Semiotics, Pragmatics, and Metaphor in Film Music Analysis

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COLLEGE OF MUSIC

SEMIOTICS, PRAGMATICS, AND METAPHOR

IN FILM MUSIC ANALYSIS

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the
College of Music
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2006

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the continuous support of Michael Buchler and Matthew Shaftel. I can’t thank them enough for their encouragement, patience, and their enormous contribution to this dissertation. Throughout these years, they shared with me their knowledge and comprehensive vision, and provided advice and guidance not only in my research, but in every aspect of my professional life.

I especially appreciate of James Mathes for making possible my graduate study at Florida State University. And I am grateful to Denise Von Glahn for her insight and support. Moreover, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the College of Music at Florida State University for giving me a solid education and the best time of my life.

Finally, thanks to my family in Argentina (Ma, Pa, Karina, and Linda) who encouraged me to follow my dreams and to work hard to make them come true.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes an interdisciplinary approach that aims to broaden the music-theoretical strategies employed to analyze film music by borrowing analytical models from the disciplines of semiotics and pragmatics. The examination and application of semiotic and pragmatic models developed by Fauconnier and Turner, Lakoff and Johnson, and Peirce (among others), is complemented by traditional music analysis. This interface crystallizes in considerations of formal design, melodic contour, pitch content, harmonic gestures, cadential formulas, and other structural aspects of the music. The repertoire analyzed consists primarily of recent Hollywood film soundtracks from a wide variety of genres including cartoons, musicals, and documentaries. The result is an analytical framework that allows for the recognition of fundamental processes lying at the very heart of film music interpretation.
CHAPTER 1

PRAGMATICS AND SEMIOTICS

1.1 Introduction

Many of the techniques used for the analysis of Western classical music do not translate well to the analysis of film music. Hierarchical organization of musical elements is undermined by extra-musical sonic elements (dialogue, sound effects) that are heard in conjunction with the music. The perception of motivic development and instrumental texture is challenged by diegetic music, which most often introduces new musical figures and new instrumentation. Formal unity is often weakened by the score’s layout throughout the film. And, most importantly, the final score is more than the composer’s creation, it is a collaborative blend of the artistic, philosophical, practical, and technical visions of the director, composer, sound engineer, and others.

Existing analytical models provide a wide array of tools that prove effective when applied to their intended objects of study. However, no single model seems uniquely suitable for film music because it is, by nature, a multi-parametric artistic manifestation. Therefore, this dissertation takes an interdisciplinary approach that aims to broaden the music-theoretical strategies employed to analyze film music by borrowing analytical models from the disciplines of semiotics and pragmatics.

1.2 Pragmatics and Semiotics

The disciplines of semiotics and pragmatics might generally be defined as follow:

Semiotics: science that studies signs and how they produce meaning. It seeks to unravel the nature, origin, and evolution of signs.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Marcel Danesi and Paul Perron 1999, 40.
**Pragmatics**: discipline that studies meaning, focusing on the relationship among signs, their users, and context, rather than on reference, truth, or grammar.

A basic distinction between semiotics and pragmatics is that the former focuses on the relation between signs (i.e. signifier) and what they represent (i.e. signified), whereas the latter focuses on the relation between signs and their users. As a general rule we can uphold that semiotics searches for meaning by considering sign production and evolution, while pragmatics searches for meaning by considering intention and context.

Semiotics and pragmatics differ in their manner of incorporating contextual information. Semiotics resorts to context only during *indexical* representation.² Pragmatics, on the other hand, simultaneously integrates the elements under analysis and the context in which they are presented; that is, context provides the necessary clues that allow the receiver to interpret the message.

In practice, distinguishing the semiotic and pragmatic fields of study is as difficult as structuring a relationship between the two. In fact, separating the two modes of inquiry seems unrealistic; Francois Nemo acknowledges that “a people-free semantics is just as impossible as an object-free pragmatics…Interpretation may be described as a process of unification of semantic indications and contextual elements.”³

The point of interface between semiotics and pragmatics rests in their common search for meaning, either as embodied (semiotics) or specified by the context (pragmatics). In trying to construct a model that integrates the two disciplines, theorists have developed three different perspectives: 1) Semiotics as a subdiscipline of pragmatics (pragmaticism), 2) Pragmatics as a subdiscipline of semiotics (semioticism), 3) Semiotics and pragmatics as complementary yet independent disciplines (complementarism).⁴

Both fields are extensive in-and-of themselves. An exhaustive exploration of these fields in conjunction with film music is far beyond the scope of this (and any other single) study. Instead, I intend to apply only specific concepts from each discipline to the

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² *Indexical* signs (often viewed as part of the semiotic tripartition) specify their representational content only in context. Accordingly, their study should fall within the realm of pragmatics. See section 4 below.

³ Nemo 1999, 357-387.

analysis of film music. From pragmatics I will borrow the notions of metaphor, irony and metonymy. From semiotics I will borrow the taxonomic division of icon, index, and symbol.\(^5\)

### 1.3 Pragmatic Processes

One of the main subjects of pragmatics, the study of metaphor, has made its way out of linguistics and into the broader field of perception and cognition. Frequently, the understanding of meaning in film music is analogous to the process by which we understand metaphors.

A metaphor is a comparison (explicit or implicit) between two different elements. The names traditionally assigned to these elements are: source domain (or vehicle) and target domain (or tenor). In the metaphor “Nancy is a rose,” “Nancy” is the target domain, and “a rose” is the source domain. Our understanding of metaphor relies on our ability to foreground the similarity between source and target domains. We achieve this by projecting relevant features of the source domain onto the target domain. Along these lines, Lakoff and Johnson argue that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.”\(^6\)

A cross-modal metaphor is one in which words that belong to one sensory modality are extended to express another sensory modality. An example of a literary cross-modal metaphor is “The dark sound of thunder,” in which the semantic sphere of “dark” addresses the visual medium, while “sound of thunder” addresses the aural medium. In addition, when interpreting metaphors that integrate film and music, we must recognize their cross-perceptual nature (i.e. metaphors expressed through two different perceptual fields) to distinguish them from (literary) cross-modal metaphors.\(^7\)

The production and comprehension of a metaphor entails a process based on an overlap of semantic (or semiotic, if considered outside literary examples) spheres. There are three models that help explain the process through which one derives meaning from

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\(^5\) I will define and explore these terms in detail in subsequent chapters.

\(^6\) Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 5.

\(^7\) The music is perceived auditively while the images on the screen are perceived visually.
this overlap: 1) Synesthetic metaphors, as developed by Lawrence Marks; 2) Conceptual metaphors, as developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson; and 3) Conceptual Integration Networks (CINs), developed by Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier. I will discuss these processes in Chapter 2, and apply them to the analysis of film music in Chapters 3 through 6.

According to the characteristics mapped between source domain and target domain, we can conceive the following categories of similarity: 1) iconic: based on the structural features of the source domain, and 2) symbolic: based on the socio-cultural associations of the source domain. Iconic similarity, as foregrounded through a pragmatic process, can be further subdivided into: a) qualitative: which addresses the linear (i.e. continuous one-dimensional) parameters of the source domain, and b) structural: which addresses non-linear parameters of the source domain. Irony, often considered a subcategory of metaphor, employs the same cognitive processes but differs in the intended meaning. Reevaluating a metaphorical statement as ironic requires reference to perceived intent and truth status. A summary of the foregoing classification scheme with some remarks on its application to the analysis of film music will be provided in the “chapter outline” in Section 5.

1.4 Semiotic Functions

Certain musical features provide mental access to extramusical elements without the mediation of a metaphorical process. When (musical) ideas clearly stand for what they signify, we can speak of them as semiotic constructs, or signs. Metaphors might incorporate (or rely on the understanding of) signs, but the process through which the audience understands those signs does not fall under the pragmatics of metaphor. Signs

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8 This theory focuses on precise neural accounts through computational models of embodied enactments, scientifically researched under the “Neural Theory of Language.” For more information and online articles visit: [http://www.icsi.berkeley.edu/NTL/index.php](http://www.icsi.berkeley.edu/NTL/index.php)

9 Linear parameters of the music are those constituent elements that exhibit a continuous one-dimensional structure (such as pitch, dynamic level, etc). Non-linear parameters of the music are those constituent elements not structured in a one-dimensional continuum (such as formal design, cadential formulas, etc).

10 For an overview, please refer to Figure 12.1 in Chapter 12.
are studied under the umbrella of semiotics, as long as there is no contextual element that modifies their meaning. Nonetheless, signs can be culture-specific; in fact, most signs (such as language for that matter) are produced for and by a specific culture to allow communication among its members.

Pierce developed a taxonomy based on the relationship between a sign and what it represents. My approach to a study of musical signs will include two of the three categories proposed by Pierce:¹¹

1) Icons: signifier and signified are related by similarity.¹²
2) Indexes: signifier and signified are related by proximity.
3) Symbols: the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrarily established.

A sign can reflect more than one type of relationship between its representamen (sign vehicle) and its object (referent). Such a possibility, however, does not invalidate the usefulness of this taxonomic structure. In Chapters 7 and 8, I will further examine these parameters exploring the authenticity of iconic signs as well as the validity of indexical relationships.

1.5 Chapter Outline

PRAGMATIC PROCESSES

Chapter 2: Metaphor

The aim of this chapter is to lay a foundation upon which the following four chapters will build. It is introductory in nature and it does not include the application of theories of metaphor to the analysis of music. Readers with sufficient background on the subject might skip this chapter. The main topics

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¹¹ In Chapter 2, I substantiate my decision not to consider indexes as sign functions, but rather as a processes through which signs are produced.

¹² In music, iconic similarity will be limited to the aural characteristics of the signifier and the signified excluding the types of similarities highlighted through metaphorical processes.
included are: conceptual metaphors, the partial nature of mappings, unidirectionality and asymmetry, similarity and correlations, universality, conceptual integration networks, irony, and metonymy. In subsequent chapters, I apply the analytical models developed to specific musical examples.

Chapter 3: Qualitative Iconic Metaphors

I propose an analytical framework that draws on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory, and on Mark Johnson’s image schema theory. I examine the interaction of music and other elements in the film by modeling parallels between continuous one-dimensional parameters in the music (pitch, dynamic level, tempo, etc) and continuous one-dimensional parameters in the visuals or narrative. I illustrate the application of this model to examples of Mickey-Mousing (i.e. mapping the physical movements seen on the screen into musical space) and general mood-music.

Chapter 4: Structural Iconic Metaphors

I explore the central characteristics that define a structural iconic metaphor. This (more elaborate) type of iconic metaphor foregrounds some similarity between the structure of the music, and the structure of the film’s narrative. I will begin with the cadence as primary structural event, and extend the analytical method to explore the music’s formal design, as well as troping. 

Through the analyses of examples, I speculate how the music provides referential and/or narrative clues for the understanding of the film.

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13 Opera composers drew on structural metaphors to achieve some type of parallelism between events in the music and events in the narrative. Examples of this could be observed in Monteverdi’s choice of tonal areas, Mozart’s manipulation of formal design, Schoenberg’s treatment of twelve-tone rows, etc. See: Shaftel 2002, 309-329. See also the forthcoming article on Mozart’s Figaro by Matthew Shaftel in Sonata Form, Dramatic Subtext, and Musical Irony in the Trio from Le Nozze di Figaro, edited by Gordon Sly.
Chapter 5: Symbolic Metaphors

I employ Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration networks model to analyze cases where the socio-cultural associations (rather than constituent parameters) of both the source and the target domains blend to generate meaning. Symbolic metaphor is at play when a segment of a film is accompanied by music that carries a prominent cultural baggage, or music whose lyrics explicitly (or implicitly) contain clues for understanding the film.\textsuperscript{14}

Chapter 6: Irony

Interpreting irony entails a process akin to the interpretation of symbolic metaphors. The main distinction, however, lies in the intended meaning, which is established through an incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. I briefly explore some of the most recent writings on the analysis of musical irony and subsequently propose a model for irony based on Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration network theory. Since irony is generally employed to generate humorous situations, my examples are drawn from comedies.

SEMIOTIC FUNCTIONS

Chapter 7: Introduction to Semiotics

As a prologue to the subsequent chapters, I provide a basic history and introduction to the field of semiotics. I will outline the main concepts of icon, index, and symbol. Familiarization with these concepts will help readers understand the chapters on iconic signs and symbols.

\textsuperscript{14} There are numerous instances where the tune of a well-known song is played as part of a film score \textit{without} the sung lyrics. Nevertheless, a clear correlation between the narrative and the absent lyrics can be recognized.
Chapter 8: Musical Semiotics

This is a review of influential writings on musical semiotics. It spans from musical rhetoric in the Baroque period to recent applications of semiotics to musical analysis by Robert Hatten, Kofi Agawu, Eero Tarasti, Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Philip Tagg, Leonard Meyer, and other authors.

Chapter 9: Iconic Signs - Traditional Sound Design and Onomatopoeia

As an element of sound design, music provides clues for the understanding of visuals or narrative. Under this category I analyze how the different parameters of sound (volume, reverb, equalization, panning, etc) and onomatopoeia convey specific signs during the film.

Chapter 10: Non-traditional Sound Design

As an expansion of Chapter 9, I explore the use of onomatopoeia in film music and its interaction with other sound elements in a film. Developing a two-dimensional taxonomic structure that traces the constituent elements of a film soundtrack inside or outside the diegesis, I propose a general framework for understanding how a higher degree of interaction between music and other sound elements of the film can be attained.

Chapter 11: Symbols - Leitmotifs and Topics

I explore the nature and function of leitmotifs and topics in film music. These symbols are commonly employed to establish time or place, introduce and define characters (stereotyping/clichés), as well as to trace changes in a character. I draw primarily on theories by Kofi Agawu, Robert Hatten, and the Stoics.
Chapter 12: Conclusion

This chapter serves as a summary of the semiotic and pragmatic approach to film music analysis outlined in this dissertation. I will evaluate the results obtained and suggest future directions for the application of semiotics and pragmatics to the analysis of film music.

For analytical and practical purposes I treat pragmatic and semiotic processes as independent. Deriving or creating meaning from film music, however, involves a simultaneous application of more than one of these processes. Both inform and rely upon each other. For example, a symbolic metaphor can be (and usually is) based on topics established through qualitative iconic metaphors. Therefore, several of my examples will appear with complementary interpretations in multiple chapters.

The timings for the clips under discussion are supplied after the title of the clip. These timings are not time-code based; they provide the hour, minutes, and seconds, as read by a DVD player. For example “0:03:35 - 1:20:20” should be read: “the scene starts at 0 hour, 3 minutes, and 35 seconds, and ends at 1 hour, 20 minutes, and 20 seconds.”

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15 I intended to include hot-links to the video clips discussed in the text. I eagerly pursued copyright permission from publishers and rights holders but, although they recognized the academic and educational purpose of this dissertation, they demanded large sums of money to supply the corresponding licenses. I regret spending valuable time and money pursuing the copyright permissions; however, my deepest grief comes from omitting many interesting examples and removing the invaluable hot-links from this dissertation.
2.1 Recognition of a Metaphor

A metaphor is “an explicit or implicit comparison, which is literally false.”

Albert Katz suggests that a metaphorical reading occurs when “a predicate violates ‘literal’ category membership.” For example, in the metaphor “My car is a lemon,” the subject “my car” is not a member of the “lemon” category. If this sentence were literally true (as in “My car is a Ford”), it would be a categorization instead of a comparison.

Herbert Clark and Peter Lucy present a three-stage model for recognizing a metaphor; this model calls attention to the literal falsehood of a metaphor:

1) Derive the literal meaning of an utterance.
2) Test the derived meaning against the context of the utterance.
3) If the literal meaning does not make sense, then seek an alternative, non-literal meaning that does make sense in the context.

Reference to context is a key feature in this model. Contextual clues can transform a literally true utterance into a metaphor and vice versa.

For example, the utterance “John is a gator” at first seems a metaphor that correlates the conceptual domains of “John” and

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18 To some extent this phrase could be regarded as a metonymy standing for “My car is a Ford product.”
19 However, Sam Glucksberg and Boaz Keysar believe that absence of (obvious) category membership does not necessarily transform an utterance into a metaphorical comparison: “Metaphoric comparisons involve items at different category levels, and so they are implicit categorization statements. Recognizing a comparison as metaphorical involves the recognition that the comparison is intended as an implicit categorization.” (Glucksberg and Keysar 1990, 12.)
20 Clark and Lucy 1975, 56-57.
21 Since some metaphors rely on features that might not be objectively present in the source domain, such as socio-cultural associations, the understanding of metaphors requires a pragmatic consideration of their usage (i.e. context).
“gator,” with a possible implication of John’s wild or vicious behavior. In the context of football in the southeast United States, this apparently literally false comparison would be regarded as a literally true categorization. Namely, that John either belongs to or roots for the Gators’ team.

Marcel Danesi and Paul Perron offer a formal model that illustrates the structure of a metaphor as a complex sign, in which the target and the vehicle are themselves signs:

\[
\{[A1 \equiv B1] \equiv [A2 \equiv B2]\}
\]

A (1 and 2) corresponds to the signifier, B (1 and 2) corresponds to the signified, and the triple bars should be understood as “stand for.”23 In “John is a gator,” “John” is a sign \([A1 \equiv B1]\), and “gator” is also a sign \([A2 \equiv B2]\). More specifically, Danesi and Perron claim that “it is not the denotative meaning of the vehicle [source domain] that is transferred to the topic, but rather its connotations and annotations.”24 Thus, in Danesi’s and Perron’s model, B2 encompasses only the connotations and annotations of the signifier A2. The resultant model is:

\([A1 \equiv B2]\), where B2 are the connotations and annotations of A2.

By regarding both conceptual domains as signs, this model rightly hints at an overlap of semantic spheres but fails to recognize the process that correlates the conceptual domains.25 The relationship between the source and target domains should not be considered a signifier-signified relationship, but rather a comparison between two conceptual domains that highlights some similarity between them. Furthermore, as I will explain in Chapters 3 and 4, the highlighted similarities mapped from source to target are

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22 Danesi and Perron 1999, 165.

23 Denotation is the primary, obvious, or commonsense meaning of a sign; it is the literal meaning if applied to words. Connotations, on the other hand, are the secondary or derived meaning of a sign, based on socio-cultural or personal associations. Danesi and Perron do not use the “≡” symbol with its customary “if and only if” meaning. Likewise, their use of denotation/connotation/annotation is unconventional. Their notion of annotation involves the “personal associations” projected by the interpreter of a sign. See Danesi and Perron 1999, 80-83.


25 Karl Buhler also describes the metaphoric process as resulting from a “mixture of semantic spheres.” See Buhler 1965.
not limited to the connotations (i.e. socio-cultural associations) and annotations (i.e. personal associations) of the source domain.

2.2 Conceptual Metaphors

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that metaphorical thinking is the foundation of human thought processes and a “central building block for a more inclusive theory of human representations of reality.”\(^{26}\) In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, they present numerous linguistic metaphors and group them into larger, more inclusive, categories of *conceptual metaphors*. For example, the metaphors

- She has a *fertile* imagination.
- The *seeds* of his great ideas were *planted* in his youth.
- Mathematics has many *branches*.
- His ideas have finally come to *fruition*.\(^{27}\)

are tied together by the underlying *IDEAS ARE PLANTS* conceptual metaphor indicating that ideas could be understood in terms of a plant’s life cycle, its physical structure, or its ability to reproduce in an organically conceived manner.\(^{28}\) Likewise, the metaphors

- You are *wasting* my time.
- This gadget will *save* you hours.
- I’ve *invested* a lot of time in her.
- How do you *spend* your time these days?\(^{29}\)

belong to the *TIME IS MONEY* conceptual metaphor. We thus understand the notion of time as having the properties, function, and value of money. Grouping several examples into one conceptual metaphor helps clarify the two conceptual domains upon which the metaphors are structured. In the conceptual metaphor structure “\(A \text{ IS } B\),” \(A\) is the target domain and \(B\) is the source domain. In my third and fourth chapters, I will draw on Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory to build a model for the analysis of *qualitative* and *structural iconic metaphors* in film music.

\(^{26}\) Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 5.  
\(^{27}\) Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 47.  
\(^{28}\) By convention, conceptual metaphors are capitalized.  
\(^{29}\) Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 7-8.
2.3 Multiple Targets for a Source, and Multiple Sources for a Target

Zoltan Kovecses points out that a target might employ multiple sources. Due to the partial nature of metaphorical mappings, different sources would map different characteristics onto the target. For example, the conceptual metaphors HAPPINESS IS LIGHT (as in “She was shining with joy”) and HAPPINESS IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER (as in “She overflowed with joy”) focus on different aspects of the target HAPPINESS. The former identifies the energy that seems to emanate from a happy person, whereas the latter focus on the intensity and control aspects of happiness. Likewise, the same source could be applied to explain multiple targets. For example, the conceptual metaphors THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS (as in “His theories have a strong foundation”) and RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILDINGS (as in “We are building our future together”) share the same source domain.

Only certain elements of the source domain are mapped onto the target; these are the highlighted elements. In contrast, the un-mapped elements are identified as hidden elements. Lakoff and Johnson point out that in the conceptual metaphor AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING “only the foundation and outer shell play a part in the metaphor, not the inner rooms, corridors, roof, etc.”30 To account for mapped elements from a dual perspective, Kovecses distinguishes between highlighting and utilization:

Metaphorical mappings from source to a target are only partial. Only a part of the source domain is utilized in every conceptual metaphor. We have called this partial metaphorical utilization. This partial structure of the source highlights, that is, provides structure for only a part of the of the target concept. We have called this metaphorical highlighting. The part of the target that falls outside the highlighted region is said to be hidden.31

Highlighting and utilization refers to the same feature from different perspectives. Highlighting applies to the target domain, whereas utilization applies to the source domain.32

31 Kovecses 2002, 90.
32 Metaphorical entailments are based on elements of the source domain that are generally known. Kovecses describes them as the “knowledge about the source domain that is carried over to the target.”
2.4 Unidirectionality and Asymmetry

Generally, conceptual metaphors help us understand abstract concepts through more concrete ones:

If we look at structural metaphors of the form A is B, we find that B is more clearly delineated in our experience and typically more concrete than A.\(^{33}\)

Kovecses claims that this concrete/abstract duality is the cause of asymmetry in metaphorical mappings:

Our experiences with the physical world serve as natural and logical foundations for the comprehension of more abstract domains. This explains why in most cases of everyday metaphors the source and target are not reversible.\(^{34}\)

This is valid for conceptual metaphors such as IDEAS ARE PLANTS (see above), or HAPPINESS IS FLUID IN A CONTAINER:

. His heart overflowed with joy.
. I couldn’t contain my joy.

Andrew Ortony, on the other hand, addresses the subject of unidirectionality based on the recognition of the features projected from source to target. He claims that, in general, these features are highly salient for the source domain but not for the target. In the metaphor “This man is a monkey,” the salient characteristics of “monkey” (noisy, physically flexible, or other) are projected onto “man.” Reversing the order of source and target (as “This monkey is a man”) would produce different and arguably less clearly delineated projections.

Kovecses 2002, 249. Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson consider entailments to be those elements that are highlighted through the metaphorical process.

\(^{33}\) Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 108.

\(^{34}\) Kovecses 2002, 6.
2.5 Similarity, Correlations, and Universality

To explain or reveal the fundamental similarity between source and target, Mark Johnson developed the *image schema theory*. An image schema is a dynamic cognitive construct that functions somewhat like an abstract structure of an image and thereby connects together a vast range of different experiences that manifest this same recurring experience.

Lawrence Zbikowski, in his *Conceptualizing Music*, draws on the notion of image schema. He observes that the PITCH RELATIONSHIPS ARE RELATIONSHIPS IN VERTICAL SPACE conceptual metaphor is based on the VERTICALITY image schema. Even when this conceptual metaphor varies among cultures (PITCH RELATIONSHIPS ARE RELATIONSHIPS OF PHYSICAL SIZE used in Java and Bali, and PITCH RELATIONSHIPS ARE AGE RELATIONSHIPS used in Suya of the Amazon), Zbikowski claims that it is basically structured on the cross-mapping of a two dimensional space (pitch frequency) into another two-dimensional space (vertical space, physical size, or age). Zbikowski believes that “such mappings are not about the imposition of the structure of the source domain on the target domain, but are instead about the establishment of correspondences between the two domains.”

In Chapter 3, I will draw on Mark Johnson’s theory of image schema to analyze examples of qualitative iconic metaphors in film music.

Many conceptual metaphors correlate source and target domains that share an objective (preexistent) similarity; but there are cases in which the similarity does not seem objective or pre-existent. To account for this, Kovecses discusses the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS JOURNEY:

It might seem that the elements in the target domain have been there all along and that people came up with this metaphor because there were preexisting similarities between the elements in the two domains. This is not so. The domain of love did not have these elements *before it was structured* by the domain of journey. It was the application of the journey

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35 This seems to be an outgrowth of the “experiential gestalt” concept outlined in Lakoff and Johnson 1980.

36 Johnson 1987, 2.

37 Zbikowski 2002, 70. Zbikowski provides an account of the theories of “image schemata” and “invariance principle.”
domain to the love domain that provided the concept of love with this particular structure of elements.  

He also proposes that conceptual metaphors could be grounded in recurrent correlated experiences. These correlations in experience can be categorized as perceptual, biological, or cultural:

1) **Perceptual Correlation:** MORE IS UP (“Turn the radio down”). The recurrence of a fluid rising, accompanying the event of adding fluid into a container instantiates this correlation.

2) **Biological Correlation:** ANGER IS HEAT (“Boil with anger”). This conceptual metaphor provides a correlation of experiencing body heat at the event of becoming angry.

3) **Cultural Correlation:** LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME (“I’ll take my chances”). This conceptual metaphor correlates our view of our actions in life as gambles and the consequences of those actions as either winning or losing.  

Kovecses emphasizes that correlations are not similarities. In the conceptual metaphor MORE IS UP, the events that structure the correlation (adding fluid and the level rising) are not similar to each other, but address two distinct and distant parameters: quantity and verticality. Rather, the occurrence of one event is correlated to the occurrence of another:

If event E1 is accompanied by event E2, E1 and E2 will not be similar events; they will be events that are correlated in experience.  

He concludes that “metaphors are not based on similarity but generate similarity,” allowing mappings of conceptual elements of knowledge (like traveler, destination, obstacles, etc, in the case of JOURNEY) from a source to a target.

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38 Kovecses 2002, 7.

39 Lakoff and Johnson explain this correlation as “experiential similarity;” See Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 155.

40 Kovecses 2002, 72. I believe that it would be more appropriate to state that events E1 and E2 are not necessarily similar.

41 Kovecses 2002, 72.
Along the same lines, Lakoff and Johnson uphold that conceptual metaphors are grounded in correlations within our experience. They provide two types: *experiential co-occurrence* (as in MORE IS UP) and *experiential similarity* (as in LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME). Lakoff and Johnson recognize that in some metaphors the similarity is pre-existent:

The primary function of a metaphor is to provide a partial understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience. This may involve preexisting isolated similarities, the creation of new similarities, and more.\(^{42}\)

By understanding similarity from a non-objective perspective (i.e. that similarities are not found in the entities themselves) Lakoff and Johnson claim that the only similarities relevant to metaphor are “similarities as experienced by people.”\(^{43}\)

Lawrence Marks and Albert Katz address the idea of *synesthetic* metaphors to explain the possible correlations between different modes of (sensory) perception as source-target correlations:

My [Katz’s] claim is that the origin, the rationale whereby we use “white,” “candid,” and so forth to mean something more than perceptual quality lies in the sensory properties of color, or of objects, that interact with the ways in which we perceive and experience the world...In synesthetic metaphors, for instance, words that pertain to one sensory modality are extended to express another sensory modality.\(^{44}\)

Based on the notion of synesthesia, Katz infers that “our perceptual experiences are rooted at the same time in the perceptual world, in its properties, and in our experience of it.”\(^{45}\)

Lawrence Marks and Marc Bornstein invoke the color-temperature association as an example that illustrates the universality of synesthetic associations:

With the fire and flames, with the warmth of the sun, the cool lakes and rivers and so forth. Throughout the world, the sun appears yellow, whereas

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\(^{42}\) Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 154.

\(^{43}\) Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 154.

\(^{44}\) Katz 1998, 121

\(^{45}\) Katz 1998, 124.
large bodies of water appear blue and green, and these associations transcend specific cultures.\textsuperscript{46}

Lawrence Marks claims that cross-sensory metaphors (i.e. involving two sensory modalities) originate in human “hard wired” synesthetic and cross-modal perception, thus proposing that connections across modalities “appear uniform and even universal.” For the most part, he focuses on instances of aural-visual correlations such as high-pitched sounds linked to brightness, or low-pitched sounds linked to darkness. He also explores the notion of physiognomic perception from a Gestalt perspective.\textsuperscript{47}

Acknowledging that the production of metaphors is rooted in biological, perceptual, or cultural correlations, renders viable the hypothesis that diverse cultures and languages use similar (if not the same) conceptual metaphors. To answer the question of how it is possible for different languages and cultures to conceptualize a target domain metaphorically employing the same source domains, Koveceses proposes the following three postures:\textsuperscript{48}

1) It has happened by accident,
2) One language borrowed the metaphors from another,
3) There is some universal motivation for the metaphor.

He speculates that the universality of certain conceptual metaphors arises from the physiological characteristics of the human body:

People respond physiologically to certain situations in the same ways. They seem to share certain physiological processes including body heat, internal pressure, etc.\textsuperscript{49}

Conversely, we can speculate that different natural and physical environments shape the cultural variations found in conceptual metaphors.

\textsuperscript{46} Marks 1982, 16.
\textsuperscript{47} See Marks 1989, and Marks 1996.
\textsuperscript{48} Koveceses 2002, 163.
\textsuperscript{49} Koveceses 2002, 171.
2.6 Conceptual Integration Networks

Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s *conceptual integration network* theory, also known as conceptual blending theory, offers an alternative approach to the modeling of metaphorical correlations.\(^{50}\) There are basic similarities between Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration network theory and Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory: both regard metaphor as a conceptual rather than a purely linguistic phenomenon, and both require a projection between conceptual domains. In order to recognize the main differences between the two approaches, I provide a synopsis of Fauconnier and Turner’s explanation of *conceptual integration networks*.\(^{51}\) They illustrate their theory through the analysis of a riddle:

A Buddhist Monk begins at dawn one day walking up a mountain, reaches the top at sunset, meditates at the top for several days until one dawn when he begins to walk back to the foot of the mountain, which he reaches at sunset. Make no assumptions about his starting or stopping or about his pace during the trips. Riddle: Is there a place on the path that the monk occupies at the same hour of the day on the two separate journeys?\(^{52}\)

The solution of the riddle entails a mental representation in which the monk is traveling in both directions on the same day. Eventually, monk one (traveling in one direction) will meet monk two (traveling in the opposite direction); the time and place of this event answers the riddle. This hypothetical mental representation is based on a four-space model (i.e. four mental spaces): two *input spaces*, a *generic space*, and a *blended space* (see Figure 2.1). The mental spaces are created through an on-line (dynamic) process based upon the projection among their conceptual domains, temporarily capturing information from conceptual domains as our thoughts unfold.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{50}\) For a comprehensive explanation of this theory see Fauconnier and Turner 2002.

\(^{51}\) Kovecses believes that conceptual metaphors are a special case in the much larger system of metaphors proposed by Fauconnier and Turner; however, Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration network was developed to explain cognitive processes in general, and not only those involving metaphorical statements. Fauconnier and Turner refer to conceptual metaphors as single-scope networks.


\(^{53}\) This makes a mental space narrower and more specific than a conceptual domain.
To solve the riddle, each input space will correspond to one of the instances of the journey. Each element included in one input space should map onto a corresponding element in the other input space. In Figure 2.2, relevant elements are represented iconically or listed in abbreviated form inside the corresponding input space: 1) the direction on the journey (arrows), 2) the day of the journey (d1, and d2), 3) the mountain and its peak and foot (inclined line), and 4) the monk (little circle on the inclined line).

The generic space posits the abstract structure that relates the elements of the input spaces: a path, a moving individual, a position along the path, a day of travel, and an unspecified travel direction. The blended space results from superimposing both input
spaces according to the structure proposed in the generic space. Thus, the mountain and its peak and foot (an invariant element from the inputs) is projected as a single element, the different days are projected into a single day, but the moving individuals are not fused, preserving their direction and positioning. Along with elements resulting from the comparison of the input spaces, the blended space may also introduce new elements retrieved from long-term memory.

Figure 2.3 represents the thought process that helps one solve the riddle. The riddle of the monk is not a metaphorical statement, but it forces us to create a

Figure 2.3. Blended space. (Source: Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 43.)

Figure 2.3 represents the thought process that helps one solve the riddle. The riddle of the monk is not a metaphorical statement, but it forces us to create a

54 The blended space may involve elements not present in either input space (most often this is a replacement for a metonymic counterpart from one of the spaces).
hypothetical structure that is impossible to materialize. Metaphors induce a similar mental process triggered by a violation of categorical membership; therefore conceptual integration networks realize the mental process through which we understand metaphors.  

In the analysis of select metaphorical statements, Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration networks theory offers some advantages over Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory. First, conceptual integration networks allow relations between two or more input spaces. Conceptual metaphors only consider two: source and target domains. The conceptual integration networks model can incorporate as many input spaces as needed. In the case of a film, we could consider input spaces such as narrative, visuals, music, sound effects, dialogue, etc. Second, conceptual integration networks allow a more flexible directionality between input spaces. Conceptual metaphors are based in projections exclusively from the source to the target domain. In many cases the film is understood without the aid of the music; in other cases, the music is essential for the proper understanding of the narrative. In these cases the directionality is not as clear-cut. And third, the diagram formed during the blend specifies the elements from the conceptual domains included in the input spaces. In Chapter 5, I analyze instances of symbolic metaphors in film music drawing on Fauconnier’s and Turner’s model.

2.7 Irony

Understood in linguistic terms, irony constitutes a “highlighting strategy based on the use of words to convey a meaning contrary to their literal sense.” Numerous concepts have been linked to irony, sometimes to an extent that causes confusion regarding the boundaries among them; such is the case of satire, sarcasm, parody, hyperbole, and even grotesque. I will first attempt to clarify the limits of some of these concepts, while explaining their relation to irony.

55 Kovecses states that not all instances of conceptual integration networks are metaphors; this is based on the notion that the two input spaces do not correspond with the source and target domains. There are not properties projected from one to the other; rather there is a blend formed on the basis of the two.

56 Danesi and Perron 1999, 177.
Satire and parody are often considered literary genres, whereas irony is a rhetorical device often employed in these genres.\(^\text{57}\) The main purpose of parody and satire (not only as genres, but in single sentences) is to ridicule or criticize a subject. Satire achieves its purpose by highlighting the subject’s faults; whereas parody achieves its purpose through imitation. Sarcasm (like satire) also highlights the subject’s faults to ridicule or criticize; but while satire focuses on social sectors, sarcasm focuses on an individual (i.e. a clear victim). Satire, parody, and sarcasm can make use of hyperbole (exaggeration) or litotes (understatement) to achieve their purpose.\(^\text{58}\) And, all the above-mentioned devices might emphasize ironic interpretation:

The author of an utterance makes a sentence to meet some communication goal and presumably frames the sentence to provide the listener with hints about what the [discourse] goal is.\(^\text{59}\)

But satire, parody, sarcasm, hyperbole, tag questions, and other framing devices such as kinesic and prosodic cues (i.e. facial expressions, tone of voice) do not necessarily imply ironic meaning; only when used in such a way that their literal meaning contradicts their intended meaning should we link them to irony.\(^\text{60}\) For example, the utterance “You are really brilliant!” in the context of one individual addressing another who has made a mistake amounts to an ironic statement that also incorporates sarcasm and hyperbole; but what makes it an example of irony is solely the intent to highlight the incongruence between the meaning of the (metaphorical) utterance and the facts.

Irony has also been considered a sub-category of metaphor. However, ironic meaning can be communicated without the mediation of a metaphor. For example, “You are really brilliant!” is based on the conceptual metaphor INTELIGENCE IS LUMINOSITY. The utterance “You are so smart…,” provided we consider it in the same contextual situation, amounts to an ironic statement without the mediation of metaphor. Therefore,

\(^{57}\) For a detailed analysis of satire and parody, and their relationship to irony see: Kreuz and Roberts 1993, 97-109.

\(^{58}\) Additionally, rhetorical questions after a statement can be used as vehicle to specify ironic intent.


\(^{60}\) Kreuz and Roberts claim that ironic statements are not necessarily based on counter-factuality and provide evidence of highly exaggerated literal statements perceived as ironic. See Kreuz and Roberts 1995. For a detailed analysis of framing strategies see: Kreuz 1996, 23-38.
we should not consider irony a sub-category of metaphor. Along these lines, Danesi and Perron argue that, in essence, irony
does not constitute a mapping process…it is, more formally, a cognitive
strategy by which a concept [A] is highlighted through its opposite [-A]:
\[ A \equiv -A \]. This process creates a discrepancy between appearance and
reality, thus creating a kind of meaning tension by contrast.\(^{61}\)

Similarly, Herbert Colston and Raymond Gibbs propose that irony involves a second-order inference not present in metaphorical processes; namely, the inference of the speaker’s intent:

Metaphor primarily describes or shows something in a novel way about
the topic, whereas irony says something about the speaker (i.e. his or her
attitudes or opinions about the topic)…interpreting irony specifically
requires a second-order inference about the speaker’s thoughts: something
that is not needed to understand metaphor…several scholars now contend
that irony and metaphor differ precisely because irony comprehension
requires such metarepresentational reasoning in the way that metaphor
does not.\(^{62}\)

Reevaluating a metaphorical statement as an ironic one requires reference to
perceived intent (discourse goals) and truth status. An ironic metaphor, employs the same
cognitive processes of metaphor, but differs in the truth status, intent, or both. If the
metaphor “Elizabeth is a rose” is stated in a context in which both the sender and receiver
recognize that one or more salient attributes of Elizabeth are opposed to the attribute(s) of
a rose (their beauty, for example), then the statement will be perceived as ironic. Note
that ironic statements and lies share a false truth status. To perceive the statement as
ironic (and not as a lie), the receiver must be aware of the facts and recognize the
incongruence between the facts and the utterance (see Table 2.1). In spoken language,
additional markers of the ironic status of an utterance might appear in the way of a
change in intonation or body language.

Irony in film music is always based on cross-domain projections (i.e. mappings
between two or more distinct conceptual domains such as music and visuals, music and
narrative, etc.). Recognizing these mappings (a primary correlation) anticipates
recognizing their intended meaning (a second-order inference). In Chapter 6, I will

\(^{61}\) Danesi and Perron 1999, 177.
propose a model for the analysis of irony based on Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration network theory; subsequently, I will apply the model to analyze cases of irony in film music.

Table 2.1. Comparison between the ironic, the literal, and the lie.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modality</th>
<th>Utterance</th>
<th>Truth status</th>
<th>Receiver’s awareness of the facts</th>
<th>Intent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphorical</td>
<td>“Elizabeth is a rose”</td>
<td>True (She is very beautiful)</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>To highlight information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironic (based on metaphor)</td>
<td>“Elizabeth is a rose”</td>
<td>False (She is ugly [or lacks beauty])</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>To highlight information, to show negative emotions, to amuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lie (based on metaphor)</td>
<td>“Elizabeth is a rose”</td>
<td>False (She is ugly [or lacks beauty])</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>To mislead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.8 Metonymy

Most of the scholarly literature regards metonymy as a pragmatic process with a strong link to metaphor. A closer examination of its definition and examples will support my recognition of metonymy as a semiotic function rather than a metaphorical process. Metonymy is “a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or idealized cognitive model.”  

For example, in the expression “The tubas are sick today” the word “tubas” provides mental access to “the tuba players.” Likewise, in “She likes to read Saussure,” “Saussure” provides mental access to “the writings of Saussure.”

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63 Adapted from David Chandler 2002, 135.

64 Truth status refers to the meaning, and not to the literal status. All metaphors are literally false. Inter-subjective standards of beauty, as in the case of beauty in the eye of the beholder, do not affect this categorization; the truth status reflects the sender’s perception of the facts.

65 Kovecses 2002, 145.
Metonymies are often used to direct attention to a specific characteristic or quality. In the metonymy “We need more brains in this office” the word “brains” is not a mere substitute for the word people, but addresses a specific quality desired in the people: intelligence. Similar to the notion of conceptual metaphors, we can sort metonymies into larger groups according to the relationship between the vehicle and the target:

- **PART FOR WHOLE**
  - Get your *butt* over here

- **PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT**
  - I have a *Picasso* in the living room

- **PLACE FOR EVENT**
  - Chernobyl changed the world’s view of nuclear power

Asserting that in a metonymy one entity provides mental access to another is equivalent to identifying a semiotic relationship in which one element *stands for* another. While metaphor involves two elements in separate domains related by similarity, metonymy involves only one domain in which two elements are related by contiguity. Understood as such, a metonymy draws upon an indexical relationship by linking elements within the same conceptual domain or same idealized cognitive model.\(^{67}\) Two literary examples will clarify the difference between metonymy and the pragmatics of metaphor addressing a *syntagmatic/paradigmatic* relationship:

- **Metaphor:** Love is a rose.
- **Metonymy:** The White House approved the decision.

The above metaphor relates two elements (“love” and “rose”) presented simultaneously, establishing a syntagmatic relationship between its elements. In the metonymy, however, “White House” is not related to “the decision.” Instead, “White House” stands for “the president” or “the executive branch of the U.S. Government.”

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\(^{66}\) In general, the part-for-whole metonymy is called *synecdoche*. However, some writers limit the synecdoche to cases where the part is *physically* (or *existentially*) connected to the whole. For an alternative view of metonymy and synecdoche see Korsyn 2003, 114-120.

\(^{67}\) I do not claim that metonymies are indexes; rather, I propose that metonymies incorporate indexical relationships. Moreover, the indexical relationships upon with a metonymy is established might develop (over time) into symbols. Such is the case of the “White House” initially linked to “the president” through contiguity, and becoming conventionalized over time (i.e. a symbol).
This relationship is paradigmatic because it is formed with an element that is tacit at the time of presentation. In other words, metaphors rely upon a pragmatic process triggered by a violation of categorical membership, followed by a comparison of the two elements to find characteristics of the source domain applicable to the target domain. Metonymies also violate category membership, but there is a subsequent substitution for another element related by (physical, conventional, or even arbitrary) contiguity to the one present in the metonym.

Even when metonymies are (mostly) culturally specific, and when the recognition of metonymies involve context, the process through which we understand those symbols does not fall completely under the pragmatics of metaphor.68 These conclusions point to the study of metonymies under the big umbrella of semiotics. However, Kovecses points out that “certain metonymic relationships form the basis of many metaphors”69 and suggests that many conceptual metaphors derive from conceptual metonymies. For example, the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT (as in “Do not get hot under the collar”) relies on the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy (BODY HEAT FOR ANGER). The MORE IS UP conceptual metaphor (as in “Keep your voice down, please”) could also be considered as relying in the EFFECT FOR CAUSE conceptual metonymy; namely, the experience of adding liquid to a container and the result of the level rising. Metonymic PART FOR WHOLE relations (often called synecdoches) are essential to recognizing topics in film music. In Chapter 11, I will explore topics in film music as instances of symbolic signs (i.e. semiotic functions).

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68 I refer to them as “Symbols” because they are based on a conventionally accepted contiguity. Umberto Eco states that “established habits will permit one of its elements to be substituted for another. Thus, given the accepted semiotic judgment ‘the President of the United States officially lives in the White House,’ it is easy to use ‘the White House’ as a metonym for ‘the President of the United States.’” (Eco 1979, 280)

CHAPTER 3

QUALITATIVE ICONIC METAPHORS

3.1 Introduction

In a film, music coexists with visuals and narrative, but uncovering meaningful links between these domains relies upon our abilities to foreground some similarity between them. The similarity correlation between conceptual domains will be expressed in the form of a conceptual metaphor \((A \text{ IS } B)\) as established by Lakoff and Johnson.\(^70\) By revealing the correlation based upon the inherent LINEARITY image schema present in both source and target domains, I intend to show how film music acts metaphorically, mapping the visuals or the narrative into the aural medium.\(^71\)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{A} \\
\text{target) x} \\
\text{y} \\
\hline
\text{IS} \\
\hline
\text{B} \\
\text{source) w} \\
\text{z}
\end{array}
\]

Figure 3.1. Correlation based on the LINEARITY image schema.

A LINEARITY image schema, for example, would represent continuous one-dimensional qualities. *Qualitative iconic metaphors* rely by and large on the correlation of source and

\(^{70}\) For details on the conceptual metaphor theory outlined by Lakoff and Johnson, see Chapter 2 Section 2.

\(^{71}\) For an outline of Mark Johnson’s image schema theory, see Chapter 2 Section 5.
target based on the LINEARITY image schema. Figure 3.1 offers a visual representation of this correlation. 72

3.2 Qualitative Iconic Metaphors in Film Music

The next three examples of cross-perceptual metaphors belong to the MOTION IN VERTICAL SPACE IS FLUCTUATION IN PITCH FREQUENCY conceptual metaphor. 74 Figure 3.2 illustrates this correlation, where upward motion is increasing pitch frequency, and downward motion is decreasing pitch frequency.

![Diagram: VERTICAL SPACE (down <-> up) IS PITCH FREQUENCY (low <-> high)]

Figure 3.2. Correlation of “vertical space” and “pitch frequency” based on the LINEARITY image schema.

Clip 3.1 from a Tom and Jerry cartoon shows Jerry falling from an airplane, stopping temporarily in the middle of his descent (thanks to a brassiere-parachute). The music outlines Jerry’s fall through a descending chromatic figure sequenced down several times, with a pause in the music that interrupts the chromatic descending line (see

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72 Some of the metaphorical correlations here explained have become conventional. In regard to metaphors there is no splitting point between conventionality and novelty; this should rather be understood as a continuum. Throughout this and other chapters, I attempt to proceed from the conventional to novel end of this continuum.

73 All the examples presented in this dissertation are instances of cross-perceptual metaphors (i.e. the source and target domains belong to different perceptual fields: auditive and visual, or auditive and narrative, etc).

74 Lawrence Zbikowski points out the arbitrary nature of such a relationship. See Zbikowski 2002, 63-64.
Example 3.1). It is interesting to observe the trill that precedes the descent representing Jerry stasis in the air.

Example 3.1. Musical mapping of Jerry’s descent.

Clip 3.1. Jerry’s descent. (Source: “Yankee Doodle Mouse” - Tom and Jerry Greatest Chases.) (0:05:20 - 0:05:35)

In Clip 3.2, Jerry jumps towards a candy cane and savors it while falling. Savoring the candy bar just once does not seem enough for Jerry, so he proceeds up and down once more. Musical example 3.2 depicts the descending chromatic musical figure and two small glissandos in the strings that represent the downward and the subsequent upward and downward motions of Jerry.

Example 3.2. Musical mapping of Jerry’s upward and downward motion.

Clip 3.2. Jerry’s upward and downward motion. (Source: “The Night Before Christmas” - Tom and Jerry.)

In Clip 3.3, it is not an object or character that moves upwards, but the (imaginary) camera which ascends rapidly to show the pile of plates that Tom is carrying. Again, the music portrays this ascent and cadences as Jerry appears on top of the plates (see Example 3.3).

Example 3.3. Musical mapping of the upward motion of the camera.

Clip 3.3. Upward motion of the camera. (Source: “Puss Gets the Boot” - Tom and Jerry.)


Many composers adopted the techniques used for cartoons to score for non-animated films. In Clip 3.4 from the feature film *King Kong*, Max Steiner parallels the downward and upward motions of the characters by using descending and ascending chromatic scales, as well as descending and ascending sequences of the motivic material. Example 3.4 presents the first section of the music which illustrates the musical mapping of downward motion of the characters.

Example 3.4. Musical mapping of downward motion of characters.
Action movies frequently use the SPEED OF PHYSICAL MOVEMENT IS SPEED OF MUSICAL EVENTS conceptual metaphor to intensify the visuals (see Figure 3.3). This device creates momentum leading to the end of a car chase, a fight scene, or other action sequence. In Clip 3.5, the increasing speed of drumming and shortening of rhythmic ideas in Tan Dun’s score for *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* pairs with the visuals to create a climactic point towards the end of the fight between Jen Yu and Yu Shu Lien. Accordingly, the drumming and fighting cease simultaneously.

![clip 3.4](image)

Clip 3.4. Downward and upward movements of the characters.
(Source: *King Kong.*) (1:15:30 - 1:16:55)

**Figure 3.3.** Correlation of “speed of physical movements” and “speed of musical events” based on the LINEARITY image schema.
So far, I have shown examples of cross-perceptual metaphors included in the broad conceptual category PHYSICAL EVENTS OR CHARACTERISTICS ARE MUSICAL EVENTS OR CHARACTERISTICS. Other typical examples included in this category are WEIGHT IS PITCH FREQUENCY and SIZE IS PITCH FREQUENCY, where high frequencies represent small or light elements, and low frequencies represent heavy or big elements.

The function of music in film, however, is not limited to enhancing visual elements. Often, film music composers seek to portray a character’s mood or state of mind. In Clip 3.6 from The Godfather, the sound designer (Walter Murch) opted for a subjective realization of sound regarding it as musical in function.\(^\text{78}\) Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, is about to shoot someone face-to-face for the first time. The abnormal intensification of the sound produced by an elevated train passing by does not correspond to a realistic representation of diegetic sounds; instead, it reflects Michael’s increasing psychological tension up to the moment he shoots the pistol.\(^\text{79}\) This correlation is achieved through the PSYCHOLOGICAL TENSION IS VOLUME conceptual metaphor (see Figure 3.4).

\(^{78}\) Walter Murch designed the sound for The Godfather and The Conversation, among other films. For commentary on the process of sound editing specific to this scene see Ondaatje 2002.

\(^{79}\) The non-diegetic nature of the train sound, which undoubtedly could be quite loud, is elucidated through its absence at the time Michael shoots the pistol.
Figure 3.4. Correlation of “psychological tension” and “volume” based on the LINEARITY image schema.

Clip 3.6. Increasing psychological tension illustrated through sound design. (Source: *The Godfather.*) (1:28:10 - 1:29:00)

In *The Conversation*, the composer (David Shire) and director (Francis Ford Coppola) established a metaphorical correlation between the music and the main character’s mood. Gene Hackman plays Harry Caul, a surveillance expert whose job entails listening into other people’s private lives. Throughout the film, the non-diegetic piano score captures Harry Caul’s private reality through changes in the timbre by equalization, delay, and distortion. Over the course of the film, the audience is (perhaps subliminally) taught to recognize the specific moods of Harry Caul via the PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE IS INSTRUMENTAL TIMBRE conceptual metaphor (see Figure 3.5). Diegetic music exists within the narrative’s time and space. Therefore, the source of non-diegetic music is neither visible on the screen nor has been implied to be present in the narrative’s time and space. The LINEARITY image schema inherent in both parameters enables a parallelism whereby no timbral distortion represents a relaxed psychological state, and timbral distortion represents a disturbed psychological state.
Figure 3.5. Correlation of “psychological state” and “instrumental timbre” based on the LINEARITY image schema.

The presentation of the main theme played on piano (see my transcription on Example 3.4) accompanies a scene in which Harry Caul calmly walks home after accomplishing the difficult task of recording the conversation of a young couple in a park. The smooth and undistorted sound of the piano gives a sense of repose and relaxation.

Example 3.5. Piano theme from *The Conversation*. 
Example 3.5. (Continued)
The conversation Harry Caul has recorded hints at a murder. He starts to worry about becoming involved in a labyrinth of secrecy and murder. In Clip 3.8, these tormenting thoughts are explicitly shown as part of Harry’s dream, and reflected in the soundtrack by altering the timbral qualities of the piano. Like the main theme, the music during Harry’s dream draws heavily on ostinato figures.

Different degrees of distortion are applied to the piano sound throughout the film, reflecting Harry’s state of mind. Toward the film’s end Harry becomes aware of somebody recording him. Infuriated, he searches for the recording device. Once more, the distorted piano timbre signals his nervous tension. An ostinato arpeggio (D-F-G♯-A♯-B) in the high register of the piano and a subsequent pounding tritone (G-C♯) added later in the middle register form an almost complete octatonic set, missing only the pitch E (see Examples 3.5 - 3.7). By choosing this specific octatonic collection and excluding the pitch E from it, David Shire obtains a pitch collection that excludes all the notes of the a-
minor tonic triad. One might therefore regard this near-octatonic sonority to be maximally unstable in an A minor context. As Harry Caul gives up the hope of finding the recording device, the music returns to the undistorted piano sound that reflects his surrendering to the situation. The main theme returns and immediately provides us with a stabilizing A minor triad (see Clip 3.9).

Clip 3.9. Harry’s search for a recording device. (Source: The Conversation.) (1:50:30 - 1:51:30)

Example 3.6. Ostinato arpeggio figure.

Example 3.7. Pounding tritone.

Example 3.8. Almost complete octatonic set.

The examples from The Conversation show how one could understand the music establishing not only the PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE IS INSTRUMENTAL TIMBRE conceptual
metaphor, but also the MENTAL/PHYSICAL STATE IS HARMONIC CONSTRUCT conceptual metaphor, where relaxed states are consonant, and tense (or disturbed) states are dissonant (see Figure 3.6). Determining relative consonance and dissonance is a complicated matter, and one that I will not delve into presently. For now, let it suffice to propose the MENTAL/PHYSICAL STATE IS HARMONIC CONSTRUCT conceptual metaphor with an ad hoc assumption that the audience can perceive (if not conceptualize) relative consonance/dissonance at least at the extremes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL/PHYSICAL STATE</th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>HARMONIC CONSTRUCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td>consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dissonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tense/disturbed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.6 Correlation of “psychological/physical state” and “harmonic construct” based on the LINEARITY image schema.

3.3 Conclusion

The examples discussed in this chapter show how the interaction of music and other elements in a film could be structured metaphorically. I deliberately chose linear (or quasi-linear) parameters in the music (pitch, dynamic level, tempo, etc.) that paralleled linear parameters in the visuals (vertical motion, speed of movements) or in the plot (intensity of tension, psychological state). I believe that an effective application of Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory to the analysis of film music relies on the highlighting of the music’s structural features. In the following chapters, I will apply Lakoff and Johnson’s theory to non-linear parameters of the music, and explore other theories of metaphor that could be employed to analyze instances where socio-cultural associations of the music are mapped onto the narrative.
CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURAL ICONIC METAPHORS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore instances where non-linear parameters in the music (such as cadences, formal structures, as well as musical troping) reflect the structural organization of a plot. The absence of a continuous one-dimensional structure (i.e. LINEARITY image schema) that is applicable to both tenor and vehicle does not proscribe the application of Lakoff and Johnson’s theory. Therefore, and despite the reference to cultural-specific elements, structural iconic metaphors establish a correlation based on structural features (rather than socio-cultural associations) of the source and target domains.\footnote{Peirce’s subdivision of icons includes: a) images, based on simple qualities, b) diagrams, represented by analogous relations among the parts of the object, and c) metaphors, represented by parallelism. Structural iconic metaphors (explored in this chapter) resemble both Peirce’s diagrams and metaphors. Structural iconic metaphors reveal a parallel between the relations among parts found in both the source and target domains.}

4.2 Cadential Events

The classical harmonic tradition that establishes the dominant-tonic polarity has become so deeply rooted in the western musical practice that the need for a tonic sonority at the end of a piece conforms to our instinctive expectations. The absence of a final tonic sonority would undeniably be perceived as a lack of closure in the music. Cadences in film music can (and most often do) metaphorically map the events in the narrative.\footnote{William Thompson conducted three experiments to examine the influence of musical underscoring on the judgment of closure in film. In order to provide a general understanding of the concept of closure in music he draws on general music theoretical concepts, and on the theories of Leonard Meyer. See Thompson, 1994.} As a result, when the arrival (or denial) of a tonic sonority portrays instances of closure (or
lack thereof) in the narrative, it is possible to recognize the CLOSURE IN NARRATIVE IS CLOSURE IN MUSIC conceptual metaphor.

In Clip 4.1 from the film *15 Minutes*, Oleg, an aspiring film director, is shot while recording his own movie. His death is portrayed both by pausing physical movement, and by halting the music (see Example 4.1). The sudden stop at the subdominant (instead of the tonic) hints at a lack of closure. In fact, Oleg is just simulating his death to end his movie dramatically. After a moment, he resumes his speech and the music carries on. A few seconds later Oleg actually dies, and the music arrives to a tonic.

Clip 4.1. Oleg simulating his death. (Source: *15 Minutes.*)
(1:50:00 - 1:51:00)

In the following set of examples from *The Conversation*, the music helps structure a lengthy film sequence with the CLOSURE IN NARRATIVE IS CLOSURE IN MUSIC
conceptual metaphor. The lack of an authentic cadence (or a tonic sonority as final sonority) in the first instance of music (see Clip 4.2 and Example 4.2), helps sustain a sense of unity through the scenes. Seven minutes later, the music returns and reaches a final tonic, drawing a parallel with the sectional units in the narrative (see Clip 4.3 and Example 4.3.)

Example 4.2. Lack of closure in the music representing the continuity of a narrative section.

Clip 4.2. Harry arrives at his companion’s home.  
(Source: The Conversation.) (0:20:10 - 0:21:00)
Example 4.3. Closure in the music representing the end of a narrative section.

Clip 4.3. Harry left his companion’s home. (Source: *The Conversation.*
(0:27:25 - 0:28:25)

In the next examples from *Mission Impossible*, the use of pedal points helps clarify the narrative structure. In Clip 4.4, which is excerpted from towards the end of the film, Nyah gets the vaccine that will save her from a deadly virus. The tension and expectancy associated with this event is underscored by a dominant drone (guitar), which accompanies a guitar solo in D minor (shown in Example 4.4).\(^{82}\) The tension finds its dramatical and musical resolution at the end of the film (Clip 4.5) where we see Nyah in a healthy state underscored by a D major tonic pedal, also performed on a second guitar.

\(^{82}\) Note also the A - B\(^{b}\) - A semitone, which becomes an essential element in the melodic contour.
(shown in Example 4.5). Moreover, the dominant pedal that underscores her reception of
the vaccine emphasizes that the film is not yet over. If the composer had given us a clear
tonic pedal, the sense of finality would be so strong that any later scene would appear
disconnected.

Example 4.4. Guitar drone on dominant harmony.

Clip 4.4. Nyah gets the vaccine. (Source: Mission Impossible.)
(1:55:42 - 1:56:25)

Example 4.5. Guitar drone on tonic harmony.
Similar to the closure provided by harmonic cadences, placement of rhythmic figures in specific meters provides a sense of musical conclusiveness that is mapped onto the narrative, establishing the CLOSURE IN NARRATIVE IS MUSICAL (RHYTHMIC) CLOSURE conceptual metaphor. Clip 4.6 shows the final segment of a long chase sequence from the film 15 Minutes; detective Eddie Flemming (Robert De Niro) lowers his gun, seeming to give up his final chance to shoot at the criminal. At that point, the drumming evaporates without reaching a rhythmic cadence on the downbeat. After a few seconds, he resumes his shooting position and takes the shot; at the same time, the drumming resumes, concluding with the sound of the shot at a downbeat (see Example 4.6). Note the interplay between diegetic sound of gun shots and non-diegetic music on percussion 2 (circled in the score).

Example 4.6. Closure in rhythmic figures.
4.3 Formal Design

Standard musical structures have not typically been employed as a narrative resource in film music. Reasons for this might include:

- The scattered nature of music in film undermines the perception of repetition and contrast as a form-defining element.
- The narrative implications of the musical structure might not parallel the main narrative.
- Visual elements, such as length of cues and scene editing, often dictate the length, tempo, and meter of the musical cues.
- Diegetic music and non-musical sound elements might interfere with the main non-diegetic score.

There are, however, a handful of films that manage to draw a parallel between the cinematic narrative and the musical narrative as implied by their formal design. Small forms such as rounded binary or small ternary frequently accompany relatively short movie sequences. Roy Prendergast illustrates the parallel between the arching (A-B-A) formal design in the music and the narrative in the films *Carrie* and *Joan of Arc*. He also mentions the famous “Theme and Variations” that accompanies the breakfast montage in *Citizen Kane*. Clip 4.7 shows Kane’s vanishing marriage through a series of breakfast scenes. Examples 4.7 to 4.11 illustrate the variations of the joyful theme that correspond to each tableau of the montage. As a result, the correlation of music and

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narrative establishes the VARIATIONS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHARACTERS ARE VARIATIONS IN THE MUSIC conceptual metaphor.

Example 4.7. First Variation from breakfast montage.

Example 4.8. Second variation from breakfast montage.

Example 4.9. Third variation from breakfast montage.

Example 4.10. Fourth variation from breakfast montage.
The nature of film music makes adapting traditional forms to a large-scale score a difficult and to some extent even unnecessary task. However, John Corigliano’s score for *The Red Violin* realizes a large-scale structural plan that maps the events in the narrative through a theme and variations formal design. Corigliano states that in *The Red Violin*, he planned a big structure of seven chords, which literally formed the basis for the entire movie. Everything that happened in the movie came out of those seven chords. Because the movie was involved with the tarot, involved with classical music and a violin, and involved with many different ages of music, I felt that one had to tie everything together. If you just wrote baroque, classical, romantic, and so forth, they would be detached, since the only thing that threaded through the 300 years was this violin. One needed a thread that had to be thematic and harmonic. Therefore, these chords became the basis of everything. That was an intellectual decision that I made. I told the director about it and got his approval. At first, he wanted to use traditional music for the live playing and have me write just the underscoring. But I said, “No. The movie will not have a center because we have different casts, five different countries, five different languages, five different plots. Unless you tie it together with some common thread, you will not feel the organic quality of the movie.”

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The Red Violin begins with a present-day violin auction, and flashes back to numerous times, places, and performers that surrounded the violin. Throughout the film, correlations between the narrative and the music establish the VARIATIONS IN THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE VIOLIN ARE VARIATIONS OF THE MAIN THEME conceptual metaphor. In Clip 4.8, the main theme is presented in its essential form sung by Anna (Irene Grazioli), whose blood will paint the violin after she dies while giving birth to the luthier’s child. The theme leads into the first flashback: the creation of the violin in seventeenth-century Italy (see Example 4.12).

Example 4.12. Theme from The Red Violin.

(0:06:50 - 0:07:30)

Clip 4.8 shows the second flashback, to an eighteenth-century Austrian monastery. Example 4.13 shows a variation of the theme. This variation incorporates stylistic characteristics of the period’s music such as clear diatonic harmonic progressions, and continuous rhythmic figuration reminiscent of the works by baroque composers.
Example 4.13. Variation of *The Red Violin* theme to represent Baroque style.

(Source: *The Red Violin.*) (0:39:27 - 0:39:50)

Clip 4.10 shows the flashback to nineteenth-century Oxford; a Gypsy female violinist plays a variation of the theme. This scene takes place right before the “Devil” takes possession of the violin. The variation of the theme is in an improvisatory style and makes use of a hexatonic Gypsy/Hungarian mode (G, A, B♭, C#/D♭, E, F#) with strong emphasis on the exotic sounding B♭ - D♭ interval. Example 4.14 shows the last segment of this variation. 


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85 The Gypsy/Hungarian mode acts as a musical symbol (i.e. topic) that triggers the westernized (and thus conventionally established) association of exoticism. The visuals (scenography, costumes, character type) also provide a “topical” representation.

At the time the Gypsy violinist stops playing, the “Devil” (as addressed in the movie) appears and takes the violin. This character portrays the typical nineteenth-century virtuoso, such as the legendary Paganini, and tropes on the myth of Mephistopheles. In Clip 4.11, this character plays his new composition (clearly a transformation of the main theme), illustrating the virtuoso style of the nineteenth-century: ricochet bowing, multiple stopping at dazzling speed, extended octave playing, arpeggiated passages requiring continuous rapid string crossings, and superb bow technique. Examples 4.15 and 4.16 illustrate several of these techniques incorporated in the variation. Moreover, the music not only exhibits the technical capacities of the violin, but also allows for an increased intensity of emotional and artistic expression in the hands of the performer.


(0:56:15 - 0:58:00)

The film also flashes back to China during the Cultural Revolution, and to Montreal where a collector tries to establish the identity and the secrets of the precious violin. At the end of the film the violin finally reaches the hands of a newborn and the theme is restated in its original form, thus establishing the variations on the surroundings of the violin are variations of the main theme conceptual metaphor.

The relative succinct nature of the theme almost suggests its use as a leitmotif. However, the primary function of leitmotifs is not to outline a “theme and variations” narrative structure; transformations of a leitmotif might not correspond to the narrative structure. A parallel between the narrative structure and the music’s formal design illustrates a sophisticated use of leitmotif by establishing a structural iconic metaphor. In any event, the extreme nature of the variations (and its basis in conventional topics) is not
suggestive of leitmotif transformations. For examples and analysis of leitmotifs in film music see Chapter 11.

4.4 Troping

According to Robert Hatten, troping occurs when “two different, formally unrelated types are brought together in the same functional location so as to spark an interpretation based on their interaction.” Types, tokens, and topics will be explored in Chapter 11; however, the compositional decision to fuse two unrelated musical types is often motivated by a convergence of two distinct elements in the narrative. Understood as such, troping reflects the structure of the narrative through the CONVERGENCE OF NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IS MUSICAL TROPING conceptual metaphor.

Through the incorporation of two unrelated topics, the music might help emphasize a plot based on some dichotomy (i.e. two distinct characters, two different cultures, two points of view, etc.). For instance, Peter Sellers’s Being There presents two contrasting elements: 1) Chauncey Gardiner, an old, prudent, clean, and innocent human being, and 2) the external world, shown as contaminated, corrupt, etc. Table 4.1 compares the essential characteristics of these two elements as established in the film.

Each of these elements is represented musically through two distinct musical topics. Chauncey is continuously linked to classical music, and the external world is linked to modern music (70’s disco-funk style). Being There is a film that blends a wide spectrum of genres including comedy, drama, and even political/social satire. It is the story of Chauncey Gardiner, who lived his whole life in isolation working as a gardener in the house of a millionaire. When the wealthy man dies, Chauncey is forced out of the house. Chauncey enters an alien modern world; his immaculate appearance merges with the contaminated streets; his regular and predictable life devolves into strange and chaotic situations.

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86 Hatten, 295.

87 A token is the particular manifestation of a type. Topics are musical symbols that link a token, its type, and the socio-cultural associations of the type.
Table 4.1. Comparison contrasting elements established in Being There.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAUNCEY GARDINER</th>
<th>EXTERNAL WORLD$^{88}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Old and prudent</td>
<td>- Modern and reckless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pure / clean</td>
<td>- Contaminated / dirty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Innocent</td>
<td>- Corrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bases his knowledge on nature</td>
<td>- Bases its actions on economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Listens to classical music from</td>
<td>- New (disco) music, overload of city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the time he wakes up</td>
<td>sounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The soundtrack in Clip 4.12, which shows Chauncey leaving the only home he has ever known and stepping into a new world, makes reference to these two contrasting elements, symbolizing their convergence by combining Strauss’s Also Sprach Zarathustra with the disco-funk beats popular in the 70’s.$^{89}$

Musical troping parallels the convergence (or merging) of elements in the narrative establishing the CONVERGENCE OF NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IS MUSICAL TROPING conceptual metaphor. Troping is achieved by blending salient stylistic characteristics of each type. In this case, many elements from Also Sprach Zarathustra are retained but adjusted to conform to the 70’s disco-funk style:

- The instrumentation of the original classical piece is expanded to include typical disco instrumentation (organ, drum set, cowbells).

---

$^{88}$ Most of the characteristics I include in this list could be seen as taking part in a larger conceptual metaphor SOCIETY IS A PERSON.

$^{89}$ The arrangement included in the film is by Brazilian pianist and arranger Eumir Deodato.
- The melody (played on the original instruments: trumpet with sporadic orchestral tutti) is rhythmically adjusted with anticipations and retardations characteristic of the disco style.
- Harmonies are extended with the addition of 7ths and 9ths typical of more contemporary practices.
- A jazzy organ incorporates riffs based on extended harmonies.
- The metrical structure is maintained, but the beat is emphasized by a disco pattern performed on a drum set.
- Non-musical sounds (such as the city noise in the background) help relocate the classical piece into a non-classical context.

Table 4.2. Troping representing the convergence of narrative elements in *Being There.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NARRATIVE</th>
<th>MUSIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Convergence of two elements that portray different social, economic, cultural, historical, philosophical backgrounds.</td>
<td>- Troping of musical types achieved by blending salient denotative characteristics of each type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAUNCEY GARDINER</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXTERNAL WORLD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Old and prudent</td>
<td>- Modern and reckless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pure / clean</td>
<td>- Contaminated / dirty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Innocent</td>
<td>- Corrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bases his knowledge on nature</td>
<td>- Bases its actions on economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifies himself with classical music</td>
<td>- Identifies itself with new (disco) music and an overload of city sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLASSICAL MUSIC</strong></td>
<td><strong>DISCO MUSIC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Instrumentation: symphonic orchestra</td>
<td>- Instrumentation: 70’s electronica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pulse: flexible</td>
<td>- Pulse: regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Harmonic language: traditional</td>
<td>- Harmonic language: popular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dynamic range: large</td>
<td>- Dynamic range: narrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The superimposition of the two events (narrative and music) produces the conceptual metaphor CONVERGENCE OF NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IS MUSICAL TROPING (see Table 4.2). As a result, the audience projects the musical troping into the narrative, bringing the convergence of elements to the center of attention. I intend to further unpack the meaning of this event (considering the prominent “discovery of a new world” connotation, among other) in Chapter 5. Also, an exhaustive analysis of the topicality of the music is presented in Chapter 11.
Another instance of the conceptual metaphor CONVERGENCE OF NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IS MUSICAL TROPING takes place in the film *Big Night*. This film is about two Italian brothers, Primo and Secondo, who emigrated from Italy and opened an Italian restaurant in America. The restaurant is almost bankrupt, and the lack of success is due to the owners’ decision to keep the restaurant as authentic to the Italian tradition as possible. Table 4.3 compares the two contrasting elements established in the film: 1) Italian culture, and 2) American culture.

Table 4.3. Comparison of contrasting elements established in *Big Night*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITALIAN CULTURE</th>
<th>AMERICAN CULTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Food: pasta</td>
<td>- Food: pasta with meatballs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language: Italian</td>
<td>- Language: English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Music: Italian (pseudo-operatic)</td>
<td>- Music: jazz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dress code: elegant</td>
<td>- Dress code: casual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The restaurant would have to close due to lack of customers, so Primo seeks the advice of an Italian friend who owns a very successful restaurant called Pascal’s. The key to Pascal’s success is the blend of the two cultures in every aspect of the restaurant, from the menu (spaghetti with meatballs) to the live music played in the restaurant. As Primo enters the restaurant, the music (as well as visuals and the sparse dialogue) portrays this cultural fusion (see Clip 4.13). Through the CONVERGENCE OF NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IS MUSICAL TROPING conceptual metaphor, the audience projects the fusion taking place in the music onto the narrative. Similar to the instance in *Being There*, musical troping is achieved by retaining distinctive elements from each of the two musical traditions during the synthesis (see Table 4.4).

Clip 4.13. Primo enters Pascal’s restaurant. (Source: *Big Night.*)
(0:23:40 - 0:24:50)
Table 4.4. Troping representing a convergence of narrative elements in *Big Night.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NARRATIVE</th>
<th>MUSIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Convergence of two elements that portray different social, economic, cultural, historical, philosophical backgrounds.</td>
<td>- Troping of musical types achieved by blending salient denotative characteristics of each type.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>AMERICAN CULTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Food: pasta</td>
<td>- Food: meatballs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language: Italian</td>
<td>- Language English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Music: Italian</td>
<td>- Music: jazz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dress code: elegant</td>
<td>- Dress code: casual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITALIAN MUSIC</th>
<th>AMERICAN JAZZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Vocal style: pseudo-operatic</td>
<td>- Vocal style: jazzy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language: Italian</td>
<td>- Harmony: extended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rhythm: simple</td>
<td>- Rhythm: abundance of syncopation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the last two examples I purposely excluded some of the connotations (i.e. socio-cultural associations) particular to each style, and specific to each piece. Iconic metaphors, either qualitative (Chapter 3) or structural (present Chapter), rely on the structural features (i.e. musical materials) of the source domain. Connotations are arbitrary and (to a great extent) conventional; for this reason, I regard metaphorical processes that rely on connotations of the source domain as *symbolic metaphors* (see Chapters 5 and 6). 90

4.5 Conclusion

The examples discussed in this chapter expand the notion of iconic metaphoricity in film music by analyzing the interaction of non-linear parameters in the music and in the visuals and/or narrative. However, to effectively analyze metaphors that involve the music’s connotations, it is necessary to apply a model that specifies the connotations of the music that correlate metaphorically with the visuals and/or the narrative. Lakoff and Johnson’s theory identifies a pattern present in a large number of metaphors, and proposes a conceptual metaphor that highlights the essential relationship between two conceptual domains. In other words, it groups specific examples into general categories; therefore, it is most effective when identifying linear or non-linear parameters of the

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90 My categorization (and terminology) is rooted in Peirce’s classification of signs. For further details on Peirce’s theory see Chapter 7.
source domain that map onto the target domain (i.e. iconic metaphors). Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration network, on the other hand, is not concerned with grouping specific examples into large categories; rather, it focuses on single instances, allowing for an identification of the specific elements mapped from the source domain onto the target domain; consequently, it is a more desirable model to account for the connotations of the music mapped onto the narrative (i.e. symbolic metaphors).
CHAPTER 5

SYMBOLIC METAPHORS

5.1 Introduction

Symbolic metaphors rely on the connotations (rather than the structural features) of the source domain (i.e. music) to activate a metaphorical statement. Connotations are in essence culturally defined; hence, the understanding of symbolic metaphors is contingent upon the audience’s knowledge of a sign’s connotations. Given the large number of connotations that a single piece of music might have, Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration networks seem preferable to Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory because it specifies the mappings from source to target. This chapter explores how the compilation score and pre-existent instrumental music interact with the narrative.

5.2 The Compilation Score

The compilation score so common in today’s movies emerged as a marketing strategy and opened a new dimension in the general conception of film music. Recent compilations enhance the film’s story through innovative placement of songs.

During the 80’s, the financially advantageous idea of selling a movie and a soundtrack to the public promoted the incorporation of popular songs as part of the non-diegetic (rather than diegetic) soundtrack. David Bell states that songs are “being purchased and placed in films, not for artistic reasons, but because they might sell more

91 The primary differences between symbolic metaphors and topics (which will be discussed in Chapter 11) are the conceptual process through which an audience derives the meaning, as well as the degree of conventionality of that meaning. Symbolic metaphors establish new meanings by either mapping similarities or correlations, whereas topics draw on conventional meanings established through metonymy.

92 The compilation score is based on the (almost exclusive) use of pre-existing material (frequently popular songs) as diegetic and non-diegetic music.
soundtrack records/CDs. It’s now the point where film-soundtrack CDs that include songs which never appeared in the film are manufactured and sold! The power of the record companies within the film industry has become enormous; it’s a bit of the tail wagging the dog.”93

The trend started by placing a “catchy” feature song either at the beginning or at the end of the film; often these songs bore little or no relation to the events that took place during the film. Irving Bazelon recognized this trend saying that “it does not seem to matter that the theme tunes have little relevance to the film’s dramatic context… Usually placed at the beginning as a title song but occasionally at the end...the songs cash in on today’s fast changing market, ostensibly giving pictures with a gilt-edged frame of catchiness.”94

Recent films that incorporate compilation scores are largely directed at the teen market. The young public is the main consumer of pop/rock recordings, and demographic studies show that people between the ages of 15 and 19 spend more money on recordings than any other five-year age group.95 Accordingly, Richard Davis mentions that “it is no wonder that producers are all hopping on the soundtrack bandwagon, hoping to generate both profit and publicity for their films through the use of songs.”96

Criticism has been directed not only at the obvious financial motivations of a compilation score, but also at its artistic function within the film. In this respect, David Bell states that “the incorrect use of songs endangers the cohesiveness of film art. Instead of a two-hour dramatic statement, motion pictures often become bits of plot interspersed between MTV-like music videos.”97

In Fools Rush In, however, in addition to the non-diegetic instrumental score composed by Alan Silvestri, several songs from different styles, eras, and even languages, are placed strategically to match the visuals as well as the plot. Through its lyrics, each song in the soundtrack comments on the narrative events. A few examples

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93 Bell 1994, 66.
94 Bazelon 1975, 30.
95 For a complete demographic report see: Baskerville 2001, 304-305.
96 Davis 1999, 196.
97 Bell 1994, 67.
will be sufficient to exemplify this use of popular music. For each example, I provide a conceptual integration model that specifies the mapping between the lyrics of the song and the narrative event.  

Alex, a New York nightclub designer played by Matthew Perry, meets Isabel, a beautiful young Mexican photographer, while supervising the construction of a new project in Las Vegas. Their one-night stand results in the unexpected pregnancy of Isabel. After three months, Isabel reappears and tells Alex the news, to which he does not respond well. Clip 5.1 shows Isabel angry driving away in a huff. As Alex starts to follow her, the song *Para donde vas?* [Where are you going?] portrays Alex’s uncertainty of where Isabel is going. The lyrics “Para donde vas, muchacha” might thus be read as “Where are you going, Isabel” (see Figure 5.1).

---

**Figure 5.1. Conceptual integration network for *Fools Rush In*. Blend of lyrics and narrative.**

---

98 For details on Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration networks, see Chapter 2.
They decide to marry, but the in-laws do not agree to the plan. Both families meet during a very hot afternoon, and Alex’s parents wind up with terrible sunburns. In Clip 5.2, a brief segment of *Fever* plays while Alex’s parents are on the screen. Figure 5.2 illustrates how the lyrics included in the movie soundtrack “Fever, ‘til you sizzle. What a lovely way to burn…” map onto the visuals and the narrative, emphasizing the event of the characters getting sunburned.

**Generic Space**

Mappings between the narrative / visuals and the song’s lyrics.

**Narrative - Visual Input Space**

- Alex’s parents got sunburned.

**Musical Input Space**

- Lyrics: “Fever, ‘til you sizzle What a lovely way to burn…”

**Blended Space**

The lyrics emphasize the event of Alex’s parents getting sunburned.

Figure 5.2. Conceptual integration network for *Fools Rush In*. Blend of lyrics and narrative / visuals.
In the foregoing examples, there is a direct association of the music and the events in the narrative because of the incorporation of the lyrics. However, when song lyrics are not included in a soundtrack, the link between the songs and the narrative relies upon the audience’s prior knowledge of the lyrics or title (i.e., the music’s connotations). In the next example, a conceptual integration network model helps highlight those common elements that the audience might perceive between the two mental spaces (the connotations of the music and the narrative).

During a weekly family gathering, Isabel’s old boyfriend confronts Alex. After a tense moment, Isabel’s old boyfriend asks the Mariachis to go on with the music. In Clip 5.3, the Mariachis play *La Martiniana* but do not sing its lyrics.

The absent lyrics are: “Por el yo te perdí…solo en mis sueños estás en mi.” [I lost you because of him…now you are only in my dreams]. The lyrics reflect Isabel’s former

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99 Recall that connotations are the socio-cultural or personal associations surrounding a sign. This could be understood as synecdoche (i.e. part-for-whole substitution).
boyfriend’s feelings through a blend of conceptual spaces. Figure 5.3 models the conceptual integration network in which the blended mental space has as inputs the absent lyrics (connoted by the music) and the events in the narrative. Note that the very absence of the lyrics also reflects the sense of loss in Isabel’s ex-boyfriend.

![Conceptual integration network](image)

**Generic Space**

Mappings between narrative and specific connotations of a musical piece. (Lyrics of a song).

**Narrative Input Space**

- Isabel’s ex-boyfriend realizes that he lost her for another man.

**Musical Input Space**

- Lyrics: “Por el yo te perdí…”

The absent lyrics of the song reflect the feelings of Isabel’s ex-boyfriend.

**Blended Space**

Figure 5.3. Conceptual integration network for *Fools Rush In*. Blend of absent lyrics and narrative.

### 5.3 Pre-Existing Instrumental Music

Steven Spielberg’s *Minority Report* is a science fiction action thriller based upon a short story by Philip K. Dick. The plot revolves around a “pre-crime” unit in the police force. With the aid of three psychics or “pre-cogs,” the police are able to see violent crimes before they occur. The pre-crime unit gathers information from visuals transmitted by the pre-cogs, bringing the crimes to a stop before they can be committed.

In Clip 5.4, Tom Cruise, as the chief of the pre-crime unit, is in charge of manipulating the visuals transmitted by the pre-cogs with the purpose of finding
information that would reveal the place and time of a crime. To accompany his quasi-conducting movements in front of a flat screen pane, Tom Cruise introduces Schubert’s Unfinished Symphony in an audio device.

Introducing Schubert’s Unfinished creates a symbolic metaphor that draws a parallel between the narrative and the music. In the narrative input space we include three elements: 1) an event that unfolds in time: the crime, 2) the notion of interruption, 3) the person responsible for the interruption: Tom Cruise. Each of these elements has a counterpart in a musical input space: 1) an event that unfolds in time: a symphony, 2) the notion of interruption: the connotation of unfinished, 3) the person responsible for the interruption: Schubert (see Figure 5.4).  

![Figure 5.4. Input spaces of Minority Report. Correlated elements between the narrative and the music spaces.](image)

---

100 Schubert’s Eight Symphony was written in 1822. He died in 1828 without adding a third movement to the existing two movements of the work, hence its nickname “Unfinished.”
Figure 5.5 illustrates the resultant conceptual integration network. The generic space specifies the abstract structure that promotes the blend. The blended space results from superimposing both input spaces according to the structure proposed in the generic space.

**Generic Space**

Mappings between narrative and specific connotations of a musical piece.

**Narrative Input Space**

- A crime
- Interrupted
- Tom Cruise

**Musical Input Space**

- A symphony
- Unfinished
- Schubert

The crimes are to be interrupted by Tom Cruise as the Symphony was left unfinished by Schubert.

**Blended Space**

Figure 5.5. Conceptual integration network for Minority Report. Blend of the narrative and Schubert’s Unfinished symphony.

The use of metaphors in politics is pervasive. Zoltan Kovecses mentions that “in American politics, for example, political thought (and discourse) is largely structured by the following metaphors: POLITICS IS WAR; POLITICS IS BUSINESS; SOCIETY IS A FAMILY; SOCIETY IS A PERSON; and THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS A RACE.”\(^{101}\) Russell Lack observes that “politics, or rather the representation of politics, was a key ingredient in 1960s western cinema.”\(^{102}\)

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\(^{101}\) Kovecses 2002, 62.  
\(^{102}\) Lack 1997, 266.
In Clip 5.5 from Fahrenheit 9/11, the director (Michael Moore) aims to draw a parallel between the connotations of the TV series Bonanza, and events that took place in 2003. The visuals mimic the opening sequence of the TV series. An old brown tinted map of Afghanistan gets burned from the center of, and the characters (in this case George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and Tony Blair) are shown first riding horses together and then presented one by one in cowboy costumes.103

Clip 5.5. Bonanza-like sequence. (Source: Fahrenheit 9/11.)
(0:44:28 - 0:44:45)

The resultant conceptual integration network is shown in Figure 5.6. Afghanistan replaces the West as the place being conquered; the four politicians replace the four members of the Cawright family; and the U.S.-Afghanistan conflict replaces the civil war. As a result, the mappings between the narrative input space and the connotations of Bonanza (through visual and musical quotations), trigger a metaphorical understanding of the segment.

103 The music that accompanies the visuals is the original title soundtrack from The Magnificent Seven; the title soundtrack from Bonanza might not have been included due to copyright restrictions.
I now return to the example from *Being There* analyzed in Chapter 4. Recall the connotations of Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, and disco music (see Figure 5.7). Some of these connotations are present in the music input space during the blend. The mappings between the narrative and the combined connotations of disco style and *Also Sprach Zarathustra* suggest that Chauncey’s attitude towards the new environment is one of discovery. Chauncey is not upset, frightened, or nervous; Chauncey is observing, and (in his own way) comprehending the new world (see Figure 5.8). From this point on, he is able to make sense of the new environment through constant reference to his experience as a gardener, often employing metaphors based on the conceptual metaphor SOCIETIES ARE GARDENS.

**Also Sprach Zarathustra**
**4.1 Conceptual Integration**

**Generic Space**

- **Narrative Input Space**
  - Former element: Chauncey
  - New element: environment
  - Chauncey’s attitude: discovery of a new world

- **Musical Input Space: 2001: A Space Odyssey and Disco Music**
  - Former element: classical music
  - New element: Disco style
  - Character’s attitude in 2001: A Space Odyssey: discovery of a new world

**Blended Space**

- Chauncey’s attitude towards the new environment is one of discovery.

**Figure 5.7. Connotations of Strauss’s Also Sprach Zarathustra and disco music.**

- **Figure 5.8. Conceptual integration network for Being There. Blend of the narrative and a disco version of Strauss’s Also Sprach Zarathustra.**

**5.4 Conclusion**
In this chapter, I analyzed correlations based on similarity between the music’s connotations and the narrative and visuals. In the next chapter, I analyze cases in which one (or several) of the correspondences between the input spaces is based on dissimilarity (rather than similarity). Though I employ the same analytical model, instances of correlations based on dissimilarity should not be considered symbolic metaphors, but rather ironic statements. Directors and composers generally draw on this procedure for the musical underscoring in comedies.
CHAPTER 6

IRONY

6.1 Introduction

Irony in film music could easily form the subject of an entire dissertation. In this chapter, I briefly explore some of the most recent writings on the analysis of musical irony. Subsequently, I propose a model for irony based on Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration network theory, and provide examples drawn from comedies to illustrate the implementation of this model.

6.2 Precedents of Analysis of Irony in Music

By and large, irony is regarded as a sub-category of metaphor. However, ironic meaning can be implied without the mediation of metaphor. Also, numerous concepts have been linked to irony, sometimes to an extent that causes confusion regarding the boundaries among them; such is the case of satire, sarcasm, parody, hyperbole, and even grotesque. These tropes and other framing devices such as kinesic and prosodic cues (i.e. facial expressions, tone of voice) do not necessarily imply ironic meaning.¹⁰⁴

Existing analytical models of musical irony, put forth by Robert Hatten, Kevin Korsyn, Esti Sheinberg, and Yayoi Uno Everett, resemble the literary approach. As a result:

1) these models treat musical irony as a metaphorical statement;
2) in accounting for hyperbole, parody, and other rhetorical tropes, the boundary between these tropes and irony becomes ambiguous;
3) the almost algorithmic nature of most models proscribes the incorporation and heuristic interpretation of contextual clues.

¹⁰⁴ For literary examples of (non-metaphorical) irony please refer to Chapter 2 Section 7.
Though these models proved effective when applied to concert music, none of them seems suitable for film music. This is (among other reasons) because film music is a multi-parametric artistic manifestation; the interpretation of film music as an ironic statement is generally triggered by information provided through the visuals or the narrative, and often emphasized through other rhetorical tropes.

Robert Hatten considers irony a metaphorical statement “that rhetorically enhances the intended meaning by exaggeration of its opposite.”\textsuperscript{105} His definition implies the use of hyperbole; however, hyperbole is a rhetorical device not always incorporated in ironic statements. He offers a formal model that helps “unpack” the meaning of an ironic statement:

Note that the metaphor must first be unpacked before its negation can be meaningful, implying two distinct levels of interpretation. One might model the situation as \(- (A + B)\), in which “\(A + B\)” is metaphor (attributive or speculative) and “\(- ( )\)” is irony (intended reversal of the meaning of a discourse or action).\textsuperscript{106}

Hatten’s formal model does not represent the complex cognitive process in perceiving and understanding irony. This is partially because his model presumes that ironic statements in music are based on metaphor; and partially, because it does not consider the mapping(s) of dissimilarity between two conceptual domains that results in a reversal of meaning. (My own model for irony, which I present in Section 3, will likely clarify this last statement.) Kevin Korsyn, on the other hand establishes a clear difference between irony and metaphor:

Metaphor and irony, for example, both compare two wholes, but metaphor compares them in positive terms (\(A=B\)), while irony is negational (\(A\neq A\)).\textsuperscript{107}

It is not clear whether Korsyn truly means (\(A\neq A\)), or rather (\(A\neq B\)), which would significantly change his notion of irony. In Korsyn’s (\(A\neq A\)) model, the ironic meaning is the result of incongruence that stems from a comparison of one “whole” with the same “whole”. I prefer the (\(A\neq B\)) model, which would account for the mapping of

\textsuperscript{105} Hatten 1994, 172.
\textsuperscript{106} Hatten 1994, 173.
\textsuperscript{107} Korsyn 2003, 122.
dissimilarities between two distinct conceptual domains, or between the literal and the figurative meaning.

Esti Sheinberg, in her book *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Dmitrii Shostakovich*, considers satire, parody, and the grotesque in music, as examples of “musical correlations of semantic modes of ambiguity.”¹⁰⁸ She claims that these tropes “use two or more layers of meaning,” and regards irony as “a structural prototype for all other modes of ambiguity.”¹⁰⁹ In the first section of her chapter on irony, Sheinberg discusses previous attempts to analyze irony in music and proposes a model of irony (see Figure 6.1) that considers “incongruities in a purely musical context or in regard to text and other referential elements.”¹¹⁰

![Figure 6.1. Sheinberg’s model of irony. (Source: Sheinberg 2001.)](image)

Sheinberg criticizes writers who “tend to disregard the various kinds of irony,” and states that “their examples of romantic irony are usually interspersed with other examples of existential and/or satirical irony, without explicitly differentiating between

¹⁰⁸ Sheinberg 2001, 27.
¹⁰⁹ Sheinberg 2001, 27.
them.” She offers criteria for identifying musical irony; “music that has one or more of the following characteristics will be regarded as conveying irony:”

1. Stylistic incongruities within one governing style.
2. Stylistic discontinuities within one governing style.
3. Incongruities with available information about the composer’s set of convictions, beliefs, values, or about his personal characteristics.
4. Incongruities based on meta-stylistic norms, e.g. rendering a feeling of “too high,” “too fast,” “too many repetitions,” etc., not when measured relative to a certain style or topic, but per se.
5. Shifts between levels of musical discourse.
6. Juxtapositions of more than one stylistic or topical context, none of which could be regarded as “governing.”

While Sheinberg provides numerous examples to support these characteristics, they do not intrinsically imply irony. For instance, we can regard characteristic #4 as defining musical hyperbole; characteristic #6 is akin to Hatten’s definition of musical troping; and characteristic #2 could account for musical pastiche. Furthermore, considering irony as prototype for all other modes of ambiguity presumes that parody (for example) is a subcategory of irony. Parody is based on incongruous presentation and involves intertextuality and a victim. The problem with regarding irony as a prototype lies in the differentiation between the structural and the interpretative dimensions. Parody is based on structural processes such as incongruous presentation and intertextuality; irony, on the other hand, is based on interpretational hermeneutics.

Drawing on the writings of Linda Hutcheon and Douglas Muecke, Yayoi Uno Everett explains that the main difference between parody, pastiche, and quotation in classical music lies in the aesthetic motivations of the composer. She focuses on parody, which at times takes the form of irony (if the motivation is to ridicule) or satire (if the motivation is to contradict). Everett’s goal is to distinguish parody from quotation and pastiche, and therefore her theoretical approach incorporates parody as central element and irony as secondary one.

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111 Sheinberg 2001, 61.
112 Sheinberg 2001, 64.
113 She mentions that these categories overlap frequently.
Everett aims to formalize the “procedures by which parody assumes satirical or ironic resonance in musical discourse”\textsuperscript{114} by drawing on Hatten’s model of irony and Sheinberg’s writings. The result is an interpretative framework based upon the correlation of structural and expressive oppositions that relies on the music’s structural features to produce meaning (such as equipollent oppositions of modes, e.g. major-minor). Everett proposes five models that generate satire and irony and provides examples that illustrate their operation (see Table 6.1). These models are all based upon the negation of meaning produced by substitutions, decontextualizations, or oppositions found in the music itself, with no reference to any other semiotic system (text, scenery, plot, etc); Everett is aware of this limitation:

Further criteria for distinguishing different types of musical irony need to be explored… the contexts under which ironic ethos arises in instrumental music need to be distinguished from those under which it arises in relationship to text and narrative.\textsuperscript{115}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A:B :: X:Y</td>
<td>structural and expressive oppositions</td>
<td>minor : major :: tragic : non-tragic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A:B :: Y:X</td>
<td>paradigmatic substitution via inverted correlation</td>
<td>Andriessen, Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A \rightarrow -(A) :: x \rightarrow -(x)</td>
<td>paradigmatic substitution via analogy</td>
<td>Weill, Mahagonny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(x) \rightarrow y \rightarrow ...</td>
<td>progressive de-contextualization</td>
<td>Debussy, Golliwogg’s cakewalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x + y</td>
<td>metaphor that arises through a juxtaposition of incongruous types and gives rise to a trope</td>
<td>Davies, Eight Songs for a Mad King Andriessen, Writing to Vermeer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-(x + y)</td>
<td>ironic metaphor context inverts the meaning of a trope</td>
<td>Davies, Eight Songs for a Mad King Andriessen, Writing to Vermeer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{114} Everett 2004, 1.  
\textsuperscript{115} Everett 2004, 12.

Even when Everett applies these models to musical works that include text, scenery, or narrative, her analyses show that the negation typical of irony results from a
transformation (distortion of the original) found inside a single conceptual space (i.e. the musical space), and not from the incongruence between two conceptual spaces (such as music and narrative). Her last model is an exception to this because she explicitly mentions that “context” is the cause of the resultant inversion of meaning; however, the model does not represent the “context” as one of its elements, and therefore the analyst needs to supply it. Consequently, these models are not only limited to analysis of the music’s structural features (i.e. musical materials), but also they do not consider oppositions in two (or more) conceptual domains.

My goal is to provide a model of irony that accounts for the interaction between music (its structural features and its connotations) and other semiotic systems present in a film. For this reason, I propose a modified version of Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration network in which the input-space correlations based upon dissimilarity substitute for those based upon similarity. Understood as such, the primary correlation should not be regarded as a metaphorical process, but rather as a cross-domain mapping of dissimilarity.

6.3 Analytical Model for Irony

In this section, and through the model I propose, I intend to clarify the following:

1) irony should not be considered a type of metaphor;
2) analysis of irony should identify and locate the presence of other rhetorical devices.

Cross-domain projections are not unequivocally metaphorical; projections based on similarity between conceptual domains are, however. Musical irony does not necessarily incorporate similarity in the cross-domain projections typical of metaphorical processes. The analysis of an ironic statement will involve a correlation based on dissimilarity between an element in the music input space and a corresponding element in one other input space. For example, we could consider the statement “Elisabeth is a rose” to be either a metaphor or an ironic metaphor, depending on the similarity status of the
mapping between the input spaces. In Figures 6.2 and 6.3, two conceptual integration networks portray these two situations; in the first one we recognize Elizabeth’s beauty, in the second we recognize her lack of beauty.

![Conceptual integration network for metaphorical correlation](image)

Figure 6.2. Conceptual integration network for metaphorical correlation.

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116 Please refer to Chapter 2 section 8, for an analysis of the statement “Elisabeth is a rose” according to the truth status, the receiver’s awareness of the facts, and the sender’s intent.
Generic Space

Correlation based on dissimilarity between literal and intended meaning.

Literal Meaning

Elizabeth is beautiful via the “Elisabeth is a rose” metaphor:

- Human having the attributes of a flower
- Elisabeth

Intended Meaning

Elisabeth lacks beauty

dissimilarity

Blended Space

Ironic metaphor that stems from the incongruence between the literal and the intended meaning.

Figure 6.3. Conceptual integration network for ironic metaphor.

The interpretation of film music as an ironic statement is generally triggered by information provided through the visuals or the narrative. Figure 6.4 presents the abstract model I will apply to the analysis of irony in film music.
Figure 6.4. Model for irony in film music, based on Fauconnier and Turner’s conceptual integration networks.

To emphasize (or further specify) ironic interpretation, other rhetorical devices might be incorporated in the form of hyperbole (exaggeration), parody (reference and imitation), satire (intention to ridicule or criticize a social sector), sarcasm (intention to ridicule or criticize an individual), and even metaphor (similarity cross-domain correlation). The algorithmic models presented in Section 2 account neither for contextual clues, nor for other rhetorical devices. In the model I propose, contextual clues are supplied in the visual or narrative domain; rhetorical devices that emphasize the rendering of ironic meaning (such as hyperbole) can be incorporated in any conceptual domain. Other rhetoric devices that imply a complementary reading (such as satire) will not be incorporated in the conceptual domains, but rather, they will result from the cross-domain correlations. Figure 6.5 models an abstract instance of irony that incorporates metaphor and proposes some type of satirical commentary.

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117 Framing devices used in other types of communication such as tag questions, facial expressions, and tone of voice, are not applicable to the analysis of film music.
6.4 Irony in Film Music

Contextual expectations circumscribe the use of irony in film music to certain genres. Roger Kreuz mentions that “we might expect ironic statements in a story by Kafka, but not on the front page of the newspaper.”  

Similarly, we are more likely to encounter ironic correlations in comedies, than in dramas or science fiction films.

Meet the Parents is a comedy that revolves around Greg Focker (Ben Stiller) meeting his prospective in-laws for the first time. Jack (Robert De Niro), the judgmental...
father-in-law and ex-CIA agent, has one precious possession: his cat. During the weekend, the cat gets lost. To gain Jack’s respect, Greg disguises a newly purchased cat by painting a fake white tail, and he pretends to have found the lost cat. Clip 6.1 shows Greg arriving with the disguised cat; the music (composed by Randy Newman) has all the characteristics (instrumentation, tempo, melodic gestures, harmonic gestures) of a “triumphant hero” musical cliché (i.e. a musical topic). The audience is thus exposed to contradicting representations of Greg: the plot clearly outlines Greg’s fallacious actions, while the music and the visuals portray Greg as a hero. In Figure 6.6, I analyze the irony that stems from the contradiction presented among elements in the input spaces. This is not an example of parody; there is an obvious reference (musical and visual) to an external film genre (i.e. the epic), but there is no intention of ridiculing or criticizing the genre. This example (arguably) incorporates hyperbole; we can perceive hyperbole as the necessary overstatement of the epic genre to maximize its identification.

Clip 6.1. Greg arrives with the lost cat. (Source: Meet the Parents.)
(1:13:10 - 1:13:50)

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119 Topics in film music will be analyzed in Chapter 11. However, since the main (ironic) meaning in this example is established through incongruous narrative elements that pertain to different input spaces, it is more properly analyzed as a pragmatic process.
The romantic comedy *Guess Who* (2005) touches upon racial issues. It blends the plots of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) and *Meet the Parents* (2000). Ashton Kutcher plays Simon, a young Caucasian man, who will marry Theresa (Zoe Saldana), the daughter of Percy (Bernie Mac) and Marilyn (Judith Scott), a successful and
protective African-American couple. After a heated discussion, Percy decides that Simon should stay in a hotel. Unfortunately (for Percy), the hotel is fully booked, so they drive back home. As they get in the car, Percy turns the radio on. The ending of the song *Ebony and Ivory*, performed by Paul McCartney & Stevie Wonder, sounds and the lyrics “Ebony, ivory, living in perfect harmony” make both Simon and Percy uneasy (see Clip 6.2). This ironic statement is based on a primary metaphor: the lyrics of the song correlates the black and white keys of a piano (ebony and ivory respectively), with the African-American and Caucasian population, proposing that both live in “perfect harmony.” However, the contradiction between the narrative (Simon and Percy not getting along) and the metaphor proposed by the lyrics of the song renders this secondary correlation as ironic (see Figure 6.7). The interpretation of satire relies on a parallel drawn between the film and the audience’s reality; but note that this reality is not objectively present in the film.

Clip 6.2. Simon and Percy drive back home. (Source: *Guess Who?*)
(0:29:28 - 0:30:00)
Figure 6.7. Conceptual integration network for *Guess Who?* Irony (and satirical commentary) established through the correlations between the narrative and musical (metaphorical) space.
Both examples \textit{(Meet the Parents} and \textit{Guess Who?}) comply with Roger Kreuz’s perspective:

Positive evaluations of negative situations are perceived as ironic, and negative evaluations of positive situations are typically not, unless there is a clear victim of the remark.\footnote{Kreuz 1996, 33.}

This supports some researchers’ proposition that ironic statements are echoes of positive cultural norms.\footnote{See Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989, 374-386; and Sperber and Wilson 1981.} Kreuz remarks that “when real life does not reflect our expectations, we can ironically invoke these norms.”\footnote{Kreuz 1996, 32.}

\textbf{6.5 Conclusion}

In this chapter I hope to have established a basic model for the analysis of irony in film music. Further research on the use of hyperbole, satire, parody, and other rhetorical devices in film music would greatly enhance our understanding of the limits of irony, and its potential for meaning production. In the following chapters I will explore, from a semiotic perspective, the music’s potential to establish meaning.
CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO SEMIOTICS

7.1 Introduction

Semiotics is “the science that studies signs and how they produce meaning. It seeks to unravel the nature, origin, and evolution of signs.”\textsuperscript{123} This chapter provides a basic history and introduction to the field of semiotics. Familiarization with the concepts discussed will help one understand the forthcoming chapters on iconic signs and symbols. The contemplation of signs started in antiquity, and many ancient philosophical documents reveal a concern for the nature of signs and their function. Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.E.) used the term \textit{semeiotica} for the first time in a branch of medicine that related medical symptoms and sicknesses during the process of \textit{diagnosis}; however, the name \textit{semiotics} applied to an established general theory of signs did not appear before the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{124}

7.2 From Ancient Theories to Saussure and Peirce

In his \textit{Cratylus}, Plato (427-347 A.C.E.) speculated about the relationship between ideas and words. He claimed that the true nature of things could not be revealed through the verbal sign, and that knowledge of the true nature of things is superior to the knowledge of things mediated by signs. Wingfried Noth notes that Plato believed that “the study of words reveals nothing about the true nature of things since the realm of ideas is independent of its representations in the form of words.”\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{123} Danesi and Perron 1999, 40.

\textsuperscript{124} Since many theorists and philosophers refer to the same concepts using different terminology, I will supply a more inclusive terminology (in parenthesis) derived from Noth 1990.

\textsuperscript{125} Noth 1990, 15.
Aristotle (384-322 A.C.E) made a distinction between natural and conventional (arbitrary) signs. He conceived the arbitrary sign as a chain comprised of four elements where the last two are universal but the first two are not:126

- Written marks
- Spoken sounds
- Mental impressions (affections)
- Actual things

The three-part model postulated by the Stoics (c.300 B.C.E.-200 A.C.E.) resembles that of Aristotle but does not include the written marks. The result is a concept of sign similar to the one put later forth by Peirce:

- semainon (sign vehicle)
- lekton (sense)
- object or event (referent)

Note that the lekton, as a mental entity, differs from the other two elements.

The Epicureans (c. 300 B.C.E.-100 A.C.E) viewed the sign differently from the Stoics, rejecting the lekton and proposing a two-part model.127 This reflects their belief that signs originate in sensory impressions of material objects. This is a key difference between the Epicureans and the Stoics, who considered the sign to be a product of the intellect. Aurelius Augustine (354-430 A.C.E.) followed the Epicurean view, rather than developing new models, but he re-incorporated the interpreter's mind as a third element; consequently, his model is no different from that of the Stoics. Significant to Augustine’s writings, however, is his consideration of non-linguistic sign systems and his distinction between natural and arbitrary signs.

During the Medieval period, semiotics was linked to linguistics as part of the trivium (grammar, dialectic (logic), and rhetoric). Some advances were: 1) supposition theory, which studies language in context, and 2) modest semiotics (of late 13th century), which anticipates Noam Chomsky’s theory of deep structure in the notion of an underlying universal structure behind all languages.

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126 Aristotle’s model, from a Hjelmslevian perspective, reveals that linguistic sign systems differ in the expression-plane, and not in the content-plane.

127 The Epicurean two-part model, unlike Saussure’s model, considers the material elements of the sign and rejects the mental elements. See Section 4 below.
With the outset of the Renaissance (c. 1400) the medieval ideology of universal grammar was abandoned, and Aristotelian semiotics revived. The emphasis on human intellect that took place during the Age of Rationalism, with Descartes as its main exponent, spawned a study of signs from an anthropocentric perspective. The search for a universal grammar reflected their belief that thought is prior to language. The Port-Royal school developed a two-part model that foreshadows that of Saussure. This model considers the sign as a mental phenomenon comprised of two elements, the “sound image” and the “idea.” About the same time, Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) expanded the scope of semiotics to areas other than linguistics, but limited it to figures and marks developed for thinking. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) avoided the study of language, and concentrated on systems of communication that do not include words, such as gestures or Egyptian hieroglyphics. The nominalist John Locke (1632-1704), in his 1691 Essay Concerning Human Understanding, was the first to mention the term semiotics as the study of sign systems, and the first to consider it a science.

During the French Enlightenment (c.1750) three philosophical movements followed the influential Port-Royal semiotics. The Sensualists, with Etienne Condillac (1715-1780) as their main exponent, proposed a study of language that integrates natural and arbitrary signs. In his view, language originates from natural signs, but as soon as it is transferred and memorized it becomes arbitrary. The Encyclopedians, led by Denis Diderot (1713-1784), who wrote for the Encyclopedie of 1751, considered gestural languages to be superior to verbal languages. The Ideologues, with Joseph-Marie Degerando (1772-1842) as their main exponent, distinguished between pre-linguistic and linguistic signs, proposing that communication is not based on pre-linguistic signs. Pre-linguistic signs originate in sensations, which in turn excite an idea in the mind; for example the smell of a rose, which excites a mental association with the rose itself.

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128 Since animals lack not only language, but also the faculty of reasoning, any attempt to develop a Zoosemiotics theory during this period failed.

129 Such a mentalist view that has no reference to the material world is opposed to one of the essential purposes of a sign system, namely that of communication.

130 Such as musical notation, astronomical nomenclature, etc.

131 Nominalists reject the idea of universals.
Johann Lambert (1728-1777), Johann Herder (1744-1803), and to a lesser extent Immanuel Kant (1744-1803), represent the philosophy of the German Enlightenment. Lambert’s idea of *symbolic cognition* rejects pre-linguistic signs as semiotic entities because they cannot be intentionally repeated for inter-human communication. The linguistic theories of Herder resemble those of Plato in the belief that language can name things but cannot express the thing in itself.

The Italian Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744) anticipated the theories of Claude Levi-Strauss in his exploration of the underlying structure of myths, the function of symbols, and the signifying properties of metaphor. In this respect, Vico’s theories closely resemble current semiotic thinking. During the 20th century, the developments of a semiotic theory are varied. Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure are the two main exponents of modern semiotics. In the next sections of this chapter, I will consider their models of sign along with other aspects of their theories relevant to this dissertation.

### 7.3 Ferdinand de Saussure

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) considered a semiotic system to be one that expresses ideas; language, in his view, is the most important of all semiotic systems. His theories are *structuralist*, because they search for structures underlying the surface phenomena of the object of study.\(^\text{132}\) Structuralist theories are generally based on binary oppositions; Saussure’s most influential binary oppositions are *langue* vs. *parole*, *syntagmatic* vs. *paradigmatic* relations, and *synchrony* vs. *diachrony*. Langue is the linguistic system, and parole is the individual’s use of langue; because of his mentalist view of the sign, Saussure’s theories concentrate on langue rather than parole. Syntagmatic relations can be thought of as horizontal, in that one element relates to the contiguous elements; paradigmatic relations are the ones between one element and another not present in a structure.\(^\text{133}\) Synchronic semantics considers the symbolic system

\(^{132}\) Structuralist theories do not concern themselves with referential meaning or the specifics of usage. Post-Structuralism places binary oppositions into a context to be interpreted.

\(^{133}\) “Horizontal” because Saussure applied this notion to written language, in which words (in the majority of languages) are placed horizontally next to one another.
at one given point in time in one given culture; diachronic semantics explores meaning as part of a dynamic symbolic system constantly changing in space and time.

One fundamental principle of Saussure’s semiology is the notion of the arbitrary and conventional nature of a sign.\(^{134}\) Saussurean theories are applicable to music as relations among elements and binary oppositions inside a specific musical parameter. Charles Seeger, for instance, adapted the logic of binary opposition to the parameters of pitch, interval, tempo, duration, dynamic level, etc.\(^{135}\) The main problem with Seeger’s approach is the recognition of binary oppositions in the signifier that do not have a counterpart in the signified. For example, it would be difficult to conclude that a falling interval of a third has the meaning opposite to that of a rising interval of a third.

### 7.4 The Two-Part Model of the Sign

Saussure considers the signifier and the signified to be mental entities, and he therefore does not include the referential object of the sign in his model. Thus, Saussure’s linguistic model of a sign consists of:

\[
\text{signifier ('sound-image')(sign vehicle)} \rightarrow \text{signified ('concept')(sense)}
\]

Louis Hjelmslev expanded Saussure’s model, proposing a two-part model that integrates the material world. He achieves this by incorporating the concepts of *substance* and *purport*:

By virtue of the content-form and the expression-form, and only by virtue of them, exists respectively the content-substance and the expression-substance, which appear by the form’s being projected on the purport…\(^{136}\)

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\(^{134}\) Arbitrary in the sense that the link between signifier and signified is not necessary, intrinsic or natural; and conventional because they are used in collective behavior. Saussure, however, admits the (infrequent) existence of onomatopoeia, which fashions signifiers in imitation of their signifieds. Many other semioticians argue that sign creation is primarily based on the behavior of simulation.

\(^{135}\) See Yung and Rees 1999.

\(^{136}\) Hjelmslev 1943, 57.
The Russian linguist Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) also proposed a two-part model; he applied structuralism to language and other disciplines as well. One of his most profound theories is that of “markedness.”

7.5 Connotation and Denotation

The notion of connotation and denotation (as a structuralist opposition) was first postulated by Saussure and further developed by Hjelmslev and Roland Barthes. The distinction between connotations and denotations applies to the signified of a sign. Denotation is generally defined as the “literal” meaning of a sign (when referring to a word); whereas the connotations are the socio-cultural or personal associations. Connotations might become so directly related to the sign that, within a given social group, they seem to be denotations. However, there are some aspects that help differentiate between them. While a sign’s denotations are (generally) permanent, a sign’s connotations tend to change over time.

Saussure’s structuralist model of the sign focused solely on denotation. Later, Barthes attempted to include the connotational dimension to understand a sign. As

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137 See Hatten 1994 for an application of the theory of “markedness” to the analysis of music.
illustrated in Figure 7.2, Barthes adopted from Hjelmslev the notion of different orders of signification to explain the connotation/denotation dichotomy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second-order of signification</th>
<th>Signifier</th>
<th>Signified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-order of signification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denotation</td>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Signified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.2. Barthes’s model of connotation.

In the first order of signification (or denotation) a sign consists of a signifier and a signified. In a second-order of signification (or connotation) a sign operates using a first order signification as signifier. In this model, connotation is itself a sign whose signifier is another sign; this allows for a chain of connotations.

Eco claims that music presents the problem of a semiotic system without a semantic level (or content plane). On the other hand, there are musical “signs” with an explicit denotative value (trumpet signals in the army) and there are syntagms or entire “texts” possessing pre-culturalized connotative value (“pastoral” or “thrilling” music, etc.).

Eco’s notion of musical signs and syntagms is akin to Leonard Ratner’s theory of topics. Trumpet signals in the army should not be considered music but sound signals; thanks to the loud and far-reaching sound of trumpets, they serve to communicate commands in open, large places. In the case that trumpet signals are incorporated (for instance) in opera, they become topics. I will further explore the theory of topics in the following chapters.

There has been some debate regarding music’s denotative meaning. My position in this dissertation is that denotative meaning in music exists when there is a clear signifier signified relationship; my use of the term “connotation,” when applied to music, does not imply a primary denotation; and I regard “connotations” as synonymous with “socio-cultural associations.”

138 Eco 1979, 11.
7.6 Charles Sanders Peirce

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), considered the founder of modern semiotics, developed a semiotic approach independent from linguistics. Central to his theory is the notion of three universal categories called firstness, secondness, and thirdness. Conceptually, a sign is a three-part array that includes:

1) The *representamen* (sign vehicle): the material form the sign takes.
2) The *object* (referent): the referent of the sign. This could be a material or a mental entity.
3) The *interpretant* (sense): (not to be confused with interpreter) is the sense (meaning) derived from the sign.

The main difference between Peirce’s representamen and Saussure’s signifier is that the latter is a sound image, and thus a mental entity.

7.7 The Three-Part Model of the Sign

Some three-part models are reducible to two potentially independent two-part models. John Locke’s model (which considers that words stand for ideas, and ideas stand for things) could be divided into two two-part models. Some theorists consider Peirce’s model as a single two-part model by not incorporating the interpretant or the object. To perceive a three-part model as genuine, there must be a correlation between the first and third elements, which cannot take place without the mediation of a second element. In Aristotle’s conception of signs, for example, the spoken words stand for mental images, which in turn stand for actual things:

```
Words (sign vehicle) → Mental image (sense) → Actual thing (referent)
```

According to this model, it is not possible for a word to be linked with the actual thing without the mediation of the mental image. This model could be reversed without losing
its genuine three-part nature. The actual thing evokes an idea (image), which in turn is named:

Actual thing (referent) → Mental image (sense) → Word (sign vehicle)

Peirce’s order in the relationship between the elements is different from that of Aristotle:

A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea.\(^{139}\)

Representamen (sign vehicle) → Object (referent) → Interpretant (sense)\(^{140}\)

According to the relationship between the representamen and the object, Peirce considered a sign to be an *icon*, an *index*, or a *symbol*:

1) **Icon**: the relationship between representamen and object is one of similarity.\(^{141}\) (For example a photograph of a person.) A triadic subdivision of this category is:

   a) Images: based on simple qualities;

   b) Diagrams: represented by analogous relations among the parts of the object;

   c) Metaphors: represented by parallelism.\(^{142}\)

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\(^{139}\) Peirce 1940, 228.

\(^{140}\) Peirce also considers the *interpretant* to be a representamen of another sign, creating an infinite series that Eco calls “unlimited semiosis.”

\(^{141}\) In his *Theory of Semiotics*, Eco critiques the existence of iconism. He focuses on the degree of similarity between the representamen and the object, and concludes that the relationship is one of identity rather than a sign function. Furthermore, he argues that all iconic resemblance is based on conventionality of some sort. See Eco 1979, 191-217.
2) **Index:** the relationship between representamen and object is one of proximity. (For example the baton symbolizing the role of conductor.)

3) **Symbols:** the relationship between representamen and object is arbitrarily established.\(^{143}\) (For example the word “Music.”)

Often, symbols have been developed out of icons and/or indices that acquire conventionality through time; moreover, a sign can reflect more than one type of relationship between its representamen (sign vehicle) and its object (referent). These facts, however, do not invalidate the usefulness of Peirce’s taxonomic structure.

A critical difference between Saussure’s structural semiology and Peirce’s semiotics is that the latter provides a hermeneutic component through the interpretant and the process of *abduction*.\(^{144}\) Saussure’s semiology requires a complementary semantics to supply reference; Peirce, on the other hand, includes semantic (and pragmatic) interpretation in his basic model of semiosis.

Some of the concepts explained in this chapter have been further developed and applied to the analysis of music. In the next chapter I review the writings in musical semiotics relevant to this dissertation.

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\(^{142}\) Monelle notes that “musical signs have been thought of as images and metaphors but never, apparently, as diagrams, unless one considers a few cases of resemblance between musical forms and physical objects; the suggestion, for example that the five parts of Stravinsky’s *Canticum Sacrum* represent the five domes of St. Mark.” Monelle 1992, 198.

\(^{143}\) Peirce’s symbol, because of it being arbitrary, is the closest to Saussure’s linguistic sign.

\(^{144}\) *Abduction* is “the process of inference by which a hypothesis is formed or generated.” Colapietro 1993, 1.
CHAPTER 8

MUSICAL SEMIOTICS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is not an exhaustive survey of writings on musical semiotics; my more limited intention is to discuss the semiotic theories that have influenced my own writings. Some of the concepts explained herein will be further developed in the following chapters, and subsequently applied to the analysis of film music; other concepts have been reinterpreted in light of pragmatics and applied to film music in previous chapters; there are also some concepts that informed my writings but are not relevant for the analysis of film music.

The musical application of rhetorical concepts was the fundamental approach to music composition until the end of the Baroque period. Since semiotics was linked to linguistics as part of the trivium (which includes grammar, dialectic and rhetoric), the association of music with rhetoric provided the first formal attempt to link semiotics and music. Theorists not only borrowed the terminology that rhetoric provided, but they also applied rhetorical concepts to compositional methods (c.f., Johann Heinichen, Joachim Burmeister), musical structures (c.f., Burmeister, Gallus Dressler, Johann Mattheson), as well as performance practice (c.f., Mattheson).145

Raymond Monelle traces the beginning of “modern music semiotics” back to the 1950s and 60s, and he groups theories of musical semiotics according to their interdisciplinary background: 1) those based on non-linguistic semiotics (Kofi Agawu, Robert Hatten, Leonard Meyer); 2) those based on linguistics but not semiotics (Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff);146 and 3) those based on linguistics and semiotics (Jean-

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145 Aristotle in his Rhetorica, Cicero in his De Oratore, and Quintillian in his Institutio Oratoria, also consider structural aspects of rhetoric; the connection with music, however, is relatively vague.

146 Lerdahl and Jackendoff even consider parallelisms between phonology and music. See Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1996, Chapter 12.
Jacques Nattiez, Philip Tagg, Eero Tarasti). Meyer proposes a different subdivision, based on the limits of the object of analysis: 1) the absolutists, who approach meaning as lying exclusively within the context of the work itself; and 2) the referentialists, who consider meaning in reference to the extramusical world of concepts, actions, and emotional states. Though this distinction appears useful for clarifying the object of study, most music semioticians developed models that blend (in different manner and extent) both absolutism and referentialism. In the next sections, I will first consider the absolutist and referentialist viewpoints (under introversive and extroversive semiotics, respectively), as well as their combination; second, I will reflect on other subjects such as polysemy, minimal units of meaning, connotation, denotation, and the universality of signs as understood by music semioticians.

8.2 Introversive Semiotics

Introversive semiotics bases its search for meaning in the syntactical aspects of music, considering the music’s formal design or its adherence to rules (or grammar) of style. Burmeister attempted to describe musical syntax as “the method of combining the pitches of two or more melodic lines into a harmony to produce musical movement.” His definition of the term provides some insight into the manner in which musical elements were segmented and subsequently linked; however, it differs from today’s definition of syntax in its linking simultaneous instead of contiguous events. Contiguous events were discussed as a compositional strategy based on a threefold structure: 

exordium, confirmation, and conclusio. Dressler, in his Praecepta Musicae Poetica, adopted a compositional structure for smaller musical segments that followed the formal divisions of a sentence: exordium-medium-finis. Almost two hundred years later, Mattheson in his Der Vollkommene Capellmeister proposed a similar structural model for a vocal composition:

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147 Many theorists apply both the absolutist and referentialist approaches to music, but employ different terminology: introversive/extroversive (Kofi Agawu), intramusical/extramusical (Raymond Monelle), endosemantic/exosemantic (William Bright), congeneric/extrageneric (Wilson Coker).

148 Burmeister 1606, 57.
Our musical disposition is different from rhetorical arrangement of a mere speech only in theme, subject, or object. Hence, it observes those six parts which are prescribed to an orator, namely the introduction, report, discourse, corroboration, and conclusion. (Exordium, Narratio, Propositio, Confirmatio, Confutation, & Peroratio).  

Meyer defines style as the rules (or system) of musical grammar and syntax. Out of such systems arise the expectations upon which musical meaning is built. Meaning, to Meyer, emerges when our expectant habit responses are delayed or blocked. As an example, he proposes the following deviations (from expectations):

- The consequent phase is delayed;
- The antecedent phase is ambiguous (suggesting several possible consequents);
- The consequent phase is unexpected.

Hatten implicitly draws on the notion of “expectation.” He regards the musical deviations from certain expectations as “marked events.” Hatten borrows the theory of markedness from Jakobson. Jackobson, after Saussure, proposed that linguistic units are bound by a system of binary oppositions; Jackobson expands this notion by putting forward the “asymmetry between oppositions” in his theory of markedness. A marked opposition is one in which the narrower element is foregrounded in relation to the more inclusive one. Hatten regards such oppositions as essential to the generation of meaning. He distinguishes between privative oppositions (presence of A vs. absence of A) and equipollent oppositions (A vs. B, where A= not B, and B= not A):

“Man/woman” is clearly a privative opposition (at least until current reforms affecting English usage are more generally accepted), since “man” (unmarked) can be used to refer generally to humankind, whereas “woman” (marked) invariably specifies gender…On the other hand, the opposition “male/female” is equipollent.

Based on a set of elements displaying privative oppositions, Hatten derives meaning from the correlation between structural oppositions (signifier) and expressive oppositions.

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149 Mattheson 1739, 470.
150 Hatten 1994, 35.
(signified). Figure 8.1 illustrates Hatten’s model of markedness as the “asymmetrical organizational structure underlying correlations between structural and expressive oppositions.”

![Figure 8.1. Hatten’s model of markedness.](Source: Hatten 1994, 37.)

Tarasti’s model for musical analysis, which he borrows from Greimas, is also based on binary oppositions. However, compared with basic structuralist binary oppositions, the “semiotic square,” shown in Figure 8.2, provides a richer semiotic system.

![Figure 8.2. Greimas’s semiotic square.](Source: Chandler 2002, 119.)

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151 Hatten claims that equipollent oppositions do not produce correlations that exhibit markedness. See: Hatten 1994, 2. Esli Sheinberg believes that equipollent oppositions are “the semantic source of irony, and their structure…can function as the direct model for the correlations of all modes of ambiguity.” See Sheinberg 2001, 14.

152 Hatten 1994, 37.
The upper corners represent a binary opposition and the lower corners represent positions not included in the binary opposition. This model can be understood as a network that interrelates a set of privative and equipollent oppositions (drawing on Hatten’s terminology). Figure 8.3 provides an example of privative and equipollent oppositions structured as a semiotic square.

figure 8.3. Privative and equipollent oppositions in Greimas’s semiotic square.

Tarasti’s main intent is to carry qualities related by logical opposition into the realm of syntax. An abstract level of narrative is then developed employing “discursive structures.” Thus, the main difference between Hatten’s oppositions and Tarasti’s semiotic square is that the former creates meaning, whereas the latter also creates a background (or syntactical) structure. The semiotic square functions as a plot or deep structure that the music unfolds in time. Oppositions become temporal to create a narrative:

Narrativity can be understood in the very common sense as a general category of the human mind, a competency that involves putting temporal events into a certain order, a syntagmatic continuum.\(^{153}\)

Subsequently, “at a surface level, the actorial category enters as identifiable complexes of motifs and theme-actants, which through modalizations make this the ‘anthropomorphic’ level of music.”\(^{154}\) Two themes from a piece are consequently considered the “actant” and the “antactant,” and their opposites resulting from it the

\(^{153}\) Tarasti 1994, 24.

\(^{154}\) Tarasti 1994, 34. There are four “modalities” that apply to musical narrative grammar: savoir (new compositional procedures introduced in a piece), pouvoir (instrument’s technical resources), vouloir (musical expectations), and devoir (stylistic restrictions).
“negactant” and the “negantactant.” Thus, Tarasti shifts his focus to examine the time-relationships among the identified semantic units, therefore leaving the realm of musical semiotics and entering that of (musical) narratology.

Tarasti’s theories, as well as Schenkerian theory, follow Saussure’s structural distinction between langue and parole. Tarasti, however, remarks that the “achronic” fundamental structure from which a narrative-generative process is derived (i.e. Greimas’s semiotic square) is substantially different from Schenker’s Ursatz:

For Greimas this achronic deep structure is already a structure of signification, but in Schenkerian analysis the deepest structure is a single tonic chord to which it is difficult to join any hidden meaning.

Similarly, Tarasti compares Greimas’s generative course and Chomsky’s transformational grammar:

Chomsky’s grammar has nothing to do with significations, whereas Greimas expressly takes into account significations, while progressing from a deep level (semio-narrative structures) toward the surface (discursive structures) of a text.

Chomsky’s transformational grammar influenced the writings of Lerdahl and Jackendoff. Their Generalized Theory of Tonal Music is a theory of musical syntax (not of musical semiotics) which combines Chomsky’s and Schenker’s theories. From Chomsky they take the “tree” structure for analysis. Chomsky claims that sentences are not generated according to grammatical laws, but rather, they follow “transformational” laws. Chomsky believes that the deep structures of language are innate, and consequently

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155 Saussure’s langue can be compared to Schenker’s Ursatz, both are achronic deep structures; and Saussure’s parole can be conceived as the actual piece, as a specific realization of the background structure. Agawu’s distinction of style and individual pieces also relies on Saussure’s structuralist concept of langue and parole: “We might think of the classical style as langue, and the individual ‘utterances’ of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven and their contemporaries as various paroles.” (Agawu 1991, 15.) However, given the multiplicity of styles in which film music manifests itself, such a distinction is not relevant to this study.

156 In an achronic structure there is no temporal relation among its components.

157 Tarasti 1994, 27.

158 Tarasti 1994, 27.

159 Leonard Bernstein was the first person to connect Chomsky’s theories with music analysis in his Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1973. He saw the parallels between transformation of sentences (in language) with transformation of phrases in music.
universal. Applying Chomsky’s theories, Lerdahl and Jackendoff proposed a transformational/generative grammar of classical western tonal music. After the process of segmentation, they trace hierarchical levels according to metric placement and to tension-resolution relationships of contiguous sonorities. Figure 8.4 reproduces an example given by the authors of the first four measures of Mozart’s Piano Sonata in A, K 331.

Figure 8.4. Example of Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s “tree” structure.
(Source: Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1996, 172.)

The application of musical semiotics to the introversive analysis of music has sought deep structures that produce meaningful surface phenomena. Since introversive semiotics limits the subject of study to the materials of music (without considering extra-musical elements), it produced models based on syntax rather than semiotics. Large-scale syntactical (formal) structures in film music are rare because of the discontinuous nature of the music, and the required interaction with other semiotic systems (narrative, visual, etc.). This interaction of semiotic systems is what defines film music as mainly an extroversive semiotic system.  

Tarasti’s notion of “actants,” however, could be understood as musical leitmotifs, which are a frequent resource in film music. A discussion of leitmotifs follows in Chapter 11 in the section on “symbolic signs.”
8.3 Extroversive semiotics

Heinichen and Burmeister approached music composition from a surface-oriented perspective. Heinichen, in his Der General-Bass in der Composition, includes the loci topici (topics for a formal discourse) as a general method of composition that focuses on surface textures. Later Ratner, Agawu, and other theorists adopted the concept of topics for the analysis of (mostly) eighteenth-century music.\(^{161}\)

Figure 8.5 is Agawu’s “Universe of Topics,” which he borrowed from Leonard Ratner. Each topic manifests itself in two dimensions: 1) the signifier, which comprises all the surface phenomena, such as rhythm, melody, texture, timbre, etc; and 2) the signified, which makes direct reference to the particular topic as a socio-cultural entity.

Like Ratner and later Agawu, Tagg provides a universe of topics that he calls the “ethnocentric selection of possible connotative spheres” or feels. The list of feels he provides, as a verbalized form of signs, is not exhaustive. Both the transmitter and the receiver understand these feels because they share the same socio-cultural background and store of signs. Some of the ethnocentric feels that Tagg addresses are:\(^{162}\)

\(^{161}\) Text painting, another surface phenomenon, was discussed by Joachim Burmeister in his Musical Poetics. He provided the foundations for text painting by projecting the semantic meaning of the text through the musical figuration that accompanies it. I consider text painting a type of iconic metaphor.

\(^{162}\) Tagg 1999, 12.
He further remarks that even though creative musicians within the European and North American cultural sphere might never use any of the words in the list to describe their music, they would know how to construct sounds corresponding to most of these “feels” while codal competent listeners from the same cultural background would be able to distinguish that music into categories similar to those listed.\footnote{Tagg 1999, 11.}

In fact, most film directors communicate with their film composer employing words or phrases (i.e. feels) such as the ones listed above; it is the composer’s task to understand and translate these feels into music that evokes the desired response from the audience. In an elaborate system of communication, Tagg reflects upon the importance of the receiver’s response to the music as an indicator of “codal interference”\footnote{By “codal interference” Tagg not only means a disturbance in the channel of transmission, but also a response obstructed by socio-cultural factors, or interference caused by added systems such as words to a song.} or “codal incompetence” in the process of communication. In Chapter 11, I will analyze topics in film music as symbolic signs. My approach to topics is a blend of Agawu’s extroversive semiotics, Aristotle’s notion of sign, and a general theory of metonymy.

A music gesture is a musical-surface phenomenon similar to topics, in that its meaning results from extra-musical associations. However, whereas topics relate primarily to socio-cultural elements, gestures relate to physical or biological (human) elements. There are two perspectives on gesture: 1) as physical movements that
accompany performance, and 2) as physical movement mapped onto musical space (thus incorporated in the music). Mattheson considers the art of gesticulation as the physical movements (or choreography) that accompany the performance of music:

With the mouth closed, the hands and certain gestures alone say things which can hardly be uttered as clearly with the tongue or the written word.¹⁶⁵

Thus, Mattheson distinguished three methods of communication: the linguistic, the gestural, and the musical. This foreshadows Asafiev’s theories of intonation, which adds a layer of signification to the typical denotative meaning of a word or sentence. Tarasti is also aware of the act of “performance” as supplementing the musical text with a layer of signification:

We have to distinguish between two cases in musical semantics: first, a musical utterance, under certain conditions, always has a given semantic content; second, a musical utterance can be pronounced in a way that imbues it with semantic significance.¹⁶⁶

Tarasti devotes his chapter entitled “Semiotic Approach to the Study of Musical Performance” to the analysis of twenty-two recordings of Faure’s song Après un reve. There are two stages in the analysis, the score proper, and the specific performances or “musical enunciations” (or intonation in Asafiev’s terminology) according to tempo, vibrato, etc. We should conceive both, gestures during performance and intonation, as secondary systems of communication that modify the meaning established through the primary system (music). Film music can be conceived as a secondary system of communication that modifies the meaning established through the visuals or narrative; however, there are numerous cases in which film music appears as the primary system of communication.

Hatten’s notion of gesture as “significant energetic shaping through time”¹⁶⁷ is wide-ranging.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Mattheson 1739, 132.
¹⁶⁶ Tarasti 1994, 23.
¹⁶⁷ Hatten 2004, 95.
Musical gestures include stylistic types and their correlations, as well as strategic tokens and their contextual interpretations. They may originate as spontaneous expressive movements translated into sound; and they may be treated thematically, dialogically, rhetorically, and or tropologically. Musical gesture is a point of entry for listeners (a default level of understanding for those listeners lacking stylistic competency) and a point of entry for composers (a means of inspiration, or an interface between the creation of a musical idea and its representation of a particular emotional state, as mediated by gesture’s energetic shaping through time). Thematic gestures, like motives, can affect the musical discourse, often through a process of developing variation, and help guide both formal design and expressive genre (the dramatic trajectory of a work). Gesture can also be generalized into higher-level syntheses, such as topics, or the most creative syntheses: the speculative integration or fusion of tropes, which combine stylistic correlations in novel ways and enable new meanings to emerge along stylistically and culturally conditioned lines.\(^\text{169}\)

To account for “gestural competence,” Hatten investigated the physical (biological and cognitive) and the social (cultural and music-stylistic) aspects. In his elaboration on the physical sources of gestural competence, Hatten emphatically rejects the notion of metaphorical cross-domain mappings in favor of his “representation of events across the sensorimotor system” or \textit{intermodality}.\(^\text{170}\)

\textit{Intermodality} is a more useful underlying generalization than the “metaphors” that Johnson (1987) and Lakoff and Johnson (1979, 1999) attribute to any cross-domain mapping in their cognitive theory of embodied image schemata. Their higher-level cross-domain mapping could, from this perspective, be understood as cognitively reifying the way lower-level perception works as it maps and coordinates representations from various sensory organs. Even at the level of linguistic expression, however, an observation such as “She’s feeling down” may be understood not as metaphorical but as an aptly literal description of those bodily postures and facial gestures that naturally accompany feelings of sadness or grieving.\(^\text{171}\)

Lidov, whose own theories are based upon the work of Manfred Clynes,\(^\text{172}\) views bodily gesture as “a molar unit of motion, initiated by a single impulse, and

\(^{169}\) Hatten 2004, 233.

\(^{170}\) I view intermodality as biological correlations. Please refer to Chapter 2 section 5.

\(^{171}\) Hatten 2004, 101.

\(^{172}\) Clynes 1989. “Molar,” in this context, signifies “indivisible.”
accomplishing nothing other than expression or communication…while corporal gesture is an unbroken unit, the musical representation of a gesture might involve several notes.”

And he further comments that “gesture has a privileged status in the somatic states, for gesture appears to have no function outside of its communicative one.”

Lidov is strongly rooted in the semiotic tradition, offering a more formalistic (than Hatten) theoretical account of gesture as sign, applying developmental calculi (fragmentation, inversion, transposition) and drawing on the Peircean tripartition (icon, index, symbol).

Tagg’s brief reference to gestures, accounting for their biological as well as cultural sources, is akin to the notions presented by Hatten and Lidov:

It should be clear that music can relate to moods and gestures directly, through a sort of synesthetic homology, and indirectly, through the intermediary of similar music used for similar purposes in similar situations.

Musical gestures, as mappings of physical movements (of biological or cultural origin) onto musical space, are often used in film music. I do not regard them as semiotic functions, but as metaphorical processes that establish a perceptual, biological, or cultural correlation between the music and what they represent. The communicative potential of musical gestures relies on metaphorical correlations rather than on symbolic interpretations. Therefore, I included examples of gestures in film music in Chapter 1, on qualitative iconic metaphors.

8.4 Combination of Introversive and Extroversive Semiotics

Most writers on music semiotics aim to combine the absolutist and referentialist approach to music analysis. Hatten’s theories combine referentialism (through

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173 Lidov 2005, 132-133. “Somatic” means “pertaining to the body.”
174 Lidov 2005, 151.
175 Lidov 1987.
176 Philip Tagg 1999, 22.
177 I address the notion of perceptual, biological, and cultural metaphorical correlations in Chapter 2, Section 5.
Hermeneutics and intertextual relationships) and absolutism (in his application of the theory of "markedness"). He approaches intertextuality through reference to musical works with text, extracting from those works specific motivic formulas and their respective meaning (added by the text), and then proposing the same meaning in motivic formulas found in instrumental works. His *troping*, the interaction of unrelated types, is an example of combining introverse and extroversive semiotics.

Figure 8.6 illustrates Agawu’s approach to introverse semiosis through the “beginning-middle-end” paradigm, which is a combination of Mattheson’s rhetorical “Exordium-Narratio-Propositio-Confutatio-Confirmatio-Peroratio,” and a Schenkerian Ursatz. When considering topics as part of a structure (his “region of play”) Agawu proceeds from identification to expressive interpretation, thus combining introverse and extroversive semiotics.

![Figure 8.6. Agawu’s “beginning-middle-ending” paradigm. (Source: Agawu 1991, 53.)](image)

Tarasti notes that paradigmatic relations often correspond to *interoceptive iconicity*, while syntagmatic relations correspond to *interoceptive indexicality*. He considers topics to be exteroceptive icons, indexes, and symbols. But, when a composer

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178 Hermeneutics explores not the immediate meaning, but a secondary “underlying” meaning. It was first developed as the discipline that interpreted ancient texts, especially those of religion and myth.

179 Viewed under Ratner’s perspective, when these intertextual links apply to several composers, we can consider them “topics.”
interrelates these topics throughout a composition, they operate in the interoceptive realm:

If the same topic is repeated frequently, it no longer influences the listener through its exteroceptive quality. Instead it assumes an interoceptive function in the global structure of the work.\(^{180}\)

In this dissertation I do not directly address the interaction of extroversive and introversive semiotics. However, many of my examples require a consideration of both (introversive and extroversive semiotics) to be fully understood. Such is the case with musical troping in film, presented in Chapter 4, or the interaction of leitmotifs with narrative structures, that I will explore in Chapter 11.

### 8.5 Polysemy

Pierce's greatest influence upon Nattiez is the notion of infinite and dynamic interpretant. In Figure 8.7, Nattiez avoids the linear representation on an infinite chain of interpretants, postulating the idea of multiple *simultaneous* interpretants. His description of “symbolic form” encompasses this idea: "A sign, or a collection of signs, to which an infinite complex of interpretants is linked, can be called A SYMBOLIC FORM."\(^{181}\)

![Figure 8.7. Nattiez’s representation of symbolic form, based on Gilles-Gaston Granger’s expansion of Peirce’s triangle. (Source: Nattiez 1990, 6.]

Similarly, Tagg claims that music appears as *polysemic* (i.e. a signifier has several signifieds) because we describe its meaning by relying upon a secondary (linguistic)
system (i.e. using words). Since there is no one-to-one relationship between the two systems, he concludes that music, from a *logocentric* (linguistic) viewpoint, is polysemic:

A certain set of musical sounds might...[trigger the associations of] waving corn, rolling hills, a woman with long hair strolling through a meadow, the swell of the sea in a summer’s breeze, billowing sails, a long dress, love, romance, sighs, olden times and a whole host of other things.\textsuperscript{182}

Tagg notes, however, that all signifieds share some commonalities; and signifieds such as “crime, delinquency, streets, loneliness, etc.” are clearly opposed to “waving corn, rolling hills, a woman with long hair strolling through a meadow, the swell of the sea in a summer’s breeze, billowing sails, a long dress, love, romance, sighs, etc.” and not included in the associations produced by that specific set of musical signs.\textsuperscript{183} To specify music’s meaning, Tagg introduces the context, proposing that “musical discourse can gain symbolic precision if associated with words, actions, pictures, etc., locating the sounds in specific social, historical or natural situations.”\textsuperscript{184}

Likewise, the context in film music (i.e. visuals, narrative, or just the fact that the audience is aware of watching a movie) helps specify, or at least narrow, the meaning(s) ascribed to the music. I regard musical signs as polysemic in their connotations.

### 8.5 Minimal Units of Meaning

In 1958, Bruno Nettl first proposed using linguistic methods to identify the musical phonemes of pitch, rhythm, harmony, and other parameters. Similarly, Tagg draws on linguistics to propose his concept of *museme*. Linguistics defines a *morpheme* as “the minimal units” that “consist of signifier and signified.”\textsuperscript{185} *Phonemes*, by contrast, are distinctive but non-signifying units. Accordingly, Tagg proposes that just as replacing the phoneme |b| with |s| changes the morpheme “bad” into “sad,” changing one element in one parameter of musical expression

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\textsuperscript{182} Tagg 1999, 7.

\textsuperscript{183} This calls to mind Hatten’s expressive and structural oppositions.

\textsuperscript{184} Tagg 1999, 9.

\textsuperscript{185} See Martinet’s “double articulation” in Noth 2002, 237.
(instrumentation, volume, first or second of two notes, underlying harmony) can change the “meaning.”

Subsequently, he evaluates the validity of the same museme in different cultural contexts:

A museme is therefore a minimal unit of musical discourse that is recurrent and meaningful in itself within the framework of any one musical genre. This means that the structures constituting a museme in one style do not necessarily constitute a museme in another style and, even if they did, the museme in question would not necessarily connote the same thing.

Instead of searching for minimal units of meaning in music, Tarasti strived for a shift from semantics to syntax:

Until recently the main task of musical semiotics has been to distinguish the smallest significant units. At the same time, study of the connections among these units has been neglected; the integrating forces of musical discourse have not been taken into account.

In searching for minimal units of meaning, theorists attempt to link music with linguistics rather than semiotics. Music is a system of communication; but it does not possess the required characteristics to become a language. Music as a type of language has been the subject of narratology and narrativity.

8.6 Connotation and Denotation

Tagg proposes that meaning in music be derived from denotation as well as connotation. Hjelmslev claimed that “a connotative semiotic is a semiotic that is not a language, and one whose expression plane is provided by the content plane and expression plane of a denotative semiotic.” According to Eco, “there is a connotative

\[^{186}\text{Tagg 1999, 35.}\]
\[^{187}\text{Tagg 1999, 34. His emphasis.}\]
\[^{188}\text{Tarasti 1994, 18.}\]
\[^{189}\text{See Abbate 1989; Nattiez 1990; Maus 1997; Paley 2000; Maus 2005.}\]
\[^{190}\text{Hjelmslev. Cited in Monelle 1992, 45.}\]
semiotics when there is a semiotics whose expression plane is another semiotics,”\textsuperscript{191} and he continued, “the characteristic of a connotative code is the fact that the further significations conventionally relies on a primary one.”\textsuperscript{192} In Figure 8.7, which is similar to Barthes’s model of connotation/denotation, Tagg illustrates the notion of connotation and denotation from a linguistic viewpoint:\textsuperscript{193}

![Figure 8.8. Connotation as “superelevation of previous signification.”](Source: Tagg 1999, 7.)

The signifier-signified relationships are denotative and rely mainly upon indexicallity. But the relationship between “alarm noise” and “fire,” or between “alarm noise” and “danger,” is one of connotation.

On the notion of connotation in music, Monelle remarks that:

music appears to have denotative meaning when some natural sound is imitated, or when a quotation from some other work or style is presented: a fanfare, horn call or shepherd’s pipe. There is seldom a question of denotative meaning alone, however, as there can be in language. Karbusicky observes that the sound of the cuckoo, which presumably denotes the bird, can also signify “Spring is here!”\textsuperscript{195}

Monelle and Karbusicky’s denotative meaning of a sign is based on onomatopoeia and extended to topicality. I regard the use of onomatopoeia in music as an iconic sign; iconic meaning is not necessarily denotative meaning. With the exception of onomatopoeia and the acoustic characteristics of a (musical) sound, there is a lack of specific denotative meaning in music; furthermore, it appears that connotations in music are accessed

\textsuperscript{191} Here, Eco relies upon Hjelmslevian terminology, in which the “expression plane/content plane” is equivalent to the “signifier/signified” in Saussurean terms.

\textsuperscript{192} Eco 1979, 55.

\textsuperscript{193} See Figure 7.2.

\textsuperscript{194} Tagg 1999, 7.

\textsuperscript{195} Monelle 1992, 16.
without the mediation of a primary denotative meaning. Topics are socio-cultural associations; therefore, I regard them as symbols.

8.7 Universals

In *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff envisage universals of musical grammars of all musical idioms; they search for “the principles available to all experienced listeners for organizing the musical surfaces they hear, no matter what idiom they are experienced in.”\(^{196}\) However, they claim that “a genuine test of our claims of universality would appear to require serious historical and ethnomusicological research.”\(^{197}\) The search for or the study of musical grammar, however, does not belong to the field of musical semiotics.

Nattiez recognized Leonard Meyer as one of the first scholars to consider universal perceptive (i.e. *esthesic*) strategies in music in his theory of “expectation.” In his search for universals in music, Nattiez proposes a shift of focus from musical structure to musical function:

> They [musical universals] must be sought in the realm of poietic [i.e. process of composition] and esthesic [i.e. listener’s reception] strategies more than at the level of immanent structures.\(^{198}\)

Nattiez acknowledges the existence of a relationship between musical gestures and kinesis. But he forewarns us that “one might think that all these symbols have natural biases, but we should remember that we never believe so strongly in the naturalness of things as when we have become totally conditioned by them.”\(^{199}\) He cites counterexamples such as Greek, Arab, and Jewish cultures that associate high/low sounds in physical space in the opposite way.

Tagg limits the existence of musical universals to the realm of bioacoustics. A summary of the relationships he addresses follows:

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\(^{196}\) Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1996, 278.
\(^{197}\) Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1996, 279.
\(^{198}\) Nattiez 1990, 67.
\(^{199}\) Nattiez 1990, 121.
1) between [a] musical tempo (pulse) and [b] heartbeat (pulse) or the speed of breathing, walking, running and other bodily movement.

2) between [a] musical loudness and timbre (attack, envelope, decay, transients) and [b] certain types of physical activity.

3) between [a] speed and loudness of tone beats and [b] the acoustic setting.

4) between [a] musical phrase lengths and [b] the capacity of the human lung.

All the above categories (including gestures that appear universal) rely upon some correlation of structures (such as image schemas), and therefore explored in Chapter 3 in the section on qualitative iconic metaphors. In Chapter 9, I will discuss the potential for iconic signification of sound which does not include reference to extra-musical elements. I will also provide evidence of some degree of universality (or conventionality) of acoustic signs based upon their sonic characteristics, and I will show examples of how this notion may be applied to film music.
9.1 Introduction

Acoustic iconic signs are established through acoustic signifiers in the soundtrack, and therefore, understood (i.e. stand for their signified) via the essential parameters of a sound. In film, the sounds that accompany the visuals are seldom recorded on site; they are thoughtfully chosen, designed, and adjusted to convey specific signs by the sound engineer, the foley artist (sound designer), and to a lesser extent, the music composer (when onomatopoeia is at play). Acoustic iconic signs are generally overlooked because their perception and understanding seems instantaneous and unconscious. In this chapter I explore the semiotic potential of sound design and onomatopoeia.

9.2 Sound Design

I will consider the various parameters of sound that endow a soundtrack with the characteristics necessary to function as iconic sign. These parameters are:

1) Reverb
2) Equalization and Volume
3) Sound Placement
4) Envelope and Duration

9.2.1 Reverb

Reverberation results from the reflection of sound. Since sound propagates in waves, it reaches the listeners in two different ways: 1) directly and 2) as a reflection or reverberation (see Figure 9.1). Because these reflections or reverberations travel a longer path (from sound source to listener), they are delayed and attenuated as compared with
the direct sound. Reverb is a type of echo, but due to the temporal proximity with the main sound, we do not identify it as such.

![Figure 9.1. Reverb. Direct Sound - Reverberations](image)

Reverb helps the listener identify the:
1) size of the environment;
2) shape of a room (if applicable);
3) existence of sound reflecting surfaces;
4) the listener’s positioning with respect to the sound source.

In Clips 9.1 and 9.2 from *The Red Violin*, the same violin is played in diverse environments, each featuring specific acoustic characteristics. As the violin is played in the woods the (near) absence of reverb contrasts with the more substantial reverb present as the violin is played in a big concert hall a few days later. The sound engineer, with the aid of electronic devices, added or subtracted the amount and type of reverb to re-create the desired acoustic characteristic. This suggests the following iconic function:200

```
SIGNIFIER ----> SIGNIFIED
  Sound           Environment where sound takes place
```

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200 The arrow should be understood as replacing “stands for.”
Clip 9.1. Absence of reverb simulating outdoors acoustic characteristics.  
(Source: *The Red Violin.*) (0:51:30 - 0:52:20)

Clip 9.2. Presence of reverb simulating concert hall acoustic characteristics. (Source: *The Red Violin.*) (0:56:15 - 0:58:00)

In Clip 9.3 from *Out of Africa*, the voice and the music present in the soundtrack have a type and amount of reverb that do not correspond to the visuals. As a result, the audience experiences this incongruence as a presentation of non-diegetic voice and non-diegetic music. Therefore, the amount and type of reverb can also help identify which sounds are diegetic, and which sounds lie outside the diegesis:

Clip 9.3. Incongruence of reverb representing non-diegetic voice.  
(Source: *Out of Africa.*) (0:00:20 - 0:01:30)
Every sound has a specific signal strength that varies along the audio frequency spectrum. Due to the properties of sound, the values of signal strength of the audio frequency spectrum will vary depending on:

1) Distance traveled by sound
2) Medium that transmits the sound
3) Presence of surfaces between or beyond the sound source and the listener

Equalization can be regarded as the volume of specific frequencies across the sound’s spectrum. Using equalizers, the sound engineer is able to manipulate the sound and reproduce the necessary acoustic qualities to portray the variables listed above.

In Clip 9.4 from Mission Impossible II, the visuals alternate between a big room where a Flamenco dance is taking place, and other rooms and corridors in the same building. Correspondingly, when perceived from the adjacent rooms or corridors, there is a reduction of the general volume (particularly in the higher frequencies) of the Flamenco tap dancing and clapping that emanates from the big room. Understood as such, the volume and equalization of the sound establishes the following signifier-signified relationship:

Clip 9.4. Changes in volume and equalization to establish the distance to sound source. (Source: Mission Impossible II.)(0:12:11 - 0:12:55)
The medium (air, water, wire, etc) through which sound travels also affects the signal strength of the various frequencies. In Clip 9.3 from *Out of Africa* (above), the reduction of specific low and high frequencies of the music (as well as the introduction of noise), emulates the acoustic characteristics of a gramophone. To clarify this, the voice-over states “He even took the gramophone on safari…” As a result, the sound establishes the sign function:

SIGNIFIER ————————> SIGNIFIED  
Sound ————————> Distance to sound source

9.2.3 Sound Placement

With the advancement of technology, sound placement is not restricted to a dual left-right positioning. Surround sound allows for a more specific placement through the reproduction of sound in numerous spatial points. Thus sounds can be heard as emanating from behind the listener, in front of the listener, or on each side of the listener with greater accuracy than before.

In Clip 9.1 from *The Red Violin* (above), the violinist is shown in the middle of the screen and the violin sound emanates with equal strength from both sides (left and right) on the stereophonic spectrum. As the camera switches perspective, the violinist is not seen on the screen, but the shifting of the sound (from the center to almost completely to the left channel) specifies the violinist’s location. Thus, the sound placement in the stereophonic spectrum establishes the sign function:

SIGNIFIER ————————> SIGNIFIED
Sound ————————> Spatial relation to sound source
9.2.4 Envelope and Duration

The envelope of a sound is the contour of the sound’s intensity through time. Figure 9.2 below graphically illustrates the four phases typically addressed in studies of envelope; these are:

1) **Attack**: the onset of the sound
2) **Decay**: quick fading after the attack
3) **Sustain**: (generally) slow fading of the sound
4) **Release**: when the production of sound is ceased (for example the moment one releases a piano key), the sound fades quickly but not always instantaneously

![Figure 9.2. Sound envelope.](http://www.billbuxton.com/AudioUI02acoustics.pdf)

Every instrumental sound has a characteristic envelope that varies significantly according to the dynamic level or range in which the sound is played. Piano sounds, for example, are generally recognized by a very quick attack and decay, long sustain, and quick release.

The use of computer software for sound editing has facilitated the reversal of sound, which results in a reverse envelope. In Clip 9.5 from *Moulin Rouge!* the envelope of a piano sound is reversed to portray the backward motion of time. As Christian (Ewan McGregor) writes “one year ago,” the camera zooms out and the music plays with reversed envelopes; once time again becomes fixed as he pronounces “it was 1899” the

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201 Graph from: http://www.billbuxton.com/AudioUI02acoustics.pdf
sound is normalized to the natural envelope of the piano, and the narrative moves forward in time. Thus, the sound envelope establishes the sign function:

Clip 9.5. Reverse envelope representing backward motion in time. (Source: *Moulin Rouge!*) (0:04:50 - 0:05:10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNIFIER</th>
<th>SIGNIFIED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Direction of time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.3 Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia allows composers to represent elements musically through their sonic characteristics. Since the relationship of signifier (the musical sound) and signified (the real sound) is based upon similarity established in one conceptual domain (sound in this case) the relationship is considered a semiotic function and not a qualitative iconic metaphor.\(^{202}\) Thus, similarity relations (based on iconicity) are the result of semiotic functions, and correlations or mappings (based on image schemas) are the result of metaphorical processes.

Saint-Saëns’ *Carnaval des Animaux* contains numerous examples of onomatopoeia to portray animals (including pianists!). In Example 9.1 from *Fossiles*, Saint-Saëns chooses the xylophone to symbolize the sound of rattling bones.\(^{203}\) The common acoustic characteristics of the sound of the xylophone and the (imagined) sound produced by the jiggling of bones, has contributed to the centuries-old association of the

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\(^{202}\) Recall that for a metaphor to exist we need a violation of categorical membership, not present in the use of onomatopoeia.

\(^{203}\) Saint-Saëns’ *Le Danse Macabre* also features a xylophone.
instrument with death imagery. An early example of this association is Hans Holbein’s famous print from his series of woodcuts *Dance of Death* (of 1526), in which a skeleton is portrayed playing a xylophone (see Figure 9.3).

Example 9.1. Theme from Saint-Saëns’s *Fossiles*.

![Xylophone notation](image)

Figure 9.3. Hans Holbein, plate from *Dance of Death*. Original woodcut.

Generally, adequate representation through onomatopoeia not only requires timbral resemblance, but also similitude in some other parameter(s) such as contour, dynamic level, register, and articulation. In Example 9.2 from *Le Coucou au Fond des Bois*, also from *Carnaval des Animaux*, Saint-Saëns represents a cuckoo with the sound of a clarinet. For additional specificity, the clarinet plays a characteristic motivic idea: a descending major third, detached, in the middle range of the clarinet. Therefore, not only the timbre, but also the interval, its direction, the range, and the articulation of the notes, help relate the signifier and the signified through onomatopoeia.
Example 9.2. Theme from Saint-Saëns’s *Le Coucou au Fond des Bois*.

Example 9.3 from Bach’s *Saint Matthew Passion*, illustrates onomatopoeia in word painting. Bach underscores the sung words “Und die Erde erbebete” [and the earth trembled] with a contrabass tremolo. The range and quivering figuration in the contrabass effectively simulates the sound of an earthquake.

Example 9.3. Onomatopoeic representation of earthquake in Bach’s *Saint Matthew Passion*. 
9.4 Conclusion

The iconic function of sound design seems undeniable. A sound cannot be realized without a specific dynamic level, positioning with respect to the listener, timbre, or any of the characteristics that contribute to the perception of the sound as a sign function. Music and sounds, except for non-diegetic music, are generally introduced in the film soundtrack to represent an undistorted and (to some extent) objective perception of reality. In the next chapter, I will examine the use of onomatopoeia and non-traditional sound design in film as a means to establish subjective and (in some cases) distorted representations of reality.
CHAPTER 10

NON-TRADITIONAL SOUND DESIGN

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will develop a two-dimensional taxonomic structure that traces the constituent elements of a film soundtrack as they lie either inside or outside the diegesis. Additionally, I will explore the use of onomatopoeia in film music. These two tasks will support a general framework for understanding a higher degree of interaction between music and other sound elements of the film.

10.2 Two-Dimensional Taxonomic Structure of the Soundtrack

The terms diegetic and non-diegetic distinguish between sound sources that are on or off the screen respectively. I will refer to these categories as “fields.” There are three main elements that constitute the movie soundtrack: spoken voice, music, and noise (which includes sound effects). I will refer to these elements as “planes.” Applying this taxonomical structure to the soundtrack (see Figure 10.1), it is possible to classify each sonic element as belonging to a specific field and a specific plane.

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204 Gorbman (1987) attributes the concept and terminology of diegesis to the French filmologues of the 1950s.

205 “Spoken voice” does not include background dialogues or other background vocal utterances.

206 Although “noise” may have a derogatory connotation, I use it here simply to denote any type of sound that is not music or voice.
Clip 10.1 from the film *The Firm* illustrates the use of diegetic music; both, the viewer and the character on the screen, can hear the Jazz Band playing. The function of the music is to add realism, but not to comment on the narrative. Also note the source-identifying shot typical of scenes that contain diegetic music.

Clip 10.2 from *Out of Africa* nicely demonstrates non-diegetic voice. Here, an unseen narrator takes the form of a voice-over. This non-diegetic voice (of Karen Dinesen Blixen, played by Meryl Streep) briefly takes control of the narrative. The sound engineer has processed the non-diegetic music that accompanies this segment to emulate the sound emanating from a gramophone, which Meryl Streep mentions at the beginning of her narration: “He even took the gramophone on Safari…”
Clip 10.2. Non-diegetic voice. (Source: *Out of Africa.*
(0:00:20 - 0:01:30)

Finally, Clip 10.3 from *The Perfect Storm* provides ample examples of diegetic noise, provided by a *foley* artist to support a realistic aural impression. The non-diegetic music that accompanies this scene helps intensify the tension.

Clip 10.3. Diegetic noise. (Source: *The Perfect Storm.*
(0:52:00 - 0:52:40)

In a movie, these fields and planes represent different cognitive dimensions. Once a clear diegetic versus non-diegetic polarity, and a clear distinction between the voice, music, and noise planes have been established, any anomaly in these categories will become a “marked event.” By setting up some interaction among these categories, the director, composer, or sound editor create windows of interpretation, through which the narrative may be viewed in a new light.

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207 Very often a sound source will be implied rather than shown on the screen; nevertheless, the sound produced by such a source will be classified as diegetic. The foley artist (the industry name for the sound effects specialist) recreates the sounds of a specific scene in a studio.

208 For applications of the theory of *markedness* to music see Hatten 1994.
10.3 Interaction of Categories

While many types of interactions are possible, I will focus on interactions between the music (in either field) and one other category. This interaction can be effected with the use of three techniques that I will call *overlapping*, *replacement*, and *transition*. Figure 10.2 illustrates all possible interactions between music and one other category. In the next sections of this chapter I provide examples of overlapping, replacement, and transition.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 10.2. Interaction between music and other categories in the soundtrack.

10.4 Overlapping

“Overlapping” refers to simultaneously heard sounds. Overlapping sounds from different planes (such as diegetic voice, and diegetic noise) is common, but overlapping sounds that correspond to different fields within the same plane is highly unusual. Clip 10.4 from *The Conversation* exemplifies an overlap of diegetic and non-diegetic music. The diegetic music contributes to the realistic presentation of the event on the screen: the equalization and reverb of the music matches the acoustic characteristics of the space where the music is performed.  

209 Very often, the inclusion of “mistakes” would contribute to a realistic rendering of the musical event. For an insightful discussion of specific codes that heighten a sense of realism, see Chion 1990.
the protagonist’s specific emotional state. However, these emotions are revealed and further manipulated through the incorporation of non-diegetic music.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIELD</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIEGETIC</td>
<td>NON-DIEGETIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>Noise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10.3. Representation of overlap of diegetic and non-diegetic music.

Harry Caul (Gene Hackman) is a surveillance expert whose job involves listening into other people’s private lives. Throughout the film, the non-diegetic score performed on the piano captures Harry’s private reality through changes in the timbre by way of equalization. The diegetic saxophone solo score, on the other hand, portrays his social life to be devoid of any social contact. In this example, both the diegetic saxophone and non-diegetic piano overlap but are unable to fuse, which comments on the dissociation of Harry’s private reality and social life (see Figure 10.3).
10.5 Replacement

“Replacement” may occur when sound events from different planes share several acoustic characteristics. Therefore, the signifier is linked to its signified through onomatopoeia (or iconicity). Clip 10.5 from the film *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) shows one of the first instances of replacement. Because of the similarity between the clashing sound of the swords during the confrontation and the sound of a metallic idiophone, the non-diegetic music, composed by Sergei Prokofiev, effectively replaces the diegetic noise (see Figure 10.4). Since the shots were not filmed to the music, the inclusion of the clashing swords sound in the diegetic noise category would create a rhythmic conflict with the non-diegetic music. The director Sergei Eisenstein aimed for an unprecedented interaction between all elements of a film, and especially between music and picture.\textsuperscript{210} His decision to exclude the diegetic noise was refined by the composer’s choice of timbres in the non-diegetic music, delivering a stylized reconstruction of the aural experience.

![Figure 10.4. Representation of non-diegetic music replacing diegetic noise.](image)

210 This brings to mind Wagner’s vision of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which implies a synthesis of all the arts. Royal Brown, in his book *Overtones and Undertones*, explores the ambiguous diegesis of the music in the Eisenstein/Prokofiev collaboration *Ivan the Terrible*. 
In Clip 10.6 from *Mission Impossible II*, the diegetic noise (the sound of a woman wearing high heels rushing up the stairs) and the diegetic music (the typical tap dance of Flamenco style) contains the same acoustic characteristics. The diegetic noise is erased from the soundtrack and the diegetic music functions in both planes (noise and music) in the diegetic field (see Figure 10.5). This sonic manipulation portrays how Nyah Nordoff-Hall, a highly capable professional thief, is able to mask her footsteps with the sound of Flamenco tap dancing to get upstairs, where a valuable necklace is stored. In fact, this replacement establishes one of the primary metaphors in the film, the equation of intricate fighting and theft with dance. This is explored in both the aural and visual media throughout the film.211

211 In examples 10.4 and 10.5 onomatopoeia enables the replacement.
Clip 10.7 from the movie *Titus* (which is a new interpretation of Shakespeare’s drama) presents an example of non-diegetic music replacing diegetic voice. Lavinia, Titus’s daughter, has been tortured; her hands and her tongue have been removed, so that she cannot communicate. Marcus (Titus brother) arrives at the scene, and immediately asks what has happened. Her answer, the diegetic voice portrayed as a scream-like vociferation, and the non-diegetic music (an expressive note played on a muted flute) contain some common acoustic characteristics. The diegetic voice is erased from the soundtrack, and the non-diegetic music takes over (see Figure 10.6). This becomes a marked event in the film that draws the viewer’s attention to the music and reflects Lavinia’s incapability to speak by using a muted flute that symbolizes a voice that has been silenced.

Figure 10.6. Representation of non-diegetic music replacing diegetic voice.
10.6 Transition

“Transition” occurs when a sound event presented in a specific category is transferred to a different category. Transition can take place between any two categories regardless of their field or plane; transition in the music plane (from diegetic music to non-diegetic music, or vice versa) is common and often smooth; transition between two elements on different fields and planes, however, would be quite drastic but nonetheless very effective. Like replacement, transition models a relationship of signifier and signified based on onomatopoeia.

In Clip 10.8 from Dancer in the Dark, the sound of the train approaching the characters is first presented as diegetic noise and subsequently transferred to the music. Here, the music coexists in both the diegetic and non-diegetic fields (see Figure 10.7). The singing and the percussive accompaniment of the train sounds are part of the elements seen on-screen, but the string accompaniment is not. Selma (Bjork) has a degenerative disease that is making her blind. She is however aware of every sound that surrounds her, and in her mind these sounds become music. This shift to a world wherein everything is controlled by the sounds that overwhelm her senses is visually emphasized by subtle changes in the coloration and dance-like movements of the characters. This dreamlike drifting between sonic fantasy and reality is crucial to the film’s plot, because it forms the vehicle for her ability to cope with her situation.

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212 Claudia Gorbman, Anahid Kassabian, and Roy Pendergast, among others, have commented on the transition from diegetic music to non-diegetic music and vice-versa.
Figure 10.7. Representation of diegetic noise transferred to the music plane in both fields.

Clip 10.8. Diegetic noise transferred to the music plane in both fields.
(Source: Dancer in the Dark.) (0:55:10 - 0:57:05)

In Clip 10.9 (another scene from The Conversation) the scream of a woman being killed presented as diegetic voice, is transferred instantaneously to the non-diegetic music category as a synthesized sound that resembles a scream, i.e. onomatopoeia (see Figure 10.8). As a result, the soundtrack becomes a key element in understanding the protagonist’s reaction to the event. As our protagonist hears the scream, he tries to escape reality by turning on the TV and covering his ears with both hands. But the scream, or rather, the impression of a scream, continues to resonate in his thoughts as the non-diegetic sound element persists.
Figure 10.8. Representation of diegetic voice transferred to non-diegetic music.

Clip 10.9. Diegetic voice transferred to non-diegetic music.  
(Source: The Conversation.) (1:35:50 - 1:36:45)

10.7 Conclusion

Through the examples discussed, I hope to have shown some ways in which composers break free from standard film scoring formulas while creating dramatic and rhetorically intelligible scores that can deepen the audience’s understanding of the film. The model I present gives us a way to categorize, and therefore more deeply understand, the various ways that film composers can navigate the sonic/narrative possibilities and create meaning in non-traditional ways. The clear differentiation of sound fields and planes as well as the further experimentation with the interaction among categories using the techniques of overlapping, replacement, and transition can help to broaden our understanding of both film music conventions and music’s potential to serve as a
valuable narrative resource. The model thereby provides a taxonomical shell through
which we can describe, understand, and interpret music and sound design interactions.
CHAPTER 11

SYMBOLS: LEITMOTIFS AND TOPICS

11.1 Introduction

Leitmotifs and topics are arbitrary signs. Often, these signs rely on a basic similarity (iconicity) or correlation (metaphorical process). Usually they originate through proximity to their signified (indexicality) or through a metonymic process; but because topics and leitmotifs establish an arbitrary signifier-signified relationship, and because these signs become conventional (to some extent), I regard them as symbols.

11.2 Leitmotifs

The primary role of a leitmotif is to stand for the character, object, or place they represent (i.e. a sign function). Commonly, composers establish a leitmotif through signifier-signified proximity. For Example, Wagner’s establishes the “sword” leitmotif in Der Ring des Nibelungen through the frequent superimposition of the musical figure and the visual, textual, or narrative appearance of the element represented, in this case the sword.

To achieve a strong linkage between a leitmotif (signifier) and the character, object, or place it represents (signified), composers often rely on metaphorical correlations between signifier and signified based on image schemas. Figure 11.1 illustrates the “rainbow” leitmotif in Wagner’s Der Ring des Nibelungen as a musical mapping of a rainbow’s arched visual representation. This is not an iconic relationship because correspondences are drawn between different perceptual domains.

\[\text{Figure 11.1: The “rainbow” leitmotif in Der Ring des Nibelungen.}\]

\[\text{213} \text{ Proximity imbues the leitmotif with a sense of indexicality.}\]
Once a leitmotif has been introduced and attached to its corresponding signified, it can represent events that are absent in the visuals or dialogue. For Example, in Wagner’s Ring, when Siegmund describes his search for his father, the music introduces the Valhalla leitmotif, signifying that his father is Wotan (a fact of which Sigmund is not yet aware).

The film *Mission Impossible II* illustrates the use of leitmotif in film music. This romance-action James Bond-type film tells the story of Nyah Nordoff-Hall (Thandie Newton), a highly skilled thief recruited by Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise), a member of the Mission Impossible crew, to recover a virus stolen by Nyah’s former lover Sean Ambrose (Dougrey Scott). There are two principal leitmotifs throughout the film. Example 11.1 shows the “Nyah and Ethan” leitmotif, introduced at the time both characters meet in Spain. With its flamenco style, the leitmotif provides a sensual tone foreshadowing the relationship that will develop between Nyah and Ethan (see Clip 11.1). The Nyah-Ethan leitmotif illustrates the transformation of a simple motivic idea: an arpeggio followed by the interval of a second. Example 11.2 shows the main motivic idea (A) and its transformation (A’) based on diatonic pitch space transposition and inversion, and inclusion of passing notes.
Clip 11.1. First appearance of the Nyah-Ethan leitmotif.  
(Source: *Mission Impossible II.*) (0:10:36 - 0:12:10)

Example 11.1. Nyah-Ethan leitmotif.


“Nyah’s” leitmotif is introduced later in the film and derived from the Nyah-Ethan leitmotif; Example 11.3 shows the motivic relationship between the two. Performed by a female (wordless) voice at a slow tempo during an action scene, Nyah’s leitmotif contributes to the dissociation between the high-speed action during the scene and the pensive state of the character. As a result, the music reflects Nyah’s emotions, and establishes a viewpoint from which the audience perceives the scene (see Clip 11.2).
In Clip 11.3, introducing Nyah’s leitmotif during a fight between Ethan and Sean, suggests her presence as the motivation of the fight (see Example 11.4). She, however, is not physically present during the scene, but several hundred miles away.

Example 11.3. Motivic relationship between Nyah-Ethan leitmotif and Nyah’s leitmotif.

Clip 11.2. Nyah’s leitmotif. (Source: *Mission Impossible II.*)  
(1:21:40 - 1:25:30)

In Clip 11.3, introducing Nyah’s leitmotif during a fight between Ethan and Sean, suggests her presence as the motivation of the fight (see Example 11.4). She, however, is not physically present during the scene, but several hundred miles away.

Example 11.4. Nyah’s leitmotif.
Instances of the Nyah-Ethan leitmotif help the audience recognize the mood of the characters. In Clip 11.4, Nyah gets the vaccine that will cure her illness; the leitmotif appears in minor mode, representing the distressed state of the characters.

The further modification and shift to the major mode of the leitmotif towards the end of the film emphasizes the relaxed and joyful circumstances (see Clip 11.5 and Example 11.5).
11.3 Topics

Leonard Ratner, in his book *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, introduces the concept of *topics*, as *types* of music the (learned) listener identifies according to the music’s stylistic characteristics. Kofi Agawu, in his *Playing with Signs*, borrows the notion of topics while exploring the referential potential of music, which he names *extroversive semiosis*. He proposes that each topic manifests itself in two dimensions: 1) the signifier, which comprises all the surface phenomena such as rhythm, melody, texture, timbre, etc, and 2) the signified which makes direct reference to the particular topic as a socio-cultural entity. The link between signifier and signified, however, requires the mediation of a mental image; I will clarify this point by drawing on the *type/token* duality and Aristotle’s model of sign.

A *type* is a generalized mental concept; a *token* is the physical (or particular) manifestation of a type. Pierce observes that a type is that “which does not exist but governs existents, to which individuals conform.” Robert Hatten remarks that types can tolerate variation in their manifestation (as tokens) without losing their identity. Specifying precisely the invariant features preserving the identity of a type may not always be possible.

In my analyses I will focus on the musical features that relate tokens with their respective types. Since particular elements (of the token) stand for the whole (the type), I

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214 For a list of topics in classical period music see Chapter 8, section 3.
216 Hatten 1994, 295.
regard this relationship as a metonymy, specifically a part-for-whole metonymy (sometimes called synecdoche). Once the type has been recognized, it provides access to socio-cultural associations (Agawu’s signified). Because topics trigger socio-cultural associations that are arbitrarily and conventionally established, I consider them symbols. The mediation of a generalized mental representation (type) between the musical elements (token or Agawu’s signifier) and the socio-cultural associations (signified) clearly conforms to the Stoics’ view of signs. The Stoics’ conception of a sign involves three elements: 1) the sign vehicle, 2) the sense, and 3) the referent. For example, in the case of words:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Sign Vehicle} & \rightarrow & \text{Sense} & \rightarrow & \text{Referent} \\
\text{Words} & \rightarrow & \text{Mental Image} & \rightarrow & \text{Actual thing or Meaning}
\end{array}
\]

According to this model, it is not possible for a word to be linked with the actual thing without a mediating mental image. Applying this model to musical topics clarifies the legitimacy of this triadic model, in which the correlation between the first and third elements cannot take place without a second element:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Sign Vehicle} & \rightarrow & \text{Sense} & \rightarrow & \text{Referent} \\
\text{Token} & \rightarrow & \text{Type} & \rightarrow & \text{Socio-cultural associations}
\end{array}
\]

Metonymic (part-for-whole) relationship. Conventionally and arbitrarily established.

For example, in the case of “Indian music” topic, the token presents characteristics that relates metonymically to the type; and the recognition of the type triggers arbitrarily established socio-cultural associations:

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218 This, however, does not exclude the many symbols that have their roots either in indexical or iconic relationships between signifier and signified. Very often as well, there is a noticeable metaphoric correlation between a symbol’s signifier and signified.

219 Aristotle’s three-part model is similar to that of Pierce but differs in the order of its elements. See Chapter 8 for a description of Aristotle’s model.
A token can share an unlimited number of characteristics with the type. At times, this might seem an identity relationship instead of a topicality relationship. However, the boundary between identity and topicality is set by the context. For example, a segment of film music might incorporate many characteristics of the “70’s Disco Music” topic, and thus it might seem to become a disco hit on its own. However, contextual clues help us to recognize it as a topic rather than as disco music. Contextual clues in film can be provided by the narrative, visuals, or dialogue; they can be external to the movie (the fact that we are watching a movie and not inside a discothèque in the 70’s); or they can be both. In the following examples, I will clarify how the relationship between a type and its respective socio-cultural associations is established.

Clip 11.6 from Meet the Parents, portrays Greg Focker (Ben Stiller) as a hero. The music that accompanies the scene incorporates the “Heroic March” musical topic (see my transcription on Example 11.7). The following is a list of the main musical elements that relate the token (the music as presented in the film) with the type (a generalized mental concept of “Heroic” music):

- Instrumentation: trumpet and French horn as main instruments
- Tempo: marching tempo
- Meter: quadruple
- Rhythmic gestures: the violin section replaces the typical drum rhythmic gesture:

![Percussion notation]

\[ A \textit{that} \text{ is a mode formed by seven pitches. } Todi \textit{that} \text{ includes } c, db, eb, f#, g, ab, \text{ and } b\. Three \text{ different ragas might be derived from Todi that depending on the number of pitches used (pentationic, hexatonic, or full raga).} \]
- Phrase structure: periodic
- Harmonic language: clear progressions mainly based on primary chords, root positions, with no extended harmonies
- Melodic gestures: profusion of intervallic motion in 4ths and 5ths, as well as the melodic outline of triads
- Other: kettledrum and cymbal attacks on selected downbeats

Clip 11.6. Music incorporating the “heroic march” topic.
(Source: *Meet the Parents.*) (1:13:10 - 1:13:50)

Example 11.6. Music from *Meet the Parents.*
The conventional and arbitrary socio-cultural associations that correspond to this type are numerous. Some of these associations have been established indexically (i.e. through signifier-signified proximity); for example, in early times the kettledrum was used in the battlefield adding bass to the brilliant treble of the trumpets. Other associations are established through a metaphorical mapping of physical movement onto musical space: the marching movement as duple, and its tempo.

In Chapter 4 (on structural iconic metaphors), I included an example from the film *Being There* in which the music parallels the narrative by symbolizing the convergence of two contrasting elements. In Clip 11.7, Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is adapted to the disco-funk beat popular of the 70’s by incorporating disco-funk gestures that link the token to the type: (See my transcription on Example 11.8.)

- Percussion pattern: a) “four to the floor” pattern (the bass plays on every beat), and b) sixteenth-note subdivision performed on the cowbells.

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\[221\] In rock music, the bass hits are on the first and third beats only, and there is seldom a sixteenth-note subdivision.
- Instrumentation: electric organ, electric bass, drum set
- Harmonic style: extended harmonies
- Rhythmic gestures: profusion of syncopation, in the main melody and in the accompanying riffs
- Other: riffs representative of the disco-funk style played on the organ

Clip 11.7. Disco style revamping of Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.  
(Source: *Being There.*) (0:19:00 - 0:22:50)

Example 11.8. Disco style Revamping of Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in *Being There*. 
Example 11.8. (Continued)
Other characteristics present in the disco version of Stauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra* are not uniquely representative of the disco style, but are the result of revamping the classical piece. For example, the absence of ritardandi toward the beginning of each phrase ensuing in a steady pulse, or the absence of an extended dynamic range caused by high compression levels during mixing.\(^{222}\) I analyzed the expressive implications of the simultaneous reference to two contrasting topics in Chapter 4.\(^{223}\)

\(^{222}\) Compression reduces the dynamic range of a signal. The hardware device (or software plug-in) used to change the signal is essentially a variable gain amplifier: the amount of gain is in inverse proportion to the volume of the input signal.

\(^{223}\) The interaction of topics is named *troping*, and is a frequent device in classical music.
11.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I hope to have clarified the process through which leitmotifs and topics are established and understood. Both are symbols (i.e. arbitrary signs) that rely on a primary metaphorical correlation or iconic similarity, and that are established through an indexical or a metonymic process. While leitmotifs belong to one film (or group of films such as in the *Star Wars* series), topics originate from multiple manifestations within and outside the realm of film music. Because of this constraint, leitmotifs might employ topical gestures, but the reverse is not possible. Awareness of the processes of implementation and general constraints of leitmotifs and topics allow composers to conceptualize and more effectively create and establish symbolic signs.
CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION

12.1 Summary

The aim of this dissertation is to provide models for the analysis of film music that consider the “messages” music can transmit. My search for answers on how that message is transmitted through the music led to the disciplines of semiotics and pragmatics. While analyzing examples, I discovered that meaning crystallizes in numerous ways. Figure 12.1 provides a synopsis of my findings which summarizes the taxonomies proposed in this dissertation. The first-level categorization distinguishes between musical elements that rely upon conceptual-domain correlations to establish meaning, and musical elements that directly “stand for” what they represent. The second-level categorization focuses on the icon-symbol duality. In the case of pragmatic processes, this distinction approximates a denotation-connotation dichotomy; semiotic constructs, on the other hand, are rooted on the traditional Peircean distinction of icon and symbol. On the third-level categorization there is no single parameter that applies to both pragmatic processes and semiotic constructs; the outlined taxonomy resulted from the identification of common features among numerous examples. One additional category, based on the interaction of iconic signs, is included in the synopsis; for additional remarks that apply to this specific category see Section 5 below.

The overall analytical structure proposed in this dissertation is not based on classification. The categories presented are not mutually exclusive; they frequently interact to create meaning. For instance, segments of the score for The Conversation establish meaning through qualitative iconic metaphors, structural iconic metaphors, and nontraditional interactions of iconic signs (i.e. sound design and onomatopoeia). Likewise, segments of the score for Mission Impossible II illustrate the use of symbolic signs, nontraditional interaction of iconic signs, and structural iconic metaphors.
Figure 12.1. Taxonomy for the analysis and interpretation of meaning in film music.
12.2 The Limits of this Dissertation

Numerous technical factors play a major influence in film scoring. Consequently, many compositional choices (instrumentation, tempo, length, etc.) are motivated by technical rather than semiotic or pragmatic concerns. The analysis of such choices falls outside the analysis proposed in this dissertation. For example, in considering the technical issues in underscoring dialogue, Fred Karlin and Rayburn Wright offered the following guidelines:224

1) Voice-overs are more difficult to understand.
2) Smooth musical textures are less intrusive.
3) Keep underscoring out of the voice range.
4) Accents and solos can be distracting.
5) Avoid extreme highs and lows.
6) Don’t overwrite.

The first guideline reflects the interaction of visuals and sounds; since the lips are not visible, the dialogue requires extreme clarity. Their second and fourth points address the articulation (no staccato), dynamic level (no accents), and choice of instrumentation (smooth texture). Points three and five focus on the parameter of range. Their final suggestion directs attention to the overall compositional texture which should be sparse rather than dense. In following these guidelines, the composer might produce a composition that flawlessly blends with the film. None of the above considerations, however, offers insight into how music can interact with visuals, narrative, or sounds, to create meaning.

12.3 Perspective of Analysis

Considering the audience’s (assumed) response to the music is as essential as analyzing the elements in the music that trigger that response. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, a pioneer in musical semiotics attempted to formalize the study of meaning in music by

224 Karlin and Wright 1990, 128-132.
way of structural linguistics. In his *Fondements* of 1975, he defined the object of analysis (i.e. music) as a three-part structure:

1) Poietic level: the creative process
2) Neutral level: the score or sound itself
3) Esthesic level: the perception and interpretation

Nattiez’s suggestion that analysis should concentrate exclusively on the neutral level (i.e. the score) has triggered at least three well-founded criticisms. First, the score has always been a method for composers to notate their compositions; but, because of the limits of musical notation, some compositional aspects are best understood as deriving from performance practice. Second, abstracting the neutral level of analysis seems unfeasible because one’s awareness of the poietic and esthesic realms is inescapable. And third, from the viewpoint of communication, it is not possible to deny the composer's awareness of the listener’s musical-codal competence. Likewise, the neutral level of analysis in film music is largely unfeasible; most of the music has not been published as printed music and, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, the music (as it appears during the film) results from the artistic and technical collaboration of the director, composer, and sound engineer.

Figure 12.1 shows six analytical situations that Nattiez contemplates. The first situation (I) concerns itself exclusively with the musical materials (i.e. the score); for example the analysis of form, or of harmonies using Roman numeral analysis. In situation II, the material analysis helps in drawing conclusions about the process of composition; such is the approach taken by hermeneutics. In situation III, the analysis departs from the process of composition (e.g. letters, sketches) to analyze the musical materials; musicological research often follows this approach. In situation IV, the analysis of the musical materials helps draw conclusions from the listener’s response to the music; Leonard Meyer’s analyses often exemplify this category. In situation V, the compositional analysis attempts to understand the (psychological/physical) origin of the listener’s response; this is the approach generally adopted by cognitive science. In situation VI, the analyst considers both the process of composition and the listener’s response to the music; a good example of this approach is Nicolas Martson’s analysis of
Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 109, which is based on the study of sketches and informed by Schenkerian theory. Unlike Nattiez’s analytical approach, the analyses contained in this dissertation explore each of the above categories, excluding situation I.

In *Decentering Music*, Kevin Korsyn claims that in striving for an understanding of the use of musical tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony), analysts should not solely focus on the neutral level: “Rather than study ‘the music itself’ directly, we have to analyze the analyses through what we might call *second-order analysis*.”

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225 Marston 1995, and Forte 1974, follow this approach.

226 Korsyn 2003, 110.
12.4 Synchronic versus Diachronic Analysis of Film Music

In this dissertation, I hope to have produced models that resist deviation in time or space. My approach to the analysis of film music is clearly synchronic.\(^{227}\) However the specific examples and their interpretation are cultural-specific and might lose validity over time. Tagg summarized the core differences between diachronic and synchronic studies of music:

The historical changes represented in the evolution of a composer’s language fall under the diachronic dimension. The study of a slice of that system, so to speak, without the props of chronology, encompasses a synchronic dimension.\(^{228}\)

As an example of diachronic study, Tagg cites slide guitar techniques (most specifically the Hawaiian guitar, popular in the USA in the late twenties) which once “connoted things like ‘Hawaii’ and ‘exoticism,’ those glissando sounds were slowly but surely incorporated into the C&W mainstream, ending up as style indicators of Country.”\(^{229}\)

Similarly, film music can be studied in its diachronic dimension (e.g. its evolution from the silent film era).

12.5 Further Research

This study briefly contemplates rhetorical devices such as metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, satire, and parody. These less fashionable tropes (at least among writers on pragmatics), when considered as independent categories, exhibit numerous characteristics highly appealing for their application to film music. Further research would elucidate the rhetorical capacities of music and its relation to language.

The examination and application of semiotic and pragmatic models proposed by Fauconnier and Turner, Lakoff and Johnson, and Pierce (among others), was

\(^{227}\) The diachronic contemplation of connotational meaning of specific pieces or styles illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5, was necessary to portray a clear distinction between connotation and denotation, and to identify the elements incorporated in the conceptual integration networks.

\(^{228}\) Tagg 1999, 15.

\(^{229}\) Tagg 1999, 7.
complemented by traditional analysis. This interface crystallized in considerations of formal design, melodic contour, pitch content, harmonic gestures, cadential formulas, and other structural aspects of the music. Further analysis applying traditional theories informed by semiotics and pragmatics might generate additional worthwhile theoretical frameworks.

Further research on the interaction among the multiple categories presented in Figure 12.1 would prove valuable in the construction of refined analytical models. The sound design-onomatopoeia interaction presented in Chapter 10 is the only example of such study in this dissertation; the resultant model provides a straightforward analytical process that supports highly informative interpretations.

The film music repertoire is constantly growing. Classical composers no longer consider the film media a second-rate venue for their work; John Corigliano, Michael Nyman, Phillip Glass, and Tan Dun (among many others) have produced film music scores of high caliber. Though interest in film music has blossomed over the past two decades, as evidenced by the growing number of books, dissertations, anthologies, and articles in music-theoretical journals, few studies have attempted to view film music from an analytical perspective. It is hoped that this dissertation creates an awareness of the interdisciplinary approach necessary to develop analytical models, and that those models will facilitate recognition of fundamental processes that lie at the very heart of film music composition and interpretation.
This glossary is designed for the reader with little or no acquaintance with the terminology used in semiotics and pragmatics. Its goal is to enhance the understanding of this dissertation. The terms defined were selected on the basis of centrality to this dissertation. The entries are brief and reflect my viewpoint; they do not provide information regarding historical background or other idiosyncratic uses of the terms.

**A**

**Abduction** reasoning whereby a new concept is inferred on the basis of an existing concept.

**Annotations** personal associations projected to a sign. See also denotation and connotation.

**Arbitrariness** absence of an intrinsic, direct, inevitable, or natural basis.

**C**

**Code** organized system of signs.

**Conceptual metaphor** generalized formula that defines a specific source-target relationship.

**Connotation** associations surrounding a sign; secondary or derived meaning of a sign based on socio-cultural associations.

**Context** physical or social surroundings in which a sign is produced or used.

**Conventional** based on an established socio-cultural practice.

**D**

**Denotation** primary, obvious, or commonsense meaning of a sign; literal meaning (when applied to words).

**Diachronic analysis** study of a symbolic system as a dynamic phenomenon changing in space and/or time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Diegetic music</strong></th>
<th>also called source music; it is the music that coexists within the narrative’s time and space.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gestalt</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gesture</strong></td>
<td>a molar unit of motion, initiated by a single impulse, and accomplishing nothing other than expression or communication. (Lidov 2005, 132.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td>system of rules governing the combination of units in a code.</td>
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<td><strong>H</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hermeneutics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heuristic</strong></td>
<td>speculative thought serving as an aid to inquiry and investigation; unlike algorithms, heuristic methods offer no theoretical formalism.</td>
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<td><strong>Hyperbole</strong></td>
<td>rhetorical exaggeration.</td>
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<td><strong>I</strong></td>
<td><strong>Icon</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Image schema</strong></td>
<td>a recurring structure that applies to perceptual or cognitive processes.</td>
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<td><strong>Index</strong></td>
<td>sign in which the relationship between signifier and signified is one of proximity.</td>
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<td><strong>Intertextuality</strong></td>
<td>relationship or networking of a text with other texts.</td>
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<td><strong>Irony</strong></td>
<td>rhetorical device to express the opposite of the literal meaning.</td>
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<td><strong>L</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leitmotif</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistics</strong></td>
<td>science that studies language.</td>
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<td><strong>Litote</strong></td>
<td>rhetorical understatement.</td>
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<td>Markedness</td>
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<td>Signifier</td>
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<td>Soundtrack</td>
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<td>Structuralism</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Symbol</strong></td>
<td>sign in which the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrarily established.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Synchronic analysis</strong></td>
<td>study of a symbolic system at one given point in time in one given culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Synecdoche</strong></td>
<td>part-for-whole metonymy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Synesthesia</strong></td>
<td>simultaneous activation of different sensory modalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syntagmatic</strong></td>
<td>structural relation of signs presented simultaneously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syntax</strong></td>
<td>syntagmatic structure of a sign.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **T** |
| **Taxonomy** | a classification. |
| **Token** | particular manifestation of a type. |
| **Topic** | a complex musical sign that relates tokens with their type, and types with socio-cultural associations. |
| **Troping** | interaction of two (or more) unrelated types. |
| **Type** | generalized mental concept. |
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Juan R. Chattah was born in Cordoba, Argentina, on April 1, 1974. He began his musical studies at the age of seven. After earning the Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the Utrecht Conservatorium in Holland, he entered the School of Music at Florida State University. He earned the Master of Music in Music Theory in 2001, and pursued the Doctorate in Music Theory.

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