

Serial Techniques and Sartre's Literary Influence: Exploring the Creative Process in Camillo Togni's *Ricerca* op. 36

Sebastiano Gubian
Universität Hamburg

*Adorno représente à mes yeux un monde
devenu musique, tandis que la pensée de Sartre
exprime une musique devenue monde.*

HUGUES DUFOURT¹

Jean-Paul Sartre's thought exerted a significant influence on European and Italian musical avant-gardes. While much of Sartre's significance is owed to the debate with René Leibowitz on the possibility of a *musique engagée*,² or to the programme of his *théâtre de situations* and anti-eurocentric stance as adopted by Luigi Nono, the case of Camillo Togni is markedly different. Instead of a political model for committed art, Togni, who approached Sartrean existentialism already in the early 1950s,³ saw in the philosopher a compelling aesthetic insight and a source for textual material. As early as 1946, while the composer was writing his graduate thesis in philosophy,⁴ it was Alfred Cortot who introduced him to Sartre's theatrical works.⁵ It was, in fact, from *Morts sans sépulture* that Togni drew the subject for *Tre studi* op. 31 (1950). Sketches for these dodecaphonic Lieder also suggest that he intended to develop them into a larger-scale work entitled *Lucie*. Only a sequence of nine scenes was planned, grouped into three macro-sections. This division reflects the structure of *Tre studi*, whose twelve-tone rows are recalled at the beginning of each section (movements 1, 4, and 7), while the remaining movements employ transpositions thereof.⁶

In FIGURE 1 we can already observe an interesting constructive property, useful for the following analysis: in the first and second sections of the *Lucie* project,

ARCHIVAL NOTES

Source Studies in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Music, No. 10 (2025)
© Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia | ISSN 2499-832X | DOI 10.69125/AN.v10.n03.51-72

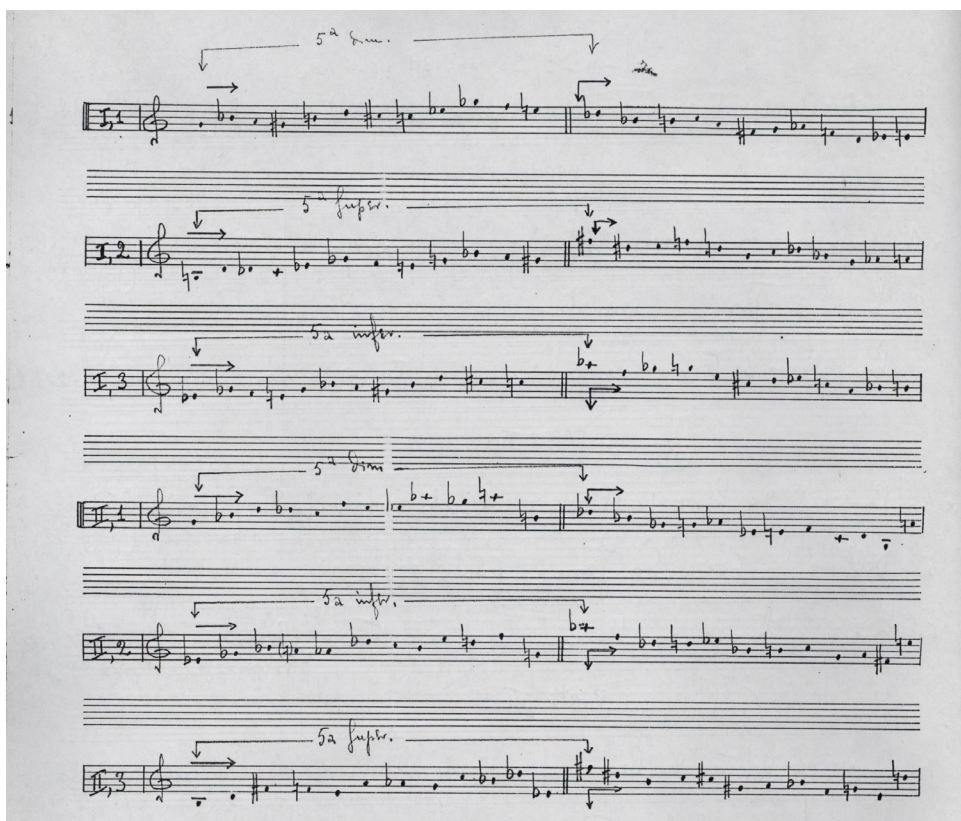


FIGURE 1. Sketches for *Lucie* project. Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini (FGC), Togni Collection.

the transpositions of row P7 (beginning in both cases on G) are P11 and P3,⁷ that is, each time transposed up (or down) by a major third. Looking now at the first row of *Tre studi* (EX. 1), we observe that it is built from the transposition of a tetrachord (G, B $\flat$, A, G $\sharp$) with set class 4-1 (0123), at the same transpositional interval (a major third), and starting from the same pitches (G, B, Eb).⁸



EXAMPLE 1.

Togni's practice of rarely using transposed row forms is not abandoned here: within the *Lucie* project, only transpositions between segments derived from the initial row are permitted. What stands out is a partial dependence of the formal

subdivision on the serial plan, as well as symmetries and correspondences between micro- and macro-levels, which would lead Togni in subsequent years to distance himself from Schönberg's formal conceptions (assimilated above all through Leibowitz's *Traité de la composition avec douze sons*)⁹ in favour of pluridimensional serialism. The achievement of these 'rational structures', particularly in the *Fantasia concertante* (1957), was, in his own words, 'the result, laboriously and slowly achieved, of various and gradual experiences'¹⁰ during the 1950s. An important step in this direction is symbolised by the title of the more extensive composition on texts by Sartre – *Ricerca. Sei studi su testo di J.P. Sartre*, op. 36 – but is also concretely expressed in the techniques deployed during this still partially under-researched transitional phase.¹¹ *Ricerca*, the main subject of this article, is thus a paradigmatic example of this stage.

One might now ask to what extent the twelve-tone and early serial techniques¹² were perceived by Togni as appropriate means to express the chosen text, a *collage* of brief passages taken from the novel *La Nausée*.¹³ In the years before and between the composition of *Tre studi* and *Ricerca*, Togni's personal library was enriched with volumes by and about Sartre (TBL. 1), whom the composer declared to hold in 'great esteem and also gratitude (for my education)':¹⁴

J.P. Sartre	<i>La Nausée</i> , Gallimard, 1951 (102nd ed.), ©1938
J.P. Sartre	<i>Théâtre</i> . Gallimard, n.d. (64th ed.), ©1947
J.P. Sartre	<i>Situations II</i> , Gallimard, 1948 ¹⁵
R. Leibowitz	<i>Introduction à la musique de douze sons</i> , L'Arche, 1949
E. Paci	<i>Il nulla e il problema dell'uomo</i> , Taylor Torino, 1950
R. Leibowitz	<i>L'artiste et sa conscience</i> , L'Arche, 1950 ¹⁶
L. Rognoni, E. Paci	<i>L'espressionismo</i> (Rognoni), <i>L'esistenzialismo</i> (Paci), Edizioni Radio Italiana, 1953
J.P. Sartre	<i>L'essere e il nulla</i> , Mondadori, 1958
J.P. Sartre	<i>Existentialisme est un humanisme</i> , Nagel, n.d., © 1959

TABLE 1. Works by and on Sartre in Togni's personal library. All copies contain partial or extensive annotations. FGC, Togni Collection.

The chapter devoted to Sartre in *L'espressionismo. L'esistenzialismo*, a collection of texts of radio broadcasts (first semester 1952), in which various cultural movements of the early twentieth century were studied together as 'different aspects of the same situation'¹⁷ was also crucial for the composition of *Ricerca*. Here Togni may have perceived a link between his two main literary interests – Georg Trakl and Sartre – which over the years became the focus of increasingly intense readings. Not by chance, apart from Kant and Croce (more academic-philosophical

interests than personal predilections), these are the two most represented non-musical authors in his library. Although Enzo Paci's text does not propose forced analogies between the two cultural movements, Togni may have come to believe that to give a musical voice to Sartre's prose and theatre, twelve-tone technique (in *Tre studi*) and later 'extended' twelve-tone technique (in *Ricerca*) represented a musically appropriate medium, insofar as it was part of a shared historical horizon.¹⁸ Here, Paci provides an interpretative key to the novel itself, which proved to be extremely influential for Togni's textual choices:

After the first novella, Sartre would study philosophy, particularly Husserl, and write an essay on imagination – a sharp and orderly essay, from a philosopher who studies seriously, just as seriously as the protagonist of *La Nausée*, Professor Antoine Roquentin, who wishes to dedicate himself to historical studies. *But Roquentin cannot study history. Something happens.* 'A sort of sickness has taken hold of me', he tells us. 'It has insidiously crept in little by little... Once it entered, it never moved; it remained quiet, and at first I almost convinced myself that I had nothing and that it was a false alarm. But now it is spreading...'¹⁹

The theme of existential loneliness will characterise the entire second section (*Studio III* and *IV*) of *Ricerca* and broadly reflects Paci's portrayal of man as 'walled up alive within himself' ('murato in se stesso').²⁰ The composer chose precisely this portion of the text ('Quelque chose m'est arrivé, je ne peux plus en douter. C'est venu à la façon d'une maladie') for the opening of the piece. Even if Togni does not derive the musical materials from the structure of the text, the text remains an important source for organising parameters not subject to 'pre-compositional' elaboration. Given that in *Ricerca* the series becomes the organising principle of pitch and rhythm, but not yet of dynamics, timbres, and instrumental registers, some of these parameters are free to be shaped according to the form and meaning of the text.²¹ At the same time, even when parameters already depend on serial logics, Togni nevertheless finds a way to adapt them coherently to the text.²²

Studying the creative process of *Ricerca* is thus relevant as it reveals differences both with previous (*Tre studi*) and subsequent phases (*Fantasia concertante*). I will present here the extensive pre-compositional elaboration: the six twelve-tone rows for the six pieces (*Studio I–VI*) that make up the work,²³ the proportionality that will link at a structural level the intervals to the corresponding rhythmic durations, as well as the planning of the overall structure and the instrumentation. Considerable emphasis is placed on how Togni reorganises the musical form, in the absence of traditional support drawn from Schönberg. The final musical outcome will be analysed simultaneously through a few exemplary moments, and further observations concerning the text will be advanced.

In a dossier titled 'Considerazioni generali intorno all'op. 36',²⁴ Togni provides a comprehensive account of the work's compositional genesis. He first clarifies the principle determining the instrumentation. Given that the voice is present in all

six pieces, the remaining instruments have been organised according to the following scheme:

PART I	<i>Studio I</i>	5 instr. (all) 2 instr. (Horn and Double Bass)
	<i>Studio II</i>	3 instr. (Flute, Viola, and Double Bass)
PART II	<i>Studio III</i>	5 instr. (all) 3 instr. (Flute, Horn, and Double Bass)
	<i>Studio IV</i>	4 instr. (Horn, Viola, Double Bass, and Celesta)
PART III	<i>Studio V</i>	5 instr. (all) 4 instr. (Flute, Horn, Violin, and Double Bass)
	<i>Studio VI</i>	5 instr. (all)

TABLE 2.

The symmetries arising from the subdivision of *Studio I*, *III*, and *V* into two halves then overlap with a further formal division: each piece can be subdivided into four sections, each of which assumes a different basic rhythmic value (quarter note = A, quaver = B, semiquaver = C, thirty-second note = D). The scheme is as follows:

	Section I	Section II	Section III	Section IV
<i>Studio I</i>	C	A	D	B
<i>Studio II</i>	C	D	A	B
<i>Studio III</i>	A	B	C	D
<i>Studio IV</i>	D	C	B	A
<i>Studio V</i>	B	A	D	C
<i>Studio VI</i>	B	D	A	C

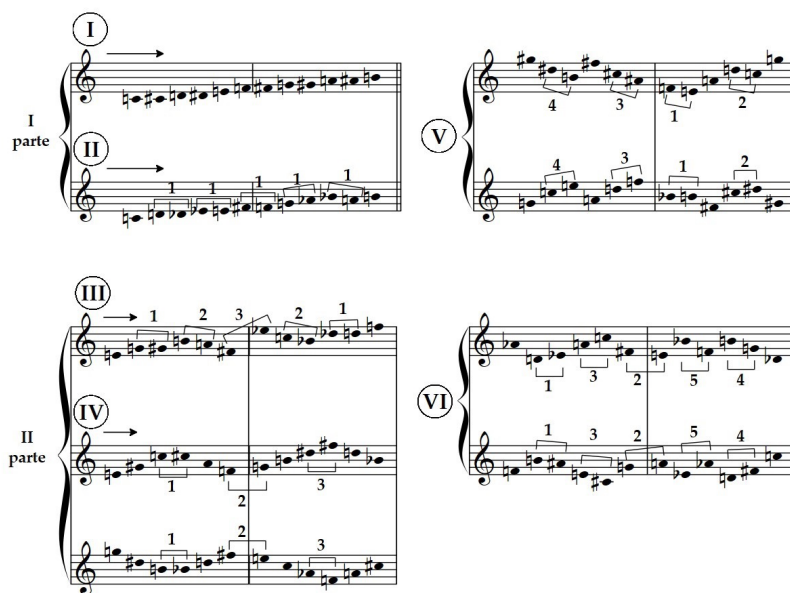
TABLE 3.

Togni points out that the series here ‘reflects its crucial influence on the “*formal-architectural world*”’,²⁵ but the logic determining the permutations of the ABCD order is in fact a symmetrical one (rather than strictly ‘serial’): by placing an axis of symmetry between *Studio III* and *IV*, one observes that *IV*, *V*, and *VI* follow a retrograde order (‘*un ritroso*’) with respect to the first three.²⁶ The two systems of formal subdivision are (with some exceptions) largely superimposable, as ‘the division between the end of the second section and the beginning of the third section can thus be ideally identified between the first and second half of each *studio*’.²⁷ Therefore, once all traces of motivic-thematic development have been set

aside, the symmetries regulating instrumentation and the basic rhythmic units can outline a kind of formal ‘skeleton’, subsequently filled in with sonic and textual material.²⁸ In addition, the principle of row segmentation also plays a role in the formal articulation: each of the four sections corresponds to a different type of segmentation (generally: full series–hexachords–tetrachords–trichords).²⁹ This is a process likely acquired through Togni’s apprenticeship with René Leibowitz, who during the 1950s integrated all possible segmentations of a series into his works, including – unlike Togni – the so-called ‘asymmetrical’ ones (e.g., 3+4+5, 5+5+2, etc.). This no longer served to distinguish one piece from another, but as a means of formal differentiation within a single composition.³⁰

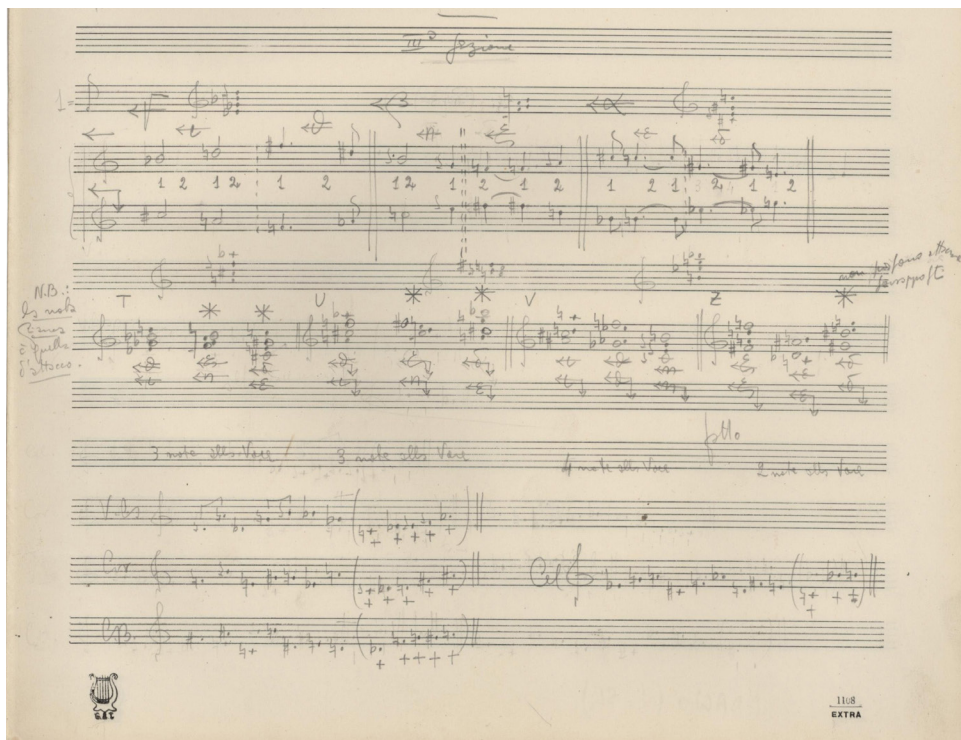
Overall, the scheme in TABLE 2 reveals a general enlargement in the orchestration of the piece and increasingly rich timbral variety, paired with a gradual increase in the intervallic variety of the twelve-tone rows. Each movement is in fact based on a different row (EX. 2). The first one ‘contains only interval-classes 1 (i.e., semitones)’. This alone reveals a clear transgression of Schönberg’s principle, which states that ‘the row is in no way identical with the chromatic scale’.³¹ Each subsequent row adds one new interval in ascending order: the second row has only i.c. 1 and 2, the third 1, 2, and 3, and so on, up to the sixth row, mainly based on the tritone. Despite contravening Schönberg’s twelve-tone principles, Togni saw the new approaches as coherent historical developments beyond the master’s theory itself.³² At the same time, he applied one fundamental technique used by Schönberg: hexachordal combinatoriality.³³ He learned it through the study of *Variations* op. 31 and through an ongoing dialogue with Leibowitz, who considerably expanded this technique in his own works, giving it a structural role as well.³⁴ In each row of *Ricerca*, the first six notes of P combined with the first six notes of I produce a full chromatic aggregate; the same applies to the second halves of the rows. However, here Togni transforms combinatoriality (section III of *Studio IV*) into a new generative process, distinct from its conventional use, as illustrated in FIGURE 2.

As we can see, Togni divides the R and RI combinatorial rows into tetrachords (α – β – γ), each of which is further divided into dyads (δ – ε – ζ – η – θ – ι), assigning an independent³⁵ rhythmic value to each tetrachord (the eighth note is the basic unit). The dyads are later combined into four-note chords: some are horizontal combinations, corresponding to the notes of subsets from the R and RI rows (letters T and U); others are new tetrachords formed by summing the overlapping dyads (two notes from R + the corresponding two notes from RI), i.e., vertical combinations. Togni notates the chords using white and black noteheads, with the two white ones indicating the notes with which the group must begin. These may be attacked simultaneously, as long as the interval between them is licit; otherwise, they must occur in sequence (Togni has marked such cases with asterisks). Looking at the realization of these complexes in the score, where they are presented in



EXAMPLE 2.

FIGURE 2. Togni's analytical scheme for *Studio IV*, section III. FGC, Togni Collection.



retrograde order (Z–V–U–T), it is evident that combinatoriality becomes a source of harmonic potential on which Togni draws to replace the function once fulfilled by tonal triads. On this harmonic foundation, melodic fragments from the R row can then be superimposed.

Another remnant of twelve-tone technique is the reflection on the ‘distinctive sound’ determined by the row intervals,³⁶ a way to differentiate the etudes from one another. The new interval progressively introduced in each series (*Studio I*: i.c. 1, *Studio II*: i.c. 2...) is largely predominant compared to the narrower ones. These, in turn, are evenly distributed, making the main interval the distinctive element of the series and the ‘sound’ of the etude. Although not specified in his ‘Considerazioni generali’, sketches show that the series are derived from a generating complex (scale or chord) (FIG. 3).

The second row is derived from the superimposition of two whole-tone scales (characterised by interval class 2), the third one from the superimposition of three diminished seventh chords (i.c. 3), while the fourth is derived from the four augmented triads, and so forth. Finally, another element linking this phase to the earlier twelve-tone period is the ‘kinship’ between *Ricerca* and *Tre studi*: as Togni noted, the first two series begin on C, *III* and *IV* on E, and the last two on G#. This ‘transposition up a major third’³⁷ thus corresponds to the transpositional interval upon which both series were constructed in *Tre studi* and *Lucie* (EX. 1).

We now turn to the techniques that are new, compared with the ones used so far: the proportional union between rhythm and pitch, and the principle governing the overlapping (‘sovrapposizioni’) and shifts (‘sfasature’) of the series, or their segments, all stemming from an extension of the concept of interval beyond the domain of pitch.³⁸ Serialism represents the ‘absolute regulating principle also for rhythmic values’:³⁹ depending on the base value chosen for one of the four sections of each etude, i.c. 1 of the series corresponds to it, so each interval between successive row notes is directly proportional to the time between their attacks. Thus, the same series can be ‘rhythmised’ in this way, assuming the quarter note or the eighth note as the base value:⁴⁰

EXAMPLE 3.



pag. 1.

I. °

II. °

III. °

IV. °

V. °

1. Viol. 1. p. 3.

2. (1) - p. 3.

3. (2, 1) - p. 3.

4. (3, 1, 2) - p. 3.

5. (3, 1, 1, 2) - p. 3.

1106
EXTRA

FIGURE 3. *Ricerca*, sketch. FGC, Togni Collection.

In both cases the proportion remains unchanged. However, two clarifications are necessary to understand the solution that Togni chose (among many) to link pitch and rhythm. On one hand, a comparison with the score shows it is more accurate to speak of ‘intervals between attacks’ rather than ‘durations’.⁴¹ On the other hand, this pitch–rhythm union occurs more structurally than perceptually: it is not always clear in the line of a single instrument, but becomes identifiable from a ‘polyphonic’ perspective. The composer’s task – and thus significant freedom beyond pre-compositional procedures – lies in ensuring variety not by presenting series segments linearly, but by distributing them across instruments. This is important not only melodically, avoiding the monotony of repeating the same segments, but also rhythmically. Due to the proportional link, each series (if presented linearly) would have a characteristic rhythm: identical values for the first, triplets for the second, dotted rhythms for the third, and so on, up to the extreme variety of the last series. However, Togni devised strategies⁴² to create the greatest possible variety on the level of the actual sonic event, even when starting from less diverse rows.

Regarding the presentations of the entire series (or its segments) in overlapping and non-linear form, the general rule is that only those will be allowed in which ‘the first note of the overlapping element and the first note of the overlapped one form a permitted interval, that is, one contained within the same series’.⁴³ If the overlap is not perfectly simultaneous, it is essential that this rhythmic shift has ‘a duration corresponding to the interval formed by the two notes’.⁴⁴ The number of possible overlapped forms of the row thus increases from *Studio* to *Studio*. In *II*, for example, there is only one possible overlap of the entire 12-tone row (P + R, considering that here R = I). Togni indicates in a sketch (FIG. 4) its four possible shifts (‘sfasature’), marking them with letters of the alphabet.

This represents a first method of variation on an otherwise static structure,⁴⁵ aiming to extract the maximum variety from a compact material. By segmenting the series into hexachords, then into tetrachords and trichords, the number of allowed overlaps and their respective time shifts grows. Togni carefully transcribes them in his schemes, covering the entire alphabet twice from A to Z. This represents the second method of variation. The third one is obtained through the ‘attack variation principle’ (‘principio di variazione dell’attacco’), indicated by a number below the corresponding letter and achieved by shifting the entire overlapping block backward by one, two or three rhythmic units,⁴⁶ attacking on the upbeat. Togni thus creates a repertoire of structurally determined time shift possibilities. While these variation methods avoid simple one-by-one presentations of the series, they also bring the music – especially in the second piece – closer to serial thinking at the formal level. Togni tends to preliminarily note all the allowable types of overlap, segmentation, time shift, and attack variation, arranging

op. 37. Π^0
I^A SEZIONE

Seiz ($\rightarrow = \leftarrow$)

3 sovrapposizione leste : $\rightarrow \leftarrow$ $\begin{matrix} \times \\ \leftarrow \end{matrix}$ $\begin{matrix} \times \\ \rightarrow \end{matrix}$

la sovrapposizione $\leftrightarrow$ è attuabile con 4 flauti:

I^A SEZIONE. (= G. 1-26; D=1).

A B C D

Nelle Battute 1-11. B^1 A^2 B^1 A C^1 D^1 .
la seguente funzione: $(\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}) (\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}) (\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}) (\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}) (\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}) (\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix})$

NB. mediante il principio di variazione dell'attacco (partendo da $\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}$ attacco prima una $\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}$ e poi una $\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}$ indietro; e quindi, partendo ancora da $\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}$ attacco prima una $\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}$ e poi una $\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}$ avanti) è possibile enunciare 2 volte B e 2 volte A.

Nelle Battute 11-14. si enunciano per la prima volta C e D, ma siccome il principio di variazione dell'attacco è stato finora esaurito, si ricorre allo stesso degli attacchi tra C e D, e cioè:

C^1 D^1
 $(\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix}) (\begin{matrix} \text{L} \\ \text{L} \end{matrix})$

Minichiamo ancora A^1 ; B^1 ; C ; D : che è quanto si fa nelle Batt. 15-21.

La fine e la ricomincia (fin qui non ancora offerte separatamente) si funzionano nelle Batt. 22-24.

Le Batt. 25 e 26 (che dividono la prima sezione di questo pezzo) offrono rispettivamente i gruppi

6 frasi $\begin{matrix} \times \\ \leftarrow \end{matrix}$ e $\begin{matrix} \times \\ \rightarrow \end{matrix}$, gruppi su cui si basano tutti la seconda sezione.

1105
EXTRA

FIGURE 4. Togni's analytical scheme for *Studio II*, section I. FGC, Togni Collection.

the blocks (designated by alphabet letters and subscript numbers) in a logical sequence. Furthermore, he does not conclude the composition until all possibilities have been exploited. The sequence in *Studio II* at measure 88 is:

S0–T1–U2–V0–Z1–A2–B0–C1–S2–T0–U1–V2–Z0–A1–B2–C0–S1–T2–U0–V1–Z2–A0–B1–C2.⁴⁷

We see a combination of an alphabetic succession S–T–U–V–Z–A–B–C (8 elements), repeated three times, with the numerical order 0–1–2 (3 elements), repeated eight times, in a regular periodic sequence. In other cases, the letters are not arranged alphabetically, following a different concatenation principle that depends on pitch content. At b. 65, for instance, we note blocks M–O–N–P–Q–R, deviating from the alphabetic order to keep a note in common between the end of one block and the beginning of the next. In M–O–N the last note ‘overlaps with the first two notes of the following block’,⁴⁸ while in P–Q–R there is no overlap, and they start on the following quarter note.⁴⁹

A similar principle is employed in *Studio V* in the ‘connecting passages’ (‘passaggi connettivi’), where Togni lists all sixteen allowed overlaps of the two hexachords x and y (in all four serial forms: P, R, I, RI). Here too, a repertoire of rhythmic blocks is created, this time indicated with Arabic numerals, resulting from the overlap of notes (two by two, or in some cases three by three). These blocks are again put in a sequence based on correspondences between the last notes of one overlap and the first ones of the next (used sometimes as pivot notes). One example can be found between bb. 57–58 (transition from block 15 to block 3), with the same notes arpeggiated first in one direction (A♭–G–E♭–C), then in the opposite, i.e., ascending direction. This, along with the fragmentary nature of these instrumental passages and the instructions, ‘un poco esitando’, creates some correspondence with the text, recalling that ‘drôle de bruit’ from Roquentin’s favourite recording, which the voice comments immediately after (‘quasi parlato’). In this etude particularly, Togni resorts to what in the late-Renaissance repertoire would have been called *madrigalismi*, arranging the parameters still left free by the serial framework to symbolically emphasize the connection with the sung text. Let’s consider a few examples: at b. 74, the word ‘glissent’ is accompanied by an actual glissando of the voice; when the text states that the melody of the song *Some of These Days* is not affected by the scratch noise of the record, the words ‘reste’ and ‘ferme’ reiterate the same note; similarly, in *Studio II*, b. 107, on the word ‘écroulés’ the voice corresponds to a downward leap of a major seventh. Sometimes the symbolism also involves the serial form: in *Studio IV*, for instance, Togni points out that ‘the first and second sections use only prime forms (→) // the third and fourth sections use only retrograde forms (←) // (“Le monde disparut de la même façon qu’il était venu”)’.⁵⁰ At first glance, this Sartre quotation seems merely to indicate the words at which the R forms begin. However, an analysis of

the piece reveals that they actually begin earlier (b. 35). This suggests that Togni once again intended to establish a semantic connection with the musical material: the retrograde element is linked to the idea of the world metaphorically 'disappearing in the same way it had come', moving figuratively backwards. Beyond these specific effects, it is the dynamics that most closely follows the meaning of the text and its dramatic climax. Thus, while the creative process involves using juxtaposition and combining procedures (*com-position* in its etymological sense) of pre-constructed blocks, it also carefully develops quasi-serial principles of formal concatenation. Meanwhile, for the parameters that do not depend on serial organization, the music more clearly expresses the internal dramaturgy that Togni perceived in Sartre's text.

In *Studio VI* he once again lines up the various possible overlaps, carefully notated in his sketches (semiquaver = base value), employing a sequence based on a system of 'mirrors', as can be seen in FIGURE 5, first line: 'Specchio'.

The search for symmetries, already carried out 'implicitly'⁵¹ at the beginning of the piece (P overlapped with I, R with RI) reaches a further level of systematization. The remaining twelve possible overlaps (Togni once again aims to use them all) are presented with a similar principle of attack variation and some tones are annotated with instrumentation marks.⁵² He divided the twelve overlaps into three groups of four, where the axis of symmetry can refer to either a single hex-

FIGURE 5. Togni's analytical scheme for *Studio VI*, section IV. FGC, Togni Collection.

IV² sezione. 1=♩

Specchio

Questa parte è impostata sulla II^a sezione.

* L'ordine di successione è quello naturale.

* Si ripete Specchio con la stessa successione.

* Le due parti della V^a sono composte in Specchio.

- Il I° periodo ha 2 gruppi, l'addizionale e l'originale.

- Il II° periodo ha 2 parti, ciascuna divisa in 2 parti: l'originale, l'addizionale e 2 gruppi di cui uno è l'originale.

- Il III° periodo è una parte relativa (unificata alla 2^a sezione) divisa in una parte originale (unificata alla II^a sezione).

achord or an entire series. Thus, the first and third groups have two axes of symmetry, while the second has only one. This scheme also exemplifies how certain parameters are ‘adjusted’ in accordance with the structure of the text, which is made up of three periods. Togni pointed out that ‘the three vocal periods are enclosed between mirrors’.⁵³ This means he considered the mirrors not simply as indicators of a serial relationship (here, a retrograde between what precedes and follows) but as boundaries, or dividing lines, assigning them the function of a full stop in grammar. Interestingly, the terms ‘period’ and ‘phrase’, still used by Schönberg in the musical sense (by analogy with written language and stemming from classic *Formenlehre*),⁵⁴ refer here to the syntactic structure of the text and lose any form-building role. The sketches for this final *Studio* also document this extended search for balance and symmetry into the field of instrumentation: Togni preliminarily distributed the notes of the series among the instruments, creating pairings (horn–double bass / flute–viola) that differ from those established earlier (TBL. 2), and which are instead based on the set-classes they play.

A partial exception to these formal elaborations is the *rondò* scheme in *Studio V*,⁵⁵ which represents a kind of reminiscence of tonality in other parameters as well: the row begins with a minor triad, followed by a major one, both in first inversion, and Togni explicitly employed traditional terms such as ‘melody’ and ‘accompaniment’. This aligns with the textual choices, since this final section focuses on the role of music in Sartre’s novel: Roquentin must leave and he hears *Some of These Days* for the last time. The structure of the piece establishes an almost dramaturgical reference: just as in Sartre’s description of the song, the voice is preceded by an instrumental melody (which was rare in other etudes) at bars 1–16. It is played in sequence by flute and horn, whose alternating timbres recall the recorded sound of the saxophone heard by Roquentin.⁵⁶ This is followed by a (non-melodic) vocal passage (‘à présent il y a ce chant’): through the use of *quasi-parlato* voice, Togni framed these vocal passages as narrative comments, decidedly opposed to the melodic parts which remain instrumental. At times, he explicitly indicated that the voice had an accompanying role, effectively integrating it as an equal member of the instrumental ensemble.

In the introductory and less articulated *Studio I*,⁵⁷ instead, none of the variation systems illustrated so far is applied. The atmosphere conveyed by the sound of the rows, extremely homogeneous both in terms of intervals and rhythm, is rarefied and indefinite, fitting well with the opening of Sartre’s novel. Here, Togni employed some more subtle forms of variation. Besides the frequent register changes within a single melodic line, a technique involving dyads is introduced, starting from the celesta cadence at b. 29. It consists of combining notes belonging to the two hexachords into dyads or melodically alternating them and generating *de facto* a new series: 11–0–10–1–9–2–8–3–7–4–6–5.⁵⁸ Togni transcribed this in the

sketches of the first piece, using marks that group the syllables of the corresponding text and correspond to groups of notes separated by rests (FIG. 6).⁵⁹

The pitches in the vocal part first correspond to the new series generated by the dyads and then return to the original row (b. 39). The resulting configuration is shown in FIGURE 7.

Although a new series is created, Togni still respects the rhythm-pitch equivalence (here semitone = thirty-second note), since the line is made up of sixty-fourth notes: according to the principle of alternation, notes a semitone apart (every other note) are simultaneously spaced by a thirty-second note. The dyad technique, with centripetal movements (toward F#) or centrifugal ones (toward the chromatic extremes), does not undermine the pitch-rhythm correspondence and embodies the concept of variation: a modification that retains a connection

FIGURE 6. *Ricerca. Studio I*, sketch. FGC, Togni Collection.



10

VELOCE A PIACERE

VOCE

FL.

COR.

V.LA.

C.B.

CEL.

quasi: cadenza

mf

f

ff

lunga

PRESTO (♩: 168)

VOCE

COR.

C.B.

agitato

scacc.

ppp

stacc.

35

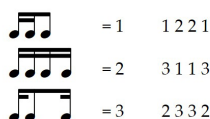
3+2

s'a - mas-sent sont pré-cur - seurs d'un nou-veau

FIGURE 7. *Ricerca. Sei studi su testo di J.P. Sartre*, annotated heliographic copy of the score, p. 10. FGC, Togni Collection.

with the original element. Through variation techniques, despite the interval–duration correspondence, the composer’s subjectivity influences not only non-serial parameters but also the rhythmic domain itself, showing that the transition from the pre-compositional phase to the drafting of the score is far from automatic and instead involves deliberate compositional choices. A further example can be found

at bb. 22–26, whose rhythm is determined according to this numerical scheme, noted by Togni on this draft of the score:



EXAMPLE 4.

This scheme, corresponding to the vocal rhythm alone ('une fois dans la place'), reveals three palindromic groups of four rhythmic cells⁶⁰ whose symmetry was deliberately planned rather than a result of mechanical procedures derived from the series. The pursuit of this kind of symmetry and balance is therefore carried out alongside the serial approach, sometimes even modifying parameters obtained from the series when they do not produce symmetrical orders.⁶¹

In conclusion, *Ricerca* marks not only the beginning of a renewal in musical language but also a synthesis of continuity and discontinuity, characterizing Togni's transition from twelve-tone technique to multi-parametric serialism. This synthesis, charged with expressive tensions, arises from adapting the old principle of variation to a more complex compositional horizon, where formal planning pushes these tensions to the extreme. They emerge in a creative laboratory where the search for symmetries, extension of the serial principle to new parameters, and the text's guiding role across musical dimensions coexist.

Notes

- 1 Hugues Dufourt, 'De la notation à l'ordinateur', in: *Révolutions industrielles de la musique*, coordonné par Bernard Stiegler et Nicolas Donin, Paris: Fayard, 2004, pp. 67–74: 71
- 2 René Leibowitz, *L'artiste et sa conscience*, Paris: L'Arche, 1950.
- 3 Existentialism was central to Togni's interests; however, unlike Luigi Nono, he did not see Sartre as a dramaturgical model nor apply the major questions of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* to music. The copy in Togni's library bears no annotations, whereas Nono's was thoroughly studied and cited, especially after composing *Intolleranza 1960*.
- 4 *L'estetica di Croce e il problema dell'interpretazione musicale*, thesis defended in Pavia in 1948 under the supervision of Enzo Paci.
- 5 Camillo Togni, 'Alfred Cortot e Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli a Giussago', in: *Carteggi e scritti di Camillo Togni sul Novecento internazionale*, a cura di Cecilia Gibellini, Firenze: Olschki, 2006, pp. 261–266: 264.
- 6 Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini (FGC), Togni Collection, fasc. *Tre Studi per Morts sans sépulture*.
- 7 Unless the symbolic system adopted by Togni himself is used, I employ the analytical terminology of Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, New Jersey: Pearson, 2005.
- 8 This method is likely a tribute to Webern's derived series, but also reflects the influence of René Leibowitz, who emulated Webern's style in his works from the late 1940s. See, for example, the row in *Explanation of Metaphors*, op. 15, or the String Quartet No. 2, op. 22, as well as the unpublished quartet *Anton Webern in memoriam* (1946). See *Skizzenbücher 1–2*, Sammlung René Leibowitz, Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (PSS).
- 9 René Leibowitz, *Traité de la composition avec douze sons*, manuscript. PSS, René Leibowitz Collection. In 'Gesture through the lens of pluridimensional serialism in the music of Camillo Togni', *Music Theory Online*, 30/2, June 2024, Christoph Neidhöfer demonstrates the influence of this text on Togni. See also Gianmario Borio, 'Schönberg e la cultura italiana: storia di un rapporto contraddittorio', in: *'Cara scientia mia, musica'. Studi per Maria Caraci Vela*, a cura di Angela Romagnoli, Pisa: ETS, 2018, pp. 649–682.
- 10 '[...] il risultato, laboriosamente e lentamente conseguito, delle varie e graduali esperienze'. Camillo Togni, 'Traccia di analisi della / "Fantasia concertante"', undated manuscript, Togni Collection; quoted from Christoph Neidhöfer, 'Character and Form by Way of Integral Serialism: An Analysis of *Fantasia concertante* (1957) by Camillo Togni', *Archival Notes*, 3, 2018, pp. 47–79: 72.
- 11 A thorough overview of Togni's engagement with twelve-tone composition is provided in Alessandro Venzi, 'La tecnica dodecafonica di Camillo Togni nelle opere degli anni Cinquanta', *Il Saggiatore musicale*, 17/2, 2010, pp. 237–263. More recent analytical contributions, collected in *Hidden geographies. Essays on the music of Camillo Togni*, ed. by Angela Carone and Christoph Neidhöfer, Lucca: LIM, 2025, focus on later phases, tracing the extension of serial procedures beyond pitch to other musical parameters. See Neidhöfer, 'Developed from Within Rather than Imposed from Outside: Multi-parametric Thinking in Camillo Togni's Settings of Georg Trakl's *Gesang zur Nacht*', pp. 59–100; Angela Carone, 'Composing with Charts and Performers: Observations on the Creative Process in *Quasi una serenata* (1979) and *Cinque pezzi per flauto e chitarra* (1975–1976) by Camillo Togni', pp. 101–138; and Laura Zattra, 'Recitativo for Tape (1961) by Camillo Togni: Tracking the Creative Process for His Only Work of Electronic Music', pp. 167–198. Only in 'Gesture through the lens of pluridimensional serialism in the music of Camillo Togni', does Neidhöfer present examples of both the dodecaphonic and serial phases in sequence, though his analysis emphasizes their differences rather than examining the gradual transitional phase in between.
- 12 In the case of *Ricerca*, only the durations are developed according to the intervals of the row, as we shall see.

- 13 It is unclear whether Sartre would have approved this association. On the few occasions he commented on contemporary music, he seemed to appreciate Boulez, Nono, and Berio, particularly for innovations in vocal treatment. Regarding Schönberg, Sartre held an ambivalent view, noting traditional form in his work and the lack of dramatic force in *A Survivor from Warsaw*. See Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Questions sur la musique. Entretien avec Jean-Yves Bosseur', *Sartre et les arts, Obliques*, 24–25, 1981, pp. 239–253; 247. See also the debate with Leibowitz in *L'artiste et sa conscience*.
- 14 '[...] una grande stima ed anche riconoscenza (per la mia formazione)'. Camillo Togni, 'Scritti, appunti per lezioni, ricordi (1960–1993)', in: *Carteggi e scritti di Camillo Togni sul Novecento italiano*, Firenze: Olschki, 2001, p. 207.
- 15 A letter from Togni to Leibowitz dated 15 December 1955 (PSS, Leibowitz Collection) shows he received 'the two volumes of *Situations*' from Leibowitz.
- 16 With a preface by Sartre.
- 17 Luigi Rognoni, *L'espressionismo – Enzo Paci, L'esistenzialismo*, Torino: ERI, 1953, p. 5.
- 18 A shared 'Weltanschauung', as René Leibowitz argued in *Introduction à la musique de douze sons* (p. 100), where the analogies between the two movements are strongly emphasised. Leibowitz also thanks Sartre 'for his assistance in the drafting of these paragraphs' ('dans la rédaction de ces paragraphes', p. 104).
- 19 'Sartre, dopo la prima novella, studierà filosofia, ed in modo particolare Husserl, e scriverà un saggio sull'immaginazione, un saggio acuto ed ordinato, da filosofo che studia seriamente, così come seriamente studia il protagonista della Nausea, il professore Antonio Roquentin, che vuol dedicarsi agli studi di storia. Ma Roquentin non può studiare la storia. Accade qualcosa. "È nata in me – egli ci racconta – una specie di malattia. Si è subdolamente insinuata a poco a poco... Una volta entrata non si è più mossa, è rimasta tranquilla e mi son dapprima quasi persuaso che non avevo nulla e che era un falso allarme. Ma ora si espande...". Rognoni–Paci, *L'espressionismo, L'esistenzialismo*, pp. 136–137. The underlining was added in pencil by Togni himself.
- 20 Rognoni–Paci, *L'espressionismo – L'esistenzialismo*, p. 137.
- 21 Schönberg identified the poetic text as a possible guide for composing more complex forms in the absence of any other organising principle replacing the former functions of tonal harmony. See Arnold Schönberg, 'Composition with twelve tones', in: *Style and Idea*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1950, p. 106.
- 22 Neidhöfer provides some examples in later works, see 'Developed from Within', pp. 84–85.
- 23 An interesting analogy links the two works based on Sartre's texts: beyond their tripartite structure, both are composed of 'études'. Although flourishing in the Romantic tradition – which Togni, as a pianist, knew well – the étude offers formal neutrality and openness that few inherited musical forms guarantee. Togni seems to have seen the étude as embodying a 'laboratory': an investigation both technical-compositional (as the title *Ricerca* indicates) and aesthetic-philosophical.
- 24 The self-analytical dimension was conceived by Togni as an integral part of the compositional process itself: he considered a work complete not only when the writing was accomplished, but when a thorough retrospective explanation had also been provided. This can be understood in light of the strict discipline imposed on him by his diabetes diagnosis, as recalled in Giada Viviani, 'Maestro d'arte e di vita. Modelli e percorsi della riflessione teorica di Camillo Togni su Arnold Schönberg', *Gli spazi della musica*, V/a, 2016, pp. 28–45; 28. In this specific case there was also an additional reason to keep careful track of the compositional process and its 'coherence': the work had been written for a competition, the *Prix de l'œuvre du XXe siècle* of the *Congrès pour la liberté de la culture*, which gave Togni another reason to 'return' to Sartre's texts after a few years. For an account of the first performances see Daniela Cima, *Camillo Togni. Le opere*, Milano: Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, 2004, p. 82.
- 25 '[...] riflette la sua influenza determinante al "mondo formale-architettonico"' [emphasis in the original]. Camillo Togni, 'Considerazioni generali intorno all'op. 36', manuscript, 1954.

- FGC, Togni Collection.
- 26 Crucial to the development of such procedures were the analyses and debates in Darmstadt on Webern's works. See Venzi, 'La tecnica dodecafonica di Camillo Togni nelle opere degli anni Cinquanta', pp. 237–263: 249.
 - 27 '[...] tra la fine della seconda sezione e l'inizio della terza sezione è quindi da collocarsi idealmente la divisione tra la prima e la seconda metà di ogni studio'. Togni, 'Considerazioni generali'. A further symmetry can also be found in the non-coincidence between the two formal orders. In *Studio I*, the midpoint defined by the division of rhythmic units precedes the one defined by instrumentation, whereas in *Studio V* (beginning of Part III), it slightly follows it as a form of compensation. The central section, however (*Studio III* – beginning of Part II), features an exact correspondence.
 - 28 Confirming that this 'filling-in' took place at a later stage, Togni preserved a handwritten transcription of excerpts from the novel, already divided into six sections. The draft contains later pencil annotations showing how he adapted the pre-structured 'skeleton' to the text by assigning the corresponding basic rhythmic values. In some cases, he had to cross out sentences, mainly in order to maintain formal balance among the sections.
 - 29 A very frequent procedure in *Ricerca* is the tendency to anticipate the new type of segmentation at the end of the preceding section, often by introducing the new segments without any accompaniment (see b. 62 or 181, *Studio II*).
 - 30 Leibowitz began integrating various types of segmentation into a single composition around 1950. The first work in which this procedure is evident – already visible in the sketches – is *The Grip of the Given*, op. 21. The key difference with Togni is that the sections Leibowitz continued to differentiate by segmentation were still the traditional ones (first theme, repetition, liquidation, transition, second theme, development, recapitulation). See in particular the sketches for *Marijuana*, op. 54, Skizzenbuch 3. PSS, Sammlung René Leibowitz.
 - 31 Schönberg, 'Composition with twelve tones', p. 107.
 - 32 When Togni presented his *Helian Lieder*, op. 39 (on a text by Trakl) in 1955, in response to the criticisms of Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, Luigi Rognoni stated that Togni still believed in 'the living continuity of the *Urlaut* of Expressionism', thus making him a unique figure within the avant-garde scene. Archiv des internationalen Musikinstituts Darmstadt (IMD), audio recording, IMD-M-5950.
 - 33 See particularly Milton Babbitt, 'Review of *Schönberg et son école* and *Qu'est-ce que la musique de douze sons?*' by René Leibowitz' in: *Collected Essays*, Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 10–15.
 - 34 Alongside the compositional shift noted in footnote 33, Leibowitz began using combinatoriality as an essential compositional element. Sketches show he increasingly avoided writing all twelve transpositions, instead starting from row pairs with inversionally-related hexachords (or, more rarely, retrograde-related). Choosing different combinatorial row pairs also influenced formal segmentation. See also Wilbur Ogdon, 'Concerning an unpublished treatise of René Leibowitz', *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, 2/1, October 1977, pp. 34–41: 39.
 - 35 This means that the intervals connecting the various hexachords are not 'rhythmically' aligned correspondingly (see the double lines in the scheme).
 - 36 Venzi, 'La tecnica dodecafonica di Camillo Togni nelle opere degli anni Cinquanta', pp. 237–263: 256.
 - 37 '[...] trasporto alla terza maggiore superiore'. Togni, 'Considerazioni generali'.
 - 38 This represented a common goal of many composers in this period, albeit pursued in different ways. See Pierre Boulez, *Penser la musique aujourd'hui*, Paris: Gonthier, 1963, p. 41.
 - 39 '[...] principio normativo assoluto anche per i valori ritmici'. Togni, 'Considerazioni generali'.
 - 40 The following two examples are taken from the twelve-tone row of *Studio III*.
 - 41 This can be proved by the fact that, in many cases, the space between two successive attacks (i.e., the attack interval) is filled with rests or repeated notes. As shown by Neidhöfer ('De-

- veloped from Within', pp. 84–85), when Togni used the term 'durata' in later years, he referred to a concept quite different from the rhythmic value assigned to notes, one rather connected to their possible shortening or lengthening. Thus, 'durata' represented somehow an interplay-parameter between the rhythmic dimension and articulation (legato, staccato, etc.).
- 42 The use of *Klangfarbenmelodie* is one example, as is the technique of *dyads* (see below).
- 43 '[...] la prima nota dell'elemento sovrapposto e la prima nota dell'elemento sottoposto formino un intervallo amnesso, cioè contenuto nella stessa serie'. Togni, 'Considerazioni generali'.
- 44 '[...] una durata corrispondente all'intervallo cui le due note vengono a dare luogo'. Togni, 'Considerazioni generali'.
- 45 In one of his first widespread texts, Leibowitz spoke of a *variation perpétuelle* as a fundamental feature of twelve-tone music. René Leibowitz, *Qu'est-ce que la musique de douze sons?*, Liège: Dynamo, 1948.
- 46 Depending on the rhythmic base unit that corresponds to each section (EX. 4).
- 47 In Togni's repertoire of symbols, the second alphabet is distinguished by the addition of a diaeresis (*Umlaut*) above the letters; for ease of reproduction, they are shown underlined in the example.
- 48 '[...] l'ultima nota di una sovrapposizione viene a sovrapporsi alle prime due note della seguente'. Camillo Togni, 'Schemi analitici del II pezzo dell'op. 36', manuscript. FGC, Togni Collection.
- 49 It often happens that Togni summarizes the sequence of blocks (letters) in his 'schemi analitici', analysing with an almost statistical approach the occurrence frequency of individual segments of the series. He then highlights that each segment recurs as many times as the others and (in the case of the letters from M to R) emphasizes their even distribution between voice and other instruments.
- 50 'La prima e la seconda sezione impiegano solamente cammini retti. (→) // La terza e la quarta sezione impiegano solamente cammini ricorrenti (←) // ("Le monde disparut de la même façon qu'il était venu")'. Camillo Togni, 'Schemi analitici del IV pezzo dell'op. 36', manuscript. FGC, Togni Collection.
- 51 See the first line in FIG. 5.
- 52 Togni used a 'V' as a symbol for the voice.
- 53 'I tre periodi della voce sono chiusi tra specchi'. Sketches for *Studio VI*, FGC, Togni Collection.
- 54 See Arnold Schönberg, *Der musikalische Gedanke. Sämtliche Schriften*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Abt. 2, Lehrwerke, Bd. II.6 'Fragment gebliebene Lehrwerke I', Vienna: Universal Edition, 2018. On the history of the analogy between verbal and musical language, and on the progressive 'crisis of the linguistic paradigm', see Gianmario Borio, 'Il pensiero musicale della modernità nel triangolo di estetica, poetica e tecnica compositiva' in: *L'orizzonte filosofico del comporre nel ventesimo secolo*, a cura di Gianmario Borio, Venezia: Fondazione Ugo e Olga Levi–Il Mulino, pp. 1–49.
- 55 See Cima, *Camillo Togni. Le opere*. The scheme is: A–B–A1–C–A2–D. A is the varied melody, while other letters are identified as 'connective passages'. See also Camillo Togni, 'Schemi analitici del V pezzo dell'op. 36', FGC, Togni Collection.
- 56 It is interesting how Togni keeps the selected text here almost entirely intact, yet removes the word 'saxophone'!
- 57 In the opening part of the text, Roquentin senses the emergence of this still obscure feeling and wishes to understand what it is ('Je voudrais voir clair...').
- 58 This is by no means an unprecedented procedure: René Leibowitz had constructed the row for his *Quintet op. 11* in this way (see Skizzenbuch I; PSS, Sammlung René Leibowitz), and years later Emmanuel Nunes would use a similar approach for constructing the pitch material of *Einspielung II*. See Jean-Pascal Chaigne, 'Écriture mélodique et geste instrumental dans "Einspielung II" d'Emmanuel Nunes', *Revue de musicologie*, 94/1, 2008, pp. 181–202. In the following études as well, Togni often condenses into a single line what would otherwise consist of two overlapping segments, using *acciacaturas* to indicate the pitches that should occur simultaneously (see b. 88 of *Studio II*).
- 59 The intention to rhythmize the text by creat-

ing continuous groups of syllables (not necessarily aligned with word boundaries) separated by rests also emerges from the handwritten transcription of the text (see footnote 31). Among the pencil markings mentioned earlier, it is only in this first *Studio* that Togni wrote the number of syllables and their subdivisions directly onto the text. Although no similar traces are found for the other pieces, this was a rhetorical process necessary to ‘poeticize’ a text which was originally in prose.

60 ‘2332’, for instance, means ssss/ses/ses/ssss, where e = eighth note and s = sixteenth note.

61 Precisely for this reason, *Ricerca* represents the phase in which composers of the Darmstadt avant-garde were getting acquainted with the music of Anton Webern. See Gianmario Borio, ‘L’immagine “seriale” di Webern’, in: *L’esperienza musicale. Teoria e storia della ricezione*, a cura di Gianmario Borio e Michela Garda, Torino: EDT, 1989.