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## A Gestalt Approach to the Analysis of Music in Film

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### 1. Introduction

In the academic study of film music, Cognitive Psychology is perhaps the most employed alternative to Post-Structuralism and Cultural Studies.<sup>1</sup> Cognitivism involves a constructivist approach to experience, the brain being modular (separate modules are in charge of specialistic operations) and the mind operating in a way similar to a computer: it elaborates the raw data collected through the senses by applying schemata, prototypes, heuristics, and inferential routines.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the more holistic approach of Gestalt Psychology has recently seen a

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, 1994 was already devoted to the investigation of film music through the lenses of Cognitive Psychology, and Tan, Cohen, Lipscomb, and Kendall, 2013 confirms the ongoing interest. James Buhler's work is within the post-structuralist/culturalist area (e.g. Buhler, 2000 and Buhler, 2001) and so are Kassabian, 2001 and Walker, 2015. Ireland 2015 proposes an interdisciplinary 'psycho-semiotic approach' blending these two fields.

<sup>2</sup> In my rather cursory presentation I have used 'Cognitivism' to indicate the general framework that has come to include such areas as Psychology, Linguistics, Philosophy, Neurosciences... For a general introduction and more precise definition, see Parkin, 2000; for Cognitive Psychology and film music, see Cohen, 2000.

revival of interest – for example, Kulezic-Wilson, 2015 and Donnelly, 2014. Donnelly has employed Gestalt to discuss the phenomenon of audiovisual synchronisation:

Although I am more than happy to accept the insights provided by cognitive psychology [...] there are distinct aspects of the aesthetic process (for film especially) that are poorly accounted for by such an approach. [...] The grasping of situations as a whole is one of the most profound insights of Gestalt psychology. [...] Human hardware is determinedly pattern-seeking, looking for – and inevitably finding – some sort of sense, be it narrative, representational, relational, or whatever.

(Donnelly, 2014: 18-24)

While Cognitive Psychology has the general tendency of being more concerned with single mechanisms of how perceptual data are processed and it gives much salience to the higher cognitive operations, Gestalt Psychology is more concerned with the holistic nature of our experience and attributes greater importance to the lower perceptual operations.<sup>3</sup> Gestalt can offer enlightening concepts not only to theorise how music and visuals combine in an audiovisual whole, but also helpful guidelines to analyse concrete instances of audiovisual interaction in films. Hereafter, I take the lead from Donnelly and employ Gestalt to propose a method that can be called 'micro/macro configuration' analysis.<sup>4</sup> Stemming from Film Studies (I am a film scholar with an interest in film music, not a musicologist) this approach

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<sup>3</sup> Within the Cognitivist field there are more holistic proposals – for example, Cohen, 2000 – and studies that address lower perceptual operations – Zohar Eitan's work, for example, as in Eitan and Rothschild, 2011 – but, as explained by Donnelly, 2014: 18-24, Gestalt can perhaps be a better alternative to address the global dimension of film perception.

<sup>4</sup> This article is a part of a larger proposal for the analysis of music in films – 'Film/Music Analysis' – that I have been developing: Audissino, 2018.

treats music not so much as music – the analysis of the score – but as one of the interdependent sound components of the film. 'Micro/macro configuration analysis' is concerned with the examination of how music contributes to our experience of a film by fusing with the other cinematic elements – cinematography, editing, mise-en-scène, et cetera... – to produce 'a whole that is something else than the sum of its part' (Koffka, 1935: 176).

My proposal also seeks to overcome what I call a 'separatist conception' of music and film, the consequence of an inveterate visual bias in Film Studies.<sup>5</sup> Films, even after the coming of sound, have typically been considered to be a pre-eminently visual medium, with the audio part being an addendum of secondary importance. An offspring of this conception is the polarisation of the role of music between parallelism (music replicates what is in the visuals) and counterpoint (music contradicts what is in the visuals), both positions implying that the visual element is the dominant, while music can merely be either subservient to it or a contestant. While this pair can be traced back to the debate surrounding the novelty of sound cinema in the late 1920s (See Wierzbicki, 2009: 96-101), even more recent theorisations still show the trace of the visual bias, for example, Noël Carroll's notion of music as a 'modifier', which again implicates that the visual is the dominant element and music cannot but modify it, as adverbs do with verbs (Carroll, 1996). As other film-music scholars,<sup>6</sup> I argue that visuals and music should not be considered as two separate and unequal elements that are somehow pasted to each other but as two equal agents that fuse to create the audiovisual experience. The holistic view of Gestalt can be a good solution to overcome the 'separatist conception'.

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<sup>5</sup> I discuss the 'separatist conception' in detail in Audissino, 2018: Chapter 2.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Kalinak, 1992: 30-31.

## 2. Gestalt Psychology

Gestalt was applied to the study of music most notably by Leonard B. Meyer (Meyer, 1956), and this was a quite natural application because the initial theorisations of Gestalt were inspired by musical considerations. In 1890 Christian von Ehrenfels noticed that a melody cannot really be defined as the sum of its parts, the tones. If this were so – a melody as a sum of elements – a tune in one key would not be recognisable at all if transposed to some other key. But one melody can be perfectly recognised even if the new key is a very distant one. Ehrenfels concluded that a melody is 'something novel in relation to this sum, something that certainly goes hand in hand with but is distinguishable from the sum of elements...' (Ehrenfels, 1988: 83). A melody is a relational structure. Ehrenfels called 'gestalt quality' this relational structure amongst elements that transcends the elements themselves. The word 'gestalt' refers to a 'form/shape' but more accurately to a dynamic process of organisation and a relation amongst the parts of a system. It is better rendered with 'configuration'.<sup>7</sup> The main focus of Gestalt is to study why we experience phenomena as wholes even if they are made up of separate components.<sup>8</sup> At the basis of any experience there is an organisation of such stimuli into gestalts – forms, configurations, closed shapes – and this native and autonomous organisational process operates according to the better configuration

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<sup>7</sup> 'The segregation of specific entities [gestalten] in sensory fields appears as only one, though surely a highly important, instance among the various issues which constitute the subject matter of Gestalt Psychology. In fact, the concept of "Gestalt" may be applied far beyond the limits of sensory experience. According to the most general functional definition of the term, the processes of learning, of recall, of striving, of emotional attitude, of thinking, acting and so forth, may have to be included. This makes it still clearer that "gestalt" in the meaning of shape is no longer the center of the Gestalt Psychologist's attention' (Köhler, 1970: 178-179).

<sup>8</sup> The classic text of reference for Gestalt Psychology is Koffka, 1935. Yet, I find Köhler, 1970 and Köhler, 1969 more accessible for a first recognition in these territories. Other introductory texts are Katz, 1950 and Ellis, 2013.

possible, i.e. the most stable and complete – 'Law of Prägnanz' or 'the tendency towards simple gestalten' (Köhler, 2013: 54). Gestaltists posited 'psychophysical isomorphism' as the basis of mental activity, a correspondence between the configurations of the external objects as we perceive them and the configurations of the energy field in the brain structures responsible for the perception of those objects (see Parkin, 2000: 7). The brain is hard-wired so as to perceive the world in a certain fashion – for example, similar and proximate objects tend to be grouped. Perception is the result of certain Gestalt qualities in the external world – the figure has lines that converge in acute angles – that trigger a 'dynamic self-distribution' of energy in the brain that, once it has reached an equilibrium in its distribution, produces in our mind a corresponding experience – in our example, that of 'edginess.' If the figure has other Gestalt qualities – say, curved lines – the energy fields in the brain take a different distribution and produce a corresponding different experience – 'roundness'.<sup>9</sup>

Isomorphism can also be thought of as a correspondence between Gestalt qualities from one field of experience and another:

Brightness and darkness, for instance, are attributes of both the auditory and visual experience. Again, if an object which we touch appears cool, its coolness somehow resembles visual brightness; comfortable warmth is dark in comparison.

(Köhler, 1970: 223)

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<sup>9</sup> Isomorphism and dynamic self-distribution are the targets of the typical criticism against Gestalt, as these processes were postulated and not demonstrated, contrary to the more evidence-based theorisations of Cognitive Psychology. Yet, the recent discovery of the 'mirror neurons' has indicated that there might be something akin to such processes: see Morris and Wakefield, 2007.

This correspondence is illustrated by Köhler's 'maluma/takete' experiment (Köhler, 1970: 224-25). Transculturally, when presented with these two non-words and two drawings (one with curvaceous features and the other with sharp edges and angles) and asked to associate one non-word to one drawing, people invariably associate 'maluma' with the soft-feature drawings and 'takete' with the edgy-feature one. This indicates that there is some gestalt quality – softness in one case and sharpness in the other – that is identified both in the visual and in the auditory phenomenon. 'Maluma' is isomorphic with the curvaceous figure, and 'takete' with the edgy one. There is not only isomorphism between mental states and experience/behaviour, but also between art expressions. Donnelly mentions that: 'in “The Gestalt Theory of Expression” (1949), [Arnheim] theorized that expressive aspects of art objects have a form of “structural kinship” with corresponding mental states' (Donnelly, 2014: 19-20). This implies that, if an artistic expression is isomorphic with an emotional experience, then the artistic expression must also be isomorphic with the mental process that produces that emotional experience. If negative events cause my mental processes to configure around certain energy distributions that make me experience sadness, then a piece of music that proficiently replicates the gestalt qualities of sadness is able to make my mental process configure along the same energy patterns and hence make me experience sadness. Moreover, Donnelly adds that 'similar structures in different media are related in a way not dissimilar to the relation between an artistic stimulus and the configuration of the brain activity it causes' (Donnelly, 2014: 98). Carroll C. Pratt illuminates the point:

An auditory rhythm is auditory, and that's that; but the same rhythm – a Gestalt – may also be visual or tactual, and the graceful lilt, let us say of a waltz rhythm [...] will be present in all three modalities. Gestalten [...] reveal innumerable iconic relations and resemblances across modalities. Therein lies the great power of art, for the moods and feelings of mankind are capable of iconic presentation in visual and auditory patterns – a mode obviously far more direct and effective than symbolic representation.

(Pratt, 1969: 25-26)

The fact that different media are capable of configuring the same gestalt – or possess the same gestalt qualities – is the key to the Gestalt approach to audiovisual analysis. Imagine a close-up of a character having just lost a dear friend: we recognise her/his face as sad because some physiognomic traits, the gestalt qualities of 'sadness,' produce a certain configuration that we experience as an expression of sadness. (Mind that the actress/actor interpreting the part might not be sad at all but has the skills to exteriorly replicate the Gestalt that we recognise as 'Sadness.')

The same happens with a piece of music: 'Music is sad [...]' not in a literal sense, nor because the composer was sad when he or she wrote it, nor even because it makes us sad, but because it 'presents the outward features of sadness' (Stephen Davies, in Cook, 1998: 89). If that close-up is coupled with music that possesses 'the outward features of sadness' (gestalt qualities that are experienced as sad, for a mix of native responses and cultural conventions), then the two configurations of 'Sadness' – physiognomic and musical – fuse to produce a larger configuration of 'Sadness' that is more powerful than the two taken singularly. Micro-configurations fuse and produce a macro-configuration.

### 3. Micro-Macro Configuration Analysis

To analyse music in films from a non-musicological viewpoint, we should concentrate on the gestalt qualities of the music, which can be roughly identified with what Meyer calls 'secondary parameters.' While the 'primary parameters' of music (chordal progressions, syntactic relations between tones, etc...) are the structural parameters responsible for the formal construction of the piece and those typically focussed on in the musicological analyses, the 'secondary parameters' are the affective and expressive parameters (Meyer, 1996: 209). The secondary parameters are such 'exterior' characteristics of the music as dynamics, tempo and agogics, register, timbre, rhythmic patterns, consonance/dissonance, and melodic contour and character. Of course, even if this Gestalt approach does not demand deep musicological skills, some musical competence is nevertheless required. One is expected to be able to tell a flute from an oboe when s/he hears it, or to notice an *accelerando* or *decelerando*, and should possess enough ear training to discern the profile of a melody and recognise it when it is presented again, or to distinguish between dissonance and consonance and between major and minor mode.

By focusing on the secondary parameters of music, we can then observe the degrees of isomorphism between the micro-configuration of the music and the micro-configurations of the other cinematic devices, and analyse how these micro-configurations fuse to produce the macro-configuration of the scene/sequence under examination. Think of *Citizen Kane* (Welles, 1941): in the opening sequence, the dark and lugubrious images of the abandoned Xanadu mansion (visual micro-configuration) are coupled with music in an extremely low-register, in an almost lifeless slow tempo, played by dark-timbre instruments such as the bass clarinet and the contra-bassoons (musical micro-

configuration). Music seminally fuses with visuals to convey the sense of death and ruin in the sequence (macro-configuration). On the other hand, think of the sequence in *Hook* (Spielberg, 1991) in which Peter Banning retrieves his 'happy thought' and thus is able to fly again and reverse to his previous Peter Pan status. As soon as the happy thought is secured, the music builds up, creating a crescendo in volume and orchestral texture, with flutes and piccolo bubbling in the higher register to express the excitement that is hardly containable and about to explode; then, when an exhilarated Peter takes off to fly over Neverland, the music explodes in a tutti fortissimo exactly as Peter pops out like a missile into the sky; then music continues to support Peter's flight with an airy melody by high-register violins, punctuated by fast flights and runs of high-register woodwinds and celebratory fanfares of the trumpets in their brighter register – music sounds as bright as the sunny sky, as excited as Peter, as soaring as the flight it accompanies, as fizzy as the wind whirls up there. In the opening of *The Hateful Eight* (Tarantino, 2015) we see the snowy landscape but it is the music that makes us feel the glacial temperature. The high-pitch sustained notes of the violins are isomorphic with the visuals: the music is as static and frozen as the landscape we see. The sound of these violins in their highest register, in a non-vibrato dry timbre, is poor in harmonics, a 'cold' sound – as opposed to, say, the 'warm' sound of a cello in its middle range. The music does not only sound cold but also bright, because it shares a high-frequency quality with the blinding white of the snow – a bright light is the effect of high frequencies in the visual dominion and a high-pitch sound is the effect of high frequencies in the auditory one. High-pitch violins are also used in similar way to express coldness in the ice-wasteland dystopia *Quintet* (Altman, 1979). Yet, it cannot be said that they automatically equal coldness. The same high-

pitch violins are also used to mimic the dazzling sunshine in scenes set in extremely hot locales, as happens in *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962) – in such torrid desert scenes, high frequencies in the music are isomorphic with the high frequencies of the blinding sunshine. The reason for this different effect of the same type of music is that the whole must be considered in analysis, not the single device and its supposed function in isolation. The experienced effect depends on the combination of the music's micro-configuration with the ones of the other devices. A separatist conception such as that of music as an adverb-like modifier is liable to take the musical agency as too rigid and predetermined – the adverb 'merrily' will always project a merry halo on the verb, the adverb 'sorrowfully' always one of sorrow. Music is one factor of a multiplication, rather than one element of a sum. It is better to think in terms of a fusion of elements, rather than a modification of one element by another. In a desert scene, the dry timbre and the high register of the static violins finds its isomorphic visual counterpart in the blazing sun and the sand dunes; placed in a snowy scene, the same type of music is perceived as isomorphic with the coldness of the icy landscape and the shining whiteness of the snow.

So far I have been dealing with instances of so-called audiovisual parallelism, in which the micro-configuration of the music and that of the visuals match, they are isomorphic, there is a correspondence between the configuration of the music and some configuration of the visual aspect or of the emotional tone of the narrative. What if they are not? What happens with the so-called audiovisual counterpoint, when contradictory music creates a meaningful comment? While music can directly mimic some general affect and gesture (Meyer, 1956: 266-69), when it comes to precise extramusical meanings and abstract concepts,

music alone is inadequate to express them. To use Langer's term, music is a symbol but an 'unconsummated' one (Langer, 1948: 195): it is not as referentially precise as the verbal or visual symbols. To be 'consummated,' music has to be associated with some other extra-musical phenomenon. Meyer elaborates on this:

Music presents a generic event, a 'connotative complex,' which then becomes particularized in the experience of the individual listener. Music does not, for example, present the concept or image of death itself. Rather, it connotes that rich realm of experience in which death and darkness, night and cold, winter and sleep and silence are all combined and consolidated into a single connotative complex.

(Meyer, 1956: 265)

Music itself cannot express 'Compassion,' but generically sentimental music can become the expression of compassion if coupled with the images of someone succouring another human being. The coupling of micro-configurations that are not exactly isomorphic – what Nicholas Cook calls 'complementation' (Cook, 1998: 103-04), music that is not neither perfectly parallel nor in counterpoint with the visuals, but adds something – produces a macro-configuration in which music cooperates in the production of ideas and abstract concepts. What if there is no isomorphism at all, not even 'complementation' but radical 'contest' (Cook, 1998: 103-04)? For example, imagine a funeral scene scored with a lively and carefree merengue. In such cases, we are faced with an interpretive problem, to which we have to find a solution. A problem is like an incomplete or unstable configuration, and the Gestalt theory of problem-solving posits that a solution is found when the configuration of the conundrum is made stable by examining the relations between its elements:

We have to recognize that probably all problems with which we may be confronted, and also the solutions of such problems, are matters of relations. So long as problems are problems, the materials in question exhibit some relation; but these special relations are such that a difficulty arises. However, we may now discover other relations in the material which make the difficulty disappear. In some instances, we are at first unable to see any relations in the material which are relevant to our task. When this happens, we have to inspect the given situation until, eventually, it does exhibit relations from which a solution can be derived. Consequently, not only does our understanding of the problem depend upon our awareness of certain relations; we can also not solve the problem without discovering certain new relations. For the most part, such relations are not [...] simple and directly accessible [...]. Often they are of a far more abstract or conceptual kind; and, almost always, we have to deal not with one relation but, rather, with whole sets of them, and thus with relations among relations.

(Köhler, 1969: 143-44)

The difference with Cognitivism is that Gestalt addresses problem-solving not so much as a cognitive effort of hypothesis-testing but more as a perceptive effort of relation-seeking: we have to 'observe' the problem from different angles until we find the right one from which the required relation is individuated that can illuminate a solution. This is called 'insight': 'In the solution of a problem [...] we suddenly become aware of new relations, but these new relations appear only after we have mentally changed, amplified, or restructured the given material' (Köhler, 1969: 153).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Gestalt posited the 'Aha! phenomenon', i.e. an instance in which the solution to a problem does not arise from reasoning, hypothesis-testing, inferences, etc. but suddenly presents itself to the mind as the result of the reconfiguration of the problem (Braisby and Gellatly, 2012: 306).

The interpretive part of film analysis is about finding relations amongst the elements and, in the most challenging cases, relations amongst relations. Film interpretation is about reaching the insight to solve a problem. In such situations as those with 'audiovisual counterpoint' this is attained by looking at the possible relations between the micro-configuration of the visuals and that of the music until we see the relation that makes the two isomorphic and fused into a larger macro-configuration. Let's consider an example from *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, 1971): the attempted gang-bang rape in the abandoned theatre. In this scene, we have visuals that depict a hideous act of violence on the one hand, and Rossini's carefree-sounding overture from the comic opera *The Thieving Magpie* (1817) on the other hand. Music and visuals are seemingly not isomorphic. In analysing this scene we can appreciate the difference between the typical approaches in which music is seen as a secondary element – a 'modifier' – and my Gestalt approach in which both music and visuals equally interact in the production of the macro-configuration. David Sonnenschein employs Michel Chion's concept of 'anempathetic effect' to discuss this scene (Sonnenschein, 2001). The 'anempathetic effect' happens in those instances in which some diegetic sound (a sound whose source is within the narrative world) is playing before a dramatic event and continues playing after it, unaffected by what happened. This produces in a scene an unsettling sense of 'cosmic indifference' (Chion, 1994: 8-9): the 'uncaring' sound is taken to signify that individual sufferance is completely irrelevant to the economy of the Universe, we are helplessly alone. Though formulated to account for the agency of diegetic sound and music, non-diegetic music too is often singled out as responsible for the anempathetic effect. It is in these terms that Sonnenschein applies Chion's concept to the scene in question: '[the

viewer's] involvement can be heightened when there is a great tragedy or catastrophe depicted, using the juxtaposition of happy music that simply challenges us to identify more closely with the victims, as in *A Clockwork Orange*' (Sonnenschein, 2001: 156). Here, music is treated as a rather mechanical modifier, something that changes the polarity of the visuals and makes us 'identify' with the victim: if music of opposite emotional sign is paired with a tragic event, then an anempathetic effect must be the result and we pity the helpless victim.

I think there is a more insightful way to tackle the musical agency here. Without music, the rape scene would have been experienced as a dramatic moment of violence but, given it is framed from a distance in long-shot, it might have also been experienced with some emotional detachment – there is not a single close-up of the victim.<sup>11</sup> If appropriately 'empathetic' dramatic music had been used, we would probably have experienced the event from a closer vantage point, because the micro-configuration of the music would have been emotionally isomorphic with the situation as experienced by the girl – violence, terror, violation, captivity... – and thus the macro-configuration would have been consolidated around her as the subject at the centre of the experience. Instead, Kubrick's choice is to use music that is 'anempathetic' with the girl, but the reason is not so much that of creating an anempathetic effect. The micro-configuration of the music is empathetic with another viewpoint in the scene. Kubrick's choice, disturbingly enough, is to use music that has a micro-configuration that is affectively isomorphic with Alex, his droogs, and the rival gang in action here. For all those violence-addicts, this is but a pleasant pastime. Indeed, the scene opens with Rossini's music, followed by Alex's casual

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<sup>11</sup> The close-up is the key stylistic device to make viewers empathise with a character: see Plantinga, 1999.

voice-over recountal: 'They were getting ready to perform a little of the old in-out in-out on a weepy young devotchka they had there...' The merry music is isomorphic with Alex's feeling. Uplifting classical pieces – Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' and the joie de vivre typical of Rossini's music – are consistently featured throughout the film during his 'ultraviolence' moments as a manifestation of the inner joy and the invigorating feel-alive sense that he experiences. The macro-configuration resulting from the long-shot-styled visuals (with no close-ups of the victim) and the merry music is one in which the subjects of the experience are the rapists, and the girl is just an objectified plaything they pass around. Because of the micro-configuration of the music, we are provoked to empathetically align with the gang, we have access to their emotional world. This is why this musical choice makes the scene so effective and unsettling: we are forced to be part of the gang. And this is why considering music as a modifying element might lead to superficial results: in *A Clockwork Orange* the music does not 'challenge us to identify more closely with the victims' but exactly the opposite. If we think of music as an ingredient of the whole macro-configuration instead of some seasoning that is added when the baking is done, we can see the relation amongst the film's component from a different angle, often in a more productive way.

#### 4. Conclusions

A Gestalt approach to the analysis of music in films can provide film scholars with a methodical way to tackle film music, but without the need to possess deep musicological competence; it can provide music scholars with insights into how the audiovisual coupling of music and visuals can be theoretically accounted for. This is also a way to

supersede the visual bias and separatist conception that have long characterised film studies. My proposal seeks to conceptualise music and visuals as equal and interplaying agents of the production of the whole Gestalt of the film. The audiovisual experience of the film is the effect of the configurations of the single cinematic components (micro-configurations) combining into the whole configuration of the scene/sequence/film (macro-configuration). The combination of these micro-configurations is not merely additional but it is a product, it generates a surplus (of meaning, emotion, perception) that is not given by the single elements but it is the multiplied result of their combination. My theorisation here echoes Eisenstein's discussion of the productive capacities of montage, similarly based on elements of the Gestalt Psychology:

The juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resembles not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot as it does a creation. It resembles a creation – rather than a sum of its parts – from the circumstance that in every such juxtaposition the result is qualitatively distinguishable from each component element viewed separately. [...] The woman, to return to our first example, is a representation, the mourning robe she is wearing is a representation – that is, both are objectively representable. But “a widow,” arising from a juxtaposition of the two representations, is objectively unrepresentable – a new idea, a new conception, a new image.

(Eisenstein, 1957: 7-8)

If the audiovisual whole is the product of this fusion, analysis then should be like a reverse-engineering move, isolating, within the macro-configuration of the film's system, the micro-configurations of the single devices and then studying how they interact, combine,

isomorphically fuse, and 'multiply' each other to create the stabilised and unified product of the macro-configuration that we perceive.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The micro/macro-configuration approach that I am explaining has similarities with Jeff Smith's 'polarisation' and 'affective congruence': 'The first of these refers to an interaction in which the specific affective character of the music moves the content of the picture toward the emotional pole communicated by the music. The second interaction [...] refers to a type of cross-modal confirmation in which the spectator matches the score's affective components to the emotional shading of narrative. [...] More than the sum of its parts, affective congruence produces a degree of emotional engagement that is stronger than either that produces by the music or visual track alone' (Smith, 1999: 148). The difference is that Smith is concerned here with the emotional contribution of film music, while I aim at applying the micro/macro-configuration approach to all the potential agencies of film music. Also, despite the Gestalt-reminiscent wording, Smith develops his approach within a cognitivist framework.

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