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Variations on a Theme: Scored Music and Language in Julio Cortázar's 'Clone'

Nicholas Roberts, Durham University

For Julio Cortázar, language is a problem. Throughout his work there is a sense of a missing ontological authenticity to humankind, and it is a lack linked both to the breach that language opens up between (our) meaning and its expression, and to the separation entailed by the labelling and categorisation inherent in linguistic expression, this latter characteristic often underpinning the divide found in Cortázar's fiction between the putatively civilised self and monstrous other of humanity. Thus, Cortázar frequently attempts to break through the barrier of language, either by fashioning 'holes' in the wall of words, as in chapter 66 of *Rayuela*,¹ or by trying to twist language into expressing an ontological wholeness, as in the opening of the story 'Las babas del diablo'.² Or by positing music as an alternative form of expression. In all cases, the principal objective is to move beyond words, attaining an 'authentic' point where expression, meaning, and (plenitude of) being meet.

Previously, I examined Cortázar's claims for jazz as constituting just such a viable alternative to language.³ But, in the early (1945) essay 'Soledad de la música',⁴ Cortázar also refers to music that necessitates an *interpretación*, a performance based on reading, interpreting, and enacting of a piece of priorly-composed and scored music, arguing that this *interpretación* is merely 'la barrera que distancia del poema al lector – el lenguaje – [...] bajo otra forma' (292). Despite the rejection of such music as offering a qualitatively and ontologically distinct form of expression, some of the principal genres associated with it – diverse types of classical music and tango – appear frequently in Cortázar's subsequent

¹ Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela* (1963) (Madrid: Cátedra, 2007).

² Julio Cortázar, *Los relatos 3. Pasajes* (Madrid: Alianza, 2000), 295-308.

³ Nicholas Roberts, 'Subverted Claims: Cortázar, Artaud, and the Problematics of Jazz', *Modern Language Review*, 104: 3 (2009), 730-45

⁴ Julio Cortázar, 'Soledad de la música', in Mignon Domínguez (ed) *Cartas desconocidas de Julio Cortázar: 1939-1945* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1992), 290-97.

production. This article examines one of the most sustained engagements with scored music in Cortázar's work, the late story 'Clone',⁵ exploring how it develops the basic elements outlined thirty-five years earlier in 'Soledad de la música'. Central to my examination will be the fact that 'Clone' engages with forms of scored music, specifically Renaissance and baroque, not just in its content, but also in its form and in Cortázar's compositional *modus operandi*. This much is made clear in the story's epilogue 'Nota sobre el tema de un rey y la venganza de un príncipe'.⁶ Accordingly, my analysis will look at both the published version of the story in *Queremos tanto a Glenda* (1980) and the handwritten manuscript version, a document that has, to my knowledge, not been analysed until now.⁷ In examining these two versions, our understanding of the salient themes of music, writing, composition, and performance, as well as Cortázar's thought and compositional processes in developing these thematic concerns, will be significantly enhanced. We are left with a story that both binds scored music and literary production together in a symbiotic relationship, and simultaneously reveals the human self and human being to be inextricably caught in this musico-literary web. In short, 'Clone' affords us a more nuanced and developed understanding not just of the problems and nature of scored music, but of the linguistic, ontological, and interpretative problems which underlie Cortázar's work as a whole.⁸

The Performance of the Madrigals

⁵ Julio Cortázar, *Queremos tanto a Glenda* (Madrid: Ediciones Alfaguara, 1980), 105-27.

⁶ Cortázar, *Queremos*, 122-27.

⁷ *Julio Cortázar literary manuscripts, 1943-1982* (Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin). My thanks to the British Academy, whose Small Research Grant funded a two-week research trip to study these manuscripts, and to the staff at the Benson for their invaluable help.

⁸ Cortázar's engagement with classical music has received relatively little scholarly attention. Examples include Teresa López, 'La música clásica en los relatos de Julio Cortázar', in Jorge Dubatti (ed), *Poéticas argentinas del siglo XX: literatura y teatro* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1998), 119-26 and José Vicente Peiró, *Las músicas de Cortázar* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 2006), 87-101. However, such studies generally do not engage in theoretical discussion of classical music's place in Cortázar's wider thought and ontolinguistic concerns.

One of the main criticisms of scored and interpreted music in ‘Soledad de la música’ is that ‘toda comunicación de [una] obra por un ejecutante ya es versión, interpretación, no la Obra misma’ (293). This statement conveys the central thematic concerns of versions, or interpretations, and the notion of a putative original, where there is a fundamental aim of collapsing the breach between the two. As Cortázar proceeds to explain, underlining in his focus on the written score that this is the same problematic found in the use of language:

por muy sutil que sea su *notación* [...] el inexpresable fluido que informa una Música, que surge del sonido plasmado por el espíritu del artista de una manera única, innominable, corre riesgo mortal en toda interpretación. (293, italics mine)

The centrality of these considerations to ‘Clone’ is evident from the basic elements of the story, which concerns a tightknit group of eight singers. Their unity is based around their performing apparently to perfection the madrigals of Carlo Gesualdo (?1566-1613), the Italian composer who murdered his wife and her lover. In terms which resonate with the lines cited above from ‘Soledad de la música’, the singers study the music scores – significantly referred to as ‘textos’ (*Queremos*, 111) – and try to repeat the moment when the composer ‘ali[ó] los poemas a la melodía’ (111), seeking with each performance ‘ese esquivo centro del que surgirá la realidad del madrigal’ (111) rather than just producing ‘una de las tantas versiones mecánicas que a veces escuchaban en discos’ (111). Musically, that is, they are aiming at a ‘direct communication’ with the composer and the moment of composition, Gesualdo as both man and music, as we are told, variously, that ‘todo parece girar en torno a Gesualdo’ (105), and that ‘ese centro era la música y en torno a ella las luces de ocho vidas, de ocho juegos, los pequeños ocho planetas de sol Monteverdi, del sol Josquin des Prés, del sol Gesualdo’ (112). Yet this image of the singers circling around the grounding and

determining presence of Gesualdo and his music also signals the presence of an underlying linguistic model, in that it chimes with a Derrida-esque portrayal of words revolving around the Word, or transcendental signified, as the full presence and/of meaning at which Western thought (language) aims. Indeed, this is suggested more strongly still in the manuscript version, which reads ‘ese esquivo centro del que surgirá la *plena* realidad del madrigal’ (MS5:5, italics mine).⁹ For Derrida, each signifier gains meaning via a process of difference from other signifiers, hence its ‘full’ meaning is endlessly deferred as ever more signifiers are brought into its web of signification. The transcendental signified would be the end point of signification, closing off the process of language, or *différance*, as Derrida terms it.¹⁰ And yet it is precisely an end to such a process that is highlighted by the idea of the ‘clone’ and its apparent attainment of the centre written out by language. One of the singers, Roberto, uses the term to describe the lack of division or difference between the group’s eight members, with Lucho explaining that this refers to the fact that ‘el canto y la vida y *hasta los pensamientos* eran una sola cosa en ocho cuerpos’ (*Queremos*, 110, italics mine). In effect, then, the text implies that the words (singers) have been reduced to the indivisible Word (originary musical ideation, where composer and music are themselves ‘one’).

But even within the terms used to describe this unity and oneness there are already problems, not least in the insistence on the image of the eight musicians revolving around this composer/music centre. Such an image, as I have already suggested, implies an inscription within rather than an escape from the Derridean portrayal of language’s workings. Similarly, the very use of the word ‘clone’ raises a number of problems. W.J.T. Mitchell, in the chapter on clonophobia in *Cloning Terror: the war of images, 9/11 to the present* (2011), talks of ‘deep cloning’, which ‘goes beyond the visual or phenomenal surface to copy the inner

⁹ Manuscript citations indicate Box and Folder numbers.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 1-29.

structure and workings of an entity'.¹¹ This definition recalls the use of the word in genetics both in science and science fiction, the latter being particularly relevant here, given that Roberto came across the term whilst reading this literary genre (*Queremos*, 110), and it reflects both the group's desire to attain a oneness with the moment of musical ideation beyond the surface of the score and the claimed indistinguishability of its members. Yet the definition cited above reveals the term to be destabilising on both fronts. Firstly, it underscores the nature of the group('s renditions) as a copy of, rather than one with, that moment or centre. The term 'clone' speaks, that is, of the group as a marker of iterability, of the move away from plenitude into the realm of replication and duplication, of *écriture* in its broadest sense.¹² Secondly, in alluding to the genetic understanding of term, it undermines the 'clone'-like oneness of the eight singers: no genetic clone is ever entirely the same as the entity of which it is a clone, as there are always differences in its development and behaviour, not least because stimuli and experiences can never be repeated exactly. On both levels, then, the use of the word 'clone' implies the sort of web of relationships that constitutes the basis of language.

Reflecting some of these problems, the story tells of the gradual disintegration of the group's unity, as there are hints of an attraction between Sandro, the group's director, and Mario's wife, Franca, both of whom are singers in the group. This disintegration is linked specifically to a loss of contact with the 'originary' essence of Gesualdo's music: as the situation gets worse, the characters see that 'todo se volverá cada vez más mecánico, se pegará impecable a la *partitura* y al *texto*, será Carlo Gesualdo sin amor y sin celos' (*Queremos*, 113, italics mine), that is, just another performance out of contact with the original Work at the ideational moment. It is worth noting that the manuscript version of the story has 'la palabra' instead of 'el texto' here, underlining the pre-eminence of a linguistic

¹¹ W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: the war of images, 9/11 to the present* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 2011), 27.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 145-202

concern at the heart of the story. And a closer look at other elements of the text's composition also reveals an increasing emphasis on this loss of an originary contact or oneness. During an early discussion by the characters about Gesualdo's life, for example, the manuscript version reads, 'ésa es la noticia de policía, el ~~informativo~~ flash de mediodía' (MS5:5), whereas the published version has 'ésa es la noticia de policía o el *flash* de las doce y media' (*Queremos*, 105). This change from the symbolically charged midday to the more mundane half-past twelve speaks of a shift away from a time associated with the apogee of light, a perfect, shadow-less time, linked with divinities from the Egyptian sun-god Re to Christ,¹³ bound up by implication with the idea of a momentary glimpse of a prelapsarian Word. Instead, Cortázar emphasises the breach opened up between such a moment and the linguistic version ('noticia de policía', '*flash*') we have of it. Similarly, in the story's seventh section, when we are given details of the group's discussions of how best to perform Gesualdo's madrigals, the manuscript version's description of Lucho's call to 'dejar flotando la melodía en toda su ambigüedad gesualdesca' (MS5:5) is altered in the published version to 'dejar que la melodía fluya en toda su ambigüedad gesualdesca' (*Queremos*, 112). This apparently minor alteration of 'flotar' to 'fluir' represents a concerted shift from an identification of performance as fully presencing an all-imbuing, timeless and originary essence towards an underlining of the temporal, a move, that is, from pre- to postlapsarian being, with the attendant fall into the flow of time and language, here in the guise of musical performance.

Most crucially, however, the group's supposed unity, both internally amongst its members and with the originary music(al moment), is, from the beginning, outside the text: the story begins with the group *already* in the process of disintegration and where a oneness with the Work is only ever referred to in the indefinite past. We read, for example, that '*alguna vez ese centro era la música*' (112, italics mine). And the published versión is

¹³ See, for example, Samuel Mercer, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* (London: Luzac and co., 1949), 128; Isaac Watts, *Hymns and spiritual songs* (London, 1979), Book 2, 158.

notably more insistent in this regard than the earlier manuscript: whereas the latter ends the fourth section stating: ‘Sandro era el ~~mejor~~ de más músico de todos nosotros, sin él no seríamos nada’ (MS5:5), the published version adds: ‘Esto que fuimos, murmura Lucho’ (*Queremos*, 109). Indeed, several notable additions in the published version go further, questioning whether such unity ever was. Significantly, for instance, when Paola refers back to the supposed moment when things changed, no such moment can be located: ‘Hasta que. Porque ahora algo había cambiado desde.’ (107); and, as Roberto later asks, ‘¿dónde empieza lo sano, dónde hay que cortar si no ha pasado nada, si nadie puede decir que haya pasado alguna cosa?’ (109), implying the possibility that the current state of affairs is the way it has always been.

Returning to the specific question of the group’s musical practices, it is notable to what extent references to their performances and procedures are inscribed within terms which resonate with the critique found in ‘Soledad de la música’. For a start, the story places great emphasis on the group’s *ensayos*, with mention made of their frequent rehearsals in just the second sentence. Certainly this conveys the notion of an attempt to get the piece exactly ‘right’. But the insistence on the *ensayos* and a correct reading of the musical *textos* (111) signals that what is at stake is a reading, an interpretation which is tied to, and does not go beyond, the score, whatever the claims made within the story by the singers. Indeed, this problem is highlighted by Cortázar in the essay ‘Melancolía de las maletas’, where he talks eulogically about the practice of ‘takes’ in jazz recording, before underlining the ‘diferencia entre “ensayo” y take. El ensayo va llevando paulatinamente hacia la perfección, no cuenta como producto, es presente en función de futuro’.¹⁴ The *ensayo*, then, is an endless journey towards a perfect rendering of the score, in contrast to the take, which is always, as this extract proceeds to underline, original. In emphasising *ensayos* as the basis on which the

¹⁴ Julio Cortázar, *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos, tomo 2* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno de España Editores, 1970), 150-56: 156

group operates, then, Cortázar belies the claims made within the story of the group's having fallen from a past originary or perfect performance. Rather, such perfection is always deferred to the future, and, moreover, would always be determined by the score being performed.

In addition to these factors, it is notable that the story as a whole is replete not with references to unity, but with allusions to tension, division, and repression ('Estamos demasiado tensos, *damn it*' (*Queremos*, 107)). Far from being part of one single clone, each thinking and feeling the same way, the group appear as individuals who each read the scores and imagine their ideal production in a quite different way, a fact tied in with their individual sense of the composer himself and the emotions felt at the compositional moment ('cada uno con su manera de sentir a Gesualdo' (111)). As Cortázar goes on to state: 'el *clone* se iba disgregando y cada día asomaban más los individuos con sus discrepancias, sus resistencias' (111). As we have seen, however, that this represents a fall from an actual state of oneness and originary performance is itself undercut by Cortázar's narrative.

The Performance of Gesualdo's Life

A close reading of 'Clone', then, reveals that rather than unity, we have a group divided; and rather than oneness with the original Work, we have performance based on an attempted 'perfect' reading of the musical score. Crucially, this revelation goes hand in hand with the realisation that the story being played out is itself increasingly aligned with the life and crime of Carlo Gesualdo, where Mario and Franca assume the roles of Gesualdo and his wife respectively and Sandro the role of the latter's lover. In other words, the writing out of the claimed oneness both *amongst* the group and *of* the group with Gesualdo as man and music is

concomitant with a move towards a supposedly ever greater oneness with that man and the infamous events from his life.

Fundamental to an initial understanding of this apparent paradox is the fact that, despite the putative oneness with Gesualdo and his life that Cortázar gives us in the group's enacting of the love triangle, this enactment is revealed to be a version, rather than a perfect repetition, of the original story of Gesualdo's life. The narrative details make this clear, with the group's interpretation of Gesualdo's life, as with their interpretations of his madrigals, being 'flawed': in the version played out here only the wife (Franca) is apparently killed, whereas in fact Gesualdo killed – or had killed – both figures.

I say 'in fact', but Cortázar's text leads us to ask where this fact comes from. At no point in the story are we ever given unmediated access to the 'truth' of Gesualdo's life. Our knowledge of the events being repeated by the group's members is always filtered, reported: a version. Thus, for example, the opening debate amongst the group's members as to why Gesualdo murdered his wife and her lover is littered with different takes on the story, where 'no es tan fácil saber por qué se traiciona y por qué se mata' (*Queremos*, 105). More significantly, it is in written texts that the 'truth' of what happened can, apparently, be discovered: 'Hay mucha bibliografía sobre Gesualdo, recuerda Lucho, si te interesa tanto averígualo cuando volvamos a Roma en marzo' (106). Aside from the problematic ramifications of this turning to words to discover the 'truth', the reference here to 'mucha bibliografía' discloses the existence of many different takes on Gesualdo and his life's defining events, thus underscoring the impossibility of escaping 'versions', of escaping the written text, in any attempt to get back to an original moment. Equally significant in these passages is the allusion made both in this opening section and later on in the middle of the story to these events as tangos, further drawing together language and scored, or interpreted, music:

Tuvo razón, se obstina Roberto, entonces y ahora es lo mismo, su mujer lo engañaba y él la mató, un tango más, Paolita. Tu grilla de macho, dice Paola, los tangos, claro, pero ahora hay mujeres que también componen tangos y ya no se canta siempre la misma cosa. (105)

¿Por qué la mató? Lo de siempre, le dice Roberto a Lily, la encontró en el bulín y en otros brazos, como en el tango de Rivero. (113)

Notably, even Paola's alternative version to the tango-esque understanding of Gesualdo's life preferred by Roberto is conceived of as a different tango. In short, we are given a web of (linguistic and musical) versions and performances in the group's presentation of Gesualdo's life, whose defining events are not knowable in any objective or univocal form. What is more, the extent to which this represents a deliberate strategy on Cortázar's part is clear when we compare the text's published version with its manuscript counterpart. The paragraph beginning '¿Por qué la mató?' in the seventh section is particularly noteworthy in this respect. The manuscript version reads:

¿Por qué la mató? La encontró en la cama con otro hombre, el de Verona los apuñaleó en persona o acaso sus sayones, antes de huir de la venganza de los hermanos de su mujer y encerrarse en castillos donde habrían de tejerse a lo largo de los años las refinadas telarañas de los madrigales. Roberto y Lily lo comentan entre ellos. (MS5:5)

The reference to Rivero's tango, almost certainly 'Amablemente', in which a man discovers his wife in bed with another and kills her, stabbing her thirty-four times, is only added, then,

in the published version. Likewise, the simple line ‘Roberto y Lily lo comentan entre ellos’ is replaced in the published version by reference to how ‘se divierten en fabricar variantes dramáticas y eróticas’ (*Queremos*, 113). These changes disclose a conscious focusing on a multiplicity of versions or interpretations of the story of Gesualdo’s life and an attendant emphasis on the narrative (Roberto and Lily) and musical (Rivero) act of composition and interpretation.

Yet, this sense of the inescapability of multiple versions and interpretations is not just limited to the presentation of the story of Gesualdo himself, but extends to the nature of the version of Gesualdo’s story being enacted in the text in front of us. The story’s first sentence is key: ‘Todo parece girar en torno a Gesualdo, si tenía derecho a hacer lo que hizo o si se vengó en su mujer de algo que hubiera debido vengar en sí mismo’ (105). This, coupled with the presentation of the group as a whole as being a clone of Gesualdo, or, at least, Gesualdo as set down in music at the madrigals’ ideational moment, leaves open the possibility that, rather than individual characters taking the roles of Gesualdo, his wife, and her lover, the story could be understood as playing out the alternative version of Gesualdo’s story alluded to in this first sentence, where the breaking up of the group and the internal killing of one of its members by another would represent the taking out of the revenge by Gesualdo on himself. In other words, an understanding of ‘Clone’ as a single story containing several *different* versions is built into it by its opening salvo. Indeed, that this alternative version was at the forefront of Cortázar’s mind in writing the piece is evident from a comment made on the otherwise blank page opposite the handwritten text of the third to last section in the manuscript, where we read ‘La venganza es total, contra el clone que se deshará la noche del recital anulado por la ausencia de Franca’ (MS5:5): the revenge is not against Franca and Sandro as embodiments of Gesualdo’s wife and her lover, but against the group as a whole.

The combination of the different textual versions of Gesualdo's act alluded to in 'Clone' and the variety of possible interpretations of the story's re-enactment of it points towards a text in which any notion of an originary version of the events, and, hence, perfect interpretation or performance of them, is lost. Indeed, this provides one possible reason for Cortázar's choice of Gesualdo and the story of the murders as the basis for his narrative, in that this is a story whose multifarious interpretations and 'performances' are both numerous and, frequently, divergent. As Glenn Watkins states, 'The story [of Gesualdo and the murders] has been repeatedly told. It has been variously recounted in chronicles, popularized, vulgarized, made the subject of endless poems, and later even fashioned into a novella. We have a myriad details, but a considerable amount of sorting out is required to get at the truth, and even then a few enigmas remain'.¹⁵ Furthermore, an additional result of Cortázar's engagement with this aspect of the story of Gesualdo is that it further problematises the aims and claims of the group. Not only does it underline the axiomatic impossibility of any perfect performance, including their attempted rendering of the madrigals at their ideational moment, but it also, specifically, writes out any unmediated, 'correct' understanding of the events that, in the version espoused by Roberto, provoked the feelings Gesualdo sought to transmute into those madrigals. Moreover, the specific allusion to Rivero's twentieth-century, Argentine tango, not as a musicalised version of Gesualdo's act, but, implied by Roberto's words, as anachronistically constituting a model for it, a basis for understanding it, underscores how any event or person is ineluctably perceived by an individual through association with texts (literary, musical, *et al.*) that pertain to their own location in place and time.

In this reading of these two types of performance on the group's part – of Gesualdo's music and of his life – we thus go some way to making sense of the scenario that 'Clone' seems sets up. Rather than a paradox, where the move away from a perfect musical

¹⁵ Glenn Watkins, *Gesualdo: the man and his music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 7.

performance of Gesualdo's madrigals, associated by Lucho (*Queremos*, 113) with a loss of contact with the composer's defining emotions of love and revenge, would, bizarrely, be brought about by the all-too-strong emergence of those same emotions amongst the group's members, as they enact the defining moments of Gesualdo's life, my reading suggests that the latter enactment is, in fact, entirely representative of such a lack of contact with any sense of Gesualdo's 'original' feelings of love and revenge. The performance within Cortázar's written text, that is, where we have an interpretation and performance of the love and revenge of Gesualdo, is the *textual* version of, rather than what lies behind, the group's insufficient *musical* performances of his madrigals, likewise devoid of his 'originary' emotions.

Yet the extent to which this story brings together the linguistic and the musical in its development of a web of versions and interpretations goes beyond both Gesualdo's music and the group's re-enactment of his life. There is a further level of interpretation and performance at work here: that of Cortázar himself in the writing of this story. The story's epilogue, entitled 'Nota sobre el tema de un rey y la venganza de un príncipe', details how this textual performance was constructed, and, importantly, also reveals the full extent to which the literary and the musical are fused together in Cortázar's narrative. But what is most significant about this third level of musicotextual performance is how it not only reinforces the questions regarding the notions of 'original' and copy, version, or interpretation that I have been addressing, but also goes beyond them, implying a far more complex and all-encompassing network of interpretation and performance in which characters/performers and authors/composers are caught.

'Clone' as Musical Performance

An unpublished note, written on an otherwise blank page of the manuscript version of the story's epilogue, opposite what came to be its first published page, reads:

Al final: las tapas de discos son una literatura en sí y siempre me han fascinado. Casi todo lo que sé sobre música y músicas viene de ahí, lo que permitirá juzgar sobre el nivel de mis conocimientos. (MS5:6)

The second sentence of this note appears in an amended form in the published versión ('casi todo lo que conozco sobre música y músicas me viene de la tapa de los discos, que leo con sumo cuidado y provecho' (*Queremos*, 127)). But the omitted first sentence is more significant, emphasising the intertwined, symbiotic relationship between music and writing, and, more particularly, scored music and literature, that underlies both this description of Cortázar's literary *modus operandi* and the story whose evolution it charts. In this respect it is also worth commenting on a revision Cortázar made within the story itself, where the line 'pero ahora hay mujeres que también *componen* tangos y ya no se *canta* siempre la misma cosa' (105, italics mine) appears in the manuscript version as 'pero ahora que hay mujeres que también *escriben* tangos ya no se *cuenta* siempre la misma cosa' (MS5:5, italics mine), a revealing conflation of the linguistic and the musical, literature and scored music.

Underscoring this equating of scored music and literary composition, or, indeed, language more generally, 'Clone', this epilogue makes clear, is at once a linguistic and a musical interpretation and performance. Cortázar describes how he set out to write the story following the model of Bach's *Musical Offering*,¹⁶ apparently as a way of avoiding the monotony of always writing 'al dictado' (*Queremos*, 122):

En este relato la 'grilla' consistió en ajustar una narración todavía inexistente al molde de la *Ofrenda Musical* de Juan Sebastián Bach. (122)

¹⁶ J.S. Bach. *Musical Offering*, BWV1079. Realisation by Millicent Silver. London Harpsichord Ensemble. LP Saga XIX 5237.

Despite the imposition of such restrictions and rules on the act of literary composition, the choice of musical model may seem initially to be linked with the desire on Cortázar's part to get beyond the problem of the perfect performance of an original, in that Bach's piece both originated as improvisations on a theme provided for him by Frederick II of Prussia and continued to allow subsequent performers a certain amount of freedom in their own renderings:

Bach no indicó instrumentos que debían emplearse, salvo en el Trío-Sonata para flauta, violín y clave; a lo largo del tiempo incluso el orden de las partes dependió de la voluntad de los músicos encargados de presentar la obra. (122)

Yet what soon becomes apparent is that Cortázar has looked not to improvise, but to repeat – to perform – a very specific interpretation of the piece:

En este caso me serví de la realización de Millicent Silver para ocho instrumentos contemporáneos de Bach, que permite seguir en todos sus detalles la elaboración de cada pasaje, y que fue grabado por el London Harpsichord Ensemble en el disco Saga XID 5237. (122)

Matching the eight singers to the eight instruments of the Saga LP version, and having them appear in the story in the same combinations as in the musical performance, with the story divided into sections corresponding to each part of Bach's piece, 'Clone' thus preempts the narrative's focus on the reading of a score and the attempted perfect rendering of the original that that score putatively represents, an impression further enhanced by the methodical

preparatory notes which accompany the manuscript version of the story and epilogue.¹⁷ He is engaged, that is, in a textual performance of the Saga LP – effectively the score which he is reading – which is itself the inscription of Millicent Silver’s interpretation and performance of Bach’s score. Moreover, it transpires that the actual ‘score’ that Cortázar used to plan and compose his story was not the LP played and read by a stylus, but a photocopy of the LP’s sleeve and the notes written on it:

Viajé a una playa llevando la fotocopia de la tapa del disco donde Frederick Younes analiza los elementos de la *Ofrenda Musical*. (256)

In effect, Cortázar’s ‘Clone’ is an interpretation and performance of a photocopy of a written interpretation of the engraved LP copy of Millicent Silver’s interpretation and performance of Bach’s written score of his interpretation of a musical theme given to him by Frederick II of Prussia. Beyond this, it is not so much that Frederick II is the final link in the chain, but, rather, that there is, here at least, no textual interpretation of where that theme could have found its basis.¹⁸

What we have, then, is a succession of ‘clones’: copies of a putative original that in each case turn out themselves to be clones, or versions, of a preceding artefact, either linguistic or musical. In this respect, Cortázar’s choice of musical model is significant, in that Bach’s baroque piece is a series of canons and fugues, musical forms built around repetition and imitation, again underscoring the idea of variations on a theme which is itself the theme

¹⁷ The holdings contain a two-page, detailed schematic plotting of Bach’s piece against the ‘Clone’’s characters and structure, as well as Cortázar’s annotated LP sleeve photocopy.

¹⁸ Humphrey Sassoon (‘JS Bach’s Musical Offering and the Source of Its Theme: Royal Peculiar’, *The Musical Times*, 144: 1885 (2003), 38-9) notes the similarities between the royal theme and a theme in Fugue V of Handel’s set of *Six fugues or voluntaries for organ or harpsichord* (1786), suggesting a possible ‘origin’ of the former.

on which the varied texts alluded to in both story and epilogue are variations.¹⁹ Indeed, the manuscript version of the epilogue is revealing here in signalling Cortázar's desire to emphasise an endless series of variations, as it discloses the author's suppression of an initial sense of closure in his depiction of the Bach piece:

El maestro escribió ~~y envió~~ la Ofrenda Musical ~~al soberano con un mensaje donde lo se agotan las posibilidades~~ donde el tema real es tratado de ~~la~~ una manera más diversa y compleja. (MS5.6)

Moreover, the web of versions, copies, interpretations, and variations does not stop with Cortázar's piece: in 2007 the Argentine composer Antonio Zimmerman wrote an opera called *Clone*, based on Cortázar's story, in yet another coming together of scored music and literature, or language, in the unfolding narrative of this series of 'clones'.²⁰ It was even performed in the possible, even probable, setting for the final performance-that-never-was at the end of 'Clone', the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires.²¹

And yet Cortázar's epilogue does more than destabilise the notion of an 'original' text or performance. It serves, additionally, to ask whether we are ever able to move outside of the performance of pre-existing 'texts', no matter what our aims. In contrast to the other riddle canons of the *Musical Offering*, which, despite Cortázar's affirmation of their performance depending on the 'voluntad de los músicos' (*Queremos*, 122), have a correct 'solution' that must be worked out by the performers, the riddle canon for two 'Quaerendo invenietis' is left more open, as Frederick Youens describes on the LP sleeve consulted by Cortázar:

¹⁹ The Handel piece which possibly gave rise to the royal theme is also a fugue. Sassoon ('JS Bach') also posits that Bach himself used the Handel fugue as a model for his own composition.

²⁰ Antonio Zimmerman. *Clone*. 2007.

²¹ See <http://www.escribirte.com.ar/destacados/1/cortazar/noticias/863/clone:-una-opera-sobre-un-cuento-de-cortazar.htm> [accessed 20 May 2011]

In ‘enigmatic’ or ‘riddle’ canons it was customary to furnish a clue to their solution by showing the notes of the theme on which the other parts should enter. In this canon, however, Bach provides no hints and simply inscribes the piece: ‘Quaerendo invenietis’ (Seek, and ye shall find!) There are four solutions, presented in the following order: (a) bassoon and violoncello; (b) viola and bassoon; (c) viola and violoncello; (d) viola and bassoon.²²

In Cortázar’s story, these solutions correspond to sections thirteen to sixteen. In contrast to Bach’s open riddle and Silver’s equal presentation of the four solutions, Cortázar’s version leaves little doubt as to which of the passages contains the ‘solution’. In the first section, beginning ‘*Cherchez la femme*’ (*Queremos*, 115), Mario, in conversation with Roberto, insists there is nothing he can do about the relationship between Franca and Sandro, apparently accepting that this is simply how things are. The second section follows similar lines, only this time with Mario in conversation with Paola. In the third section Paola and Roberto discuss why Mario does not want to act, adding that Franca cannot be blamed; rather the fault lies with Sandro. None of these sections represents the ‘solution’ to the riddle of how the story will unfold. That is left to the fourth and final section. Here, Mario muses on why Gesualdo was so crude in his act of revenge, when he could have composed it along the lines of a madrigal (‘madrigalizar una tortura de semanas o de meses’ (117)), hinting, that is, that he has in mind an ‘improved’ repetition of Gesualdo’s act, one set up as a (musical) performance. With the reference to Paola in the background, ‘trabaja[ndo] y repit[iendo] un pasaje de *Poiche l’avida sete* [a madrigal from book V of Gesualdo’s madrigals]’ (117) underlining the re-enactment being envisaged by Mario, this section thus provides us with the solution to the riddle and to the text we are reading.

²² In Bach, *Musical*

These sections, then, appear to affirm an amount of authorial control and primacy for both Cortázar and Mario and suggest, thus, an escape from the models that they seek to rewrite rather than copy, in Cortázar's case the non-committal rendition of this riddle canon by Silver and in Mario's case the apparently disappointing way in which Gesualdo carried out his the revenge. And yet there is still an overriding sense of being bound by pre-existing texts and performances, even at these moments of apparent liberation. Cortázar's 'solution' to Bach's riddle serves to send his text down the path of performing a different preceding 'text' (Gesualdo's life), as well as being, in any case, bound by the requirement of marrying the text's dénouement to the final section of the *Musical Offering*, where there are seven instruments, not eight. Indeed, more generally, Cortázar's presentation of the story's composition as a whole is built around a sense of fate or guidance which exceeds his conscious control ('Ya podía seguir, todo estaba consumido desde antes' (125)). Likewise, Mario's musings in effect merely underscore that his eventual actions respond to an apparent need to live out his life in the manner of a madrigal (performance) and as a version, however, 'new', of a pre-existing 'text' (Gesualdo's life). Moreover, the effect on the reader is similarly shackling, in forcing upon us a particular solution of what had been an open-ended riddle canon. Indeed, this sense of being guided and controlled, present for author, character, and reader, is reflected textually by the use of the future tense in several sections, not least the tenth section which concerns precisely the process of rehearsal performances, beginning 'Ensayaremos' (113).

The principal question thrown up by the epilogue, however, and exemplified by the 'Quaerendo invenietis' riddle canon, is: to what are the various performers, interpreters, and composers bound? The extra dimension added by the epilogue is not so much the fact that Cortázar's story is itself a version of a pre-existing performance or text, but that it brings an entirely new textual and performative strand to bear on our understanding of 'Clone'. In

short, whereas the story itself appears based, as stated in its first line, ‘en torno a Gesualdo’ (105), both man and music, the epilogue reveals that it is also based around Millicent Silver’s interpretation of Bach’s *Musical Offering*. Cortázar’s narrative is driven in its content by the former, and in its structure by the latter. A correlate of this is that, likewise, not only do the characters perform the music and life of Gesualdo, but their conversations and interactions are also driven by the formal structure of Millicent Silver’s interpretation of Bach that Cortázar is following. It is not just that we have multiple interpretations, versions, and performances of particular stories and texts, both musical and linguistic, but that at any one time the players, by which I refer to author, character, and reader, are engaged in the interpretative performance of more than one pre-existing text.

What ‘Clone’ is presenting, I would suggest, is a template for how we can conceive of the human condition when it is bound by the structures of expression and being that are encapsulated and perpetuated by the inherent characteristics of language and scored/interpreted musical expression. Moreover, through the examples of both the characters’ and Cortázar’s own performative acts, Cortázar’s story reveals that within such a template it is impossible to locate a single, ‘central’ text, amongst the multifarious texts, which overarchingly controls or commands the particular (textual, musical, performative) act in question. Indeed, rather than looking for a central text, or attempting to place the different texts being performed in some sort of hierarchical order, what is key is the simultaneous presence of the different performances, each of which interacts with and affects the other(s). This notion of performative interaction certainly provides one way of understanding the loss of the apparent perfection of the group’s musical performances as their performance of Gesualdo’s life takes hold. What is more, such inter-performative impact could, in turn, also be argued to lie behind the imperfection of the group’s performance of Gesualdo’s act of revenge (and, with it, Cortázar’s own narrative performance of Gesualdo’s story). I have

already noted that the version of Gesualdo's story presented here fails to be an accurate rendering of the composer's life (as transmitted via a plethora of different textual and cultural versions) in that only his wife (here, Franca) is killed, whilst her lover (here, Sandro) survives. Certainly this can be seen as an example of the failure of attaining an apparently perfect or 'originary' performance, but it can also be seen as a consequence of Cortázar's own attempt to perform perfectly Millicent Silver's interpretation of the *Musical Offering*, in that the final section of this requires that seven instruments (singers) be present, not six, as would be necessary were Cortázar to have killed off both Franca and Sandro.

In sum, what we are left with is a scenario whereby the story and its epilogue are replete with personae (both characters and authors) who are at once composers, interpreters, and performers of literary/linguistic and musical texts. Within this scenario, the notion of a desired perfect interpretation is shown to be illusory, in part due to the fact that any actual knowledge of, indeed, even the existence of, a supposed 'originary' is written out. But, more significantly, the implication is not only that the (creative and ontological) freedom of these personae is undermined by their reliance upon this process of interpretation and re-enactment in their performative choices (to perform the madrigal of Gesualdo; to write following the structure of the *Musical Offering*), but that their actions and, hence, lives, are governed on both a conscious and an unconscious level by these texts, or, to be more precise, these textual chains. Both levels are found in the performances of the group, of course, as the story in which their narrative is transmitted to us is, unbeknownst to them, a performance of the *Musical Offering*. But there is evidence to suggest this is the case for Cortázar as well in his description of the story's composition, not least in the epilogue's final lines:

Que [Gesualdo] mató a su mujer es seguro; lo demás, otros posibles acordes con mi texto, habría que preguntárselo a Mario. (*Queremos*, 127)

Aside from the playful *mise en abyme* here, underscoring the impossibility of escaping ‘the text’, these lines imply a recognition that part of the performative identity of Cortázar’s text is not controlled or even known by Cortázar himself. Further still, it highlights yet again the impossibility of arriving at an original ‘composer’ or controlling figure, since the agency here assigned to Mario is itself undermined by the ‘Quaerendo invenietis’ riddle canon’s disclosure of the character’s desire to re-enact and ‘madrigalizar’ Gesualdo’s act.

Returning to the initial conceit of ‘Soledad de la Música’, we thus see how ‘Clone’ offers a vision of humanity where individuals – and groups – live through and according to linguistic and (interpreted) musical structures. In playing up both his and his characters’ common goal of rendering or performing a pre-existing text as ‘faithfully’ as possible, and in doing so by filling the story and its coda with examples of linguistic and musical texts and interpretations to the extent that the common structures inherent in both are laid bare, Cortázar is thus using (scored) music interpretation and performance as a way of presenting the nature of the linguistic being of humanity from which he desires to break free. The implications of how this is worked through in ‘Clone’, however, exceed the relatively simple statements of the early essay. Rather than focusing on the human being as one who perceives and understands the world and other human beings by interpreting ‘text’, in the form of words (or notes on a score, in the case of the musician), and who must, attendantly, express (and, thus, ‘lose’) him/herself using the same mechanisms, either as an active reader (interpreter) or a writer (performer/composer), ‘Clone’ shifts the attention onto the human being as a site where different texts play themselves out. It may appear at first sight, that is, that the story is brimming with performers and composers who are very much in control of and determining their textual, musical, and lived ‘products’: the group determines to produce putatively perfect, or originary, versions or performances of Gesualdo’s madrigals; Mario, it

is implied, resolves to play out Gesualdo's murderous acts in a more aesthetically perfect manner; Cortázar sets out textually to render Millicent Silver's version of Bach's *Musical Offering* as accurately as possible; Millicent Silver herself, according to Youens, '[took] great pains to render [the *Musical Offering*] as authentic as possible by employing instruments in use in Bach's day, and it is therefore free of anachronisms';²³ Bach undertook the composition of a succession of variations on the royal theme given to him by Frederick II of Prussia. But in each case we see a hand forced, a composition determined, not just by a previous piece, but by a textual version of a putative original which is never attained. More than that, as I have shown, the double-performance in which both Cortázar's text and the group are engaged implies that in each case there are a variety of performances being enacted in each of these persona-sites, some known, others unbeknownst to those personae. In this sense, 'Clone' goes further than its possible 'sister' text 'Instrucciones para John Howell'.²⁴ This earlier story has been read as utilising 'the concept of the world as a stage',²⁵ showing how a sense of improvisational freedom is replaced by an awareness of 'anonymous controlling powers'²⁶ at work. Standish suggests that this might be seen as the 'especie de superestructura'²⁷ to which Cortázar referred towards the end of his life.²⁸ But it is 'Clone', closer in time to the statement just cited, that provides a more convincing way of understanding such a superstructure, in its presentation of the (linguistic) human condition as a passive site where a multiplicity of performances – of texts – are enacted. It speaks, in short, of the ineluctable renouncing of 'authentic' individuality attendant with the move not just into language, but into (scored) music composition and performance (terms which are increasingly synonymous in 'Clone'), whilst also removing any sense of ultimate authorial or

²³ In Bach, *Musical*.

²⁴ Julio Cortázar, *Todos los fuegos, el fuego* (1966) (Buenos Aires, Editorial Sudamericana, 1970) 129-47.

²⁵ Terry Peavler, *Julio Cortázar* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 42.

²⁶ Peter Standish, *Understanding Julio Cortázar* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 150.

²⁷ Omar Prego, *La fascinación de la palabras* (Barcelona: Muchnik, 1985), 134.

²⁸ Standish, *Understanding*, 150.

identifiable control in the superstructure of being in its insistent focus on origin-less textual or performative chains.

But what of the two different approaches to scored music that we have here? The approach of the group recalls the same logocentrism that underpins Western thought and language, whilst demonstrating that performance is always just a version of what has gone before, of a previous text/score. And, at first glance, it would seem as if Cortázar's own performance repeats this, being beset by the same fallacious goal of performing a pre-existing piece to perfection. But in his case it comes with a ludic awareness of the chain of versions, of performances, in which his text, as the opera *Clone* demonstrates, is taking its place. One might say that Cortázar's overall approach is a variation on that of the group of madrigal singers in his story. Or should that be the other way round?

Coda

The reading of 'Clone' that I have proposed is based on the importance of scored music, language, and performance both in 'Clone' and in the 'marker' text 'Soledad de la música'. Yet, just as within the text there is a sense of encroachment felt by both Cortázar when writing the story and the group on their tour, as the Prince of Verona's person and life impose themselves on both (sets of) 'performers', so too in constructing the above reading, what might be termed the 'orthodox' reading of the story has been hard to resist. And, as with 'Clone' itself, it is perhaps in the interaction between these two readings or interpretations that a fuller appreciation of this story is found.

Steven Boldy lays bare the basic schema that operates in Cortázar's fiction, underscoring the sense of a divided humanity where what society deems barbaric, undesirable, 'other' is rejected and repressed, its existence within both society and the

individual silenced and denied rather than encountered and redeemed.²⁹ The inner tensions within humanity, tensions made such by the very divisions operated by thought, language, and action, are brushed under the carpet, violently, only to return again in order to offer a chance for reconciliation between what are now construed as opposing ‘sides’ to humankind. The result, though, is usually the continuation of the cycle. The tensions that increasingly invade ‘Clone’, then, suggest the applicability of such a template to the story. Certainly there is a frequent sense of things being silenced or covered up, in each case appearing as an attempt at limiting any threat to the prevailing, dominant discourse of the self (in this instance, the clone). Thus, the failure to verbalise the apparent moment at which the group’s unity began to disintegrate (‘Hasta que. Porque ahora algo había cambiado desde.’ (*Queremos*, 107)), aside from being a disclosure that such unity never was, also harbours an unspoken desire to erase from language and consciousness that which is seen to threaten the clone’s unified façade. This sense of barely-contained threat, simmering beneath the cracking surface of the clone is perceptible throughout much of the story, the repetitious emphasis on ‘por debajo’ underlining this point in the following passage:

De golpe así, mirar de otra manera a Mario y a Sandro que discutían de música, como si por debajo imaginara otra discusión. Pero no, de eso no hablaban, justamente de eso era seguro que no hablaban. En fin, quedaba el hecho de que la única verdadera pareja era la de Mario y Franca aunque desde luego no era de eso que estaban discutiendo Mario y Sandro. Aunque a lo mejor por debajo, siempre por debajo. (107)

Significantly, this is an aspect of the narrative that Cortázar enhanced in the published version of the story. In the lines just cited, for example, the repeated ‘por debajo’ is not found

²⁹ Steven Boldy, *The Novels of Julio Cortázar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 7-8; 41-4.

in the manuscript version, and there is, in general, a heightened insistence on things being sensed and implied, rather than stated. As an example of this, whereas in the third sub-section of section seven in the manuscript version, the idea that the group's performances are becoming mechanical (and 'imperfect') is prefaced with the line 'Pero Sandro ha comprendido lo que iba a decirle Lucho' (MS5:5), in the published versión this becomes 'Se siente en el aire que Sandro ha comprendido lo que Lucho iba a decirle' (*Queremos*, 113).

My reading of the story following Boldy's template thus implies that the clone is a textual representation of Western civilisation, the civilised self aligned with order, control, laws, and language throughout his fiction. Moreover, this self, on both a societal and an individual level, is on several occasions in Cortázar's *œuvre* associated with the world of what we might broadly refer to as classical music, reaffirming the bringing together of language and scored music as synonymous, inasmuch as they are complicit in and effectors of the move into a riven, inauthentic humanity. In the story 'Lejana',³⁰ for example, the civilised self is, at least initially, represented by Alina Reyes, a concert pianist; and in 'Louis, enormísimo cronopio',³¹ the depiction of classical music concert-goers suggests a similar alignment, as we are told of 'en el concierto de flauta y arpa [...] un público tan bien educado' (16).

Within the story of 'Clone' itself, this identification opens up the aims and *modus operandi* of the group of classical music performers to a different interpretation from the one I have been pursuing so far. In simple terms, we are called to examine to what extent we can see the group as engaging in acts and attitudes of repression, of the sort of rejection of *lo otro* found in so many of Cortázar's fictions. Again, the title of the story and self-applied descriptor 'clone' is useful in this regard. The term speaks of a shutting out of differences, of the exclusion of anything beyond or distinct from the self, and, certainly, this ties in with the

³⁰ Julio Cortázar, *Los relatos 3. Pasajes* (Madrid: Alianza, 2000), 100-09

³¹ Cortázar, *Vuelta*, 13-22

dismay at the discrepancies and disagreements that creep into the group's rehearsals and performances. Particularly relevant here are the details of how Roberto hit upon the term: 'el otro día leyendo ciencia-ficción encontré la palabra justa: éramos un *clone*' (110). It is impossible to know what – if any – specific book Cortázar had in mind when writing this line, but we might consider two reasonably representative novels available at the time of writing: Huxley's classic *Brave New World* (1932) and, as an example of more contemporary literature, Kate Wilhelm's *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* (1976).³² Both present human cloning on a group or societal level (with the latter portraying groups of four to ten clones, similarly to the group in Cortázar's story) and in each case such cloning is associated with a loss of individuality, with anyone deemed to be exhibiting individualistic traits banished in order to maintain the non-differential *status quo*.

In line with this understanding of the group, I would argue that not only is its stance repressive in terms of the erasure of differences between its members (or lamenting their ineluctable appearance), but also in its approach to Gesualdo and his music. A clue to such a reading is found in Bakhtin's depiction of the act of empathising:

I empathize actively into an individuality and, consequently, I do not lose myself completely, nor my unique place outside it, even for a moment. It is not the object that unexpectedly takes possession of me as the passive one. It is I who empathize actively into the object: empathizing is my act, and only that constitutes its productiveness and newness.³³

³² Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932) (London: Harper Collins, 2001); Kate Wilhelm, *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sing* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

³³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. and notes by Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 15

The group, then, apparently searching for the original of which it is to be the clone, by this reading in fact engages in an act of self-assertion, subsuming Gesualdo within itself.

The extent to which such a reading is suggested, even foregrounded, by Cortázar's text, as well as an understanding of the reasons behind the clone's repressive nature here, is found by looking more closely at the person and music in question. Despite the claims made in 'Clone's epilogue, it is hard to imagine that the choice of musical model is purely aleatory, not least given that Gesualdo's madrigals are notable for a series of characteristics that play heavily into the themes of Cortázar's story. For one, Gesualdo's madrigals are thematically very different from the Arcadian lyrics of composers such as Marenzio and even Monteverdi, another composer whose work the group sings. Gesualdo, in contrast, composed madrigals dominated by images and feelings of anguish, pain, death, and sexual and amorous frustration. As Denis Arnold puts it:

Such constant misery as Gesualdo's is ridiculous, one is tempted to say. Does the man *never* enjoy love-making? The answer is – probably not. This music has an air of continuous desire and very little satisfaction [...]. The constant mood is not so much [...] of anguish as of 'dolore', a word which can mean pain but a continuous, nagging pain rather than something sudden and very intense; and it also means sorrow.³⁴

In terms of the music itself, several elements stand out, of which I shall mention two of the most significant. Firstly, Gesualdo was particularly given to repeating and giving variations of certain motifs and harmonic devices. Again, the words of Arnold are helpful here:

³⁴ Denis Arnold, *Gesualdo* (London: BBC, 1984), 33-4

Whereas his contemporaries tended to extend the melodic ideas by different contrapuntal devices, Gesualdo invents a harmonic complex, then repeats it with various alterations, usually to make the atmosphere more intense.³⁵

Secondly, there is a strong element of dissonance and counterpoint. Watkins, for example, draws attention to Gesualdo's 'use of prepared and unprepared dissonances'³⁶ and his 'genuine, essentially diatonic contrapuntal style' and 'use of double-counterpoint'.³⁷

In sum, Gesualdo's madrigals are characterised by tension, repetition and variation, dissonance, and a sense of unsettlement. As well as further underscoring the insistent presence of variation on existing themes, this ties in with the image provided by the literary and musical texts of a man tortured by guilt and unease over his murderous actions, which took place before he turned in earnest to writing madrigals. The musical and lyrical traits outlined here are, moreover, particularly notable in Gesualdo's last two books of madrigals (V and VI), and it is therefore significant that Cortázar should have chosen to make specific reference in 'Clone' to two madrigals from book V, 'Poichè l'avidità sete' and 'O voi, troppo felici'.³⁸ Most pertinently, these traits stand in sharp contrast to the group's goals of unified harmony, devoid of tension and dissonance. In short, the madrigals and, one supposes, Gesualdo's state of mind, themselves work against the ideas and aims of the group. Despite their stated aim of assuming the taught emotions at stake here (*Queremos*, 113), then, the group's repression is precisely of the tension of Gesualdo and his music. And whilst this can be seen as a result of the use of the score (text) in their attempt at reaching this centre, that is, the idea that 'the linguistic' is itself always already caught up in this repression, it is also

³⁵ Arnold, *Gesualdo*, 31.

³⁶ Watkins, *Gesualdo*, 179.

³⁷ Watkins, *Gesualdo*, 183.

³⁸ Carlo Gesualdo, *Samtliche Madrigale für fünf Stimmen*, vol. V (Hamburg: Ugrino Verlag, 1958), 67-9; 51-3. The reference to these two madrigals constitutes a late revision: the manuscript version talks of 'Aqui suspiro al cuore' instead of 'Poichè l'avidità sete' and 'Ah dimmi' instead of 'O voi, troppo felici'. I have been unable to ascertain the origin of these two pieces, but they are not Gesualdo madrigals.

portrayed as an integral part of the group's very approach to its task. Moreover, these characteristics of Gesualdo and his music also underscore that the idea(1) of breaking down the barriers erected by both language and scored music to arrive at the emotional, human subject transmitted in these communicative milieux does not alter the fact that every human centre in question is precisely that: human, and thus riven by the tension and divisions effected internally on both an individual and societal level by the structures of language, thought, and custom through which we have our being. In their goal of a univocal centre, then, the group is at once repeating the exclusion of tensions found in the rejection of *lo otro* throughout Cortázar's fiction and drawing attention to the problematic attempt at (re)gaining a sense of unified humanity without finding oneself slipping into the same repressive structures and approaches.

Having thus identified how 'Clone' depicts the group as an example of language, scored music, and Western 'civilised' humanity's being responsible for and bound up in essentially repressive structures, the next stage is to understand in what sense the story presents the return of the repressed in this 'orthodox' reading I am proposing. Following the group's repression of Gesualdo as a human site of tension, perhaps the most obvious is found in the scenario of division and tension from Gesualdo's life, in the guise of the adulterous affair by Franca, returning to impose itself on the clone, and thus break the inauthentic, harmonious version of Gesualdo that it has become. Franca's subsequent murder by Mario would thus constitute a repetition of the group's repression of *lo otro* in Gesualdo's life and music and the threat it poses to their façade of unity.

Attuned to the possibility of multiple interpretations and versions which emerged in my earlier reading of the text, however, it becomes clear that both the return at stake and the initial act of repression here are also more complex. In addition to the actions and attitudes of the group, Gesualdo himself is, of course, an example of the very type of repression of *lo otro*

that so concerns Cortázar's texts. His murder of his wife and her lover is nothing if not an instance of the dominant discourse of the self (man, husband, nobleman) carrying out the violent repression of what it perceives as a threat. In seeing the group as a clone of Gesualdo, then, as I suggested in my earlier reading, the nature of the revenge, or return of the repressed, changes markedly. Now we see the revenge on the clone ('La venganza es total, contra el clone (MS5:6)) as being the revenge against Gesualdo himself either on the part of the murdered lover-as-the-repressed, hinted at by the fact that Sandro, playing the role of the lover, is the director of the group and is repeatedly blamed by the other members of the group for the increasing division within it, or on the part of Gesualdo himself, recalling the story's opening gambit (si se vengó en su mujer de algo que hubiera debido vengar en sí mismo' (*Queremos*, 105)).

In applying Boldy's conceptual template, what thus becomes clear is that, as with my earlier reading, the story refuses to be bound by a single, monolithic interpretation. Rather, there are, once more, several different performances being enacted, each of which play into and impact the others. In short, I am suggesting that the two readings I have offered here must be brought together. When we do this, we see that 'Clone' offers an opportunity to revise our understanding of the repression-return-repression schema that operates in Cortázar's texts, and, in particular, in his short stories, in that the story makes it impossible to isolate such a schema from the notion of an ineluctable web of interpretation(s), versions, and variations on themes: let us not forget that Franca's killing, a primary element in my application of Boldy's template, is determined by the textual (and scored music) requirements of there being only seven players present at the end of the story. This story discloses, then, that the cycle of repression-return-repression is not simply a mechanism by which the other is rejected and then makes its presence felt again, only to be rejected once more. Rather, it symbolises the fact that being is underwritten by the repetition, both conscious and

unconscious, of 'texts'; the cycles we see in his stories are thus, first and foremost, performances of pre-existing performances. 'Clone' discloses this by unveiling the different performances and texts at stake in this particular narrative, that is, by showing us what is going on *por debajo* in his other stories. Moreover, the implication of such an understanding of Cortázar's fiction is that the breaking of the repression-return-repression cycle is not simply bound up with the need for a radically different response to the other('s return), but is attendant with a more essential and less easily defined breaking free from the interpretative and performative structures through which we live and make sense of ourselves and the world, structures which are innate characteristics of both language and scored music. In 'Clone', then, the avoidance of a repetition of Gesualdo's murderous act in response to the irruption of the other is not a question of a different reaction to the affair between wife and lover, but a refusal to be bound by the structures of interpretation and performance. The murder is repeated not, ultimately, because of a simple desire to maintain the group's façade of unity, but because Mario insists on re-performing the murder in a more orchestrated way, to *madrigalizarlo*, and because Cortázar insisted on accurately performing Millicent Silver's interpretation of Bach's *Musical Offering*, where seven instruments (voices) are present at the text's dénouement.

There is one further conclusion that can be drawn from 'Clone'. Not only does it offer a reappraisal of the nature of human beings as sites of the coming together of performative chains, as well as enabling a new vista on the understanding of the repression-return-repression schema. It also asks to be understood as a comment on the wider act of reading, of interpretation *per se*. As this article has shown, alongside the multiple interpretations, both textual and musical, of different events, musical pieces, and stories, each of which can be classified as 'text', and as played out by both characters and composers/authors, we must add how the story addresses and guides the reader. In my study, I have revealed how the story

itself necessitates an engagement with a wide variety of texts: it cannot properly be understood without reference to Gesualdo's life, his madrigals, Bach's *Musical Offering*, Millicent Silver's version of it, the emergence of the opera *Clone* twenty-seven years after the story's publication, narratives of clones and cloning in science fiction and beyond. It is a story, that is, that obliges us to operate within a network of literary (linguistic) and musical texts, as sites where the performative and interpretative nature of the human is laid bare, just as the characters and Cortázar find themselves obliged to do. And, like them, we find ourselves engaging in a series of interpretations, each of which impacts the others, each of which sends us back to others, refusing any finalising or putatively perfect interpretation or version of how the story is to be understood, much like the end of the story's epilogue, which sends the story and its meaning back into the world of its multi-performative narrative. We are, then, forced into the position of the clone itself: incapable of locating the 'centre', incapable of finding a sense of unity or finality of interpretation. And yet the story also shows us how to avoid the clone's error. For its insistence on our (and its) engagement with multiple texts, its insistence on the need for us to offer an endless multiplicity of interpretations of it stands in sharp contrast to the tunnel-visioned approach of the group, who maintain the illusion of the existence of the centre, of a point of finality, of, in a word, logocentrism. We may be inextricably bound up in a performative and interpretative web, but in revelling in its boundlessness, we may at least occupy a space of playful acquiescence.