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Transcribing: between listening, memory, and invention

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Chapter 5
Tutto chiudi negli occhi
Dreaming the Other

Alone, I cannot be –
The Host – do visit me –

Emily Dickinson, "Alone, I cannot be"

I shall be the other
I am without knowing it, he who has looked on
that other dream, my waking state.

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Dream"

When discussing *Una notte* in chapter 4, I explored more radical possibilities in the utilization of a poetic text within a musical work to shape its transcription, making a step forward in the approach that I first experimented with when writing *Hortense* (see chapter 3). In this fifth chapter, I will discuss *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, my transcription for string quartet of Josquin Desprez's *Nymphes des bois, or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* (1497). In transcribing this work, I aimed to collect the results of my research by using the findings and insights from my previous transcriptions while also diving deeper into the theme of the relationship between otherness and the double.

Audio example 1 presents *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* in its entirety.

Audio 1. Bracci. *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, performed by the New European Ensemble:
https://soundcloud.com/giulianobracci/tutto-chiudi-negli-occhi
Complete score in pdf:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Bracci_Tutto-chiudi-negli-occhi.pdf

Throughout this thesis, I have reflected on the theme of otherness – on the concepts of self and other – and I have described the practice of transcribing as a form of listening and creating a new relation to an existing musical work. This (doubly) transformative relation between the transcriber and the other work establishes itself in the transcriber's musical imagination. I have argued that, in the transcribing process, both the original work and the transcriber's language

are contaminated and transformed by each other. Indeed, transcribing has the potential to transform a work in a number of ways. First, the practice of transcribing transforms a musical work into an original, the copy thus preceding the original. Second, this practice yields a transcription that is a performable and audible transformation of a musical work that actualizes some of its inherent virtualities. Finally, transcribing alters the manner in which a work can be experienced from that moment onward. As I have argued and demonstrated through my practice, the language of the transcriber is influenced by the encounter with the original. In earlier chapters, I employed the metaphor of a chemical experiment to characterize the process of transcribing as an exploration of the transcriber's musical invention. This invention is indeed activated differently by each original musical work, and the resulting interactions produce unique and unexpected responses.

In chapter 4, I presented and reflected on my process of transcribing Franz Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger," where I was prompted to consider the concept of "otherness" in light of the theme of the double. The practice of transcribing produces doubles that have the potential to give rise to hidden aspects of musical works, and to actualize some of their unheard virtualities: Musical works reappear, familiar and different at the same time. This perspective encourages a consideration of the other not as something distant, but as something intimate yet simultaneously foreign. The double is perhaps the other within the self, the most nearby other.

The double

Before delving into *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, and providing a more nuanced exploration of the theme of the double where the other resides within the self, I find it helpful to consider the significance of this topic in literature and psychoanalysis. This understanding will help to contextualize and offer a broader perspective on the theme. Subsequently, I will revisit the poetic texts that I have used as a guide in my transcriptions, reflecting on their relationship with the theme of the double. Finally, I will discuss Raymond Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers* and explore the concept of dreaming as a potential model for the relationship with one's double.

The motif of the double recurs frequently throughout Western literature, expressing the idea of an intrinsic duality within a human being, often portrayed through the presence of an alter ego or twin, whether real or imagined. With the rise of Romanticism and, later, the advent of psychoanalysis, the double becomes a central symbol in the relationship with one's self, and in the exploration of its individuality and integrity, as well as its contradictory drives and impulses.

In his book *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* (1925, originally written in 1914), Otto Rank, an early psychoanalyst and also Sigmund Freud's disciple and later close colleague, aimed to "trace back the developmental and semantic history of an old, traditional folk-concept which has stimulated imaginative and thoughtful writers to use it in their works" (Rank 1971, 3).
According to Rank, the double represents the projection of a self which has been repressed and hidden, and in *The Double*, inspired by Hans Heinz Ewers's silent film *The Student of Prague* (1913), Rank addresses the literary, psychological, mythical, and ethnological sources and illustrations of the double, applying this "new psychoanalysis most extensively and diligently not only to patients […], but also to various facets of culture" (Tucker 1971, xxi). He considers appearances of the double in poetry, drama, and prose fiction, reflecting on works such as Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Shadow" (1847), Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1846), Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" (1839), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

Drawing on some of Rank's insights, Freud explores the theme of the double in his essay "The 'Uncanny'" (1919). As the psychoanalyst Valérie Bouville synthesizes, Freud's "analysis of the 'double' leads to what has come to be known as the uncanny. The complex connection between an externalized ego […] and the conscious ego make[s] the double uncanny, as it represents the imagined personification of impulses which have been overcome, suppressed or even dissociated" (Bouville 2020, 28). According to Freud, the uncanny "is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 1955, 220) and which "has been repressed" (247). In his essay, Freud also references Friedrich Schelling's definition of the uncanny as "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (Freud 1955, 224). In light of these reflections, the double is both familiar and unfamiliar, appearing as a repetition – a return or recurrence – while also manifesting as the appearance of something else, another entity. Transcribing could then mean listening to the other who inhabits oneself – not perceiving the other as an entity opposed to and external to the self, but preparing instead an opening in one's language for the other to come.

In a footnote to his essay, Freud recounts a famous anecdote about a personal experience set in a wagon-lit, in which he does not recognize his own image reflected in the mirror of the adjacent bathroom door, and mistakes himself for an(other) old man.

> I was sitting alone in my wagon-lit compartment when a more than usually violent jolt of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and a travelling cap came in. I assumed that in leaving the washing-cabinet,

> which lay between the two compartments, he had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass on the open door.
> (Freud 1955, 248)

Freud's anecdote about the sudden recognition of another as himself resonates with some of the most significant poetic fragments I have used in my research on transcribing. The text of Carlo Gesualdo's madrigal "Languisce al fin" and its English translation read:

> *Languisce al fin chi da la vita parte*
> *E di morte il dolore*
> *L'affligge sì che in crude pene more.*
> *Ahi, che quello son io,*
> *Dolcissimo cor mio,*
> *Che da voi parto e per mia crudel sorte*
> *La vita lascio e me ne vado a morte.*
>
> The one who is departing life languishes in the end,
> And the suffering of death
> So afflicts him, that he dies in cruel pain.
> Alas, that person is me,
> My sweetest heart
> I leave you, and, my cruel fate is such
> That I leave life for death.

As I discussed in chapter 3, the madrigal's central line "Ahi, che quello son io" (Alas, that person is me) marks a formal turning point as the text shifts suddenly from a narration in the third person to the first person. Gesualdo emphasizes this line significantly, and similarly, in my transcription *Hortense*, it also corresponds to a sudden change: Opening a window into my music, I inserted a (reverse) quotation from another of my own works, *Un giardino chiaro*. As happens in Freud's anecdote, in an abrupt shift, the other – another musical work – can reveal itself to the transcriber as a mirror that reflects their own image.

The sudden recognition of the double as one's mirrored self also echoes the narrative of Narcissus, the archetype of all doubles. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus, in love with his own reflection, initially addresses, unaware, his mirrored image in the water, employing the following words (book III, verses 454-455):

> *Quisquis es, huc exi! Quid me, puer unice, fallis?*

Quove petitus abis?

Whoever you are, come forth hither! Why, O peerless youth, do you elude me? Or whither do you go when I strive to reach you?

(Ovid, 1971, vol. 1, 156-157)

Subsequently, he suddenly recognizes himself (book III, verses 463-464):

Iste ego sum! Sensi, nec me mea fallit imago.
Uror amore mei, flammas moveoque feroque!

Oh, I am he! I have felt it, I know now my own image.
I burn with love of my own self; I both kindle the flames and suffer them.

(Ovid, 1971, vol. 1, 156-157)

In Heinrich Heine's poem, set to music by Schubert in his Lied "Der Doppelgänger," which I discussed in chapter 4 as the departure point for my *Una notte*, I witnessed a similarly sudden and unsettling recognition of the other as oneself: The poet recognizes himself at the window of the house where his beloved once lived, and the unexpected sight of his double terrifies him.

Da steht auch ein Mensch und starrt in die Höhe,
Und ringt die Hände, vor Schmerzensgewalt;
Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe -
Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt.

(Heine 1877)

Another man stands where the moon beams lace,
He wrings his hands, eyes turned to the sky.
A shudder runs through me – I see his face:
The man who stands in the moonlight is I.

(Heine 1982)

While transcribing Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger" for *Una notte*, I opted to look for a different text revolving around the theme of the double. I selected texts by Emily Dickinson, where she writes about the uncanny encounter with another self. When in my transcription the night arrives during which the encounter with the doppelgänger takes place, the voice sings "The first Day's Night had come

– I told my Soul to sing," and at that moment, Schubert's music and Dickinson's words converge. Dickinson's verses from two poems that I used (with three slight alterations indicated in square brackets) for that section read:

> And Something's odd — within —
> That person that I was —
> And this One — do not feel the same —
>
> He [She] was my host — he [she] was my guest,
> I never to this day
> If I invited him [her] could tell
>
> (Dickinson 2009, 52 and 184)

Dickinson's verses resonate with Freud's description of the phenomenon of the double, in which "the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self" (Freud 1955, 234). Dickinson powerfully depicts the ambiguous and unsettling relationship with her double, describing it – and then herself – as reciprocally being both her host and her guest. This idea of the double being host and guest simultaneously is helpful in reflecting on the other not as something entirely external and in opposition to the self, but as something that is always already present within the self. Furthermore, it enables thinking of the practice of transcribing as a productive way to host musical works from the past in one's own musical imagination and language, allowing the hosted works to (re)appear like ghosts and be virtually present in contemporary music. At the same time, transcribing could give rise to thinking of a transcription as a guest that, hosted by the original musical work, actualizes some of its infinite unheard virtualities.

In the poetic texts that I have discussed so far, the perception of oneself as if it were someone else – the perception of the other who inhabits oneself – is presented as an unsettling, uncanny experience, and as Bouville emphasizes, "only the old and long familiar has the potential to overcome the subject" (Bouville 2020, 30). The uncanniness is an important element of these texts, and it characterizes the moment of recognition of the other as oneself.
In my practice of transcribing, I chose not to focus on uncanniness as an aesthetic musical quality. Instead, I explored other features, such as the dreamlike quality in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, where the boundaries between transcribing and composing – between the self and the other – blend together, which I will discuss below.

The Blue Flowers

As I mentioned in chapters 1 and 3, Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers* was a significant source of inspiration for both *Une petite fleur bleue* and *Hortense*. In working on *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, this novel played a central role in shaping my relation to Josquin's *Nymphes des bois, or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* (1497), and it influenced the entire dramaturgy of my transcription.

The protagonists of *The Blue Flowers* are the Duke of Auge and Cidrolin. One is the double of the other: In fact, each chapter ends with one of the two characters – or are they the same character? – falling asleep and beginning to dream of the other. The Duke of Auge traverses history, embarking on a journey spanning from 1264 to 1964. It is in this latter year that he finally encounters Cidrolin, whom he had only ever dreamt of, residing in a state of absolute indolence on a barge moored firmly on the banks of the Seine. Here, Cidrolin engages in complete inactivity, observing the course of history, as experienced through his double, within his dreams. This narrative is illuminated by Queneau's own summary of the novel, as presented in Vivian Kogan's "Afterword" to the work:

> In *The Blue Flowers*, I focus on a person who goes back in time – and one who merges [with the modern day] from some past era. In other words, modern and ancient. My historical character lived in the thirteenth century and reappears every one hundred and seventy-five years until he meets the other protagonist and becomes his contemporary. – There is an old Chinese saying in this connection: "I dream that I am a butterfly and pray there is a butterfly dreaming he is me." The same can be said of the characters in my novel – those who live in the past dream of those who live in the modern era – and those who live in the modern era dream of those who live in the past.
> (Queneau quoted in Kogan 1985, 228)

Each protagonist dreams the actions of the other, and the entire novel appears as a double dream. In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I drew inspiration from the alternating chapter (and dream) structure of *The Blue Flowers*, choosing to model the idea of the double dream as a mode of relation with Josquin's work. As I will discuss in detail later on, I divided the poetic text of *Nymphes des bois* alternately between myself and Josquin. Without seeking an overt contrast between these two approaches, I alternately transcribed Josquin's music and set the text to music in a more independent manner. The result of this strategy is that Josquin's music and my own alternate and intertwine, each appearing within the other, as if emerging in a dream.

The dream is an "imaginary experience" (Foucault 1984-85, 45) and can be regarded as a specific form of knowledge. In his novel, Queneau writes, "Reverie and revelation [*rêver* et *révéler* in French], they're more or less the same word" (Queneau 1985, 128). The psychoanalyst Vittorio Lingiardi describes the dream

as "a domestic but foreign depth, an elsewhere unknown and ours," in which the dreamer encounters another experience of themselves (Lingiardi 2023, 5-6). The dream, being "a conversation at the border of the self" (Lingiardi 2023, 161), is also an occasion to encounter one's double, as happens, for example, in "The Other" (1975) and in "August 25, 1983" (1980), two late stories by Jorge Luis Borges. In "The Other," Borges writes about meeting with his younger self, for whom the meeting happens in a dream many years before. The two engage in questioning the nature of their encounter, and discuss where and when it takes place, with the elder Borges saying to the younger: "If this morning and this meeting are dreams, each of us has to believe that he is the dreamer. […] My dream has lasted seventy years now, […] after all, there isn't a person alive who, on waking, does not find himself with himself. It's what is happening to us now – except that we are two" (Borges 1977b, 13-14). The short story "August 25, 1983" presents a similar situation, in which the writer meets an older version of himself on the last day of his life, each dreaming of the other. Their encounter begins thus:

> In the pitiless light, I came face to face with myself. There, in the narrow iron bed – older, withered, and very pale – lay I, on my back, my eyes turned up vacantly toward the high plaster moldings of the ceiling. Then I heard the voice […]
> "How odd," it was saying, "we are two yet we are one. But then nothing is odd in dreams."
> "Then…" I asked fearfully, "all this is a dream?"
> "It is, I am sure, my last dream." He gestured toward the empty bottle on the marble nightstand. "You, however, shall have much to dream, before you come to this night. What date is it for you?"
> (Borges 1999, 489-490)

In my research on transcribing, choosing Queneau's *The Blue Flowers* and thus the dream of a double as the model of a relation with the other – with a musical work from the past, and therefore with musical tradition – is a way to seek an approach that recognizes the other and the self not as opposites, but as one virtually present in the other. Transcribing as if dreaming of a musical work – as if the music itself is capable of dreaming – is a way to avoid seizing it, and is thus an approach different from one that seeks to possess the other as something objectifiable and absolutely external to oneself.

In this thesis, I have documented the evolution of my approach to transcription, examining each stage of development in detail. Each instance of transcription has illuminated different aspects of my musical invention. Throughout this process, I endeavored to listen not only to myself, as cautioned by Luigi Nono in the text referenced in the introduction (Nono 2018), but also to listen to and give space to the voice of the other, "opening, uncloseting, destabilizing

foreclusionary structures so as to allow for the passage toward the other" (Derrida 2007b, 45). The trajectory I have delineated extends beyond personal growth; it constitutes a meaningful contribution to the scholarly discourse surrounding important aspects in artistic and musical practice as well as in education, particularly regarding one's engagement with cultural and artistic heritage. Integrating contemporary artistic expression with one's cultural legacy holds the potential to transform our relationship with history into a creative and relational process.

Why Josquin?

In my research, the choice of the musical work to transcribe is far from a neutral or impersonal decision. On the contrary, choosing the originals to transcribe involves seeking out my own heritage. My careful choices are driven by the desire to engage in a deeper creative relationship with these works, one in which I recognize the potential for me as a composer to unfold, the potential for the works to alter, contaminate, and enhance my musical language throughout the process.

After completing *Una notte*, I aimed to revisit the process of working within a polyphonic space, reshaping and intervening as I had done in previous transcriptions of music by Girolamo Frescobaldi and Gesualdo. Concurrently, I sought to deepen the approach I had taken with Schubert's Lied and its poetic text by Heine, which had influenced my selection of texts by Dickinson and had informed the dramaturgy of my transcription. I also intended to expand upon my previous experiences with transcribing for string quartet and string trio – specifically, *Une petite fleur bleue* and *Hortense* – by undertaking a transcription for a larger string quartet, in terms of both duration and depth. In doing so, I aimed to give greater prominence to the poetic elements of a vocal work, even within the process of creating an instrumental transcription. Additionally, I sought to return to transcribing a Renaissance polyphonic piece, thereby completing the trajectory of my previous transcriptions.

I chose to transcribe Josquin's five-voice motet-chanson *Nymphes des bois, or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* (1497), hosting it in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. Or was I the guest, invited by Josquin's music? Josquin composed this piece upon the death of Johannes Ockeghem, setting to music a poem by Jean Molinet and the funeral text *Requiem aeternam* as the *cantus firmus*. The motet-chanson contains a direct reference to the loss of Ockeghem, described as the musical father of Josquin and a younger generation of composers. This piece represents an early example of music consciously positioning itself within music history. Furthermore, Josquin simulates Ockeghem's contrapuntal style and cites some of the master's pupils. Thus, the point of departure for my transcription –

Josquin's musical work – was not entirely uniform, but already inhabited by various texts and voices.[1]

A recording of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* can be heard in audio example 2.[2] The text and an English translation of Molinet's poem are below.

Audio 2. Josquin Desprez, *Nymphes des bois*, *or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir:
https://open.spotify.com/intl-it/track/6AQSsiyGuePFFkcRm4jfU4?si=22cc147bb43246d0

A complete score can be consulted here:
http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/d/df/IMSLP479388-PMLP48546-DesPrez_D%C3%A9ploration_NympheA.pdf

Cantus firmus:

> *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine et lux perpetua luceat eis.*
> *Requiescat in pace. Amen.*

Nymphes des bois:

> *Nymphes des bois, déesses des fontaines,*
> *Chantres expers de toutes nations,*
> *Changez vos voix fort claires et haultaines.*
> *En cris tranchantz et lamentations;*
> *Car d'Atropos les molestations*
> *Vostre Okeghem par sa rigueur attrape.*
> *Le vray trésoir de musicque et chef d'œuvre,*
> *Qui de Tropos désormais plus n'éschappe,*
> *Dont grant doumage est que la terre couvre.*
>
> *Acoustrez vous d'abitz de deuil*
> *Josquin, Brumel, Pierchon, Compère,*
> *Et plourez grosses larmes d'œil,*
> *Perdu avez votre bon père.*

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[1] The same applies to every (musical) text, which, as Barthes argues, "consists of multiple writings" (Barthes 1977a, 54).

[2] The starting point of my transcription process was the Gesualdo score that was available to me at the time. I did not refer to any specific recording then. This recording is presented here to facilitate the comparison between Gesualdo's original and my transcription. While most of the available recordings are based on a version of the score that is a fourth lower than the one I used – this is also the case, for example, with Stefano Gervasoni's transcription discussed later in this chapter – this recording is the closest that I have found to the score I am referring to: It is in the same tune, but there are some small differences, such as the C♮ sung by the soprano in the first bar instead of the C♯ that appears in the score.

Requiescat in pace. Amen.

Cantus firmus:

Eternal rest give them, Lord,
And light perpetual shine on them.
May he rest in peace. Amen.

Nymphs of the Woods:

Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains,
Expert singers from all nations,
Turn your voices, so clear and high,
To rending cries and lamentation.
For Atropos, the terrible ruler,
Has seized your Ockeghem in her trap.
The true treasurer of music and its masterpiece
Learned, elegant in body and in no way old-fashioned.[3]
It is a terrible loss that the earth covers him.

Put on your mourning clothes
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
And weep great tears from your eyes
Gone is your great father.

May he rest in peace. Amen.

(Molinet 2012, translated by David Wyatt)

Tutto chiudi negli occhi

The title of my transcription, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, is taken from a verse of a poem by Cesare Pavese featured in his collection *La terra e la morte* (Earth and Death), written in 1945. It translates literally as "you close everything in your eyes." This phrase could allude to both death – as Pavese's poem, akin to Josquin's *déploration*, serves as a contemplation on death – and to the closed eyes of a dreamer.

As already mentioned, in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I drew inspiration from the alternating chapter structure of Queneau's *The Blue Flowers*. To transcribe *Nymphes des bois*, I divided Molinet's poetic text by assigning some verses to Josquin and others to myself. In the sections assigned to Josquin, I transcribed

[3] Wyatt has translated another version of Molinet's poem here. The verse that is in the score I used, and that I quoted above ("Qui de Tropos désormais plus n'éschappe"), could be translated as "Who has no escape from Tropos [death]."

his music in which the corresponding verses are sung. This transcribing approach recalls, from both an aesthetic and technical standpoint, the one I adopted in previous transcriptions. In the sections assigned to myself, I composed my music, drawing inspiration from and allowing myself to be guided by the corresponding poetic text. This approach builds upon what occurred in *Hortense*, where I incorporated a (reverse) quotation from my own music into the transcription to render the formal turning point of the sudden shift in Gesualdo's madrigal from a narration in the third person to the first person.
In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, this shift became a recurrent structural element throughout my entire working process, marking changes of section and aiding in the construction of the work's dramaturgy. In my creative process, these two approaches – which I could refer to as transcribing and composing – were not designed to contrast, and the division between Josquin and myself was not made to create stark differences or stylistic oppositions. On the contrary, I followed a dreamlike progression: I crafted each section with the intention of creating a musical context that would seamlessly lead into the following one. In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, the boundary between transcribing and composing thus gradually blurs, giving rise to a flow of music inhabited by different voices.

I will now discuss some concrete examples that effectively illustrate my approach and the relationship I established with Josquin's music.
Tutto chiudi negli occhi begins with a prelude (bars 1-33) that introduces and sets the musical context for a section (bars 34-52) based on the initial notes of the *cantus firmus* used by Josquin on the words "requiem aeternam." Figure 1 shows the tenor line, which features the *cantus firmus* in Josquin's composition.

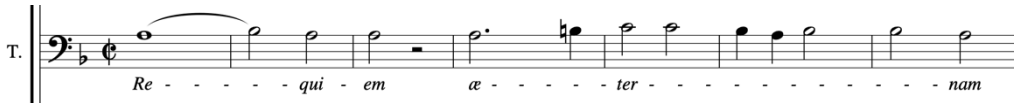


Figure 1. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-7, tenor part

In my transcription, these few bars from Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* are transformed into almost 20 bars that explore and repeat in various ways the insistence of the *cantus firmus* on the note A, and particularly focusing on the first word "requiem" and its interval A-B♭-A. Figure 2 and audio example 3 present the transition from the prelude to this section.

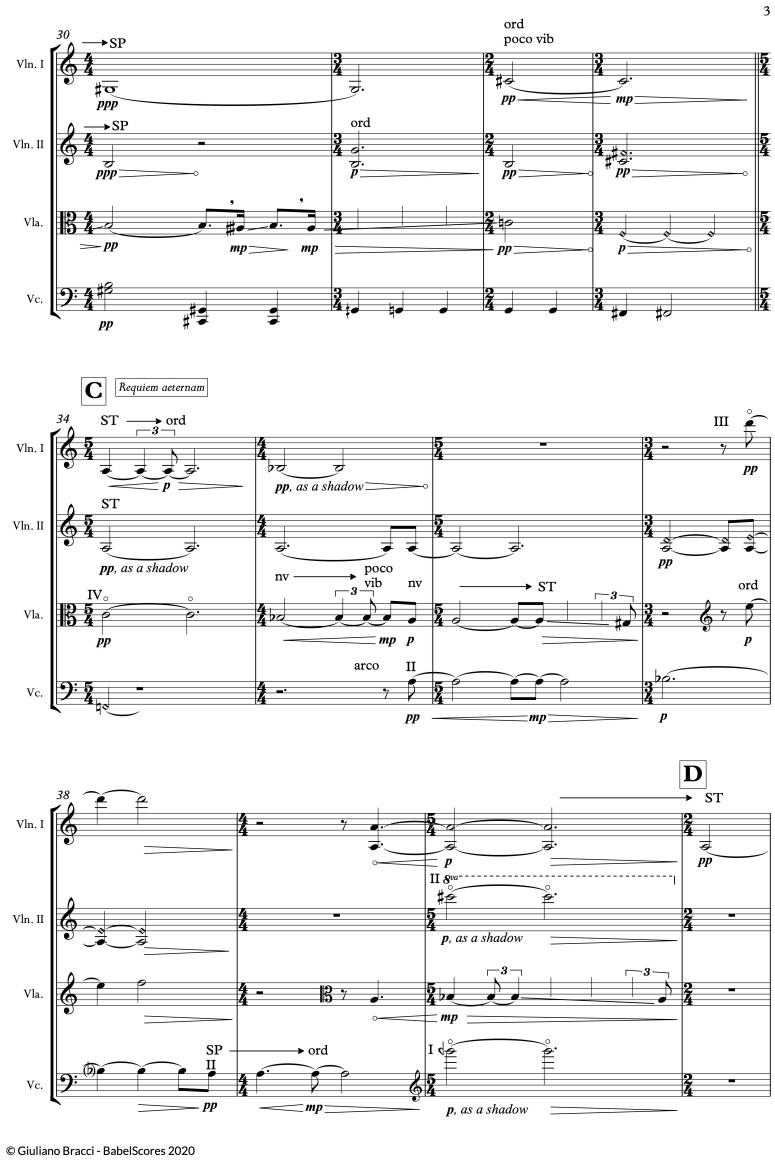


Figure 2. Bracci. *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, bars 30-41

Audio 3. Bracci. *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. Bars 30-41, performed by the New European Ensemble:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/tuttochiudi_audio_30-41.mp3

In addition to the word "requiem," I incorporated other fragments from Josquin's work. For example, on this page, I also took the soprano line that sings the words "des bois" (D-E-F) in bar 2 of *Nymphes des bois* (highlighted in figure 3) and rendered it in bars 37-38 of *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. There D and E are simultaneously present as harmonics in the first and second violins, while the viola plays a melodic interval one octave lower (E-F).

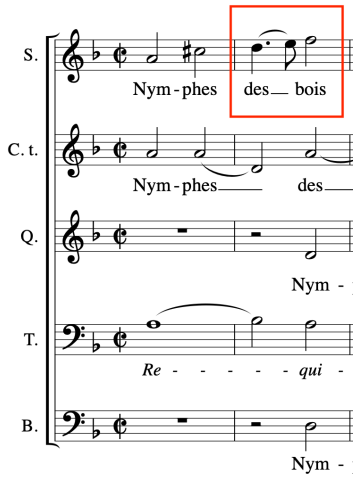


Figure 3. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-2

Following Hans Zender's ideas on the potentiality of reading music, as discussed more thoroughly in chapter 4, I moved around within Josquin's musical text, "repeating certain lines" and "comparing different readings of the same passage" (Zender 1999a, 18). I chose to highlight and emphasize specific passages of Josquin's work while excluding others. The initial transition from my music to Josquin's at bars 33-34 is seamless, and subsequent transitions maintain this fluidity. Creating an immersive, dreamlike flow of music where traces of Josquin's music are able to (re)appear and resonate here and there, akin to a palimpsest – a manuscript where remnants of an erased original text remain legible – rather than interrupting the musical discourse or employing sharp contrasts, I aimed to create a musical environment for hosting the other, for contaminating, and being contaminated by it.

After the bars dedicated to the *cantus firmus*, particularly focusing on the word "requiem," *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* transitions into a section dedicated to the first two verses of Molinet's poem, as set to music by Josquin: "Nymphes des bois, déesses des fontaines, / Chantres expers de toutes nations" (Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains, / Expert singers from all nations). I transcribed Josquin's musical rendition of the first two verses of Molinet's poem with the awareness that for the following verse – "Changez vos voix fors claires et haultaines" (Turn your voices, so clear and high) – I planned to shift my approach, my "voice," and write a new section of the piece that would emerge from Josquin's music as if in a dream: I wanted the listener to find themselves elsewhere – in a different place, yet connected by deep, secret ties – without exactly knowing how it happened. This way of proceeding worked well for me as a compositional strategy: On the one hand, it structured the appearances of Josquin's music and provided a clear direction for shaping the contexts in order to create a musical environment that could host the other guest, whether it be

Josquin's music or my own. On the other hand, from a more practical standpoint, it helped me to establish clear musical landmarks that I aimed to reach while composing-transcribing.

Figure 4 and audio example 4 presents the first bars of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, while figure 5 and audio example 5 present the first part of the section in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* that corresponds to the verses "Nymphes des bois, Déesses des fontaines" (bars 50-63). In figure 4, I have outlined in Josquin's score the elements that I transcribed in bars 50-63 of *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. In figure 5, I have highlighted the redistribution of the original voices throughout the string quartet.

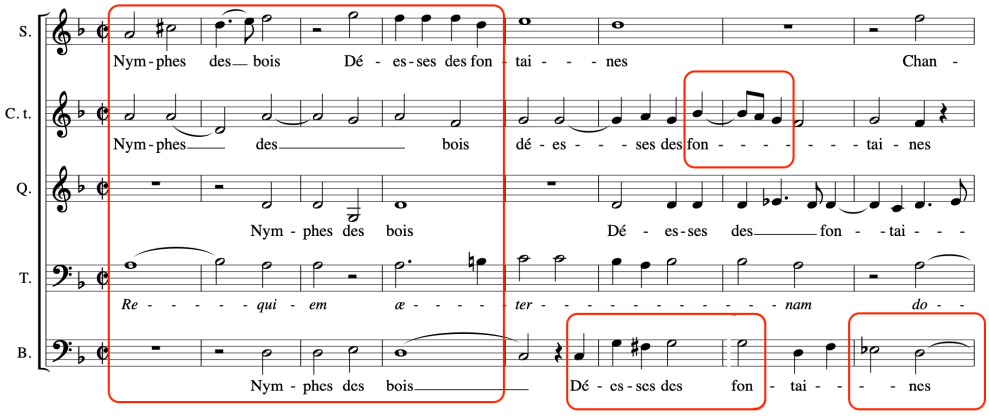


Figure 4. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-8

Audio 4. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-8, performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir, conducted by Paul van Nevel: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/JOSQUIN_AUDIO-1-8.mp3

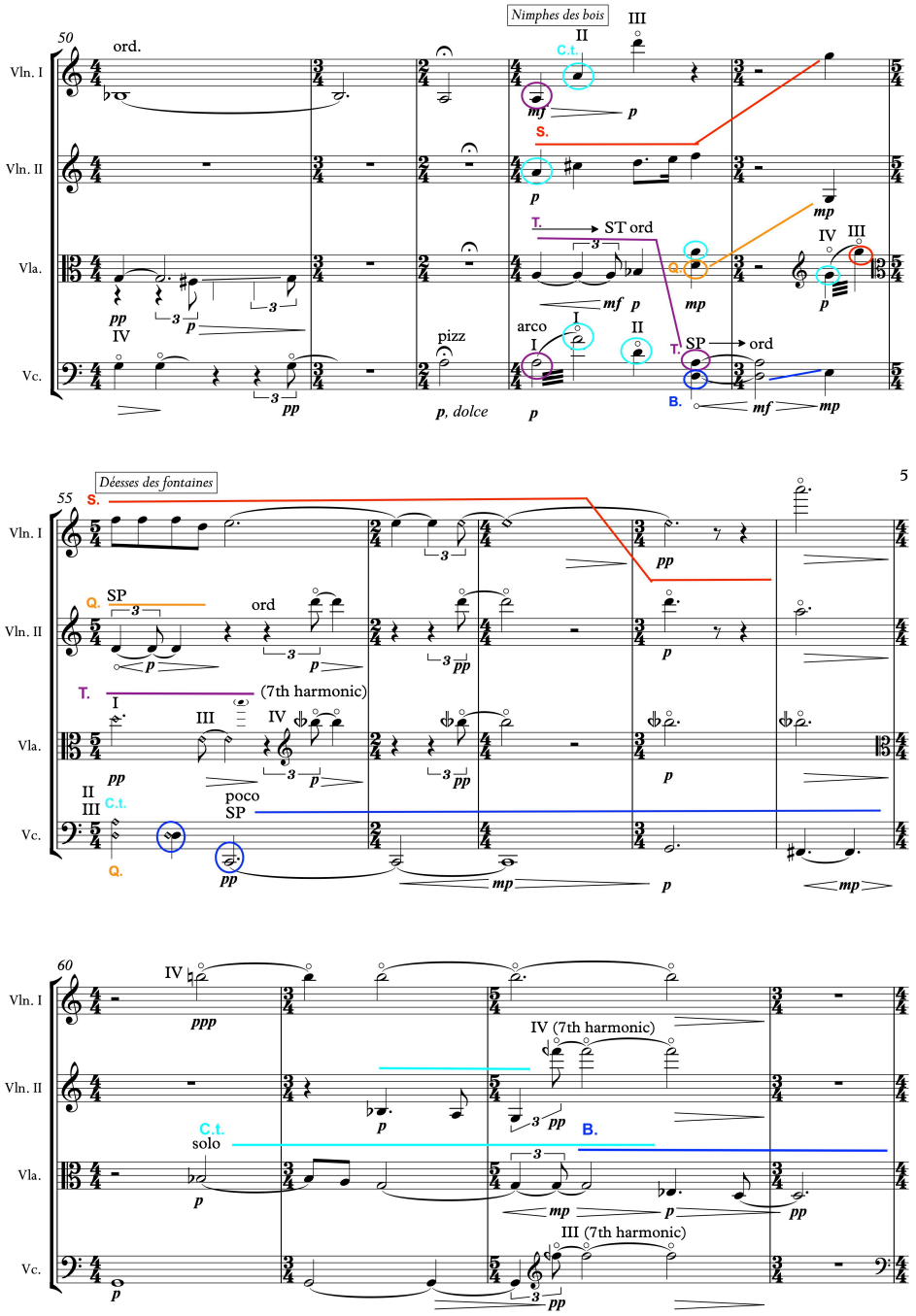


Figure 5. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, bars 50-63
Note: The score that I am using for Josquin's piece is an edition notated in cut time. For practical reasons, I have generally halved the note values for my transcription.

Audio 5. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, bars 50-63, performed by the New European Ensemble:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/tuttochiudi_audio_50-63.mp3

In bars 50-53, I transcribed all the original voices, as indicated by the highlighted sections, employing a similar approach to the one used in *Hortense*. The voices are fragmented across different registers and instruments, resulting in a reshaping of Josquin's original lines. Although transformed by the instruments, the chant remains recognizable, and the soprano line and harmonic relations are clearly audible, immediately evoking the presence of Josquin's music.
From the second half of bar 55, my attention shifted to the bass line (C-G-F#-G), excluding other elements of that passage. This prompted me to step back from Josquin's musical text and consider these few notes as the foundation for more complex spectral sounds. I took some (musical) time to redirect my, and subsequently the listener's, focus of attention to the cello playing the low open string (C) *poco sul ponte*, producing a sound rich in overtones. Meanwhile, the violins and viola play harmonics that, in this context, resonate as overtones of the cello's sound. In this passage, by dissecting and fragmenting Josquin's original, I was able to highlight specific details and create an opportunity for listeners – and for myself – to be immersed in the exploration of a single sound and its timbral nuances.
In the next bars (60-63), these two dimensions – Josquin's presence and a focus on the materiality of sound – coexist more manifestly: The viola, imitated by the second violin, plays a fragment taken from the line of the countertenor (B♭-A-G) from bar 7 of *Nymphes des bois*, while the cello and the first violin produce harmonics that are overtones belonging to the spectrum of a low G. In writing *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I aimed to create a musical context where this could happen; a space where the listener could perceive different and complementary perspectives and depths, and where various musical features could coexist, emerging into the foreground or fading into the background.

Finally, a clear example of a transition from Josquin's transcribed (and dreamed) music to the emergence of my own music, along with my use of the poetic text, is found in the verses "Chantres expers de toutes nations / Changez vos voix fort claires et haultaines. / En cris tranchantz et lamentations" (Expert singers from all nations, / Turn your voices, so clear and high, / To rending cries and lamentation). Figure 6 and audio example 6 present this passage in Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, with the elements that I incorporated highlighted, while figure 7 and audio example 7 illustrate this transition in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*.

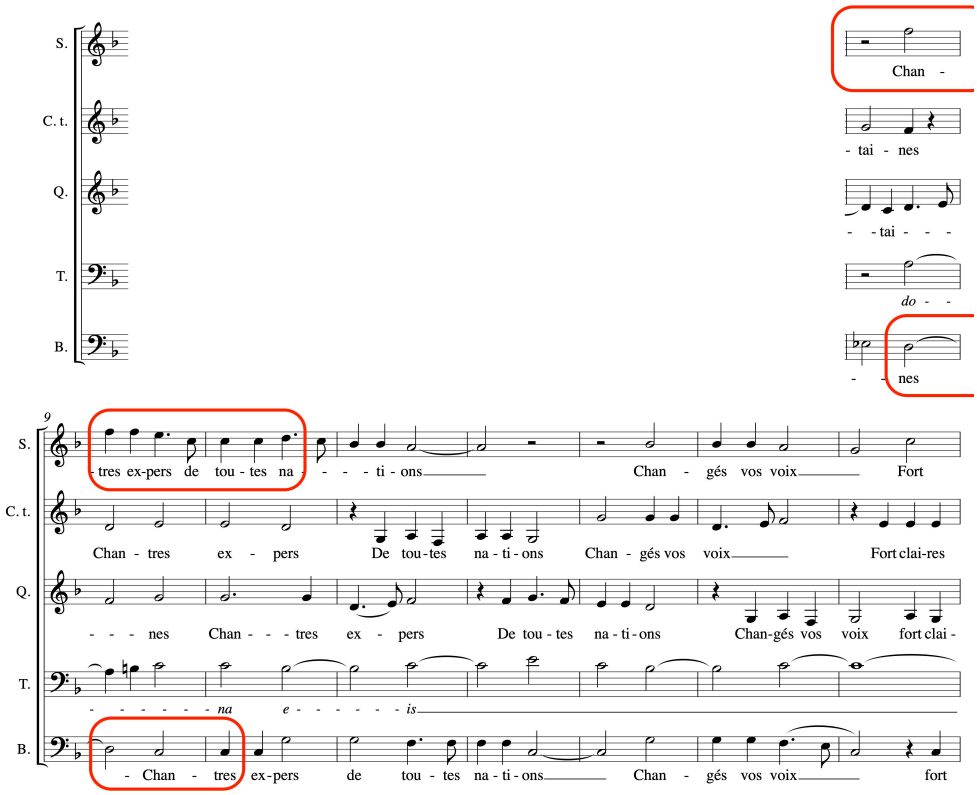


Figure 6. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 8-15

Audio 6. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 8-15, performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir, conducted by Paul van Nevel: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/JOSQUIN_AUDIO_8-15.mp3

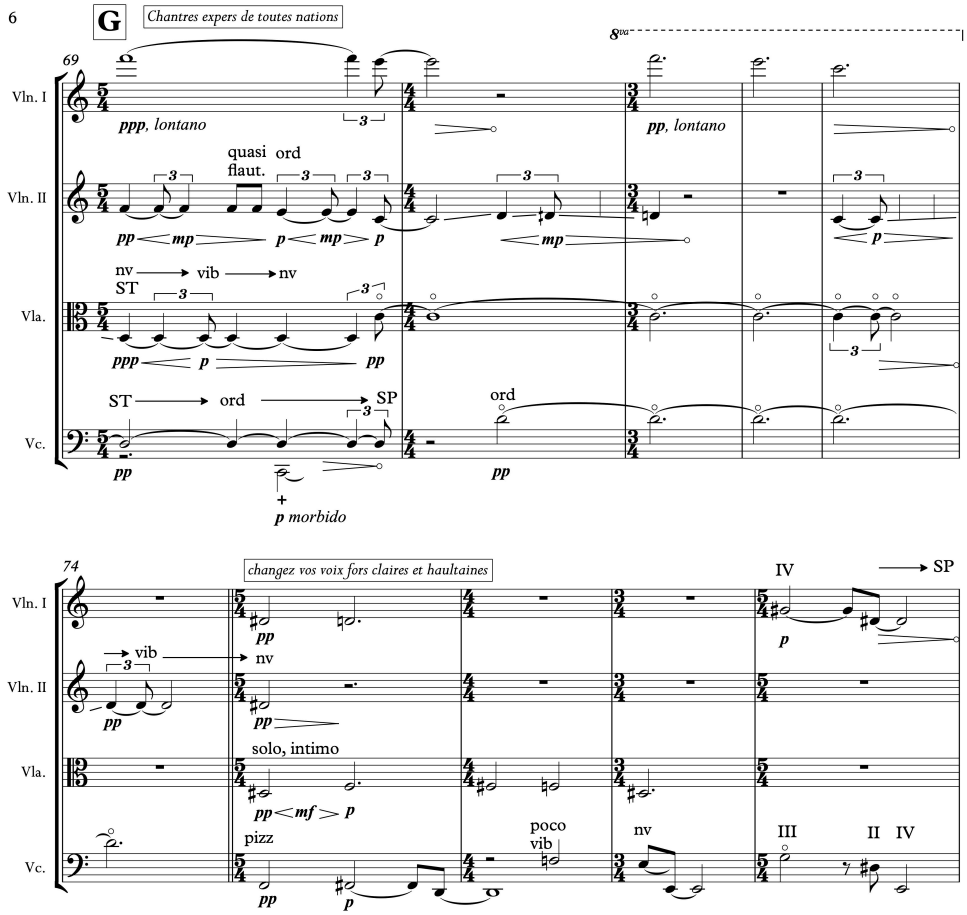


Figure 7. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi,* bars 69-78

Audio 7. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi,* bars 69-78, performed by the New European Ensemble:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/tuttochiudi_audio_69-78.mp3

Here, I took the phrase "changez vos voix" (turn [change] your voices) as a cue to transition to a new section, and to transform both my own voice and the voices of the nymphs. The soprano line singing the phrase "Chantres expers de toutes nations" (F-E-C-D) is played and transformed by the second violin. Above it, the first violin echoes it, distant, two octaves higher, with sustained F-E in bars 69-70, and then repeating the same phrase another octave higher (F-E-C) in bars 71-73. This extremely high line could be interpreted as a literal representation of the nymphs's "clear and high voices." The viola and cello share the bass line, initially on a D, and then simultaneously playing C and D. This melodic interval in Josquin's music is rendered in my transcription to allow for a dual interpretation: It serves both as a melodic interval that concludes the phrase of the second violin (bars 70-71 and 73-74), and as a static harmonic

interval (played by the viola and cello in bars 71-73) further explored through a slow glissando of the second violin.

After transcribing the phrase "chantres expers des toutes nations" (expert singers from all nations) in this manner, I shifted my own approach for the verse "changez vos voix" (turn [change] your voices). Instead of continuing to transcribe, I metaphorically took the baton from Josquin and freely composed my rendition of Molinet's text. The nymphs' voices changed into "cris […] et lamentations" (cries and lamentations), transitioning from the high violin chant described above (bars 69-73) to the solo viola chant in bars 75-78.

Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* as transcribed by Janssens and Gervasoni

For contemporary composers, the choice of a work to transcribe often signals a personal engagement with their own musical tradition. Further, choosing to transcribe recognizable works enables listeners to perceive the transcriber's activity more easily, comparing the transcription with the original. It is not uncommon for composers to select well-known pieces from music history, such as Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, rather than more obscure ones. In chapter 3, for instance, I discussed the widespread interest among composers in transcribing and finding inspiration in Gesualdo's music, as evidenced by studies from musicologists like Glenn Watkins (2010) and Marilena Laterza (2017). In chapter 4, I delved into Fabio Nieder's transcription of Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger." In 2022, Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* was also transcribed by two other composers, Daan Janssens and Stefano Gervasoni. Including their transcriptions in the discussion offers a broader context for my own work and reflections.

Before looking at examples from the transcriptions by Janssens and Gervasoni, it is beneficial to revisit the final page of the original, presented in figure 8 and audio example 8. I have already highlighted the elements that appear in the subsequent example from Janssens's transcription.

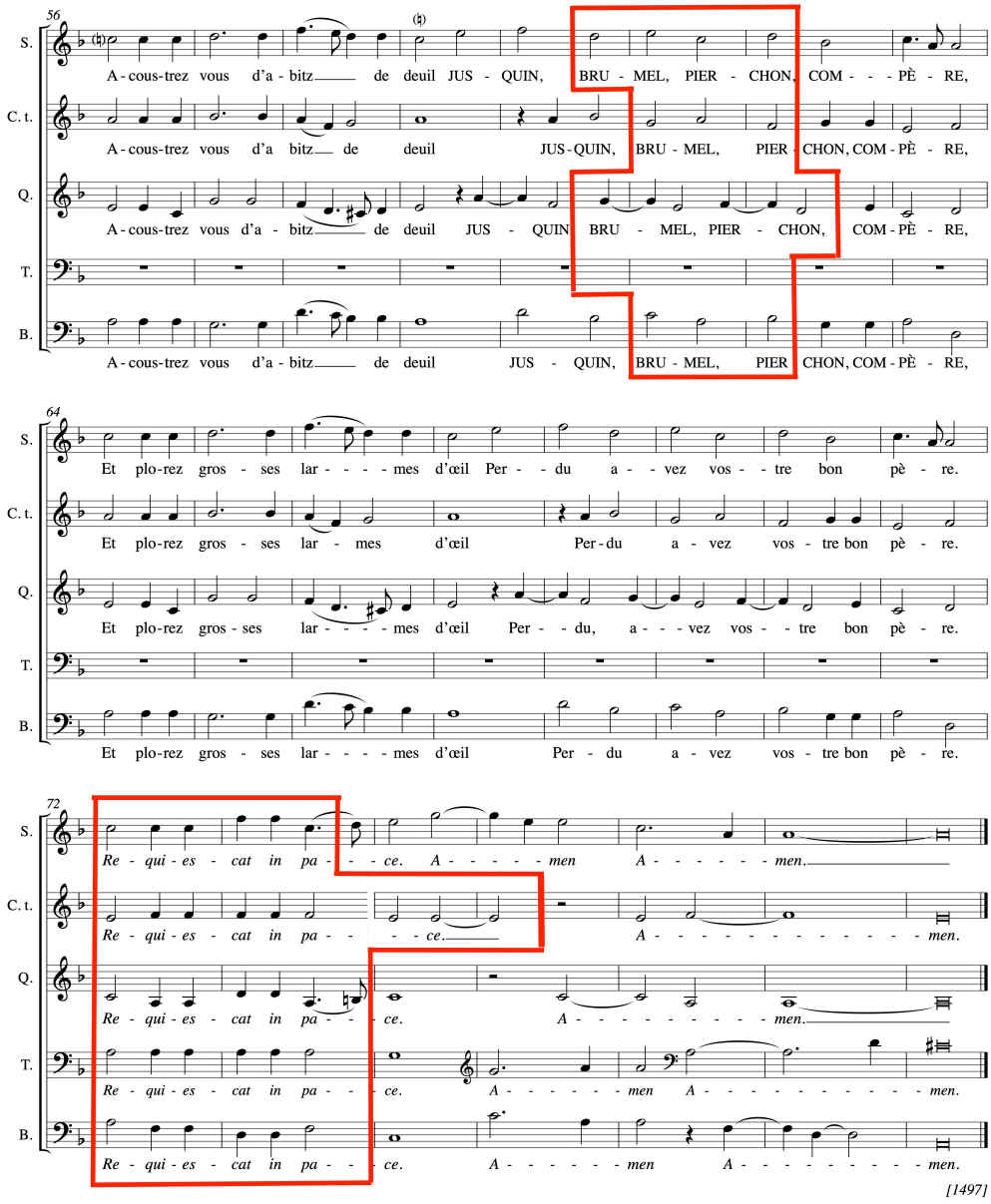


Figure 8. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 56-78

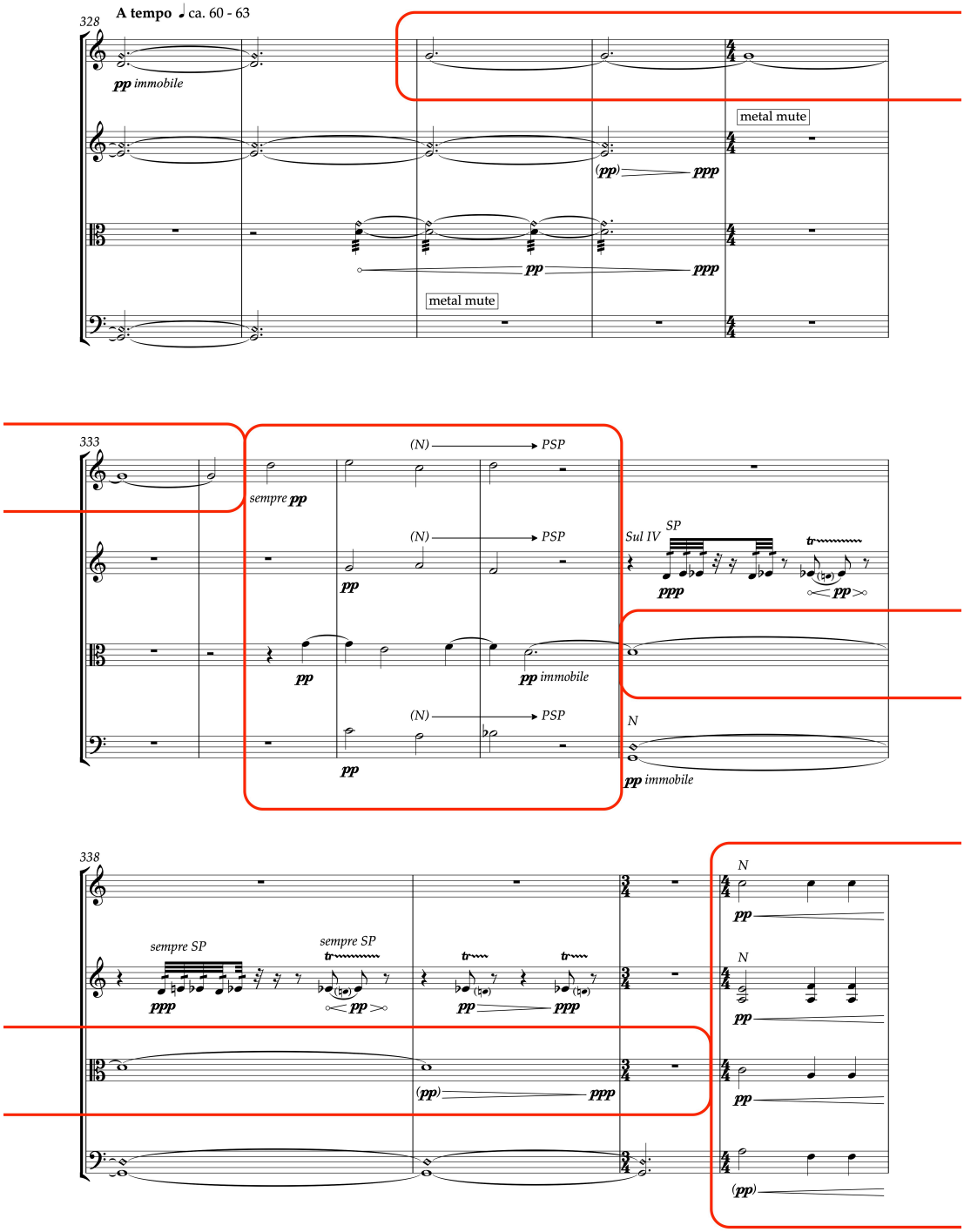
Audio 8. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 56-78, performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir, conducted by Paul van Nevel: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/JOSQUIN_AUDIO_56-78.mp3

Janssens's transcription of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* is a string quartet, like my *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. Janssens's creative process began with a reflection on how Josquin's music positioned itself in relation to the music of the older generation and of his own contemporary peers (Janssens 2022-2024). The first part of *Nymphes des bois* is indeed written in an older polyphonic style reminiscent of the music of Ockeghem (ca. 1410-1497), with the tenor voice singing the Gregorian

chant in Latin. The second part, however, adopts a more contemporary style characteristic of Josquin, echoing the music of composers from the Franco-Flemish school of his generation mentioned in the text: Josquin himself (1450-1521), Pierre Brumel (1460-1512), Pierre de la Rue (Pierchon) (1452-1518), and Loyset Compère (1445-1518).

In his transcription of *Nymphes des bois*, Janssens reflects on the possibility of music being aware, in musical terms, of its own historicity. He maintains Josquin's division into two parts, but more importantly, he transcribes this central feature of Josquin's work – the historical awareness and positioning towards music tradition – by referring to other composers. Instead of quoting them literally, Janssens evokes the voices of different composers, such as Alban Berg, Helmut Lachenmann, Brian Ferneyhough, and Salvatore Sciarrino, along with some elements of their music. These composers and their works constitute the landscape within which Janssens positions his own music. However, Janssens's work is far from being a puzzle of quotations; rather, it is a composition in which the composer's voice engages in dialogue with other music. This reflects the awareness that "today, it is impossible anyway to write something new without referring to what is already there," especially in a time when everything is readily available (Janssens 2022-2024).
This idea of relating to history and other generations also inspired Janssens in his choice to write for string quartet, which carries, as few other instrumental combinations do, a specific historical weight (Janssens 2022-2024). As mentioned in chapter 1, writing for a string quartet inevitably forces a composer to confront a history that spans more than two centuries, from Viennese Classicism to recent masterpieces in the genre by György Ligeti, Nono, and Lachenmann.

The conclusion of Janssens's string quartet corresponds to the final page of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*. Audio example 9 showcases the final part of Janssens's *Nymphes des bois*, while figure 9 presents the very last two pages of Janssens's score, which corresponds to audio example 9, from 2'00" until the end.


328
A tempo ♩ ca. 60 - 63
pp immobile
metal mute
(pp)
ppp
pp
ppp
metal mute
333
(N)
PSP
sempre pp
(N)
PSP
Sul IV
SP
ppp
pp
pp
pp immobile
(N)
PSP
N
pp
pp immobile
338
N
pp
sempre SP
sempre SP
ppp
pp
pp
ppp
N
pp
(pp)
ppp
pp
(pp)

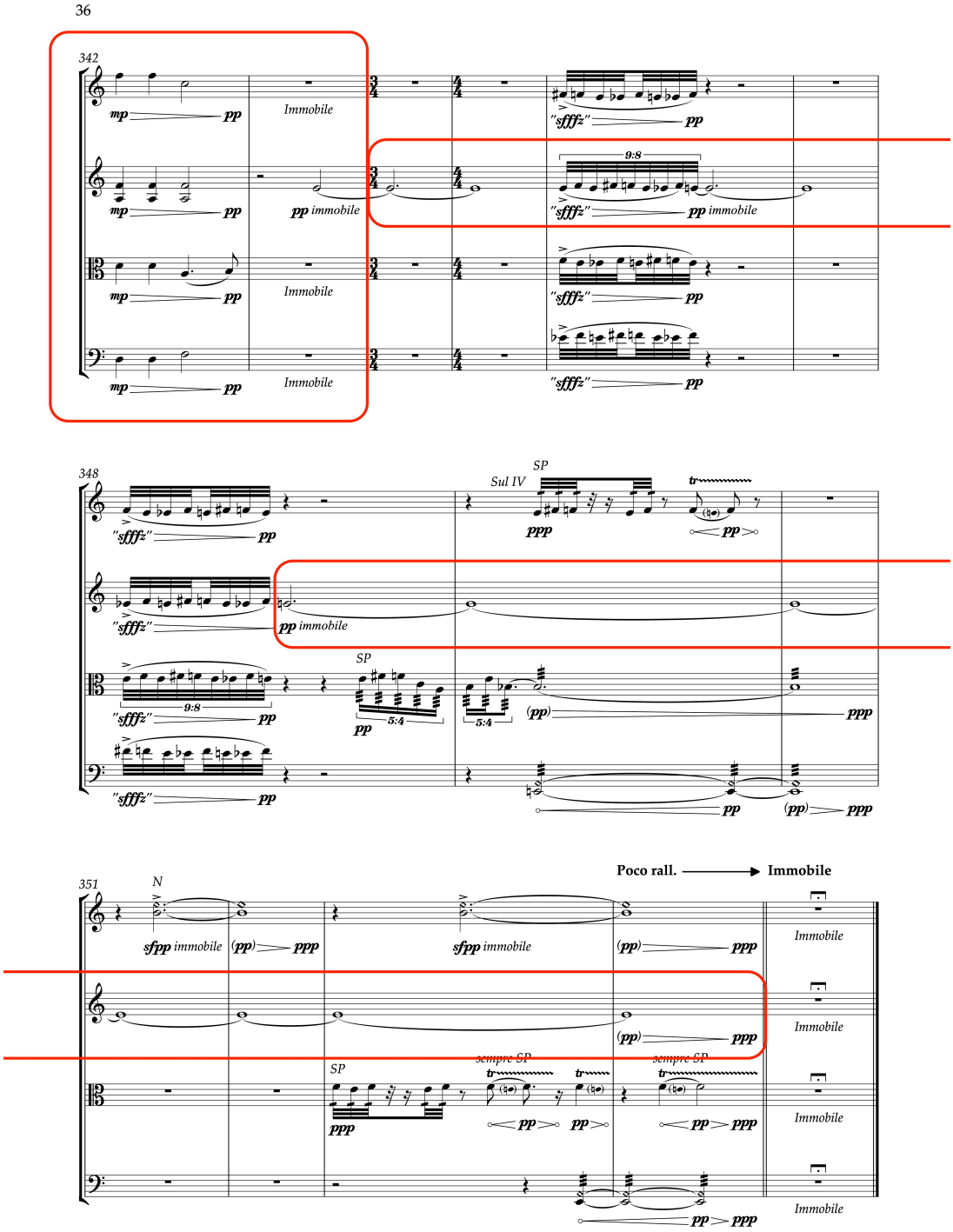


Figure 9. Janssens, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 328-355

Audio 9. Janssens, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 293-355, performed by Quartetto Maurice:
https://soundcloud.com/daan-janssens/nymphes-des-bois-2021-2022-for-string-quartet-fragment-quartetto-maurice

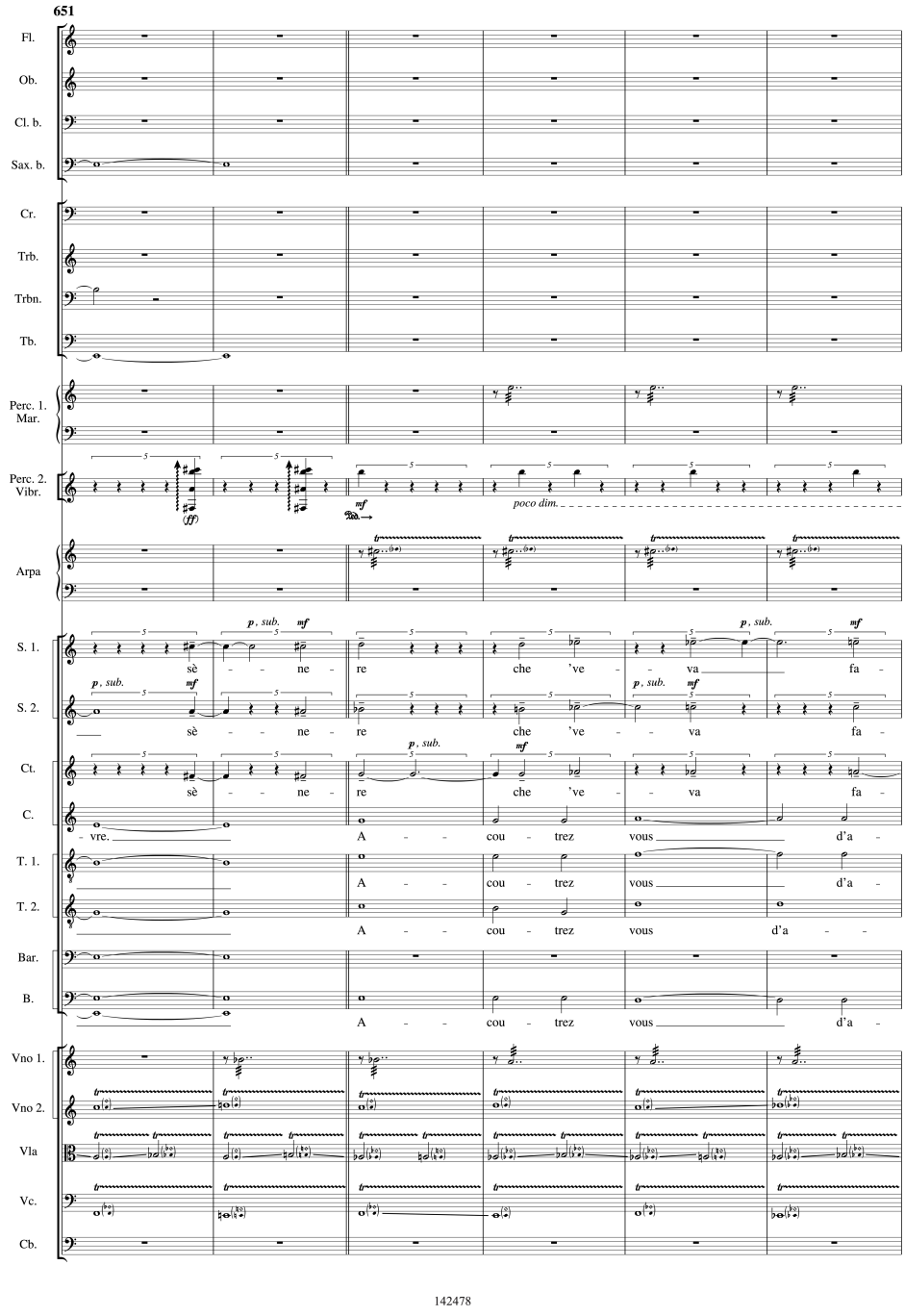
In the beginning of this section, vigorous gestures take the foreground, while in the background, high-pitched notes (D-E and G) emerge and alternate, always pianissimo. From this backdrop, after a long G played by the first violin (bars 330-334), Josquin's music surfaces at bar 334, precisely at the moment in the original when he mentions himself and other composers – Brumel, Pierchon, and Compère. This appearance vanishes with the D pedal played by the viola. Josquin's music re-emerges at bar 341, corresponding to the words "Requiescat in pace," and then yields to a long E played by the second violin all the way to the very end. Janssens makes a cut in Josquin's score, highlighted in Figure 8, allowing only two fragments of it to be heard. The context makes this omission possible: In the suspended time of this finale, where clear and essential elements are at play – the entire finale can be summarized as a long journey from D to E that unfolds in the final pages of Janssens's quartet – the last page of *Nymphes des bois* emerges twice, as if in an evocation.
In these pages, Janssens's musical language functions as a connective fabric, linking fragments of Josquin's music that are akin to guests visiting the transcriber. Simultaneously, Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* serves as the context from which Janssens's transcription originates, acting as the host of his string quartet. Janssens's transcription amplifies the meaning of Josquin's work and actualizes some of its unexpressed virtualities.

In a manner quite different from Janssens's transcription, Gervasoni's transcription also serves as a space to host other voices and expand the meaning of Josquin's music. Gervasoni's transcription of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* is part of his cantata *In nomine PPP, Cantata per Pier Paolo Pasolini*, a large composition for eight voices and sixteen instruments, accompanied by a video. Gervasoni's work is a homage to the film director and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini on the centenary of his birth. Within the cantata, Gervasoni sets to music a selection of Pasolini's poems and texts. As Gervasoni explains in the program notes, there are "three moments in which Pasolini's absurd and atrocious death in 1975 is indirectly evoked through three chansons by Josquin, rearranged with the addition of instruments and voices, including the *Déploration sur la mort d'Ockegem*, which thus becomes the 'lament on the death of Pier Paolo Pasolini' ['Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini']" (Gervasoni 2022c).
In Gervasoni's transcription, Josquin's work is sung in its entirety by five voices (alto, two tenors, baritone, and bass) out of the eight vocal parts, while simultaneously being absorbed into the ensemble's fabric. Additionally, in the second part of the transcription, Gervasoni sets to music a poem by Biagio Marin – a poet and friend of Pasolini – overlaying it onto Josquin's piece and having it sung by the remaining three, higher voices (two sopranos and a countertenor). This poem, in the dialect of Grado – a town in the northeastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia – is part of a litany in memory of Pasolini that "speaks with respect and delicacy about the creaking of the bones of his

shattered body" and is, in Gervasoni's transcription, "a tribute within the tribute" (Gervasoni 2022c). The two vocal groups, separated by register and rhythmic patterns, slowly converge, coming together only at the end, after Marin's poem has finished, on the words "Requiescat in pace. Amen."

In Gervasoni's "Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini," his musical language hosts Josquin's music and allows it to coexist with Marin's poetry. This coexistence amplifies the meaning of the mourning of a master that is inherent in Josquin's work, and renders Josquin's music a symbol of grief within the broader architecture of the entire *Cantata per Pier Paolo Pasolini*. At the same time, Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* transforms into a space capable of hosting other voices and different musical expressions.

Figure 10 displays two pages of Gervasoni's score, corresponding to the verses "Acoustrez vous d'abitz de deuil" (Put on your mourning clothes), while audio example 10 presents the same passage, extending to the conclusion of the "Déploration."


651
Fl.
Ob.
Cl. b.
Sax. b.
Cr.
Trb.
Trbn.
Tb.
Perc. 1.
Mar.
Perc. 2.
Vibr.
(ff)
mf
poco dim.
Arpa
S. 1.
p, sub.
mf
sè - - ne - re che 've - - va fa -
S. 2.
sè - - ne - re che 've - - va fa -
Ct.
sè - - ne - re che 've - - va fa -
C.
- vre. A - - cou - trez vous d'a -
T. 1.
A - - cou - trez vous d'a -
T. 2.
A - - cou - trez vous d'a - -
Bar.
B.
A - - cou - trez vous d'a -
Vno 1.
Vno 2.
Vla
Vc.
Cb.

142478

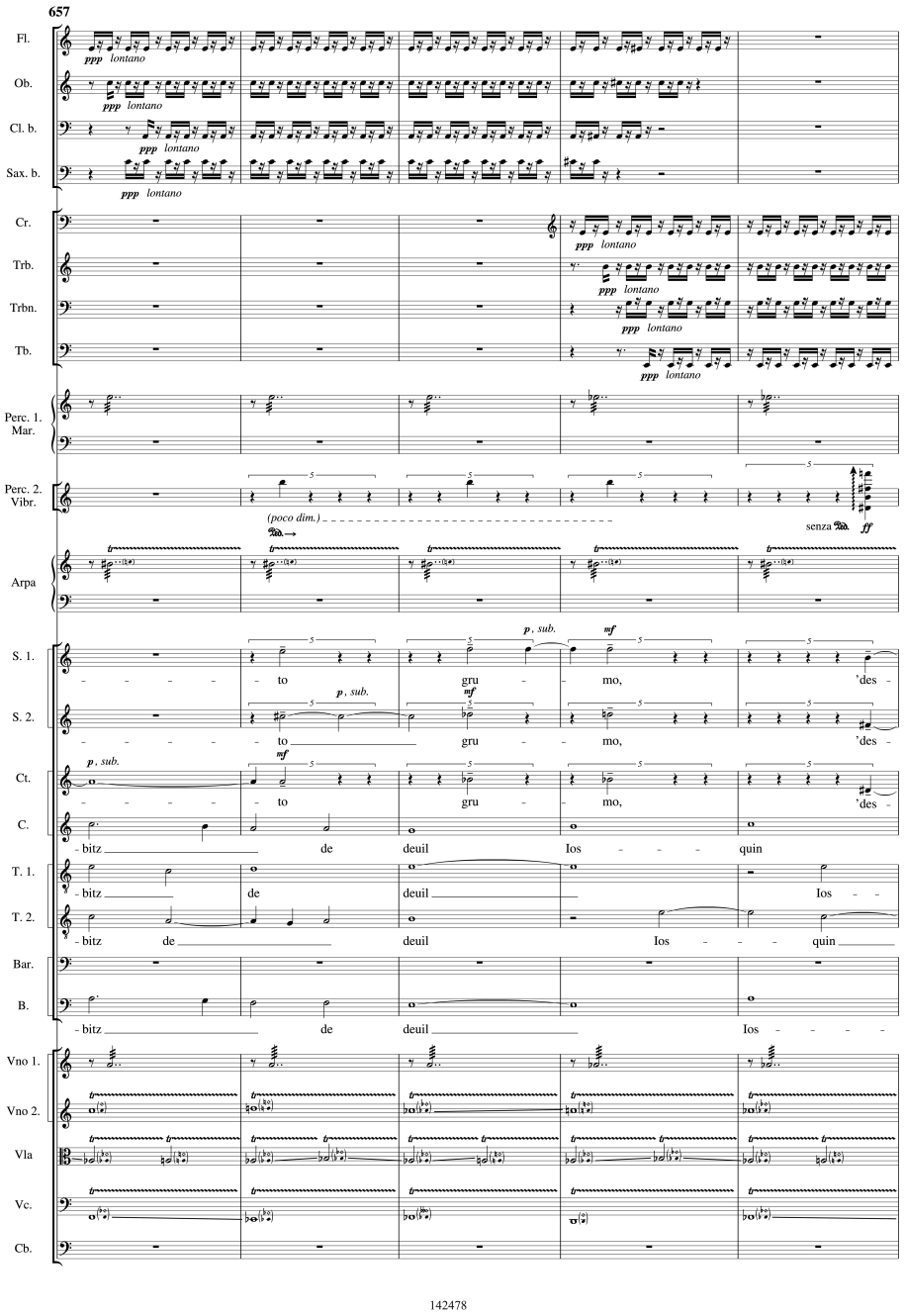


Figure 10. Gervasoni, "Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini – d'après, Déploration sur la mort d'Ockegem," bars 651-661.
Note: Gervasoni uses a version of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* that is one fourth lower than the edition that I used in this chapter.

Audio 10. Gervasoni, "Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini – d'après, Déploration sur la mort d'Ockegem," bars 651-700, performed by Ensemble Phace and the Company of Music, conducted by Nacho de Paz: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Gervasoni-PPP-Josquin-taglio.mp3

Both Janssens and Gervasoni engage with Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* in personal ways, making audible their relationship with the original work. Their transcriptions are as different as their musical languages with which they contaminate and transform the original.

Janssens takes Josquin's work as a point of departure and as a compass to navigate one of its central features – that is, Josquin's historical awareness and positioning within the musical tradition. Janssens transcribes the feature of evoking the voices of other composers – as Josquin did in *Nymphes de bois* – thereby reinventing his own tradition. In Janssens's transcription, Josquin's musical work emerges as recognizable only in certain passages, yet its formal structure plays a significant role. Furthermore, Janssens engages with Josquin's vocal composition while writing for string quartet, a formation with significant historical importance in music for its role in both experimenting with and confronting musical traditions and heritage.

By contrast, in Gervasoni's "Déploration," Josquin's work is sung in its entirety by five voices, and it coexists with a poem by Marin, which Gervasoni set to music for three other voices. Furthermore, Josquin's work and Marin's poem are hosted within the instrumental texture created by Gervasoni. Additionally, the "Déploration" is situated within the broader context of Gervasoni's cantata *In nomine PPP*, where it evokes Pasolini's death, and serves as a symbol of mourning, thereby amplifying one of the central meanings of Josquin's work.

In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I also engaged with Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, transforming it and making my relation to it audible. Similar to Janssens, I transcribed Josquin's work for string quartet, and I utilized its formal structure both as a guide and as a palimpsest – i.e., a manuscript from which the original text has been erased, but traces of it are still legible. Like Gervasoni, I engaged with the text of the original and its meanings. Instead of emphasizing its overarching mourning nature, my focus was on engaging with its individual verses and words. This approach parallels my previous work in *Hortense*, where the poetic text of the original deeply informed the music and the overall dramaturgy of my transcription.

In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I investigated the idea of dreaming as a model of a relationship with the other, and I developed a personal transcribing strategy inspired by the alternating chapter (and dream) structure of Queneau's *The Blue Flowers*. I explored the idea of transcribing as if dreaming of a musical work, and this led me to a result where Josquin's music and my own intertwine, each appearing within the other, as if emerging in a dream. The dreamlike quality of my work – where the music itself seems to dream – is part of a strategy aimed

at blending different styles and vocabularies, evoking them as ghost-like presences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reflected on *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, a work in which I synthesized the findings of my research on the practice of transcription. Building upon the ideas discussed in chapter 4 – which focused on my experience transcribing Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger" – I further explored the notion that the act of transcription generates a double of a musical piece, and I delved into the theme of the double and its connection with the concept of otherness.

Before discussing my transcription work on *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I contextualized the theme of the double within a broader perspective by considering its significance in psychoanalysis and literature, referring to Rank's study "The Double" and Freud's essay "The 'Uncanny.'" This exploration enabled me to understand the other as something within the self, rather than in opposition to it – simultaneously intimate and foreign. In particular, Dickinson's description of the double being simultaneously host and guest is insightful when considering the other's constant virtual presence within the self. It indeed allows for a nuanced understanding of the relationship with the original musical work in the practice of transcribing: The transcription serves as the double and the guest of the original musical work, amplifying its meanings and actualizing some of its virtualities. Simultaneously, however, the original musical work becomes a guest in the language of the transcriber, contaminating it while also being contaminated by it.

I then explored Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers*, which served as a guiding framework in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* for establishing my relationship with Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*. In particular, I reflected on the idea of dreaming as a specific form of knowledge of one's self, and as a model for the relationship with one's double – the other within the self – placing it into the context of Queneau's thoughts. Additionally, I considered two short stories by Borges where the narrator encounters his double of different ages in dreams. This approach, once more, acknowledges the other not as a distant and opposing entity to the self, but as a virtual presence within the self.

After introducing Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* and discussing some of its features, I detailed how the alternating chapter structure of Queneau's *The Blue Flowers*, wherein the main characters dream of each other, served as a blueprint for my engagement with Josquin's music. I then delved into my creative process, discussing in a more technical manner the use of Molinet's poetic text in my transcribing process, and my approach to Josquin's music, which alternated between transcribing and composing, leading to a gradual blurring of the boundary between the two.

I concluded this chapter by examining two more transcriptions of the same work by Josquin, undertaken by Janssens and Gervasoni. This enabled me to contextualize my work more extensively and also to offer a significant illustration of distinct approaches in transcribing the same musical work by different composers.
Furthermore, I considered these two transcriptions in light of my reflections on the theme of the double, testing my understanding of the practice of transcribing by looking at the works of other composers. In particular, Janssens reflects on his relationship with the music of composers from other generations and on the capacity of music to be aware of its own historicity in musical terms. Gervasoni, on the other hand, centers his focus on the expression of mourning, expanding grief for the death of Ockegem to include that of Pasolini.
In their own ways, and through their own musical language, both composers enhance the meaning of Josquin's work from within and provide a musical opening for other voices to be hosted within Josquin's musical work. Like in the transcriptions by Janssens and Gervasoni, history and tradition come to life in my own work, too. Indeed, history is not something merely from the past, but an integral element of our time, something that is – and needs to be – constantly reinvented, reorganized, and rebuilt, thereby reflecting our contemporary times and culture. In his foreword to Siegfried Zielinski's book *Deep Time of the Media*, Timothy Druckery provides a rich distillation of this perspective and argues that "history is, after all, not merely the accumulation of fact, but an active revisioning, a necessary corrective discourse, and fundamentally an act of interrogation – not just of facts, but of the displaced, the forgotten, the disregarded" (Druckery 2006, viii).

The reflections in this chapter have allowed me to take a further step in my research and in my understanding of the practice of transcription. In the conclusion to this thesis, I will revisit the path taken in my research and the thoughts, findings, and insights gained from it. I will also discuss the contribution of my research to the field of contemporary music, as well as the potential implications for the practice of transcribing as a strategy in music and musical education to bridge contemporary artistic expression with one's cultural heritage, redefining one's engagement with history into a creative and transformative process.