

## The Not-so-fantastical Gap Between Music Studies and Film Studies

Music scholars and film scholars approach film music from different angles, obviously. Yet, it is not simply a matter of considering film music as something more pertinent to Music or more pertinent to Film; within Music Studies and Film Studies there are further subdivisions as to how to tackle film music. This chapter offers an overview and articulation of the typical ways in which film music is dealt with by the two disciplines (for the sake of clarity of argumentation, the types of approach of the two disciplines have been separated, even if they often overlap, specifically regarding the culturalist and the semiotic approaches) and proposes some reflections on the typical drawbacks that make the current approaches from both disciplines somewhat incomplete.

### FILM MUSIC IN MUSIC STUDIES

When tackling film music, music scholars are often interested in it as ‘music’ that happens to be in some film. The first manifestation of this ‘disciplinary bias’ is what can be called ‘score micro-analysis.’ In these instances, the centre of interest is the film score as it appears on paper: the sheet music. Such micro-analyses typically present insightful musical examinations, offer accurate reproductions and transcriptions from the score, and also relate the particular film score at hand to the overall production of its composer. A fine example is Ben Winters’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (Winters 2007b) in which the context and period of Korngold’s life when the *Robin Hood* score was written are

reconstructed; manuscripts were retrieved from the archives and extensive excerpts are featured; the general architecture of the score is examined, both in terms of Korngold's adaptations of previous concert pieces of his and, in turn, subsequent adaptations of parts of the film score into concert pieces. Another example is Charles Leinberger's monograph on *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (Leinberger 2004), which also features an *ad-hoc* interview with Ennio Morricone.

A different approach can be called 'architectural analysis.' It favours the examination of the overarching construction principles or ideas over minute accounts, and seeks to unveil the unifying principle of the score, for example a musical idea that runs throughout the score. This is the case of David Neumeier's analysis of *The Trouble with Harry* (1955, dir. Hitchcock). Schenkerian analysis is applied to unearth the common *ursatz* (fundamental structure) of the thematic materials and to illustrate the tonal design of the score (Neumeier 1998, p. 121). Another recent trend in music theory and musicology that addresses the overall design and development of a score is the study of triadic transformation, mostly under the Neo-Riemannian theory.<sup>1</sup> It employs analytical tools that depart from the traditional functionalist/hierarchical chordal theory of diatonic music to relate chords directly to each other without the tonic as a reference point. Neo-Riemannian theory has been used in film music to classify the typical chordal progression used to communicate situations and feelings—exotic locales, mystery or magic, romance, and so on—and also to explain by what musical means film music sounds like film music.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, the unifying principle can be a narrative idea rendered in music. Such an instance is James Buhler's 'Star Wars Music and Myth,' in which he convincingly shows how the scores to the first *Star Wars* trilogy can be thematically divided around two poles, one excluding the 'Dominant-Tonic' move and represented by Darth Vader's Theme (the 'Imperial March') and one flaunting it and represented by the Force Theme (also associated with Obi-Wan Kenobi). One of the narrative themes of the trilogy is the contrast between Force and technology, a contrast between the natural order and an artificial order imposed by the violent use of technology. The Force is a natural, almost religious spiritual energy, and it is the main weapon of the Jedi—the good ones—who fight with the rebels against the imperial dictatorship. Technology is, on the contrary, the Empire's instrument of domination, alongside the evil version of the Force, the 'Dark Side'—something similar to 'white magic' versus 'black magic'. Darth Vader is the symbol of this dichotomy:

he is a renegade Jedi who joined the ‘Dark Side’ and, with most of his body replaced with bionic prostheses, is now more a machine than a man. Buhler argues that the score renders in music such contrast of technology versus Nature (Buhler 2000).

All these ‘architectural analysis’ approaches go beyond the close analysis of the score and also link the music to the extra-musical elements. Indeed, it must be signalled that in the last years Music Studies has moved from the traditional formalistic focus on the score to a wider consideration of performance contexts and audience reception—moving from the ‘trace’ (the score as it is) and the ‘poietic dimension’ (the reconstruction of the compositional process and the composer’s intention) to an ‘esthetic dimension’ (the analysis of the work from the vantage point of the audience/listeners), to use Nattiez’s vocabulary (Nattiez 1990, pp. 10–37). Philip Tagg’s studies on popular music are precisely aimed at superseding the strictures of the ‘*Absolute Musik*’ ideal and the canon-centred elitism of old musicology and relocate music from the abstract realm of tones, harmonic relations, and formal structures to that of concrete audience experiences (Tagg 2012; Tagg and Clarida 2003). Another example of this broader focus that addresses music as an event rather than as a text is the recent history of opera by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, which comes with absolutely no musical examples or references to the scores:

[S]cores encourage elaborate attention to particular aspects of a strictly musical argument, above all those involving harmonic and melodic details on the small and the large scale, aspects that have tended to figure too prominently in musicological writings about opera. In other words, scores encourage the idea of opera as a text rather than as an event. Memory, on the other hand, goes back to an event...Hence the musical descriptions in this book were written almost entirely on the basis of memory. (Abbate and Parker 2012, pp. 3–4)

This event-based approach for opera is a very interesting one for film scholars, as the musical descriptions of the films are also typically carried out from memory or from a broader medium in a similar way as the one described by Abbate and Parker. This lesser importance given to the scores comes as reassuring to film scholars: close musicological analysis is not really necessary to address film music.<sup>3</sup> Yet, there is at least one *difference* and one *problem*.

The *difference* is that an opera composer does not generally compose the music with such a clear idea of what the staging is going to be. There might be staging indications in the score, but an event-based analysis of, say, a Wagner's opera would describe the interaction of the music with that singular and specific performance, and that analysis would not be valid for another performance—and, obviously, Wagner did not compose the music having *that* one particular performance in mind. Opera is a performing art, never stable from one event to the other. On the contrary, film events—the screenings—are much more stable, as the screened film is a reproducible artwork with a fixed form. Film composers write their music with one precise film in mind, and the music is designed to fit that film and then is mixed with the other sound elements, forming an interlocked whole with the visual track. The music/visual interaction of a film score can be, more or less, attributed to the composer's intention and design, while the music/performance interaction of an opera changes from one event to the other and is to be attributed to the director of that particular performance rather than to the composer. Also, unlike opera, when dealing with film music, the composer's musical choices are to be thought of as more dependent on all the other extra-musical elements in the film.

The *problem* of this opera-based approach, because of the aforementioned difference, is that it does not provide specific tools to analyse how the music operates in connection with the other cinematic elements. Operas tell stories and their music can be analysed in terms of storytelling—the same can be said of ballet music, symphonic poems, incidental music for theatre, and any other type of applied composition. A film is not just a story being told and staged. A (narrative) film is a story told and staged through cinematic devices—mise-en-scene, camerawork, lighting, editing, optical effects, sound effects, and so forth. Even when it engages with the film, a musical analysis inspired by the procedures of opera analysis is prone to restrict its focus on narrative structure and mise-en-scene (staging). An analysis of film music conducted with this approach might read as an analysis of any other form of applied music. As Claudia Gorbman warned, 'to judge film music as one judges "pure" music [*and opera music, I would add*] is to ignore its status as a part of the collaboration that is the film. Ultimately it is the narrative context, the interrelations between music and the rest of the film's system, that determines the effectiveness of film music' (Gorbman 1987, p. 12). For example, consider the following piece of analysis



the shark's motif not only accelerates and gets louder as the shark accelerates and decelerates and gets softer as it decelerates—thus communicating the off-screen movements of the shark—but also the thickness of its instrumentation changes according to whether the shark comes up to the surface or goes down into the abyss; instrumentation thickens as the shark approaches the surface and conversely thins down when it goes down. The ostinato works efficiently in the film by using many musical parameters in a very complex way, rendering the movements of the shark both on the horizontal axis (through variations of the music's tempo and dynamics) and on the vertical axis (through variations of the music's texture) (Audissino 2014, pp. 111–118).

In the same journal issue, Frank Lehman analyses the Ark's Theme in the Map Room sequence of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, dir. Spielberg). I have conducted somewhere else a thorough analysis of how music works in this very film (Audissino 2014, pp. 145–182). The comparison of Lehman's take and my take makes a good point about the 'disciplinary bias' I have been dealing with in these pages. Lehman is interested in in-depth musical analysis—with a Neo-Riemannian approach—and describes the harmonic transformations that the Ark's Theme undergoes, an analysis I don't have the expertise and skills to do:

The theme...is highly chromatic, constructed almost entirely from non-diatonic transformations acting on purely minor triads. Particularly salient is the theme's *leitharmonie*, a tritonal oscillation between tonic and the triad T6 away. The theme thus draws on centuries' worth of associations with dark magic, and implies to the audience that this is a dangerous MacGuffin, best left untouched by humanity's grasping hands. (Lehman 2012a, p. 184)

My interest is more in film analysis and my description of the Ark Theme goes like this:

The mysterious and ominous tone of the Ark leitmotiv is given by both the minor-mode harmonic instability between distant keys...and the nature of the melodic intervals....The motif moves downward within a perfect fifth...within which can be found the 'dreaded' augmented-fourth interval—the tritone..., typically...associated with disturbing, ominous events. The Ark is a magnificent and powerful object, but it is also a treacherous and deadly one. (Audissino 2014, pp. 159–160)

My analysis, though arriving at similar conclusions about what the music communicates, is much more superficial and perhaps even simplistic. When it comes to talking about this theme at work in the film, Lehman provides a preliminary short summary of the narrative—what happens in the film sequence—and then turns again to the musicological analysis of the score without many references to what happens visually. About the musical closure of the ‘Map Room’ sequence, he says:

The exaggeratedly definitive ‘functional’ cadence to C# minor that finishes the section (and establishes the concluding tonic of the cue) stands out amidst the chromaticism. The cadence, which begins at m. 27, is itself a reinterpretation of the cadence of the more neutral version of the theme presented in example 1. The thunderous underlining of G#2–C# 3—and E5–D#5–C# is so rhetorically overstated that one suspects Williams is intentionally overcompensating for the radical *underdetermination* of tonal trajectory during the passage’s bulk. (Lehman 2012a, p. 185)

This is what I wrote about the same sequence:

[A]n upward chord progression follows Jones turning his head toward the entrance of the room....When Jones inserts the pole, the Ark motif starts over, played forte by the full orchestra, with a vocalizing female choir rising from the orchestral texture and coming to the fore in the second reprise of the theme....An orchestral crescendo of harmonic progressions resolves to the tonic when the sun hits the medallion and a beam illuminates the burial spot. (Audissino 2014, pp. 171–172)

Evidently, we see things from different angles: the music theorist Lehman explains the ‘exaggeratedly definitive’ cadence in terms of musical construction—film music is analysed on the score. For me, the interest is to explain that cadence in terms of audio-visual coupling: the final chord of the cadence happens exactly in synch with the sun rays hitting the medallion and thus indicating where the Ark is to be found, with a burst of bright light. So, to me, the cadence is so ‘exaggeratedly definitive’ because the music follows the visuals very tightly, and this obtrusive musical gesture is functional both to eloquently mark the success of the mission—finding where the Ark is located—and to duplicate musically the burst of light that we see visually. The flow of the music and the final cadence closely interacts with such cinematic devices as editing, lighting, and camerawork.

Within the Music Studies perspective, there are also some instances that are not so much musicological analysis as speculations in music theory/philosophy. These are characterised by taking film music or a particular film score as a pretext to talk about music in general. Nicholas Cook's 'Representing Beethoven' takes the BBC TV film *Eroica* (2003, dir. Cellan Jones) as a starting point to discuss how Beethoven is represented in films (Cook 2007), while Peter Franklin's 'The Boy on the Train, or Bad Symphonies and Good Movies' uses the *Star Wars* music to offer a wider reflection on nineteenth-century symphonic music (Franklin 2007). A classical example of using film music to talk about music in general is the T.W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler book *Composing for the Films*, which examined the then-contemporary Hollywood music of the 1930s and 1940s in order not so much to write about what it was like and how it functioned, as to prescribe how it should be—with the particular scope of promoting the use of modernistic music (Adorno and Eisler 2007). Their reflections are somehow invalidated by a basic flaw running throughout the whole text: their misunderstanding of and ideological bias against cinema.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Adorno and Eisler's study stems from a larger political agenda aiming at condemning Mass Culture and the Culture Industry. Cinema is seen as one of the most dangerous and deceitful manifestations of the Culture Industry, bearing all the marks of its conservative agenda. According to them, cinema is not art. Film music is seen as an even more devious servant of these nefarious cinematic commodities: 'All music in the motion picture is under the sign of utility, rather than lyric expressiveness. Aside from the fact that lyric-poetic inspiration cannot be expected of the composer for the cinema, this kind of inspiration would contradict the embellishing and subordinate function that industrial practice still enforces on the composer' (Adorno and Eisler 2007, p. 4).

The Adorno/Eisler example, since it is concerned both in stating what film music should be and in addressing the 'Big Picture'—Mass Culture—besides film music, also overlaps with another category of film–music analysis, which can be called 'Culturalist.' The aim here is to use film music as a pretext to talk about extra-musical issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, post-colonialism, ideological discourses, subject positioning, and the like. One example is Anahid Kassabian's *Hearing Film*, whose interest is in the cultural use of film music in tracing the dynamics of group identification—composed film score favours 'assimilating identification,' while compilations of songs an 'affiliating identification' (Kassabian 2001). Another



instance of similarly agenda-driven analysis is Kay Dickinson's *Off Key*, which focusses on examples of 'bad' music in films—such as the Elvis vehicle *Harum Scarum* (1965, dir. Nelson)—as a sign of the times (Dickinson 2008, pp. 3–12). The representation of gender and race through music in particular is a recurring topic. Robynn Stilwell reads the music of *Closet Land* (1991, dir. Bharadwaj) through the lens of feminist studies (Stilwell 2001), while Gary C. Thomas's 'Men at the Keyboard' takes as a pretext the diegetic piano music being played in *The Rope* (1948, dir. Hitchcock) and *Five Easy Pieces* (1970, dir. Rafelson) to discuss masculinity and Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' (Thomas 2007). Kathryn Kalinak's 'Disciplining Josephine Baker' blends post-colonial and feminist studies to examine 'how gender and race become encoded in film, and, in a large sense, how representations of race and gender circulate through culture' (Kalinak 2000, p. 317). A key representative of this perspective is the film scholar Richard Dyer. Amongst his many interests—spanning from Italian genre cinema to pastiche, to stardom, to race and gender representation—is film music, and he has provided many contributions (notably, a monograph on Nino Rota, one on songs and musicals, and an article on Disco music).<sup>6</sup> Yet, his interest in film music is not per se but subordinated to an overarching culturalist concern: film music is studied as a manifestation of some ideological discourse or as one of the tools of representation. Culturalist analysis sees the music in a given film as something of interest because (and often only if) it can be read as a manifestation of larger cultural phenomena. It is an overlapping category that embraces both Film Studies (Kassabian, Dickinson, Kalinak, and Dyer) and Music Studies (Stilwell, and Thomas). For film scholars wishing to handle film music, culturalist analysis is a convenient way to dodge the problem of musicological analysis. Since the interest here is in the cultural phenomena and ideological messages constructed by the film and the music—the 'content'—close musicological analysis, which is traditionally formalistic (Neumeyer and Buhler 2001, pp. 17–18), can be avoided.

## FILM MUSIC IN FILM STUDIES

Film scholars address music as one of the constituent elements of the film 'text.' Or they simply ignore music altogether and give total pre-eminence to the visuals. Our perception of the world is multimodal (Bertelson and De Gelder 2004), but neuro-psychologically the vision is the dominant sense in humans (Colavita 1974; Colavita and Weisberg 1979;

Posner et al. 1976), which led to a cultural visual bias.<sup>7</sup> Film scholars, for a long time, have addressed film as a predominantly visual medium, hence downplaying or totally neglecting the role of music and sound. Early film theorists—such as Hugo Münsterberg (1916)—focussed their attention on cinema as a visual art form. Ricciotto Canudo defined cinema as a ‘plastic art in motion’ (Canudo 1988), linking it to the visual arts and thus legitimising the visual bias—which was quite appropriate at the time, given that there were no sound elements on the filmstrip but just images. Yet, with the coming of sound—when a soundtrack was added next to the visual track on the filmstrip, thus undeniably becoming part of the film medium/artefact—the visual-biased trend continued, fuelled by such theoreticians as Rudolf Arnheim, who decried sound cinema as a mortification of the true cinematic art (Arnheim 1957, p. 154). And Andre Bazin—to name one whose realism-based idea of cinema is the opposite of Arnheim’s—hardly mentions sound elements in his 1940/1950s writings. And when he discusses the ‘mummy complex’ (the desire to crystallise and preserve one person’s semblance from ageing and death) as the underlying motivation behind art in general, he compares cinema with paintings and sculptures, again highlighting cinema’s visual component (Bazin 2005, p. 9). The visual bias provided a perfect excuse to ignore film music. And those few who approached music did so by devising analytical categories that are deeply influenced by the visual bias.

Consider the traditional terminological pairs ‘parallelism/counterpoint’ and ‘comment/accompaniment.’ When music is emotionally and formally linked to the images—for example, a bucolic landscape accompanied by pastoral music—that would be an instance of ‘parallelism’ or ‘synchronism.’ When music is in contrast—a bucolic landscape with industrial-rock music, let us say—that would be ‘counterpoint, or ‘asynchronism.’<sup>8</sup> Classical examples can be found in some of Rene Clair’s films—in *The Million* (1931) a number of people are fighting in an opera house to get hold of a winning lottery ticket kept in a coat pocket, and the noisy sound of a football match is ironically dubbed over the visuals—and in the first Soviet sound films—the finale of *Deserter* (1933, dir. Pudovkin), where the violent repression and the defeat of the demonstrators is scored with a triumphant March.<sup>9</sup> These two terms—parallelism and counterpoint—are controversial both from a terminological point of view and from a theoretical one. First of all, counterpoint in music does not mean a struggle between two melodies that have nothing

to do with each other. Counterpoint is the interweaving of two melodic lines having two distinct characters but being in harmonic and rhythmic fusion. Using ‘counterpoint’ to say that music and visuals are in sharp contrast is not quite correct—pace Eisenstein.<sup>10</sup> From a theoretical point of view, Kathryn Kalinak criticises these terms precisely because they are connected to the long-standing and still active ‘visual bias’ of film studies: ‘Sound was divided according to its function in relation to the image: either parallel or in counterpoint to the visual image. Such nomenclature assumes that meaning is contained in the visual image and that sound can only reinforce or alter what is already there’ (Kalinak 1992, p. 24).

Similarly, the comment/accompaniment category implies that music is a subsidiary element of the visuals, not really operating on the same level: the key level is the visual, music can add its own comment or simply provide a sort of accompanying background. In both cases, no real interaction and mutual influence is implied. But the comment/accompaniment pair has also engendered an analytical prejudice. Consider the term ‘comment.’ The agent that offers a commentary on something is typically external to the event/object that s/he is commenting—think of the sportscaster and a football match, or a Dante scholar commenting on the *Divina Commedia*. The first implication is that ‘comment’ encourages thinking of music as something not internal to the film. Moreover, for a comment to be interesting, it is important that said comment should add something to the commented event. If we had a voice-over commentary in a documentary that merely described what we are already and clearly seeing in the visuals—‘You can see here the ants carrying seeds into their nest’—we would judge said comment pointless and redundant. That would not even be a comment proper but a voice *accompanying* what we are seeing. We expect a comment to explain and to disclose meanings—for example, why those ants are doing what they are doing. Thinking of music as a comment leads to think that music is noteworthy only when it does something foregrounded and meaningful.

This comment/accompaniment division has some discriminatory impact on where the analytical focus is directed, with instances of film music automatically dismissed or celebrated according to which category they belong to. Bernard Herrmann is often singled out as one of the best film composers ever, even praised as the ‘Beethoven of Film Music.’<sup>11</sup> Herrmann is famous not so much for his melodic flair as for his penchant for character psychology and narrative subtleties.

For him, music has to add to the images what is not visible: ‘Whatever music can do in a film is something mystical. The camera can only do so much; the actors can only do so much; the director can only do so much. But the music can tell you what people are thinking and feeling, and that is the real function of music’ (in Thomas 1991, p. 177). Similarly, Ennio Morricone is considered a prominent master of film scoring, whose music is not a background simply accompanying the action but ‘foreground music’ (Leinberger 2004, p. 18). Indeed, Morricone strongly rejects music that simply replicates the visuals: ‘I think that music should be present when the action stops and crystallises;...when...there are thoughts and introspection, not when the action has its own narrative dynamic’ (in Miceli 1982, p. 319). Coincidentally, when John Williams is criticised, his detractors typically resort to the allegedly illustrative and duplicative nature of his music: ‘plastering movies with bits of what we know, rather than revealing an unseen dimension’ (Lebrecht 2002, online). Herrmann’s and Morricone’s music—in their estimators’ view—adds something subtle to the film and hence is superior: it is a comment. Williams’s—in his detractors’ view—is just a superficial decoration adding nothing meaningful: it is an accompaniment. The comment/accompaniment and counterpoint/parallelism distinctions have come to be improperly charged with an automatic value judgement. They originated from theoreticians<sup>12</sup> and were soon spread through practitioners who were professedly against the new sound technology and advocated ‘audiovisual counterpoint’ or ‘asynchronism’ as the only way to save film art from becoming ‘talkies’ or ‘photographed theatre.’<sup>13</sup> Consequently, sound or music that was not asynchronous/in counterpoint with the images was seen as detrimental to film art. And the Adorno/Eisler book *Composing for the Films*, with his unsparing critique of Hollywood music, also had much influence in reinforcing the prejudice against accompaniment music—for example, the typical Hollywood leitmotiv<sup>14</sup> associated with a character is compared to a ‘musical lackey, who announces his master with an important air even though the eminent personage is clearly recognizable to everyone’ (Adorno and Eisler 2007, p. 3).

A new wave of film scholarship aiming to treat film as an audiovisual unit was launched at the beginning of the 1980s and blossomed in the 1990s. Early contributors were Michel Chion and Rick Altman,<sup>15</sup> with an agenda striving to overturn the traditional ‘visual bias’ of film scholarship. As one of the audio elements of films, film music has become an

important element in the audiovisual paradigm. Therefore, film scholars had to come up with an approach to the study of music in films and some theoretical/analytical tools to deal with it. Musicological approaches have been generally eschewed that might be too focussed on film music as ‘music’—that is, ‘discuss[ing] music *for* films...instead of analyzing music *in* films’ (Altman 2000, p. 340)—and that might demand too specialistic competences from film scholars not possessing an adequate musical education. From a Film Studies perspective, music is a sound element to be addressed as it appears within the film. Film scholars adopted tools already in use in Film Studies that had been imported from literary semiotics and narratology, on the one hand, and Lacanian psychoanalysis corrected with Althusserian ideology, on the other, both pillars of the then-dominant paradigm of post-structuralism—also called ‘Screen Theory,’ because it was principally disseminated through the British journal *Screen*.

Semiotics is interested in signs and in what they communicate. Film semiotics adapted tools that had been created for textual analysis of literary works, that is, texts whose basic material is verbal language. Although the post-structuralist semiotics moved away from linguistics—as attested by Christian Metz’s move to Lacanian Psychoanalysis (Metz 1986)—its approach still shows such derivation and such focus, mainly as to the predominant interest in ‘message reading.’ When applied to film—whose material is a combination of images and sound in which, in a strict sense, such linguistic analytical categories would be fitting only to intertitles and the verbal content of dialogue—some limitations arise. One is that semiotics works with signs (something that refers to something else or, in C.S. Peirce’s words, ‘anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person’ [Peirce 1998, p. 478]) and codes (sets of conventions used to interpret sign systems and to communicate meanings). Each means of communication has its own signs and codes, and consequently there are semiotic studies of music (Tarasti 1994), theatre (Fischer-Lichte 1992), art (O’Toole 1994), comic books (Saraceni 2003), cinema (Metz 1974), and so on. Therefore, when it comes to music in films, there is the tendency to approach the task with a ‘multi-code’ mindset, that is, to think of cinema as one code system and of music as another code system, the two of them interacting in some way. This approach promotes a ‘separatist’ conception of images and music and perpetrates those old parallelism/counterpoint and accompaniment/comment pairs, which

are still around in the present day, possibly because, from the 1970s onwards, they have somewhat received a renewed theoretical validation from this ‘multi-code mindset.’ Indeed, in all these traditional pairs an idea was already subtended that music and film were two separate entities—two sign systems—working on two separate levels, sometimes working in tandem, sometimes struggling against each other. When music is ‘parallel’ or ‘accompanies’ the musical semiotic system simply replicates the filmic semiotic system—that is, music is in a ‘slave’ position to the visuals’ ‘master’ position—and, as in the old days, the risk is to prejudicially consider all the film/music interactions that fall within the parallelism/accompaniment category as less interesting or even not interesting at all. The greater (and often sole) importance given to communication and messages also makes semiotics naturally in favour of ‘comment and counterpoint’ over ‘accompaniment and parallelism.’ Parallel or accompanying music has mostly a formal/structural function rather than a communicative one: Mickey-Mousing does not communicate much. Alternatively, because the music does not fight against the images but is subservient to them, such cases of ‘parallelism/accompaniment’ might be considered interesting only as long as they are ‘read’ as communicating some sort of ideological manipulation. For example, the analysis would deconstruct how the music is accommodately complicit with the ideological tenets of society represented through the apparatus of mainstream cinema, whose aim is to promote conformism and repress counter-readings and critical thinking.<sup>16</sup>

This drive to ‘interpret’ the film derives from the post-structuralist fusion of the linguistic-based Semiotics with Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian Psychoanalysis, which was a good marriage because Lacan redesigned the Freudian models integrating elements from linguistics—the psyche works as a language and the use of language is a powerful manifestation of the psyche. Textual analysis already had per se a penchant for interpreting texts, that is, unearthing their less obvious meanings. Similarly Psychoanalysis—whether Freudian or Lacanian—is interested in interpreting the psyche’s contents through its external manifestations—dreams being the most obvious case. To the interpreting concern of Semiotics, Psychoanalysis added its own concern for interpretation. The output was a theoretical framework in which the film-viewing experience was described as uncannily similar to dreaming or to a hypnotic status, which renders the viewer particularly vulnerable, acritical, and passive. Such situation is perfect to pour into the viewer’s

mind any ideological indoctrination without him or her noticing that. Two founding texts of the academic study of film music, Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies* and Caryl Flinn's *Strains of Utopia*, stem from this background. Gorbman adopts Lacanian Psychoanalysis to study why film music is so effective despite its inaudibility: it is so precisely because viewers typically do not pay attention to music that music is allowed to bypass their critical awareness and connect directly to the viewers' unconscious. Film music is like the 'canned music' played in elevators and supermarkets. Its function is to soothe the consumers/viewers and to make them less problematic social elements; if they think less, they are supposed to buy more—in both senses of the term. Music is like an anaesthetic that lowers the listener's critical threshold (Gorbman 1987, pp. 5–7 and 57–64). Flinn explains the success of classical-styled Romantic Hollywood music in terms of its ability of evoking a sense of nostalgia and of triggering reassuring regressions. This 'out-fashioned' music has a soothing effect on listeners since it evokes a 'romantic' past, happier times in which people (supposedly) lived a simpler life in more cohesive communities, as opposed to the fragmentation, individualism, and complexity of contemporary society: music creates a false consciousness that keeps hidden the dominant capitalist ideology at work in Hollywood (Flinn 1992, pp. 70–90). By baring the film's hidden ideological constructs, psychoanalytic film analysis aims to make the viewer aware of the unconscious processes at work and of the ideological manipulation s/he is undergoing during film viewing.

Besides the multi-code problem of semiotics and the 'hermeneutic impulse' (Bordwell 1996, p. 24) of psychoanalysis, there is a shared issue in their adoption of a 'communications model.' In such model, the key interest is in the message being communicated—the 'content'—and less in the material and structural way in which this message is carried—the form. The film form is seen like a box that carries a content—the 'message'—and the analyst opens the box, takes the content out, and throws the box away.<sup>17</sup> In a communications model, film is seen primarily as a vehicle for messages. Coming to film music, primary attention is, again, given to those instances of musical comments or 'audiovisual counterpoints' that bring a message, while such formal agency of music as, say, building the rhythm of a scene or emphasising with fitting orchestral colour and timbres the chiaroscuro or the colour patterns of the cinematography are given secondary attention, if any at all. Music that comments is music that communicates some meaning, it is 'high-grade' film music;

music that accompanies is not really communicating anything: it is 'low-grade' film music.

In a communications model, with the first focus of interest fixed on the message, the second focus is on the sender of the message—with the receiver mostly seen as the passive final destination of the communication chain on which the message impacts. In communications, if someone sends a message, her/his motivations for sending it and the explicit and implicit points that s/he places in the message are quite central, and I need to know who the sender of the message is to fully interpret the implicit points and the connotations. If I receive the following message: 'Today Betsy was milked again by little Scottie', I need to know who the sender is. If the sender is Joe the Farmer and I know he owns cows and has a little nephew called Scottie who enjoys lending a helpful hand, then the message means that Betsy the cow was milked by the helpful Scottie once more, and consequently, I form a positive idea of this little Scottie person. If the message was sent by Joe the Disenchanted Grandpa saying that his little grandson Scottie came to meet the grandparents only to get, as usual, money from grandma Betsy, then my idea of little Scottie is much different: an opportunistic little brat. Note that also in Pragmatics, which devotes much attention to the practical use and contextual interpretation of communication exchanges, there is a basic orientation towards the sender: for example, John Austin's locutory, illocutory, and perlocutory acts can be defined as such not in relation to the receiver's but in relation to the sender's intention (Austin 1975). Semiotics came with the basic principle of analysing texts without resorting to biographical data or psychological profiling of the real author: everything useful for the analysis is to be found in the text itself. Yet, in order to fully assess and interpret the meanings of a text in a communications model, it is essential to construct a sender from whom this text has been transmitted. There is no communication without a sender. A 'narrator' and an 'implied author' are needed who can be constructed out of the textual cues themselves. We may either have no idea of who the author in flesh and blood of a given narrative was—we may find an old book by a nameless author—or, even if the author is known, the real person might have different beliefs and proclivities than the ones that emerge as the author from the reading of the book. In any case, the semiotic analysis is still possible because we have the text, and that is all we need. In Literary Studies, to build this hierarchy that descends from the real author (the person in flesh and blood), to the implied author (the system of values,



beliefs, and judgements that are ascribable to the author from cues in the text) to the narrator or more narrators, in case of smaller narratives within the larger narrative (the voice/s that tell/s the story) is rather straightforward. Linguistics is of help: for example, deictics clearly indicate the location of the narrator within the story ('here' rather than 'there'), pronouns give an indication of who is sending the message and whom the message is sent to ('I am talking to you' rather than 'She is talking to us') and verb tenses of what the time-line is on which the various moments of the communication take place ('I am told that he received the gift from a man who had received it from a stranger with the promise that he would give it to someone else one day'). These operations are a bit more difficult when imported into Film Studies because there are no such clear-cut linguistic indicators in films: for example, Francesco Casetti's attempts (Casetti 1999), after Benveniste's Theory of Enunciation, to find the cinematic equivalents of 'I', 'You', 'She/He' in, respectively, the subjective point-of-view shot, in the direct interpellation to the viewer, and in the objective shot does not sound much convincing.<sup>18</sup>

The communications model and its need of a sender may have determined the adoption in film-music studies of the terminological pair 'diegetic/non-diegetic,' adapted from literary narratology and introduced by Claudia Gorbman.<sup>19</sup> Diegetic music is the ambiance music that comes from some source within the narrative world and can be heard by the characters—for example, we see a dance orchestra play and we hear a fox trot, to which the characters dance. Non-diegetic music is the 'comment/accompaniment' music that is external to the film's world and cannot be heard by the characters—if Chrissie at the beginning of *Jaws* had heard the menacing shark motif, she would have rushed back to the shore. And 'metadiegetic' (or 'internal diegetic') is the music that comes from a character's psyche. Again, the precise application of these terms is easier in Literary Studies, as the linguistic indicators are of much help, which is not the case in films.<sup>20</sup> However, this diegetic/non-diegetic pair seems to be the basic analytical category to study the interaction of music and film. For example, it has a central and significant role in James Buhler's account:

Musicals especially often render a strict binary opposition between diegetic and non-diegetic music moot by means of an audio dissolve from source accompaniment, typically a piano, to background orchestral accompaniment....Rick Altman suggests that such audio dissolves mark a

transition from the real to the ideal realm....The *Ol' Man River* sequence from the 1951 version of *Showboat* makes especially effective use of an audio dissolve....While Joe sings the tune at an oppressively slow, dirge-like tempo, the camera remains fixed on him as wisps of white fog floats by.... Unlike the stage show, where the black community gathers around Joe as he sings, and they join him after his first chorus, the black community of the 1951 film is pushed to the margins....Thus, his performance in the film does not receive the confirmation of a diegetic community as it does in the show. Instead, it is followed by an audio dissolve to a non-diegetic orchestra and wordless choir....The musical effect of the film, therefore, is highly ambivalent, because the community has been displaced to the transcendent and universalising non-diegetic register: for the mythic community thus engendered remains that—not real, not yet actual. The film mirrors society: where society pushes the black community to the side, so too does the film. (Buhler 2001, pp. 42–43)

As expected, an approach based on a communications model tends to guide the attention to prominent film/music moments where the music offers a comment and therefore there is some ‘message’ whose meaning can be interpreted—‘The film mirrors society.’ These prominent moments are often those in which music moves from the diegetic to the non-diegetic level. To stress how meaningful these moments are, the concept of ‘Fantastical Gap’ has been coined to designate such diegetic/non-diegetic dialectics and that transitional intermediate area between the diegetic and non-diegetic (Stilwell 2007). The term itself suggests that this trespassing of the music is seen as a privileged locus for interpretation, because something almost magical happens—*fantastical*—something of great valence, and hence of great significance (More on this in Chap. 7).

The theoretical debate over the diegetic/non diegetic positioning has been widespread and lively. Recent contributions are Giorgio Biancorosso’s discussion of the unexpected shift from one level to the other as an ‘epistemological joke,’ similar to the ambiguous or ‘multi-stable images’ studied by the psychology of perception (Biancorosso 2009); Daniel Yacavone’s philosophical distinction between a diegetic world (that inhabited by the characters) and a film world (the overall film system) (Yacavone 2012); Jerrold Levinson, who adds a further term, ‘quasi-diegetic’ (meaning music that is diegetic but has some unrealistic incongruity, such as no room reverberation) and creates a subdivision of non-diegetic music coming from the ‘narrator’ (for example,

the standard Hollywood score) and non-diegetic music coming from the ‘implied film-maker’ (for example, the use of music in Godard’s films) (Levinson 1996). On the one hand, David Neumeyer has defended the use of these terms as they are, and he embeds them into a theoretical proposal aimed at clarifying their usage (Neumeyer 2009, 27). On the other hand, Ben Winters has criticised the use of these terms as inexact and ‘straightjacketing’ and has argued that the so-called non-diegetic music is, on the contrary, something that belongs to the diegesis (Winters 2010, p. 229). Sergio Miceli proposed to drop the diegesis-related terminology and rename the three ‘internal level’ (formerly ‘diegetic’), ‘external level’ (formerly ‘non-diegetic’), and ‘mediated level’ (formerly ‘metadiegetic’) (Miceli 2011). Aaron Hunter employs the term ‘trans-diegetic’ to refer to the music that moves from the one level to the other and vice versa—something similar to Stilwell’s ‘Fantastical Gap’ (Hunter 2012). This debate seems to be more philosophically focussed on the ontology of film music—what realm the music belongs to and where it comes from—rather than analytically focussed on what the reasons are for such a trespassing, what the function of the music is.

To summarise the positions we have surveyed so far, music scholars are mostly interested in the micro-analysis (detailed musicological score analysis), in connecting the overall design of the score to the film narrative (not differently from how they would analyse the musical dramaturgy of an opera score), or they take film music as a launching pad for talking about music in general. Film scholars—but also music scholars willing to analyse music with Film Studies tools—have adopted a theoretical framework blending semiotics and psychoanalysis, which has, I think, a series of limitations. It comes with a multi-code mindset, which leads to thinking about film and music as two separate and competing entities; this causes a bias for counterpoint and against parallelism. It stems from a communications model that favours content interpretation over analysis *sensu stricto*, and, again, this favours counterpoint over parallelism; a communications model also makes the interest stronger for ‘where music comes from?’ rather than ‘what does music do in the film?’ and this leads the debate to concentrate on the diegetic/non-diegetic placement of music. The import of a set of psychic mechanisms from psychoanalysis—such as the suturing effect, primary and secondary identification, illusionistic effect of the cinematic apparatus and so on—posits a viewer that is but a passive subject responding in predictable and mechanical ways: a deconstructionist hermeneutics aimed at unmasking

the deceitful ideological messages is thus favoured. The semio-psycho-analytic framework in general gives particular salience to the film/music moments where music comments, while it underestimates or neglects those moments where the music ‘simply’ accompanies. In the next chapter I survey some more recent attempts at bridging the gap between Music Studies and Film Studies and at eradicating the separatist conception.

## NOTES

1. Named after the late-nineteenth-century theorist Hugo Riemann, it was developed by Lewin (1987). For an introduction, see Cohn (1998). It should be noted that such strongly formalistic and textual-analysis-oriented approaches as the Schenkerian and the Neo-Riemannian do not represent the majority of contemporary Music Studies.
2. See, for example, Murphy (2014) and Lehman (2012b). In his study of chordal progressions, Schneller prefers a more tonal-oriented approach called ‘Modal Interchange’ (Schneller 2013).
3. Actually, this is encouraging for everyone, because obtaining the access to the full film scores for analysis is not as easy as going to a library and asking for the score to, say, *Parsifal*; it can indeed be quite daunting to find out where the materials are and how and from whom one should get the permission to access them, and to verify if the retrieved materials are indeed the original ones. On this, see Wright (1989) and Winters (2007a).
4. *The Journal of Film Music Online*, <http://www.equinoxpub.com/journals/index.php/JFM>. Accessed on 2 December 2016.
5. A sharp critique of Adorno and Eisler’s book is in Miceli (2009, pp. 536–537).
6. Dyer (1979, 2010, 2012).
7. On film music and cultural biases based on the visual dominance, see Kalinak (1992, pp. 20–39).
8. On the origin of the term, see Kalinak (1992, pp. 20–29).
9. Audio/visual counterpoint in early sound films, Soviet ones in particular, is discussed and exemplified in Thompson (1980).
10. The same criticism of Eisenstein’s use of the term ‘counterpoint’ can be found in Chion (1994, pp. 36–37), who suggests replacing it with ‘audiovisual dissonance.’ A critique of Eisenstein’s theory of audiovisual counterpoint and ‘vertical montage’ is offered in Cook (1998, pp. 57–97).
11. See Neumeyer et al. (2000, p. 21). The privileged consideration that Herrmann has long enjoyed is examined in Rosar (2003): ‘[He was the

- object of the] first dissertation devoted to a film composer....It could almost be said that Herrmann studies emerged as a field of academic inquiry prior to film music studies as a whole' (p. 145).
12. The 'parallelism/counterpoint' and 'comment/accompaniment' pairs can be traced back to the late 1920s, most notably in the famous 'Statement' on sound: Eisenstein et al. (1994). This binary separation was then further elaborated by Arnheim (1957, p. 209), Balázs (1970, p. 236) and Kracauer (1965, pp. 139–142).
  13. On the resistance against the 'talkies,' see Wierzbicki (2009, pp. 96–101).
  14. The use of leitmotiv in cinema has been criticised on the grounds of its being inadequate for the film medium (Adorno and Eisler 2007, pp. 2–3) and because the film–music 'leitmotiv' is not the Wagnerian leitmotiv sensu stricto (Miceli 2009, pp. 667–670). It has been proposed that 'condensed leitmotiv' would be a better term for film music (Brown 1994, pp. 97–118).
  15. The journal issue *Yale French Studies* 60: Cinema/Sound, edited by Rick Altman, was devoted to film sound and brought attention to the need of seeing cinema as an audiovisual art (Altman 1980). The focus on film sound was established by Weis and Belton (1985) and then consolidated by Chion (1994) and Altman (1992). The study of film as not a visual-based but as an audiovisual medium seems now to be well established, carried on, for example, by Chion (2009), Beck and Grajeda (2008) and Donnelly (2005, 2014).
  16. See, for example, Anahid Kassabian's reading of Hollywood music as 'assimilating' (Kassabian 2001, pp. 2–3) or Heather Laing's feminist approach (Laing 2007), or Neil Lerner's interpretation of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Star Wars* as authoritarian and masculinist scores (Lerner 2004).
  17. For example, the term 'style' is defined as an ineffable and even 'unidentifiable' concept by the semiologist Christian Metz (1995, p. 183).
  18. Casetti too seems to have abandoned this line of research and has turned to Culturalism, as he stated during the conference 'Il lavoro sul film. La Post-Analisi' at the University of Turin, Italy, in December 2003—see Carluccio and Villa (2005). Indeed, his latest books deal with cinema, culture, and society (Casetti 2008, 2015). The pitfalls of adapting the enunciation theory to films are detailed in Bordwell (1985, pp. 21–26). Yet, a revival of Casetti and Metz's cinematic Theory of Enunciation under the framework of Cognitive Psychology was attempted in Buckland (2000).
  19. The terms intradiegetic, extradiegetic, and metadiegetic are inherited from Genette (1972), in which they are used to define the location of the narrating voice in relation to the narrative world, thus permitting to identify a nesting that is helpful to the narratological analysis. So, an

- intradiegetic narrator would be the voice of some character telling the story from within the narrative world (e.g., Philip Marlowe in a Raymond Chandler's novel); an extradiegetic narrator would be the often omniscient narratorial voice placed outside of the narrative world (e.g., the narrating voice in the Lord of the Rings books); and the metadiegetic narrator would be one character telling a story within the main narrative, in which story he acts as a extradiegetic narrator (e.g., the Mr Mulliner character in P.G. Woodehouse's *Mr Mulliner Speaking* [1929]). The application of Genette's categories to film music is discussed in Gorbman (1987, pp. 20–26), who modified them into 'diegetic' and 'non-diegetic'.
20. 'The idea of assigning different music to different narrative levels clearly results from a tendency to see cinema in overtly literary narrative terms.... Yet while Genette's description of these discrete levels is entirely convincing when we are faced with the epistolary narrative of a novel, it is far less obviously applicable to most narrative cinema' (Winters 2010, pp. 22–26).

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