal and rhythmic organization; b) timbre, spectral behavior, and sound morphology; c) texture, layering, and degrees of sonic density; d) dynamic shaping and articulation; e) the relationship between instrumental gesture, notation (when applicable), and resulting sound; f) compositional strategies and procedures (e.g., repetition, transformation, stratification, collage, or process-based structures.

The discussion will be framed within contemporary music and artistic research discourse, prioritizing analytical clarity, methodological rigor, and descriptive precision, and avoiding impressionistic or purely subjective language.

The music unfolds in four interconnected sections: 1) *Ruinscape;* 2) *At Night the Rats Do Sleep After All;* 3) *Lost home* and 4) *Sorrow is the silence that follows a name*.

4.2.1 Ruinscape

The opening section constructs a sonic landscape of collapse through clustered piano sonorities, unstable pitch fixation, and electroacoustic drones. The gradual transformation of noise into organ-like timbres exemplifies the migration of meanings from chaos to fragile consolation. The temporal structure of the audio track (fixed media) is governed by a sustained, low-activity electronic continuum against which discrete piano gestures (*cluster*s) emerge. The fixed media establishes long-duration temporal spans with minimal internal rhythmic articulation, functioning as a temporal reference field rather than a metrically articulated layer.

The piano emerges from low, shadowed, clustered sonorities, topped with an insistent, unstable, and distant pitch hammering annoyingly and hopelessly throughout the section.

Rhythmic activity is concentrated almost exclusively in the piano layer. Piano gestures are irregular, fragmented, and non-periodic, often separated by silence or decay tails. These gestures generate a persistent temporal friction with the fixed media, whose temporal behavior is characterized by continuity and stasis. The lack of rhythmic imitation or reinforcement between domains produces a perceptual separation between human-scale gestural time and electronically sustained time. Despite this, an underlying sense of temporal continuity is preserved through consistent pacing of piano entries. Regarding the synchronization between the fixed media and the piano, no click track is deliberately provided. *Ruinscape* (as well as *Lost*

Home and *Sorrow is the silence that follows a name*) is measured by the metronome (MM=60, equaling one beat per second), and a time signature is also provided. Notwithstanding, the duration in seconds (*time tags*) is marked above the staff, but this is intended to guide the performance because the accuracy of the time tags is only apparent, whereas a certain freedom of expression and timing is necessary to avoid overly mechanical performance. In this sense, the durations in seconds will also be a little more flexible, with a margin of error of 1 second of plus or minus. Thus, the performer must visually to make the entries according to the instructions placed in the score. To help the performer deliver a good performance, besides the written cues and time tags, *Ruinscape* includes a musical countdown in the audio track.

Spectral interaction between the piano and fixed media is a dominant feature of the audio. The electronic layer primarily occupies low- and mid-frequency regions, with a dense, drone-like profile, while the piano articulations activate a broader spectral bandwidth through percussive attacks and resonant decays. In several moments, the fixed media appear to prolong or stabilize spectral components activated by the piano, creating the impression of spectral absorption rather than direct imitation. The interaction suggests a compositional interest in resonance extension and spectral cohabitation rather than contrast.

The overall texture is stratified and relatively stable across time. The fixed media provides a continuous background layer of moderate density, characterized by slow internal fluctuation. Piano gestures function as foreground interruptions rather than as a continuously developing line. In moments where piano resonance overlaps significantly with the fixed media, a composite texture emerges in which the distinction between instrumental decay and electronic sustain becomes perceptually blurred. Textural change occurs primarily through density variation rather than through thematic or motivic development.

Dynamic behavior differs markedly between the two domains. The fixed media maintains a constrained dynamic range, evolving gradually with no abrupt amplitude changes. In contrast, the piano part exhibits sharper dynamic profiles, with clearly articulated attacks and rapid decay. These micro-dynamic events punctuate the otherwise stable electronic dynamic field. The interaction results in a layered dynamic structure, where localized dynamic events are embedded within a long-term electronic envelope.

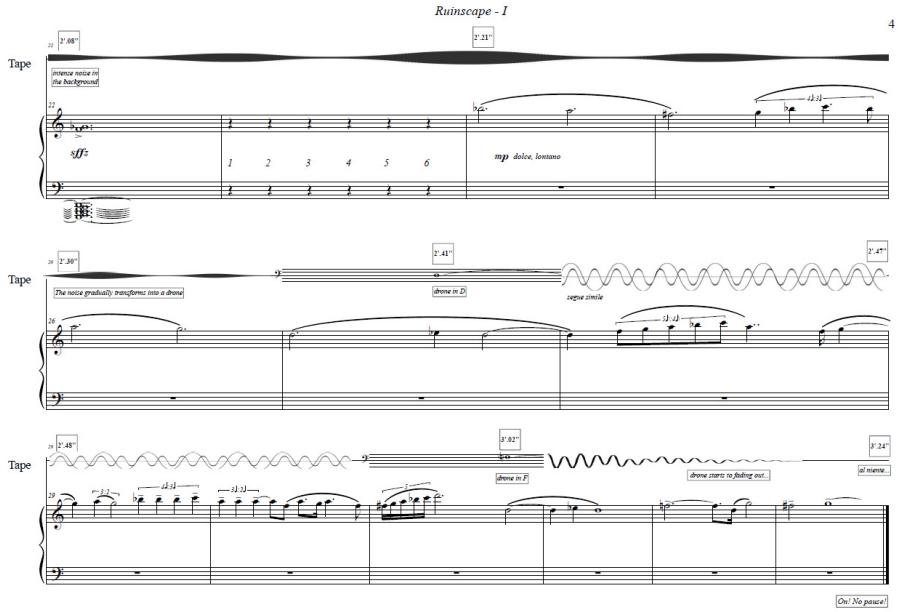
Based solely on the audio, piano gestures suggest a notational approach that prioritizes gestural clarity over metric regularity. The irregular spacing and uneven durations of events imply that rhythmic precision is subordinated to maintaining a continuous temporal flow. The sonic result emphasizes attack–resonance relationships rather than linear melodic continuity. The fixed media responds not through gestural mimicry but through sustaining and stabilizing the sonic environment in which these gestures occur.

The audio demonstrates compositional strategies characteristic of mixed music centered on extension and stabilization rather than synchronization or dialogue in the traditional sense. The fixed media operates as an autonomous temporal and spectral field, within which the piano introduces localized disturbances. There is little evidence of call-and-response or motivic exchange; instead, the relationship is asymmetrical, with the piano acting upon a pre-existing electronic space. Masking effects are minimal; instead, overlap and fusion dominate the interaction.

The piano's soundscape evokes the feeling of stepping carefully through broken rooms, with the memory of a sonic boom triggered by a high-speed missile, perceived as a buzzing sound by the human ear. On the audio track, drones, fractured noises, and ghostly remnants of human presence create a sonic scenery full of tension and distress. The noisy drone gradually transforms into a clear, organ-like pitch, offering some relief at

the end of the section and evoking memories of a (now) lost faith and spirituality. At the same time, the piano plays a fragment of an unaccompanied melody, very simple, delicate, and almost naïve, as a way to compensate for the heavy emotional charge of the musical material. As the drone fades away, the melody also comes to an end.

Figure 1 - Fragment of the melody starting at bar 24 – ruinscape p. 4



Source: Author's edition
Image description: last 13 bars from Ruinscape showing the single melody played by the piano while the audio track displays a dense noise transforming itself into a drone that fades out.

This melody first appeared in a composition scored for Alto Recorder, Violin, Cello, and Piano named *"À Mon Seul Désir"*, from 2025, and it's roughly translated as *"To My Only Desire"*. The composition is transmediated by amazing digital art by Ukrainian digital painter Tetyena Erhart. Her creations make use of Artificial Intelligence (Midjourney) composing *Renaissance-esque* inspired women portraits which display abundant beauty and poetry. Even though the musical sections make reference to the serenity, self-determination and strength expressed through the facial expression of the models, the composition's title (À mon seul désir) and subtitles (*l'amour ne désire que*

la beauté de l'âme & *Millefleurs*) are taken from *"La Dame à la licorne"* (The Lady and the Unicorn) – the modern title given to a series of six tapestries created in the style of *mille-fleurs* ("Thousand flowers") and woven in Flanders from wool and silk, from designs drawn in Paris around 1500 and displayed in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. The composition comprises 5 short sections intertwined and impregnated by Renaissance colors with a very delicate, almost diaphanous touch and feeling, sparkling joy and a pinch of melancholy:

1) *l'amour ne désire que la beauté de l'âme [Love only desires the beauty of the soul] – part 1*

2*) millefleurs [Thousand flowers] – part 1*

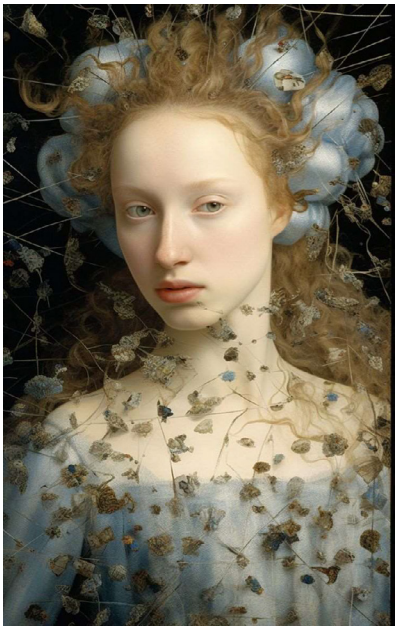
3) *l'amour ne désire que la beauté de l'âme [Love only desires the beauty of the soul] – part 2*

4) *millefleurs [Thousand flowers] – part 2*

5) *l'amour ne désire que la beauté de l'âme [Love only desires the beauty of the soul] – part 3*

The melody quoted was taken from piece no. 2 *"mille fleurs" part 1*. The mood is that of serenity, peace and self-awareness. The composition evokes Renaissance memories, extolling the beauty of the female figure depicted by the visual artist and highlighting the pastel colors and delicate flowers that cover her body. The instrumental voices intertwine like the weave of the model's dress, creating rich ornamentation.

Figure 2 – Portrait of a woman by Tetyena Erhart



Source: https://www.instagram.com/andamata/reels/
Image description: a woman with a dress adorned with flowers.

Figure 3 – fragment of the score of millefleurs

Source: Author's edition
Image description: first bars of Millefleurs part 1 showing the melody on the Alto Recorder

The melody also appeared in a very simple composition scored for piano – four hands, named *"Tão só no sótão"* (Portuguese for *"alone in the attic"*) from 2025. An attic is always a place of suspended memories. Dusty objects, stored in silence, resist time and everyday life. Among boxes, papers, and old furniture, each forgotten piece carries with it a fragment of past stories, as if waiting to be remembered again. This collection of three pieces for piano four hands invites the listener to open this imaginary space and, through music, explore the mystery and poetry of the traces that remain. The sections are:

1 – *whispering heart of a vintage bisque peasant lady*

2 – *within the snow globe, a fragile world of crystal dreams sways beneath the hush of falling stars, where love drifts softly like endless snow*

3 – *poster with a Volkswagen Beetle on a dirty road*

The above-mentioned melody was assigned to the second piece, representing a vintage snow globe. When shaken, the small globe awakens a miniature world: suspended flakes dance slowly over a cozy house and a solitary pine tree. The music reflects this fragile, almost childlike charm, alternating between sparkling movements and moments of contemplative stillness—with delicate sounds and intriguing polyphonies—like a music box. The intimate and illusory landscape, enclosed in a glass case, captures our dreams and transports us to cozy imaginary worlds.

Figure 4 – vintage snow globe with cottage and pine tree

Source: https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/vintage-christmas-snowball-globe
Image description: a snow globe with a cottage and a pine tree in the wintertime

Figure 5 - Fragment of the second piece from "Tão Só no Sótão" (alone in the attic)

Source: Author's edition
Image description: firsts bars of 'tão só no sótão'.

4.2.2. Self-Citation and the Migration of Meaning: A Transmedial and Ekphrastic Reading of a Recurrent Melody

A central compositional strategy underpinning *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation*—specifically the first section, *Ruinscape*—is the deliberate self-citation of a pre-existing melodic figure drawn from two earlier works: À mon seul désir and *Tão Só no Sótão*. This recurrence does not function as thematic development in a traditional sense, but rather as a reflective and intertextual gesture in which the composer's own material is displaced and recontextualized. The melody operates as a stable sonic signifier whose semantic content undergoes progressive transformation through transmedialization, musical ekphrasis, and the migration of meanings.

In all three compositions, the quoted melody remains structurally intact and immediately recognizable. Its persistence across distinct works should therefore be understood not as redundancy or motivic economy, but as an intentional act of self-citation. In this context, self-citation functions as a compositional strategy that externalizes the composer's past material, treating it as a semi-autonomous object subject to reinterpretation. The melody becomes a trace of compositional memory, capable of acquiring new meanings without undergoing internal transformation. This approach aligns with contemporary perspectives on intertextuality in music, in which meaning arises less from intrinsic musical structure than from contextual displacement and relational listening. The melody thus serves as a point of continuity across heterogeneous aesthetic and semantic environments.

The three works are each linked to visual or material referents situated in different media: a digital Renaissance-inspired portrait (À mon seul désir), a vintage snow globe as mnemonic object (*Tão Só no Sótão*), and the mediated imagery of architectural destruction associated with war (*Ruinscape*). The

recurrence of the melody across these contexts exemplifies a process of transmedialization, whereby affective and symbolic content migrates from one medium to another without direct representational equivalence.

Rather than translating visual form into musical structure, the melody functions as a carrier of affective residue. It absorbs qualities associated with stillness, fragility, enclosure, and loss, allowing these attributes to circulate between image, object, and sound. The musical material thus becomes a transmedial hinge through which meaning is redistributed rather than replicated.

In À mon seul désir, the melody operates within a relatively classical conception of musical ekphrasis: a sonic response to a visual artwork. The *Renaissance-esque* portrait by Tetyana Erhart, depicting a woman adorned with delicate flowers on her dress and face, informs the melody's restrained contour and contemplative character. Importantly, the music does not describe visual details but evokes the painting's suspended temporality and symbolic delicacy.

In *Tão Só no Sótão*, ekphrasis becomes indirect and mnemonic. The snow globe—an object associated with preservation, miniature worlds, and temporal stasis—reframes the melody as an analog to frozen memory and intimate solitude. Here, musical ekphrasis is no longer anchored to an artwork but to a material object imbued with affective charge.

In *Ruinscape,* the ekphrastic function is critically transformed. The melody appears late in the section, emerging from a dense electroacoustic environment as a fragile remnant. Rather than referring to a coherent image, it gestures toward absence, devastation, and loss. Ekphrasis is thus inverted: the melody does not depict ruins but survives them, standing as a sonic remainder of human presence within a landscape of destruction.

Across the three works, the melody undergoes a clear shift in meaning. In À mon seul désir, it is associated with beauty, intimacy, and contemplative femininity. In *Tão Só no Sótão*,

it acquires a nostalgic and introspective dimension, tied to abandonment and the quiet melancholy of forgotten objects. In *Ruinscape*, the same melody is recontextualized as a post-traumatic trace, charged with ethical and historical weight.

Crucially, the melody itself remains unchanged. What shifts is its ontological and symbolic status: from aesthetic presence, to mnemonic recollection, to testimony. This progressive semantic sedimentation demonstrates how musical meaning in contemporary compositional practice emerges through contextual embedding and intertextual recall rather than through material transformation alone.

Ultimately, the recurring melody functions as a symbolic survivor across the three compositions. Its persistence suggests continuity of human sensitivity across disparate conditions—artistic contemplation, private memory, and collective catastrophe. In *Ruinscape*, the melody's prior associations haunt its new context, generating a tension between what once signified beauty and what remains after destruction. Self-citation thus becomes an act of memory preservation, positioning the melody as a sonic archive through which meanings migrate, accumulate, and endure.

4.2.3 At Night the Rats Do Sleep After All

The second section of *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation*, titled *At night the rats do sleep after all*, develops a compositional logic in which absence, restraint, and semantic ambiguity are central structural parameters. Inspired by Wolfgang Borchert's wartime text *Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch,* the section engages with the paradoxical tenderness that emerges in moments of nocturnal stillness amid ruins. This tenderness, however, is never allowed to stabilize; it is continuously framed by irony and interruption, both sonically and semantically. Unlike *Ruinscape*, where the piano reappears as a fragile remnant, the acoustic instrument is entirely absent here, and the musical discourse unfolds exclusively within the domain of fixed media and voice.

The temporal organization of the section resists linear progression and teleological development. Musical time is experienced as suspended, unfolding within a narrow temporal bandwidth that privileges stasis over motion. The audio track's almost celestial melody is articulated without a clearly defined pulse, producing a floating temporal field in which rhythmic hierarchies are deliberately blurred.

The spoken phrase *"At night the rats do sleep after all"* which appears at the opening and reappears near the conclusion, functions as a framing device rather than as thematic development. This repetition establishes a circular temporal perception, reinforcing the sense of nocturnal immobility and deferred action. The final sound of a building collapsing interrupts this suspended duration, reintroducing a sudden, irreversible temporality that stands in stark contrast to the preceding stillness.

Timbre is treated as a primary carrier of meaning in this section. The melodic material is rendered through a deliberately low-quality harp VST plugin, whose limited spectral resolution, reduced dynamic range, and audible digital artifacts contribute to a sense of fragility and artificial innocence. The sound's spectral thinness and slightly unstable harmonic profile position it at the threshold between the celestial and the naïve. This timbral choice introduces a layer of subtle irony. The harp-like sonority evokes consolation and transcendence, yet its mediated and impoverished spectral quality prevents full immersion, maintaining a critical distance. The whispered female voice occupies an intimate spectral register, characterized by breath noise and restrained projection, reinforcing the atmosphere of vulnerability. This delicate sonic environment is violently opposed at the end of the section by the broadband, spectrally saturated noise of the collapsing building, whose abrupt appearance functions as a sonic rupture.

The section is characterized by a markedly sparse texture. Sonic materials are deployed with extreme economy, resulting in a low degree of textural density for the majority of the duration. The audio track melody and the spoken voice are layered in a manner that preserves perceptual transparency, allowing each element to retain its semantic specificity. Rather than increasing density through accumulation, the composition relies on layering of contextual and referential elements. Knowledge of Borchert's text, combined with the ironic title and the fragile sonic materials, produces a form of semantic density that exceeds the simplicity of the sonic surface. The sudden emergence of the collapsing building dramatically increases sonic density and retrospectively reframes the preceding stillness as precarious and provisional.

Dynamic shaping in this section is predominantly subdued. The harp-like melody unfolds at consistently low dynamic levels, with soft attack profiles and minimal articulation. The spoken voice is similarly restrained, delivered in a hesitant and understated manner that avoids rhetorical emphasis. This sustained dynamic restraint amplifies the expressive impact of the final sound event. The collapse is not merely louder but dynamically uncontrollable, introducing an energy that cannot be assimilated into the established sonic environment. The contrast between prolonged softness and sudden violence articulates a tension between care and destruction that mirrors the ethical ambiguity of the textual reference.

The complete absence of the piano constitutes one of the most significant compositional decisions in this section. Unlike in Ruinscape, where the piano emerges as a fragile survivor, here the instrument is rendered silent, gagged, and voiceless. This silence functions as an ekphrastic gesture, translating the implicit textual silence of Borchert's narrative into musical form. The non-appearance of the acoustic instrument transforms absence into a structural and expressive element. The piano's silence becomes a negative space against which the fixed

media sounds are perceived, reinforcing themes of erasure, vulnerability, and enforced muteness. In this sense, silence operates not as a neutral void but as an active compositional material.

The compositional procedures employed in this section prioritize symbolic clarity and conceptual coherence over formal complexity. Repetition is used structurally rather than developmentally, most notably in the recurrence of the spoken phrase, which frames the section and reinforces its suspended temporality. Stratification is evident in the careful separation of sonic roles: melody, voice, and noise are assigned distinct semantic and spectral functions.

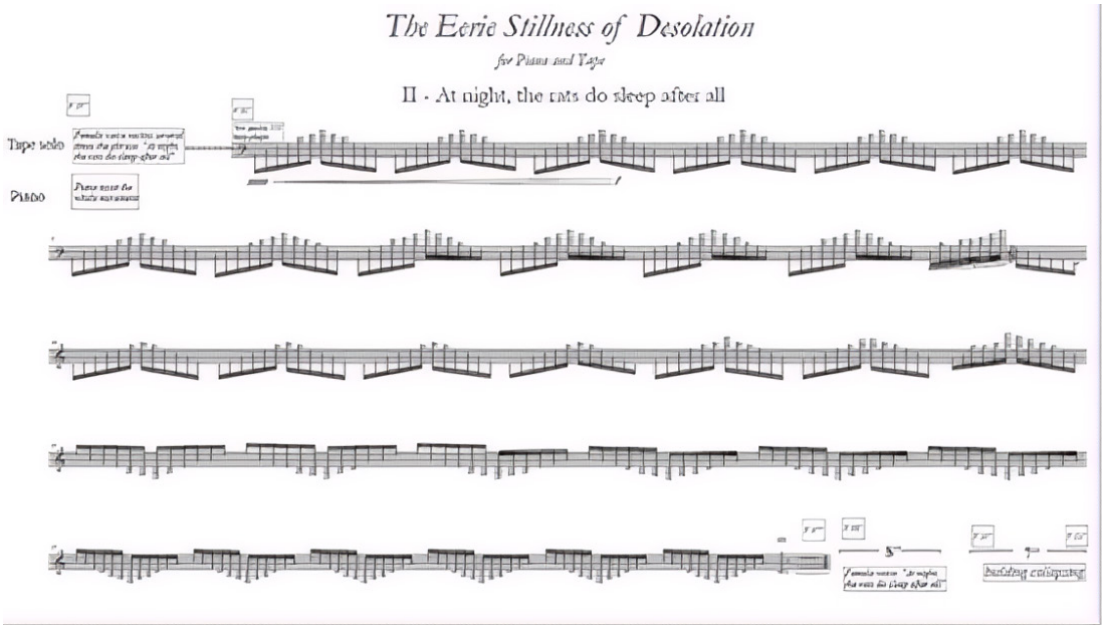
Collage emerges through the juxtaposition of heterogeneous materials that are intentionally not reconciled. The fragile, digitally mediated melody, the intimate spoken text, and the documentary-like sound of destruction coexist without synthesis, allowing their contradictions to remain perceptible. The section thus unfolds as a static yet tension-filled configuration, in which stasis is repeatedly exposed as fragile and reversible.

4.2.3.1 Harp-like Melody - Fragility and the Migration of a Mediated Sonority

The harp-like melody that assumes a central expressive role in *At Night the Rats Do Sleep After All* originates in an earlier composition for double bass and piano entitled *Sobre Recifes Enegrecidos Precipita-se Embriagada de Morte a Enrubescida Noiva do Vento* (Portuguese for *"Über schwärzliche Klippen stürzt todestrunken die erglühende Windsbraut"*) from 1995, inspired by the homonymous poem by Georg Trakl. Its subsequent reappearances—in the soundtrack for the theatre production Letter to the Father (after Franz Kafka) from 1992 and in the overture of *3 Baladas do Amor Amargo* (3 Ballads for a Bitter Love) from 2013, for piano and speaking pianist—constitute a coherent trajectory of self-citation in which a single sonic object undergoes progressive semantic displacement. Across these

contexts, the melody functions as a transmedial, ekphrastic, and affectively unstable element, whose meaning migrates without undergoing substantive internal transformation.

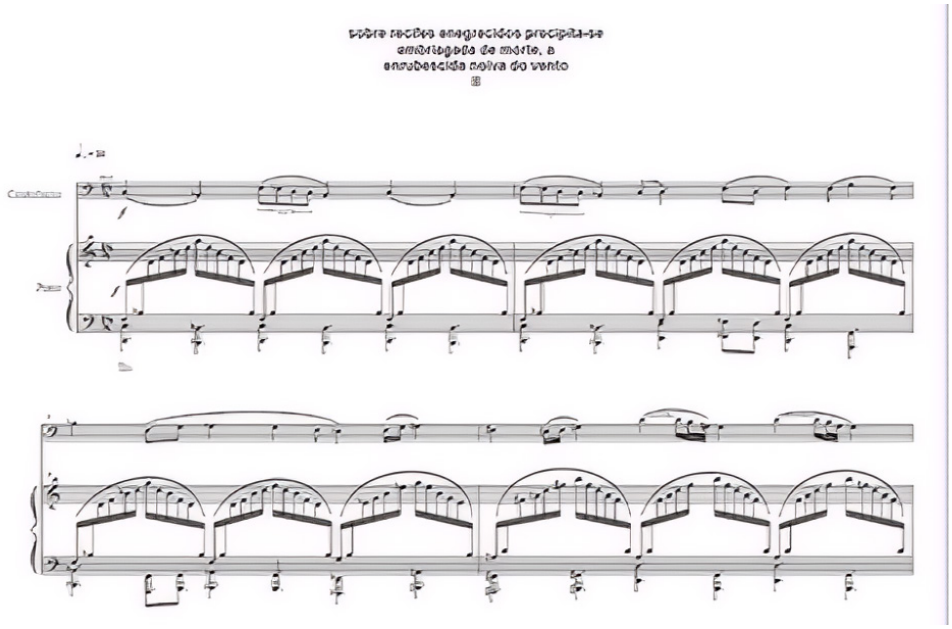
Figure 6 - The harp-like melody in the second section of "The Eerie Stillness..."



Source: Author's edition
Image description: full page of the second section from The Eerie Stillness of Desolation. The score only shows the rhythmic structure of the 'harp' melody, without specifying the pitches. The focus here is to serve as a temporal guide for the pianist, since there are slight differences between the various uses of this 'melody'.

In its original appearance in Über schwärzliche Klippen stürzt todestrunken die erglühende Windsbraut, the harp-like melody is embedded within an instrumental context shaped by poetic imagery of intoxication, collapse, and nocturnal excess characteristic of Trakl's expressionism. Temporal articulation is fluid and metric, privileging directional motion. The melody unfolds as a fragile temporal island, momentarily detached from the surrounding instrumental gestures.

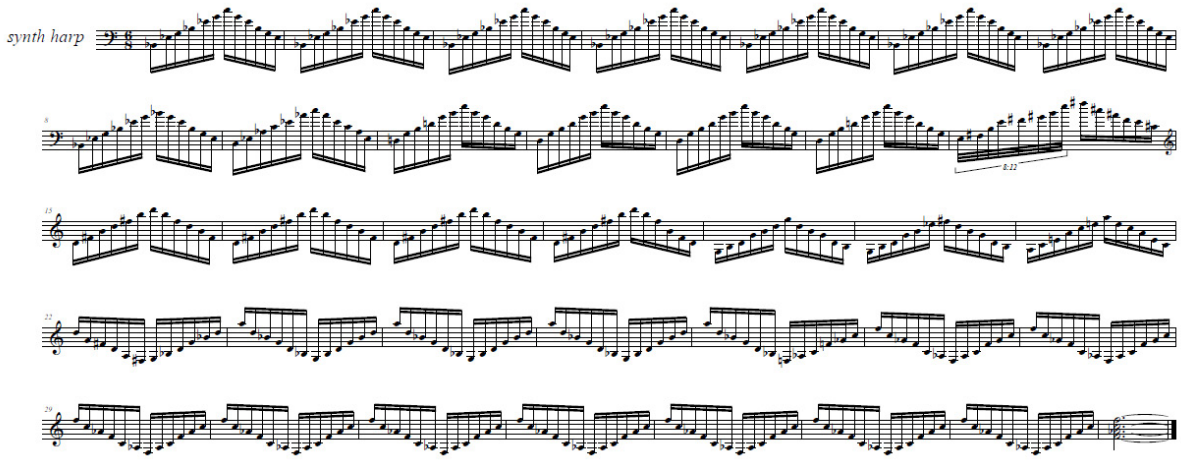
Figure 7 - Sobre Recifes Enegrecidos... for Double Bass and Piano



Source: Author's edition
Image description: First page of Sobre Recifes Enegrecidos... showing the 'harp' melody.

In *Letter to the Father*, the melody's temporal function shifts. Integrated into a theatrical soundtrack, it becomes episodic and associative, surfacing at moments of emotional exposure rather than structural articulation. Time is no longer musical but dramaturgical, and the melody acquires a reflective, almost intrusive temporal quality, interrupting rather than sustaining continuity.

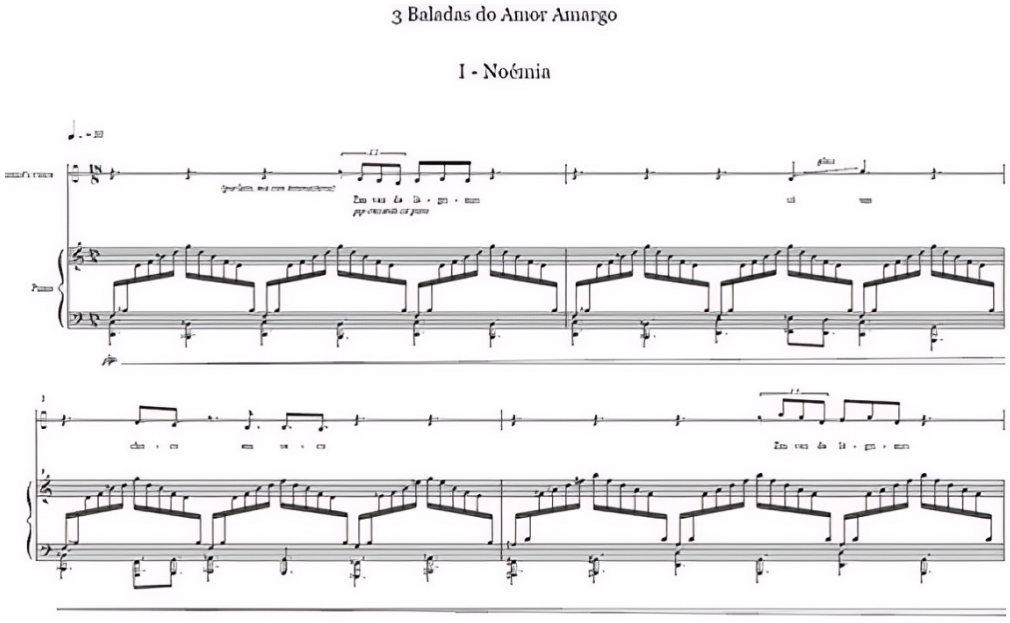
Figure 8 - Harp-like melody for the theater play "Letter to the Father"



Source: Author's edition
Harp-like melody as it appears in the soundtrack for the theater play "Letter to the Father".

In the overture of *3 Baladas do Amor Amargo*, the melody assumes a framing role. Its reappearance at the outset establishes a suspended emotional space that precedes textual articulation. Temporal stasis here functions as anticipation, preparing the listener for narratives of bitterness and emotional fracture articulated through poetry. Here the 'harp' melody is a duplicated copy from the piano's part of *"Sobre Recifes Enegrecidos..."*.

Figure 9 – 3 baladas do Amor Amargo



Source: Author's edition
Image description: firsts bars of 3 Baladas do Amor Amargo showing the harp-like melody.

Finally, in *At Night the Rats Do Sleep After All*, the melody's temporal behavior is further reduced and rarified. Detached from instrumental support and rendered through fixed media, it floats within a nocturnal temporal vacuum. The melody no longer introduces or interrupts time but exists as a fragile residue within suspended duration.

A defining feature of the melody's later appearances is its timbral mediation through a deliberately low-quality harp VST plugin. While the original instrumental version relies on acoustic resonance and gestural nuance, the mediated version

introduces spectral thinness, reduced dynamic responsiveness, and audible digital artifacts. This deliberate impoverishment of timbre is not merely a technical constraint but a compositional decision that redefines the melody's expressive status. In *Letter to the Father*, the reduced spectral richness reinforces the themes of emotional inadequacy, alienation, and distorted intimacy central to Kafka's text. The sound appears fragile and insufficient, mirroring the impossibility of direct communication. In *3 Baladas do Amor Amargo*, the same timbral quality frames the poetry's exploration of bitter love. The melody's artificial delicacy suggests emotional exposure stripped of protection, its thin spectrum resonating with themes of vulnerability and unfulfilled desire. In "*At Night the Rats Do Sleep After All*," this timbral fragility reaches its most critical point. The almost celestial yet evidently mediated harp sound introduces a paradoxical tenderness that is immediately problematized by its artificiality. The melody sounds consoling and hollow at once, incapable of fully sustaining transcendence.

Texturally, the melody becomes progressively isolated as it migrates. In the Trakl-inspired piece, it exists within an instrumental dialogue, supported and sometimes destabilized by the double bass and piano. In the theatrical soundtrack, it is layered against spoken text and stage action, functioning as a reflective undercurrent. In *3 Baladas do Amor Amargo*, the melody occupies a liminal position between music and text, preceding the poetic narratives and establishing an affective threshold. Its texture is sparse, yet still anchored in the presence of live performance. In *At Night the Rats Do Sleep After All*, the melody reaches a state of near-complete isolation. Deployed within a low-density electroacoustic texture, it is exposed, unsupported, and surrounded by silence. This isolation intensifies its symbolic fragility and prepares the ground for the violent intrusion of the collapsing building sound.

Across all iterations, the melody is characterized by restrained dynamics and soft articulation. However, the expressive implications of this restraint shift with context.

In the Trakl-inspired work, softness suggests intoxicated introspection and nocturnal lyricism. In the Kafka soundtrack, it conveys hesitation and emotional withdrawal. In *3 Baladas do Amor Amargo,* the subdued dynamic profile functions as a prelude to confessional intensity, holding back emotion rather than releasing it. In *At Night the Rats Do Sleep After All*, dynamic restraint becomes an ethical stance that resists expressive excess in the face of historical violence. The melody's quietness renders it vulnerable to erasure, a vulnerability confirmed by the subsequent sonic collapse. The migration from acoustic instrumentation to fixed media marks a decisive shift in the melody's ontological status. Originally notated and embodied by performers, the melody gradually becomes disembodied, first mediated by electronics in theatrical contexts and ultimately fixed and acousmatic. This transition alters the relationship between gesture and sound. In its fixed-media form, the melody is no longer subject to interpretative variance; its fragility is frozen, its imperfections repeated identically. This immobility reinforces its function as a memory trace rather than a living gesture.

The principal compositional procedure governing the melody's recurrence is recontextualization rather than transformation. Repetition occurs across works but not within them; the melody's internal structure remains stable while its semantic environment shifts. Stratification and collage are employed at the level of context, as the melody is juxtaposed with divergent textual, theatrical, and sonic materials.

Through this process, the melody undergoes a pronounced migration of meanings. Originating as an expressionist poetic gesture, it becomes a vehicle for familial trauma, then for bitter love, and finally for fragile consolation amid ruins. Each reappearance deposits new semantic layers without erasing the previous ones, resulting in a cumulative symbolic density.

4.2.4 Lost Home

Here, ekphrasis operates through layered media: whispered poetry, distant Chopin-esque waltz fragments, and aggressive noise textures. The waltz functions as a migrating signifier of lost domesticity and cultural memory. Lost home is a lament for spaces that no longer exist. The piano becomes more exposed, its lines fragile, limited to a few chords, at first displayed like a religious hymn – homophonic texture, and so the blocks will be displaced between the two hands, creating a disturbing yet poetic sonority. The audio track plays a very crucial role in this section. It starts with a whispering female voice reciting a sad poem that reads:

He steps through the broken street
where walls no longer remember their shapes.
Dust rises like breath from a wounded animal.
The city is quiet except for the shifting rubble.
Inside him, a waltz tries to return.
Not as he once played it
—clean, certain, full of afternoon light—
but scattered, slipping between lost measures.
A fragment of melody surfaces,
then another,
each one limping, out of order,
as if the music itself had been shelled.
He pauses,
listening to the ruined bars in his mind,
and for a moment the debris around him
feels like a score that no one will ever read again.

Still, about the fixed media part, during the poetry recitation, a *Chopin-esque* waltz begins to play from afar and disappears like a fleeting memory. Or perhaps someone was playing it amidst the rubble? Following the recitation, a drone-like noise begins, juxtaposed with the voice of a frantic girl. She speaks the words in Spanish *"días de dolor"* (meaning "days of sorrow") and proceeds to sing it and suddenly starts screaming desperately, as if she's snapping out of it. The girl's voice and cry are taken from one of the songs that make up the monodrama from 2023, *"Cancións Patètiques i Mèlancoliques"* by this author, scored for female voice, viola, double bass, and piano. The poem is by Nicaraguan poet Rubén Dario and reads: *"day of sorrow, when the angel of first love flies away forever."* This singing-and-screaming pattern repeats throughout the noise, which becomes increasingly intense, with thunderous sounds adding to the intensity. Finally, the girl's screaming and the noise abruptly fade, and a long sigh concludes this section.

In *Lost Home*, ekphrasis functions not as the description of a static visual object but as the sonic enactment of a devastated space, unfolding across multiple media layers: whispered poetry, fragmented tonal memory, and violent noise textures. These textures were manipulated from material recorded on reel-to-reel tapes that had been forgotten in the Electroacoustic Composition Laboratory at the School of Music of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte. The audio track contained excerpts of breathing sounds recorded by Argentine composer Eduardo Juan Bértola in Córdoba in the 1970s. Bértola used part of this material in the composition of his electroacoustic work *"Gomecito Contra la Siemens O El Diablo de San Agustín,"* created in 1973, and left the unused material in the laboratory archives available to anyone who wanted to use it.

The section operates as an aural ruin, where sound itself bears the scars of destruction. Rather than representing devastation from an external vantage point, the work internalizes collapse, allowing the listener to inhabit a subjectivity in which memory,

music, and environment have become indistinguishable. *Lost home* also includes a sort of countdown in the fixed media part, incorporated musically to the soundtrack.

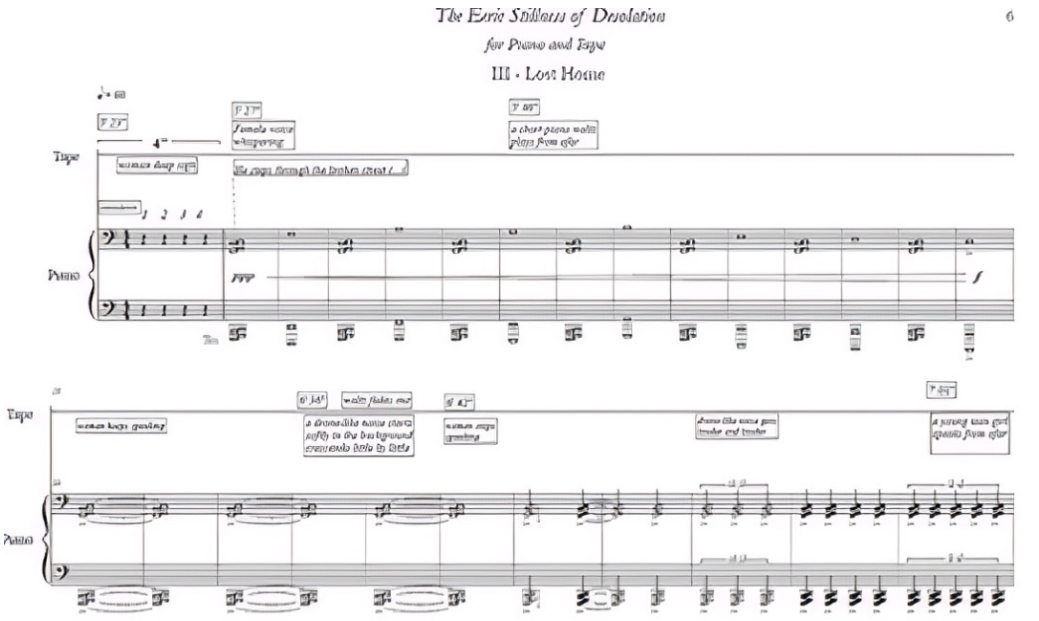
Central to this section is the *Chopin-esque* waltz, which operates as a migrating signifier of home, intimacy, and cultural continuity. Historically associated with bourgeois domestic spaces, salons, and bodily familiarity, the waltz here is dislocated from its function and context. It appears faintly, from afar, unstable and incomplete, suggesting not performance but recollection. Its emergence during the whispered poetry positions it as a memory intruding upon devastation, or conversely, as devastation eroding memory. This waltz no longer unfolds metrically or formally; instead, it "limps", surfacing in fragments that fail to cohere. Through this erosion, the waltz undergoes transmedial migration: from dance music to psychological residue, from tonal object to sonic ghost. Its disappearance is ambiguous—whether fading as a memory or silenced by external destruction—reinforcing the uncertainty between internal trauma and external ruin.

Figure 10 – fragment of the *chopin-esque*

Source: Author's edition
Image description: fragment of the chopin-esque waltz composed to be inserted in the audio track section of "Lost Home".

The piano part mirrors this conceptual instability. Its initially homophonic, hymn-like texture invokes ritual, faith, and communal grounding. However, this gesture is immediately undermined through register displacement between the hands, fracturing what would otherwise suggest stability or consolation. The piano thus oscillates between sacral resonance and existential fragility, exposing its lines and limiting itself to sparse harmonic blocks. This reduction does not imply simplicity but vulnerability. The piano is no longer a vehicle for expressive fullness; instead, it becomes a fragile architectural remnant, echoing the ruined cityscape evoked in the poetry. The listener perceives the instrument as both present and wounded, capable only of partial utterance.

Figure 11 – firsts bars of "Lost Home"



Source: Author's edition
Image description: firsts bars showing the hymn-like homophonic texture of "Lost Home".

Figure 12 – final bars of "Lost Home"

Source: Author's edition
Image description: last page of 'Lost Home' showing hand displacement.

The audio track assumes a structural and semantic centrality in this section. The whispered female voice reciting the poem functions ekphrastically, translating a visual and emotional landscape of destruction into language while remaining deliberately restrained. The whispering delivery avoids theatricality, suggesting intimacy and proximity, as if the devastation were being narrated from within the ruins rather than observed.

Following the recitation, the sonic environment shifts abruptly. A drone-like noise mass emerges, juxtaposed with the voice of a frantic girl speaking—and later singing—the phrase *"días de dolor."* The introduction of Spanish marks a linguistic and cultural displacement, reinforcing the transnational and deterritorialized nature of suffering. The phrase itself is minimal, almost ritualistic, and through repetition becomes incantatory rather than narrative.

The transition from speech to singing to screaming represents a collapse of linguistic control. Meaning dissolves into raw vocality, and the voice becomes pure affect. This escalation aligns with the increasing density and violence of the noise textures, including thunderous sounds that blur the boundary between environmental catastrophe and psychological breakdown. Here, transmedialization is enacted violently: language becomes sound, sound becomes noise, and noise becomes trauma.

The repeated cycle of singing and screaming functions as a sonic metaphor for failed mourning. Each attempt at melodic or linguistic articulation is overwhelmed by intensity, suggesting that grief cannot stabilize into form. Noise, rather than serving as mere contrast to tonality, becomes the dominant expressive medium—an aesthetic of breakdown where structure is no longer sustainable.

Importantly, the noise does not climax conventionally. Instead, its sudden cessation, alongside the abrupt silencing of the girl's scream, produces a vacuum. The final long sigh functions as a residue of life, exhaustion rather than resolution. It is neither cathartic nor reconciliatory; it marks survival stripped of meaning.

Within the larger context of *The Eerie Stillness of Devastation*, *Lost Home* articulates devastation not through spectacle but through absence, fragility, and failed return. Home is not destroyed in a single event; it erodes through memory distortion, linguistic collapse, and sonic fragmentation. Ekphrasis here does not illustrate ruins—it sonifies the impossibility of reconstruction.

4.2.5 Sorrow is the Silence that Follows a Name

The final section invokes the Renaissance lament as a vertical intertext. The chaotic yet pulse-driven piano writing contrasts with the stylized vocal lament, producing a tension between historical memory and contemporary rupture.

A name spoken aloud becomes an absence; a life remembered becomes a silence that cannot be filled. The audio track presents a sort of Renaissance Lamento – sung sorrowfully by a male voice. The lamento is repeated four times during the section while accompanied by a consort of synth viola da gamba. The piano follows the lamento with a nervous performance, where the rhythm patterns are played in a very chaotic yet controlled manner, marked by abundant deliberate notational deviations that serve no structural purpose beyond the necessity of a sustained, unwavering pulse. The audio track ends abruptly, but the piano still plays alone for a very short time, finishing the composition in an ethereal way. The lamento assumes a ritualistic function. However, repetition here does not offer consolation or closure. Instead, it underscores the stasis of grief: sorrow returns unchanged, incapable of progression or resolution. Each recurrence reinforces absence rather than presence, aligning with the section's central idea that to name is already to acknowledge loss.

The final section of *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation* functions as an elegiac threshold rather than a conclusion. Drawing upon the Renaissance lament as a vertical intertext, the section does not quote historical material verbatim but invokes its affective grammar—ritualized grief, melodic restraint, and temporal suspension. This gesture situates sorrow within a lineage of musical mourning while simultaneously exposing the impossibility of historical continuity in the face of contemporary devastation.

In choosing a voice to sing a stylized Renaissance lamento, this choice operates as an act of transmedial and transhistorical migration: the lament is displaced from its original acoustic and social context into an electronically mediated space. The use of synthesis rather than historical instruments is crucial—it frames the lament not as reenactment but as spectral remembrance, a historical memory rendered unstable and fragile.

The title—*Sorrow is the Silence that Follows a Name*—frames naming as a performative act whose consequence is void. Within this context, the spoken or sung name does not reconstitute identity; it produces an acoustic afterimage, a silence that resonates more forcefully than sound itself. This inversion of referential logic situates the section within an ethics of restraint: music does not claim to represent the dead, but rather circles the impossibility of doing so.

The male voice, historically associated with authority and proclamation, is here stripped of declarative power. Its lament does not narrate; it endures. The voice becomes a vessel for collective mourning rather than individual expression, reinforcing the vigil-like character of the work. Technically, the lamento used in this section is taken from the soundtrack of a play from 1997, based on the work of French author Marguerite Yourcenar – *Le Dialogue dans le Marécage* – a one-act play adapted from the medieval Italian story of Pia de' Tolomei, a noblewoman imprisoned by her jealous husband in an unsanitary castle in Maremma, exploring the tragedy of human existence. The lamento occurs at the moment in the play when Sir Laurent, on his way to end his days in a monastery, recalls his loves, regrets, and cowardice. The lyrics are taken from *the First Booke of Songs* (1597) by John Dowland and portray a melancholic song in which the speaker pleads with a cruel lover, blending despair with tenderness. The lamento's melody was processed to be played in retrograde mode, reinforcing the melancholic and hopeless effect.

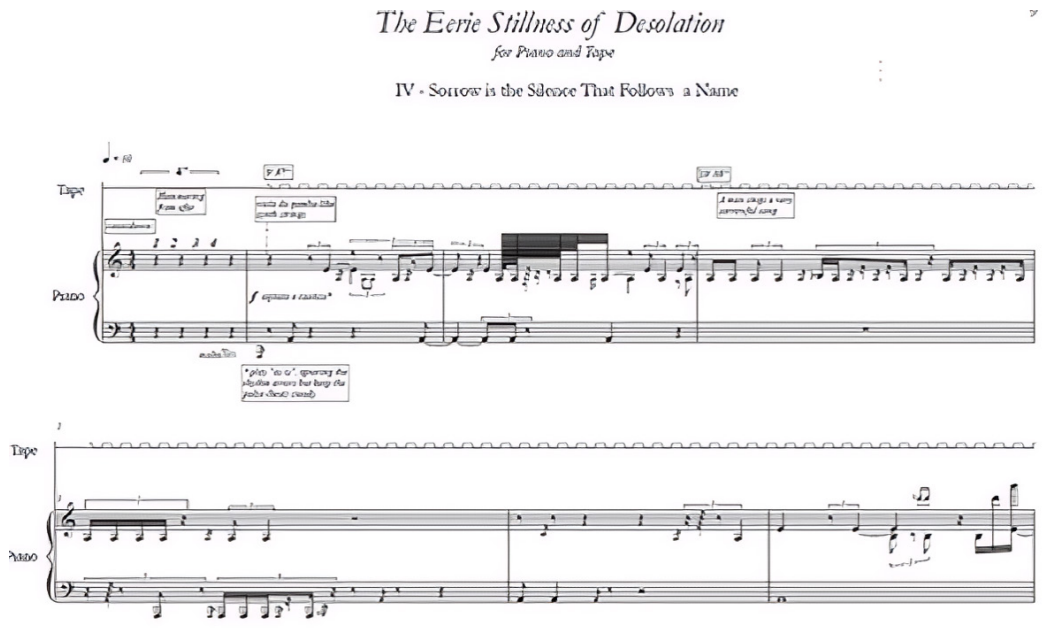
Against the stylized stillness of the fixed media, the piano introduces a contrasting layer of chaotic yet pulse-driven motion. The writing is marked by abundant deliberate notational deviations—irregular groupings, seemingly erratic articulations (grace notes to be played short and *staccato*), and gestures that resist metric clarity. Importantly, these deviations are explicitly declared structurally irrelevant; their function is not formal development but performative tension. In other words,

controlled disobedience, yet this section also includes a sort of countdown in the audio track part, incorporated musically to the soundtrack.

What anchors the piano part is the unwavering pulse (meaning the beat must [paradoxically] remain steady throughout the section). This sustained temporal grid operates as a metaphor for endurance: even as surface details fracture, time persists. The piano thus embodies a body under stress—agitated, unstable, yet compelled to continue. The "mistakes" embedded in the notation become gestures of resistance against expressive polish, privileging presence over precision, persistence over correctness.

The section thus stands as a lament not only for physical spaces but also for the conditions that once allowed music, language, and domestic sound to coexist. What remains is stillness—not peaceful, but eerie: a suspended state where memory persists without ground, and sound survives only as trace.

Figure 13 – first page of "Sorrow is the Silence..."



Source: Author's edition
Image description: firsts bars of the last section of "The Eerie Stillness of Desolation".

The relationship between fixed media and piano is not dialogical but asymmetrical. The audio track inhabits a vertical temporality—ritual, repetition, historical depth—while the piano unfolds horizontally in restless motion. This tension produces a space in which grief is experienced simultaneously as stasis and agitation, memory and immediacy.

When the audio track ends abruptly, its abrupt ending is neither prepared for nor resolved. The sudden silence functions as a final act of negation: history withdraws, ritual collapses, and the burden of continuation is transferred entirely to the living performer.

The piano's brief continuation alone, after the audio track has ceased, is not a coda in the traditional sense but an afterimage. Its ethereal quality suggests exhaustion rather than transcendence. The music does not conclude with affirmation; it simply fades, leaving behind a suspended stillness.

In this moment, *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation* reveals its true ontological position. The work is not a narrative of loss but a vigil—for silenced musicians, destroyed homes, and voices reduced to traces. Sound persists not to overcome desolation, but to bear witness to it. The final stillness is not empty; it is charged with memory, restraint, and ethical refusal to aestheticize catastrophe.

Through this final section, sorrow is no longer articulated as sound alone but as the space that remains when sound withdraws. The composition ends not by resolving grief, but by leaving it open, unresolved, and shared.

5. Case Study II: Ghost Words (Double Bass and Fixed Media) - 2025

5.1 Conceptual Framework

Ghost Words (2025) is a triptych for double bass and fixed media that explores psychological captivity, linguistic erosion, and the spectralization of voice. The work engages deeply with

intertextuality, transmediation, and the migration of meanings, drawing on theatrical soundtracks, earlier compositions, and digitally generated voices.

In a world where truth is twisted and silence becomes a weapon, *Ghost Words* explores psychological captivity and the erosion of identity through a metaphorical engagement with language and silence. The title draws from the linguistic term for non-existent or misattributed words, but here it is reimagined as a metaphor for language corrupted by fear - words that are silenced, falsified, or rendered spectral by trauma.

The double bass embodies both voice and body, while the fixed media represents fragmented internal states.

5.2 Formal and Intertextual Analysis

The three movements—*Griefworn, Mournveil, and Hollowcry*—trace an emotional arc rather than a narrative arc through the inner world of a hostage figure, isolated in darkness and fed on cruelty and deception. Intertextuality operates implicitly through stylistic references, extended techniques, and spectral electronic textures that migrate between presence and absence:

I. *Griefworn* — sorrow becomes so deeply embedded that pain is no longer felt as intrusion, but as a second skin.

II. *Mournveil* — silence thickens into a shroud, muffling fear and memory alike.

III. *Hollowcry* — the final rupture: a scream that cannot be voiced, only echoed within.

5.2.1. Temporal and Rhythmic Organization

Ghost Words articulates time as a psychological and phenomenological continuum, rather than as a metrically regulated structure. Across the three movements—*Griefworn, Mournveil, and Hollowcry*—temporal organization is governed by elastic pacing, durational fields, and asymmetrical temporal blocks.

In *Griefworn*, the double bass operates within extended durations, with gestures frequently suspended in registral extremes. Rhythmic activity is sparse and discontinuous, producing a temporal field characterized by latency and interruption. The audio track layer introduces quasi-static textures whose internal micro-fluctuations resist alignment with instrumental time, establishing a temporal disjunction between corporeal gesture and internalized sonic states.

Mournveil intensifies temporal instability through the alternation of slow, breath-like arco gestures and abrupt, non-idiomatic attacks. These contrasts do not produce rhythmic pulse but rather temporal fracture, reinforcing the work's engagement with psychological containment. The audio track's spectral events intermittently surface and recede, creating non-teleological temporal loops that undermine forward motion.

In *Hollowcry*, time is further decomposed into residual durations: silences acquire structural weight, and instrumental gestures often terminate without resolution. The movement's temporal organization emphasizes erosion and exhaustion, with the absence of rhythmic continuity functioning as a compositional constant rather than a deviation.

5.5.2. Timbre, Spectral Behavior, and Sound Morphology

Timbre functions as the primary structural parameter in *Ghost Words*. The double bass is treated as a hybrid vocal–corporeal instrument, employing extended techniques such as bowing overpressure, irregular tuning and noise-inflected attacks. These techniques destabilize pitch identity and foreground spectral ambiguity.

The audio track layer consists of electronically processed materials with granular, filtered, and spectrally stretched components. Rather than acting as accompaniment, the fixed media operates as an internalized sonic residue, often occupying liminal zones between noise and pitched sound. Spectral energy migrates gradually, producing morphologies that lack clear onset–decay profiles.

Across movements, sound morphology emphasizes emergence and dissolution. Instrumental sounds frequently begin as noise-rich gestures that partially coalesce into pitch before disintegrating. This mirrors the conceptual erosion of language: sonic forms appear, lose definition, and collapse into silence or spectral debris.

5.5.3. Texture, Layering, and Degrees of Sonic Density

Textural organization in *Ghost Words* is predominantly stratified yet unstable. The relationship between double bass and fixed media oscillates between foreground–background hierarchies and moments of near-indistinction.

In *Griefworn*, low-density textures prevail. Sparse instrumental gestures are separated by extended silences, while the fixed media introduces faint, hovering layers that remain perceptually distant. Density is controlled through subtractive means, with absence functioning as an active compositional layer.

Mournveil increases textural complexity through partial overlap and spectral masking. The double bass often occupies the same frequency bands as the fixed media, resulting in blurred textural boundaries. Sonic density intensifies not through accumulation but through spectral congestion, in which multiple fragile layers compete for perceptual clarity.

Hollowcry returns to reduced density, but with heightened fragility. Textures are thin, frequently collapsing into isolated events. The stratification becomes unstable, as neither layer consistently asserts dominance, reinforcing the sense of identity dissolution central to the work.

5.5.4. Dynamic Shaping and Articulation

Dynamic behavior in Ghost Words avoids conventional contouring in favor of micro-dynamic modulation. Extreme dynamic contrasts are rare; instead, the work emphasizes gradual crescendi and decrescendi that often fail to reach

resolution. The double bass articulations range from sub-audible bow pressure to forceful, noise-saturated attacks. These articulations are not expressive in a traditional sense but function structurally, marking thresholds between sonic states. The fixed media contribute dynamically, static or slowly evolving layers, reinforcing a sense of containment and internal pressure. In *Hollowcry*, dynamics approach a lower threshold of audibility, with articulation becoming increasingly fragile. The diminishing dynamic range parallels the conceptual exhaustion of voice and agency.

5.5.5. Relationship Between Instrumental Gesture, Notation, and Resulting Sound

When notation is present, it functions less as prescriptive instruction and more as a framework for constrained variability. Instrumental gestures are often defined in terms of approximate durations, textural descriptors, or technique-based indications rather than fixed rhythmic values. This approach foregrounds the gap between notation and sound, allowing the performer's physical engagement with the instrument to shape sonic outcomes. The resulting sound is contingent, emphasizing instability and unpredictability as compositional features rather than performative deviations. The fixed media, by contrast, presents a fixed sonic layer, creating a tension between the fluidity of live gesture and the immutability of recorded material. This tension reflects the conceptual dichotomy between embodied voice and internalized, fragmented mental states.

5.5.6. Compositional Strategies and Procedures

The compositional logic of *Ghost Words* is process-oriented and non-linear. Repetition appears not as literal recurrence but as iterative deformation: similar gestures reappear in altered spectral, dynamic, or registral contexts. Transformation primarily occurs through spectral erosion, in which materials lose coherence over time. Stratification juxtaposes

incompatible sonic states—noise versus pitch, continuity versus fragmentation—without resolving their contradictions. Collage-like procedures emerge in the interaction between instrumental and pre-recorded materials, yet these juxtapositions are subtle and integrated, avoiding abrupt stylistic rupture. The overarching strategy is one of controlled disintegration, aligning the formal trajectory of the three movements with the conceptual framework of psychological captivity and linguistic collapse.

The first piece, *Griefworn*, is characterized by a latent dramatic intensity. The audio track commences with the resonance of a low-pitched drum, which persists throughout the section, articulated at approximately regular intervals. Accompanying this percussive element are electronic sounds that emulate birds, dogs, insects, miscellaneous noises, and human screams. Over the course of the movement, male voices speaking foreign languages emerge, culminating in a folkloric chant performed by a female vocal ensemble.

The double bass initiates the section with a persistent rhythmic-melodic figure in the instrument's upper register. This figure alternates with sustained low notes that gradually transform into noise through the exaggerated application of bow pressure. At other points, the performer is instructed to produce tones with irregular intonation. The insistent rhythmic-melodic motif subsequently unfolds into rapid notes in the lower register, articulated as double stops, with one string functioning as an open drone. This tense figuration progressively subsides, evolving into a hymn-like passage—modal and melancholic—coinciding with the women's chant. Rather than accompanying the chant, the double bass operates as an autonomous entity, thereby generating two distinct sonic layers within the work.

The audio track's foundational material is drawn from the soundtrack of the theatrical piece *Le Dialogue dans le Marécage*, which depicts the pilgrimage of the protagonist, Sir Laurent, as he traverses a dark swamp on his way to a monastery where his

life will end. The incessant and unstable drumbeat symbolizes the protagonist's tormented conscience, consumed by remorse and doubt. The sounds evoking insects, distant barking dogs, and birds fantastically reconstruct the local geography of the pilgrimage. The aggregation of these elements intensifies the passage's dramatic quality while simultaneously imparting movement and direction to the scene.

The double bass material originates from a composition of the 1990s, orchestrated for violin and double bass, entitled *Ba al Zebhubh* from 2003. The double bass part is subsequently recycled and reconstructed, incorporating elements from both the original double bass and violin parts, as illustrated in figures 14, 15, and 16. *Ba al Zebhubh* refers to the Semitic deity associated with weather, thunder, fertility, agriculture, and the firmament (Ba'al in Ugaritic and Hebrew signifying "Lord"). However, the figure is also known as the *"Lord of the Flies",* owing to the Hebrew association of his name with *"pile of dung",* thereby likening his followers to flies. Consequently, *Ba al Zebhubh* embodies a duality, signifying both ruin, decay, and destruction, as well as power, control, and fertility. This ambiguity is of particular interest, as the performance may operate at both extremes of representation, engaging in a dialectic of good and evil.

Within the transmedial adaptation to *Ghost Words*, the double bass initially assumes the darker dimension inherited from *Ba al Zebhubh*, consonant with the thematic inspiration of the work. Following a tense and unstable climax, however, the instrument adopts a calmer, quasi-religious character, articulated through homophonic textures and double stops, harmonizing with the female chant present in the audio track at this juncture.

Griefworn concludes with the superimposition of two female voices—one repeating in Portuguese the phrase *"Não vejo! Não ouço! Não ouço!"* ("I do not see! I do not hear! I do not hear!"), and the other whispering the following poem:

The dark has teeth.

It hums when I move.

They feed me sounds,

say 'freedom' tastes like metal.

I forget the shape of day.

The air smells of endings.

Sometimes I talk to my shadow,

but it won't answer—

it's afraid too.

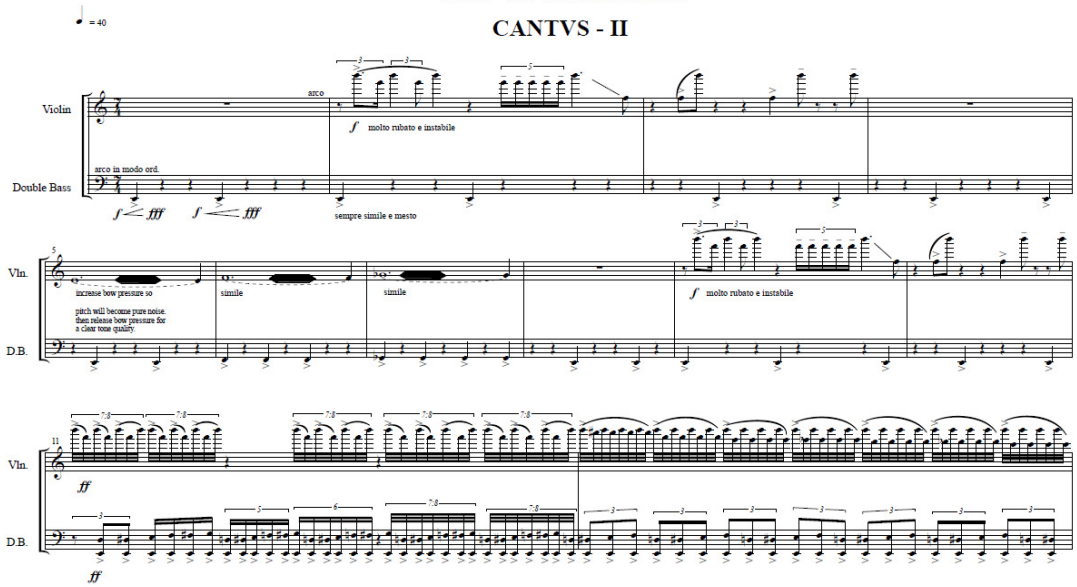
Voices crawl under my skin,

chanting promises with broken tongues.

I swallow their ghost words

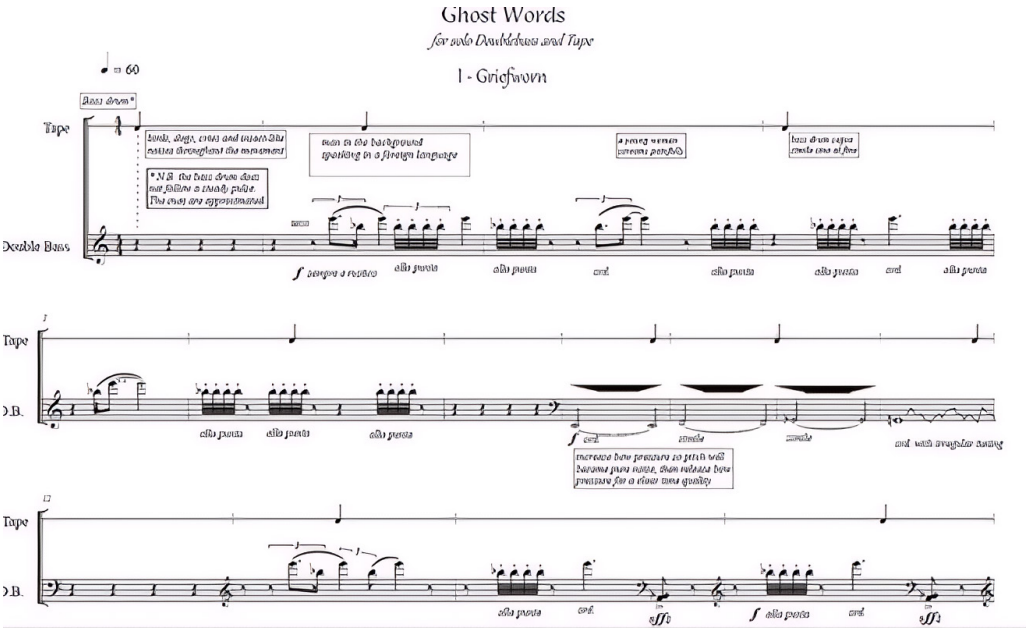
so they can't live outside me.

Figure 14 – firsts bars of Ba al Zebhubh



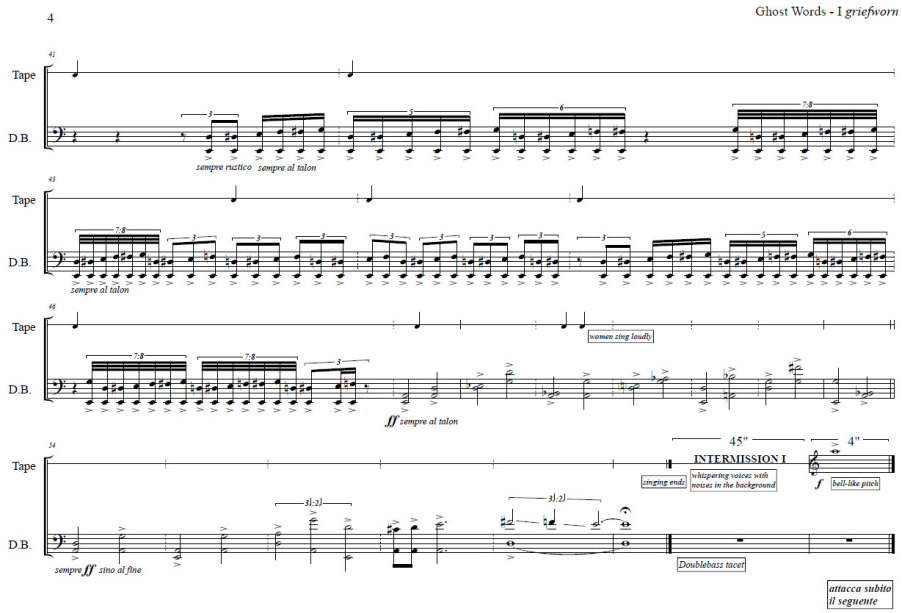
Source: Author's edition
Image description: firsts bars of Ba al Zebhubh showing the material to be extracted for use in Griefworn.

Figure 15 – firsts bars of Griefworn



Source: Author's edition
Image description: first bars of Griefworn showing the double bass material extracted from the violin part of Ba al Zebhubh.

Figure 16 - last page of Griefworn

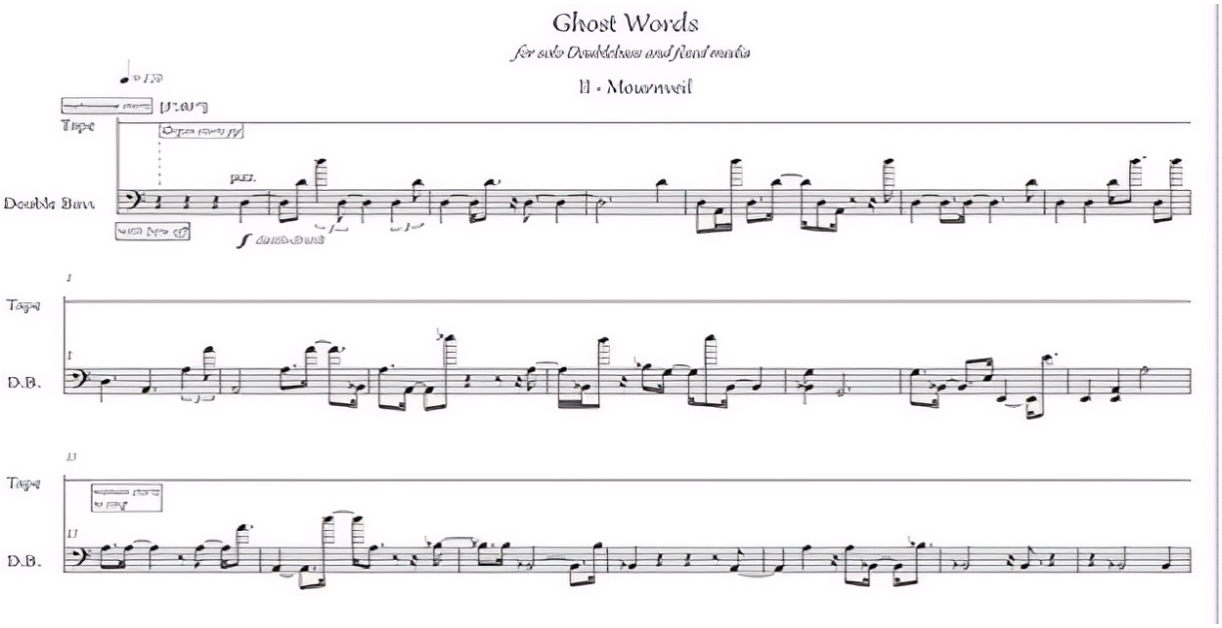


Source: Author's edition
Image description: last page of Griefworn showing the double bass material extracted from the double bass part of Ba al Zebhubh. Note the homophonic texture juxtaposed with the woman singing.

The second piece, *Mournveil*, opens with an audio layer emulating a cathedral organ. The composition begins with an intimate and melancholic female vocal solo. Subsequently, a male voice continues the soprano's initial solo, intoning a melody that evokes an atmosphere oscillating between memories of Gregorian chant and a Baroque adagio. The original material was extracted from the soundtrack of the theatrical production *Dialogue dans le marécage*. The aria is performed after the conclusion of the play, when the lights are extinguished. A poem by Amadis de Jamyn (1538–1592) is employed, beginning with the line "*on va tomber un fruit quand il est plus que meure...*," which symbolizes old age and finitude for the character Sir Laurent.

In *Mournveil*, the aria is used in its entirety but processed for retrograde performance, generating a new melodic–musical conception in which the original language becomes unrecognizable and untranslatable. This transformation aligns with the additional meanings attached to the central idea of *Ghost Words*: the suffering of hostages whose words are unutterable. The pseudo-lightness produced by the processed voice and organ in *Mournveil* is countered by the double bass part, played pizzicato with a nervous and tense rhythm, functioning as a kind of *basso continuo* for the soundtrack. The double bass is marked *forte*, with the expressive indication *"death-drunk"*. This expression is borrowed from a poem by Georg Trakl, whose original German term (*todestrunken*) is composed of two words: *Todes* (death) and *trunken* (drunk). The term suggests a passive surrender, as if the subject were seized by a mortal vertigo or ecstasy. It may evoke both despair and a form of tragic ecstasy, in which death is perceived as an irresistible force that overtakes the being. It functions as a metaphor for the dissolution of the self, the loss of control, and the surrender to destiny.

Figure 17 - first page of Mournveil



Source: Author edition
Image description: first bars of Mournveil showing the 'basso continuo style' of the double bass.

Mournveil concludes with the poetry and voice that close Piece No. 1 (Griefworn), in which the voice previously relegated to the background—repeating the *words "I do not see! I do not hear! I do not hear!"*—suddenly moves into the foreground. Both the piano part in *Sorrow Is the Silence That Follows a Name* and the double bass part in *Mournveil* were produced by converting the original soundtrack from WAV format to MIDI files, which were subsequently opened in a musical notation editor (Finale 25) and reworked to become performable. In *Ghost Words*, as well as in *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation*, the poems were generated by Artificial Intelligence, and the voices were created using the free version of the *ElevenLabs* software, based on prompts exhaustively elaborated by the composer. To extract sung or recited voices in chamber compositions, the *Vocalremover* software was used.

The third piece, *Hollowcry*, begins with three striking timpani blows, which prepare the entrance of the soundtrack proper. This soundtrack is structured around three principal

and constant elements: (1) a low, persistent percussive rhythm alternating with intense beats that recall muffled foot stomps; (2) synthesized strings that at times seem to mock, at others to lament; and (3) the voice of a woman singing from afar, detached from everything else. The sung text is drawn from the same poem by Amadis de Jamyn, which reads: "*en hiver, sans cheveux, tous les arbres délaissant ainsi sa grand beauté…*". This material was also extracted from the soundtrack of *Le Dialogue dans le marécage*; however, in *Hollowcry* it undergoes the same compositional treatment used in the construction of a *canon cancrizans*, that is, the track is superimposed upon itself in retrograde motion, producing unprecedented and striking textures. At the very end of the soundtrack a female voice recites four times the phrase *"Chegarei ao sol posto nas primeiras horas da noite"* (I will arrive at sunset in the early hours of the evening). The lyrics is extracted from a poetry book by Portuguese poet Leonor Alvim. The double bass weaves a long, melancholic melody in the instrument's middle–upper register. This melody is drawn from the introductory measures of the composer's concerto for viola and chamber orchestra entitled *Dark Night, Tear-Glistening Eyes… … en la fría luz del amanecer* (2017). This concerto constitutes a kind of threnody for all children of war and misery in the contemporary world, especially those from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, and Syria. The music poetically depicts feelings of loss, abandonment, anguish, pain, fear, orphanhood, hunger, sadness, and hope.

Figure 18 - beginning of the viola concerto

Source: Author's edition
Image description: fragment of the viola concerto with the firsts bars of the viola's entrance.

Figure 19 - first page of Hollowcry

Source: Author's edition
Image description: showing the beginning of the double bass melody.

6. Conclusions

This study has examined the interrelations between *intertextuality, transmediation, self-citation,* and *musical ekphrasis* as central paradigms for understanding contemporary hybrid electroacoustic composition. Through the analytical exploration of *The Eerie Stillness of Desolation* and *Ghost Words*, the research has demonstrated how acoustic writing and electroacoustic materials converge to construct complex semantic, architectural, and affective dimensions.

The discussion highlighted several key points:

- *Intertextuality* was shown to operate not only through explicit quotation but also through implicit gestural, timbral, and procedural resemblance, situating musical meaning within networks of cultural and historical references.
- *Transmediation* emerged as a crucial process in which meanings migrate across media boundaries, transforming affective and symbolic content rather than merely translating it.
- *Self-citation* was analyzed as a productive compositional strategy, where the recurrence of a melodic figure across distinct works functions as a semi-autonomous signifier, enabling continuity, displacement, and reinterpretation of past material.
- *Musical ekphrasis* was reframed as both an analytical and compositional strategy, encompassing responses to visual artworks, mnemonic objects, and imagined scenarios of destruction, thereby extending the scope of ekphrastic practice beyond traditional interart dialogue.
- The concept of *migration of meanings* provided an integrative lens, revealing how sonic materials acquire new associations when displaced into different cultural, media, and affective contexts.

Taken together, these perspectives underscore the multisemiotic and multimediatic nature of contemporary musical creation, where hybrid works function as dynamic nodes within broader cultural and sensory networks. By foregrounding processes of recycling, transformation, and recontextualization, the study contributes to an expanded analytical model capable of addressing the complexity of hybrid electroacoustic practices. Ultimately, the research affirms that in the current cultural environment, musical meaning is not fixed but continually reshaped through intertextual circulation, media transfer, and affective migration, positioning hybrid composition as a privileged site for exploring the fluidity of contemporary artistic expression.

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YOUTUBE LINKS

The Eerie Stillness of Desolation: https://youtu.be/hxLsB2BKqZk

Ghost words: https://youtu.be/O-8yVXa3eT4

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All the original pieces mentioned in this article that were reused in the form of self-citation or compositional recycling are available on the author's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@AntonioCelsoRibeiro

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