

MUSIC AND THE SUBVERSION OF DIEGETIC SPACE-TIME IN THE WORK OF PERE PORTABELLA (1967-1976)

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PORTABELLA AND MODERN CINEMA

Towards the end of the 1950s a cinematic practice was developed that has come to be known as *modern cinema* (Font, 2002; Quintana, 1996). Film theorists view this as an era in which European filmmakers began to articulate a new form of cinematic expression essentially characterised by its questioning of the filmic tradition of the first half of the 20th century, which Burch calls the Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR) (Burch, 2008). Unlike primitive cinema, the institutional language is based on the convention of a modern—and cinematic—representation of space-time. The concept of the IMR proposed by Burch is theoretically related to the concept of *Classical Hollywood Cinema* described by Bordwell and his team (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 1997), who suggested that the aesthetic articulation of this *institution* operates as a set of rules, formal re-

sources, and systems—a system of narrative logic, a system for representing time, and a system for representing space—that interconnect to create the filmic diegesis (Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 1997: 7). Broadly, it could be said that cinematic modernity attempts to subvert these basic premises of the IMR, or, in other words, to cast doubt on its own past and heritage.

The work of Catalan director Pere Portabella (1927-) can be contextualised within the emergence of modern European cinema. The alignment of Portabella's artistic endeavours with these theories of rupture and subversion of cinematic language—a reaction against the *institution*—is clear and cannot be separated from the political position of the artist: an active, covert opposition to Franco's regime, which informs the aesthetic positioning of all his work.

In this way, in the years 1967-1976, Portabella created a personal oeuvre clearly situated with-



Pere Portabella during the recording of his first film, *No contéis con los dedos* (1967)

in the diachronic panorama of the evolution of cinematic language proposed by the term *modern cinema*. Much has been written about the Catalan filmmaker. In particular, it is worth highlighting Marcelo Expósito's book *Historias sin argumentos: el cine de Pere Portabella* (2001), Fèlix Fanés's *Pere Portabella: avantguarda, cinema, política* (2008), and Rubén Hernández's *Pere Portabella: hacia una política del relato cinematográfico* (2008).

With respect to his aesthetic approach, the lack of narrativity in his productions was already evident in his earliest films, *No contéis con los dedos* (1967) and *Nocturno 29* (1969), produced in close collaboration with the poet Joan Brossa. Later, Portabella formulated a cinematic approach which, from our point of view, places special emphasis on subverting—*re-thinking, breaking, transforming, expanding*, etc.—the institutional mode of diegetic space-time. This way of conceiving a film is typical of modernity and he makes use of it in *Miró, l'altre* (1969), *Play Back* (1970), and the significant feature films *Vampir-Cuadecuc* (1970) and *Umbracle* (1972), where “politics bursts in as it had never done before in Portabella's films” (Fanés, 2008: 36), expressed through a transform-

ative aesthetic intention. This long and intense period of underground film creation came to an end with the production of *Informe general sobre algunas cuestiones de interés para una proyección pública* (1976), a document of almost three hours' duration that examines the different political and social forces in Spain at that time. Later, from 1978 onwards, Portabella would enter institutional politics and would not return to directing in any systematic way until the digital era.

This is why the articulation of diegetic space-time in the productions of the period studied (1967-1976)—which, for temporal, political and aesthetic reasons we take as a representative unit—is remarkable, and we believe music to be one of the most important elements—though not the only one—that Portabella uses in an attempt to subvert the institutional diegetic order.

THE ANALYSIS OF MUSIC WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF FILM THEORY

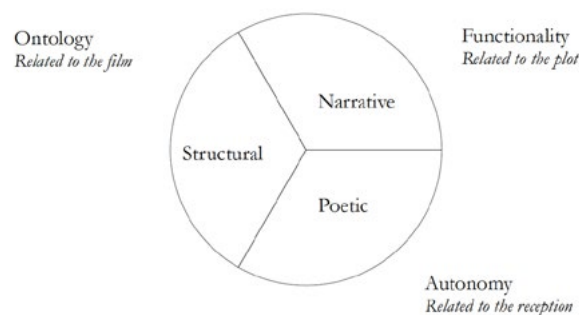
The objective of this article is to explore, within a theoretical framework informed by film studies, how the director develops the music-image relationship in his filmic praxis in the period 1967-1976. As mentioned above, we are working from the hypothesis that the way in which Portabella uses music in his films is one of the elements that allows us to understand his work as an attempt to move beyond the Institutional Mode of Representation. To develop this perspective, it is essential to consider various aspects: on the one hand, to establish a theoretical framework to deal with the question of synchrony in the image-music relationship; and on the other hand, to apply the analytical perspective of our study to the filmography of the director Pere Portabella in the aforementioned time-frame.

It is important to stress that the analysis of the music-image relationship poses a number of problems inherent to the theoretical framework and current methodological practice. The main

problem posed is that, although positive progress has been made towards the construction of a solid theoretical framework (Fraile, 2016), the existing literature dealing with the analysis of film and music is characterised by its status as an unstructured discipline (Infante del Rosal and Lombardo, 1997: 206), made up of sporadic and inconsistent theoretical contributions. Furthermore, the theory and practice of the *cinematic image* seem to have resisted the execution of an interdisciplinary analysis of its elements.¹ It is important to bear in mind that music—like any other element external to what is iconographic in the strict sense—plays an important role in the codification of cinematic language, although, traditionally, it has rarely been explored in film studies. Most of the literature has dealt only superficially with what, in our opinion, is one of the principal characteristics of the construction of the contemporary image; it is always an audiovisual construction in the multimedia sense of the term *audiovisual*: a “cinematic expression”² made up of visual and sonic dimensions, and organised into a single *expression*, a single *unit*, a single *flow*.

A PROPOSAL FOR THE STATUS OF MUSIC IN THE AUDIOVISUAL

Any critical approach to the theoretical corpus dealing with the music-image relationship is fraught by the difficulty of how to frame a conceptual outline of the literature as a whole and relate it with film theory in general. It is extremely difficult to draw paradigmatic conclusions from an analysis of this literature: it seems there is no agreed theoretical consensus that could respond, from an academic point of view, to the question: *what defines the status of music in cinema?* However, there are notable approximations. Some are worth mentioning here, such as *Historia y Teoría de la música en el cine (Presencias afectivas)* (1997) by Carlos Colón, Fernando Infante del Rosal and Manuel Lombardo, and the work of Teresa Fraile,



Outline of the theoretical status of music in the audiovisual medium.

who attempts to systematise the issue that concerns us in articles such as “Músicas posibles: tendencias teóricas de la relación música-imagen” (Fraile, 2005), in her doctoral thesis *La creación musical en el cine español contemporáneo* (Fraile, 2008) and, more recently, in “Música de cine en España: crecimiento y consolidación de una disciplina” (Fraile, 2016). Another is the research by one of the authors of the present article into the aesthetic relationship between music and image, the existing literature on the subject, and the role of music in the evolution of audiovisual language in *La música en las Maneras de Representación cinematográfica* (Torelló, 2015).

Moving beyond the diachronic questions, in this article we propose an original categorisation within the theory studying the synchronic relationship between music and image. This is no simple task and we are aware that one of the criticisms often made of existing theory in the discipline is that each author formulates his or her own analytical categories from scratch, a practice that greatly complicates any attempts to structure a general theoretical framework. This is not the intention behind our proposal in this article. Our aim is, in any case, using the theory established within the discipline, the categories described and the analytical approaches posited in different anthologies and studies, to try to define the status of music in cinema, insofar as possible, in a single analytical-theoretical system.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEAR IN MIND THAT MUSIC—LIKE ANY OTHER ELEMENT EXTERNAL TO WHAT IS ICONOGRAPHIC IN THE STRICT SENSE—PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CODIFICATION OF CINEMATIC LANGUAGE

We believe that this is one of the most urgent necessities in the discipline: to try to unite the dual approach outlined by Infante del Rosal and Lombardo, in which the analysis of film music is considered from: 1) an ontological perspective, in which music is an *essence of the audiovisual*; and 2) a formalist or functional approach, in which music is a part of the mechanism, *a functional part of the cinematic whole* (1997: 206-249). It is our view that this dual approach is appropriate in that it is descriptive, but can be combined in a single complementary theoretical framework. In this sense, the original proposal that we suggest below is one that we have found useful in this article to conduct an analysis of several sequences from Portabella's filmography, understanding the status of music in cinema as a combination of functions and dominances, a system in which music can have various statuses at the same time.

In view of the above, we argue that the status of music in cinema is sustained by three factors: 1) the structural-ontological; 2) the narrative-functional; and 3) the poetic-autonomous. These elements place the study and the presence of music in cinema, respectively, in relation with: (1) the construction of the filmic; (2) the dramatic development of its plot; and (3) the viewer's reception of the cinematic mechanism.

1. Structural-ontological status

The *structural-ontological status* of music in cinema encompasses ontological issues involving the relationship between music and image in the

"cinematic expression". These issues, as existing academic research demonstrates, are based on the role of music in the construction of a "third element" or "third product" that is neither musical nor iconographic, but audiovisual (Fraile, 2008: 51; Infante del Rosal and Lombardo, 1997: 221). In other words, we consider music's contributions to the construction of the iconic-sonic flow, and how music empowers and transforms the image to give it a new, strictly cinematic status. Matters associated with the articulation of this status are the object of analysis in this section—the creation of a third dimension, giving *soul or life*, from a Benjaminian point of view, to an image which, without its sonic dimension, would be lacking its filmic essence (Torrelló, 2015: 23).

The study of this status is, ultimately, an ontological inquiry into the filmic and the role of music in the construction of its epistemological boundaries. It responds, in part, to the Dionysian sense of music in a cinematic framework (i.e., a non-significant, non-representative role), bringing the well-known aesthetic duality proposed by the German philosopher Friedrich W. Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* onto the terrain of cinema.

2. Narrative-functional status

The *narrative-functional status* of music articulated in "cinematic expression" examines the presence of music in the construction of the film's dramatic development, analysing it as one of the technical elements that allow cinematic language to develop its narrative capacities. On the one hand, music allows the articulation of an explicit and/or elided definition of time and space in the film. On the other, it allows a modulation of the narrative unity of the film, and the highlighting of its "signifieds" (Chion, 1997: 125), which, from a narrative perspective, are key in the construction of the filmic discourse.

WE ARGUE THAT THE STATUS OF MUSIC IN CINEMA IS SUSTAINED BY THREE FACTORS: THE STRUCTURAL-ONTOLOGICAL, THE NARRATIVE-FUNCTIONAL AND THE POETIC-AUTONOMOUS

This status reveals how music defines part of diegetic space-time, as well as the set of dramatic characteristics inherent to it. Through these characteristics, the union of music and image is able to articulate a geographical, cultural, sociological, or sentimental definition (to give a few examples) of the story being told. Situated in the formalist distinction between *story* and *plot*, the music helps to give shape to the *plot*. It is, following the Nietzschean comparison, a register of Apollonian or Socratic music.

3. Poetic-autonomous status

Finally, the *poetic-autonomous status* involves the development of the characteristics of musical epistemology in relation to the film's reception; that is, the capacity of the music present on screen—the most flexible element of the construction of the “audiovisual fabric” (Chion, 1993: 195-197)—to articulate the meaning of the *musical* element's autonomous capacities within the cinematic flow. Music may emerge autonomously in the music-film-spectator correlation, momentarily sidestepping the fact that it is linked to an image, and thus functioning independently. In this way, the analysis of the music may temporarily focus solely on its condition as a subjective and unmediated element, associated with the reception of the film, and not as a significant element related to the image represented in the film, as was the case in the two previous points.

This point is pure musical aesthetics, focused on the ability of the music to relate in a non-significative way to the “image”, or otherwise, in

an expressive way, independent and genuine as part of the “audiovisual expression” as a whole. Music, without the need to represent or signify anything specific, is understood as an expression of its own. This reveals another Dionysian aspect of film music which, instead of establishing a relationship—or perhaps even while establishing one—with the structure of the film, communicates directly to the spectator using its own language.

MUSIC IN THE SUBVERSION OF CODES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS OF MUSIC IN FIVE PARADIGMATIC CASE STUDIES

Case 1: Nocturno 29 (1969)

In Portabella's second feature film, *Nocturno 29* (1969), there are some general aesthetic propositions related to the articulation of the music, which the director would repeat constantly throughout his filmography of the period studied. The fragment analysed here demonstrates the importance of twelve-tone music in the director's first films. This musical style was a contribution to Portabella's early films by contemporary composer Mestres Quadreny. It is worth highlighting that the use of this type of music breaks with one of the elements that the academic literature points to as a constant in the presence of music in the audiovisual, what Teresa Fraile (2005: 297) calls “classical symphonics”, a feature typical of the IMR: the adoption for a contemporary artistic expression of a type of music that reproduces classical characteristics, in what is ultimately an aesthetic anachronism. This sequence is an example of the use of contemporary music in “the cinematic expression” of “modern cinema”: a proposal that dramatically contrasts music and image, just as Adorno (2007) argued, although without much success until the advent of audiovisual modernity. This alone—the use of aesthetically contempo-



Images from the sequence analysed from the film *Nocturno 29* (1969) (0:58:15 – 1:00:43).

rary music—reveals this to be an articulation that transgresses or contradicts the tendencies of the IMR, of which various sequences in the films *No contéis con los dedos* (1967), *Nocturno 29* (1969) and *Umbracle* (1972) offer good examples. However, it is worth acknowledging that modern cinema, according to theorist Michel Chion, is less affected by musical style than by the way music is integrated into the film (Chion, 1997: 153); it is more a question of use than of musical aesthetics.

The status of the music in the sequence is not easy to specify. The sound of a few scattered piano notes are used by Portabella to link two locations together: the actress Lucía Bosé walking around the Laberint d'Horta park in Barcelona, and a sequence in the same protagonist's house. From this, we can conclude that the music participates in the ontological status, since there is no other sonic element that defines the diegesis. As a link between the two sequences, we visualise a deconstructed, experimental melody, without any apparent harmony. What status does the music have in this sequence? In a sense, we are witnessing the transgression of the traditional IMR plot development through the use of contemporary music. The music is articulated in a narrative-functional status, since it questions the narrativity of the film, and even attempts to break it down.

Case 2: *Miró, l'altre* (1969)

Portabella's intentioned articulation of music in relation to the image and the narrativity of the montage is repeated, in perhaps a more elaborate way, in the fragment analysed here. The short film *Miró, l'altre* (1969) is an important milestone in the director's oeuvre. Not only is the film his first collaboration with Carles Santos as original music composer (a fact that gives this film a particularly strong personality), but also—and perhaps because of Santos' participation—the filmic approach “abandons the logic of cinematic language to be subject to another type of order, almost unconscious, that reminds us of music. As if they were notes, the images are repeated in a loop one after the other” (Fanés, 2010: 483).

The articulation of the image in this short film is made up of various fragments: the introduction of Miró before the performance in which he paints the outer windows of the College of Architects of Catalonia, the colour images of the artist painting the mural, the painter once he has finished the work, workers at the College cleaning the windows and scraping Miró's work off with spatulas, etc.

An analysis of the sound and music also reveals different passages. The soundtrack is made up of three different elements: a pair of voices that sing a cappella scales that get progressively higher in pitch; some unidentified sound objects;



Images from the short film analysed, *Miró, l'altre* (1969) (0:00:00 – 0:14:53).

and, finally, a piano that plays an undefined melody. Some moments in the film are articulated at OdB, as if the spaces between each fragment of the soundtrack were a transition. Throughout the film, there is no ambient sound or synchrony with the images that follows any kind of logic.

The first fragment—the black and white scene in which Miró is getting ready to paint—and the second—the performative action of painting the windows—are, on the one hand, divided and contrasted by the editing that differentiates them as separate parts, and also by the transformation that the image undergoes, changing from the initial black and white to colour, a change that helps to further stress this fragmentation. Only the audio we hear gives them continuity and unity. And although the presence of an unseen voice is a resource that Portabella had used in previous films (for example in some sequences from *No contéis con los dedos*), this film is more radical and crafted, articulating a sequence that tests the limits of the music-sound-noise distinction, while the unity of the “cinematic expression” is sustained almost exclusively by sonic elements.

We define the music’s presence in the film as dominated by the *structural-ontological status*, as there is no other element in the soundtrack here either: it is the music that allows the structuring of the film’s epistemological field. However, we believe that the music in this short also has a *narrative-functional status*; or, in any case, it has this status in a sense that subverts the IMR: the frag-

ment’s music attempts to structure an *anti-narrative* proposal. We base this claim on the fact that cyclical, looped music appears in every scene of the film (although it could be questioned whether there is any music that is non-cyclical³), music which seems to advance in time (rising gradually in pitch), but which, in reality, as it has no resolution or harmonic progression, always positions the spectator at the same point in the action. It is true that in the film’s central fragments—when the mural is painted and removed—the music contributes a sense of temporality, which in part is typical of the IMR; but in the first and final fragments, in which the loop is also expressed on an iconic level, this narrativity is broken and any idea of temporal progression of the audiovisual product disappears, thereby presenting a cinematic form that clearly transgresses the institutional, or classical, approach. In this case, the subversion of diegetic space-time is even more profound than in the previous case.

Case 3: Play Back (1970)

The short film *Play Back* (1970) allowed Portabella to continue with the creative tandem he had begun with Santos. At this point, their collaboration had adopted the idea of conceptual art as a backdrop. *Play Back* is a short film in which the aesthetic relationship between music and sound is taken to its limit, often testing the border that separates them in a radical and forceful manner.



Images from the short film analysed, *Play Back* (1970) (0:00:00 – 0:08:22).

In this respect, the film shows us a rehearsal by the choir of the Gran Teatre del Liceo in Barcelona, in which the members of the choir sing notes from an orchestra score, with the peculiarity that in their performance they do not actually sing but rhythmically verbalise each note. In other words, the scores for the different orchestral instruments are shared out among the choir, which simulates a performance of the music but without singing, only verbalising the note on the page aloud and in time. The result is an unusual cinematic-musical experiment: a reflection on the *musical object* that will be repeated, in a very similar way, in a sequence of the film *Umbracle* (1972).

As Fanés suggests, “in the film we contemplate the composer directing a part of the choir, which sings fragments of *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin* and *The Valkyrie*, although the music seems more like a composition in the minimalist style of Santos himself than a piece by Wagner. This misunderstanding is due to the fact that the choir reads the notes with the correct rhythm, but without the melody» (2010: 485).

The film was made with live sound and we hear and see Santos speaking and conducting the rehearsal. Based on this, we would argue that the *actual music* that we hear—if we can call the choir’s rhythmical recitation actual music—does not have a dominant character within the *structural-ontological status*. It does have this character, however, in its narrative aspect—or, perhaps more

accurately, in *the transgression of its narrative aspect*; that is, the music, as it often does in Portabella’s films, conditions part of the *anti-narrative* character of the short. Unlike the previous case study, the audiovisual approach is not cyclical, either in the construction of the image or in its music; therefore, in this sense the space-time diegesis is comparable to an institutional product. What is transgressive in this sequence is the conjunction of “the pounding of frenetic sounds, reinforced by the restless and almost spasmodic movements of the camera” (Fanés, 2010: 485). What is subversive is the peculiar presentation of the *musical form* which, creating a latent tension in the expressive mechanism, allows us to reflect upon the nature of music as a phenomenon within the audiovisual. Furthermore, on the visual level, the camera has no blind spots, a tendency—the breaking down of the fourth wall—which is another of the characteristics of the Modern Mode of Representation.

Case 4: *Umbracle* (1972)

The articulation of music in the film *Umbracle* (1972) is varied, and it is in this film that a series of practices initiated in other films are consolidated. The sequence we analyse here also attempts to subvert the institutional structure of diegetic space-time by using loops and musical repetition.

The dramatic pattern of the sequence begins with the presentation of an action: the actress ar-



Images from the sequence analysed from the film *Umbracle* (1972) (1:17:37 - 1:20:54).

rives home, puts some music on the record player and makes a phone call. Up until this moment, the music has a *structural-ontological status* within the sequence as a whole, as well as a narrative aspect; the action flows forwards in time. But suddenly both these aspects—the ontology and the plot development of the scene—are very obviously broken, as the music we hear starts to loop—marking a change in its status—with no diegetic or dramatic cause to justify such an alteration.

Unlike other sequences analysed here, in which it is only the soundtrack that repeats rhythmically, in this case the image also begins to loop repetitively and accompanies the music so that both are situated in this diegetic no-time and no-space constructed in the film. The director breaks the *continuum* of “cinematic expression” and questions the narrative time of the sequence using both dimensions of the audiovisual: the iconic and the sonic.

Fané explains clearly: “often the soundtrack stops on one chord or one sound, as can also be observed in *Miró, l'altre*. [...] Whether drawing on American minimalism or on Bach, in *Umbracle* the composer turns to a series of techniques based on the repetition of sound cells. [...] In one of the film’s final scenes, image and sound overlap in a mad, repetitive frenzy. It is the moment in which the female character arrives home and puts a record on, the third movement of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony. Then she sits down and

makes a phone call: at this point, the music gets stuck and Santos turns the Beethovenian sonic core into an endless repetition—like a scratched record—while at the same time different shots—as many as seven—that divide the gesture of the woman picking up the phone, dialling the number, putting the phone to her hear, are each repeated an indeterminate number of times, following the pattern of the rhythm of the faltering music” (2008: 67-68).

In other words, the fragment uses the repetition of *sound cells* to destroy the classical articulation of the audiovisual through the repetition and subversion of the film’s diegetic space-time.

Case 5: *Informe general* (1976)

The film *Informe general sobre algunas cuestiones de interés para una proyección pública* maps out the political situation in Spain immediately after the death of the dictator Francisco Franco. The scene analysed here occurs at the end of the film, in the Catalan Parliament, and deals with the Catalan political question. The image conveys the state of abandon and disuse of the institution almost four decades after its closure (the chairs covered in thick dust in the Parliament chamber). The sense of embalmment conveyed inspires a feeling both of sadness and of profound nostalgia: one cannot help wondering about all that was lost in the war, about the world that disappeared, about that whole generation, whose



Images from the sequence analysed from the film *Informe general* (1976) (2:20:35 – 2:22:19).

longings were torn to pieces with the outbreak of the Civil War.

The series of emotions that the images convey is reinforced by the presence of soft music, played on a piano, which appears intermittently throughout the scene. The music lends the sequence a poetic and narrative dimension that is underlined by the fact that we hear an ambient sound synchronised with the image, which structures the soundtrack and gives the music room to attend to other dominances. When the sequence places us inside the chamber of the Catalan Parliament, however, the ambient sound disappears and a piano that is at times distorted—perhaps aged due to lack of use or perhaps this is just suggested by the dusty images—plays *Els segadors*, building the pivotal moment in the sequence from an aesthetic point of view.

In this last section, music occupies the entirety of the epistemological sonic space on the structural-ontological level. On the narrative level, *Els segadors* accurately outlines, from a political perspective, a discourse of historical continuity between the past, the present and the future longings of the society that Portabella has presented throughout the film. Finally, on the poetic level, this is a performance which, perhaps because of the *broken* tone of the piano's sound, has the ability to elicit emotion beyond its aesthetic link with the image.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have presented, on the one hand, a proposal for defining the theoretical status of the *musical* element in film in terms of its synchrony and its aesthetic and significative relationship with the image; and, on the other, a study of a portion of the Catalan director Pere Portabella's filmography. Our objective has been to explore how the musical element helps to subvert the Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR) and bring Portabella's films in line with the postulates of the Modern Mode of Representation (MMR). The contributions made here are intended to combine these two directions, offering a reflection on the role of music in cinema, expressed in the form of a proposal of a theoretical-analytical model, and, based on that model, attempting an in-depth analysis of the Catalan filmmaker's work.

This evaluation of Pere Portabella's films has allowed us to identify the mechanisms the director uses to question—for political, cultural, social, and artistic reasons—the classical, institutional mode of representation in cinema, and understand how he subverts the codes of cinematic language. In our opinion, the music-image pairings that we have identified in the works analysed here are one of the elements that allow the direct to develop a cinematic approach that questions the IMR and tests out new forms of artistic expression, forms associated today with modern cinema.

In this sense, in the analysis carried out here we have identified and studied a series of specific features that characterise this modern approach to the integration of music in Pere Portabella's cinema, which can be summed up in the following four points:

1) It generally involves the use of music with an aesthetic that is in and of itself contemporary—twelve-tone music, *musique concrète*, experimental music, electronic music. Although we have cited Michel Chion to posit the idea that the evaluation of music in modern cinema is more an attitude (*how it is articulated*) than an essence (*what is articulated*), the use of contemporary music is an important element that conditions the construction of Portabella's films. The aesthetic range of the film music present in his work is wide: from highbrow music of various styles and eras, to pop and electronic music of the early 1970s, running counter, as we have mentioned, to the so-called "classical symphonics" characteristic of the institutional approach.

2) Out of a desire to experiment, Portabella repeatedly places music in relation to the image in such a way that the resulting "cinematic expression" becomes a reflection on the nature of music and cinema themselves, a tendency which, in a way, he shares with a generation of contemporary musicians and filmmakers. The reflection on language itself is related to the fact that the "linguistic turn" is a phenomenon that has cut across all artistic expression of the 20th Century (Bozal, 2004: 20), cinema included. In this way, a particular articulation of music in the audiovisual evokes the debate over the epistemological limits of music-sound in his films.

3) Music allows Portabella to question the cause-effect correspondence of the institutional approach to narrative, and thus, at certain moments, to do without one of the fundamental characteristics of plot development in mainstream cinema. The transgression of the unity of the Aristotelian plot and its causal relationships is

THE EVALUATION WE HAVE MADE OF PERE PORTABELLA'S WORK HAS ALLOWED US TO IDENTIFY THE MECHANISMS THE DIRECTOR USED TO QUESTION THE CLASSICAL, INSTITUTIONAL MODE OF CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION, AND TO UNDERSTAND HOW HE SUBVERTS THESE CODES

an approach that Portabella takes consciously and which, in fact, he has publicly attested to on several occasions (Cubillo, 2007). While in many filmographies music reinforces the causal and narrative links in the film, in Portabella's works this is not the case. Indeed, there are numerous examples in which the presence of music has quite the opposite intention.

4) The arrangement of music in his films allows the filmmaker to subvert the institutional diegetic space-time which, as noted above, Bordwell et al. describe as a system that constructs the dramatic development, and articulates the cinematic space and the time in which the film takes place. While we have argued that music allows Portabella to articulate a non-narrative approach, the use of music in his films also enables him to break down the space-time construction of institutional cinema.

Finally, it should be highlighted that in ontological and narrative—or *anti-ontological* and *anti-narrative*—terms, the use of music grew in importance in Portabella's films, in parallel with the increasing influence of Carles Santos in the director's work. In our view, this aesthetic subversion reaches its peak in certain scenes of *Umbracle* (1972), his creative and artistic zenith. The destruction of the diegetic space-time articulated by the IMR is explored in many of the sequences the filmmaker produced in the creative period from 1967 to 1976, but it found its most sophisticated expression in this film: the iconic and mu-

sical loops of the scene analysed above break the space, time and plot development of the classical cinematic diegesis when the image and the music enter a loop and “cinematic expression” is taken to previously undiscovered artistic and expressive terrain. This subversion ultimately corroborates the hypothesis that the specific way of building the music-image relationship in the director’s films is one of the issues that situates Portabella’s work in a mode of representation belonging to *modern cinema* or the Modern Mode of Representation (MMR), a cinematic form which “taken as whole, was a veritable event in the evolution of European culture” (Font, 2002: 15). ■

NOTES

- 1 On the subject of the lack of relevant academic analysis of music in film theory, “the topic did not seem to be of much interest previously; [...] perhaps because the field of the image alone carried too much weight from the very beginning, giving rise to countless styles and movements” (Torelló, 2015: 9).
- 2 We have coined the concept “cinematic expression” and use it here judging that it accurately expresses the cinematic duality containing image and sound and/or music. We believe that *cinematic expression* is a term that defines the duality of film and does so in a clearer way than other concepts that express similar ideas, such as “cinematic text” or “cinematic image”, often cited in the literature.
- 3 “[B]oth the most complex music and the simplest melody, once they are defined on a scale and transferred to other connected scales, must return to the tone they started form as a structuring feature of their closing logic” (Téllez, 2013: 18).

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MUSIC AND THE SUBVERSION OF DIEGETIC SPACE-TIME IN THE WORK OF PERE PORTABELLA (1967-1976)

Abstract

This article examines work in the filmography of the Catalan director Pere Portabella (1927-) made between 1967 and 1976, analysing the use of music in these films. Portabella developed a cinematic form that could be placed in the category of *modern cinema*, with which he sought to subvert the basic premises of the Institutional Mode of Representation. In general, the presence of music in films defines a part of the mechanisms through which cinematic language articulates its diegesis. We focus our theoretical approach on how music can facilitate the subversion of the Institutional Mode of Representation, especially in term of narration and the definition of space-time. Portabella offers an avant-garde film corpus characterised by its formal and aesthetic subversions, as well as the presence of clearly political themes. His films allow us to focus our study on the aesthetic relations between image and music in the construction of modern cinematic language.

Key words

Pere Portabella; Music theory; Modern cinema; Avant-garde.

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LA MÚSICA Y LA SUBVERSIÓN DEL ESPACIO-TIEMPO DIEGÉTICO EN LA OBRA DE PERE PORTABELLA (1967-1976)

Resumen

En el presente artículo se describe parte de la filmografía que el director catalán Pere Portabella (Figueres, 1927) realiza entre 1967 y 1976 y se analiza cómo la música se articula en su obra. Portabella desarrolla una forma cinematográfica que se puede considerar bajo el epígrafe de *cine de la modernidad*, con la que pretende subvertir los fundamentos del Modo de Representación Institucional. En general, la presencia de la música en los filmes define parte de los mecanismos con los que el lenguaje cinematográfico crea su diégesis. Nuestra aproximación teórica se centra en cómo la articulación de la música permite subvertir el Modo de Representación Institucional, especialmente su narración y la definición de su espacio-tiempo diegético. El autor ofrece un corpus cinematográfico vanguardista que se caracteriza por sus subversiones formales y estéticas, así como por la presencia de una fuerte temática política. Sus películas permiten centrar nuestro estudio en las relaciones estéticas entre imagen y música en la construcción del lenguaje cinematográfico moderno.

Palabras clave

Pere Portabella; teoría de la música; cine de la modernidad; vanguardia.

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