ENNIO MORRICONE'S FILM MUSIC IN THE WESTERN GENRE

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Abstract

This thesis conducts an appraisal and analysis of the western-genre film music of Ennio Morricone (1928–2020), as composed for 34 features released between 1963 and 2015. It ascertains the fundamental compositional characteristics of this body of work, while drawing out their salience against a range of historical and theoretical contexts: music in the western, Italian cinema, Morricone's life and wider practice, and film-scoring technique. Beyond the necessary outlining of contextual developments and a largely chronological survey of the works that play host to Morricone's engagement with the genre, the enquiry is thematically structured, exploring the nature and significance of these characteristics as they manifest within the filmography. The essential aim of the study is to understand Morricone's relationship with the genre. While this is a notion conventionally alluded to in discussions of Sergio Leone's cinema, the thesis expands the discourse beyond this limited filmography to include the entirety of Morricone's experience composing music for westerns, putting the composer's practice front and centre.

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Introduction

This dissertation examines the relationship between composer Ennio Morricone and the Italian-western film genre. Written across the period 1963–2015, Morricone's 34 original western scores include some of his most distinctive and widely heard pieces of music. As a result of the popularity, impact, and large-scale repurposing of this material, its compositional formulae are now deeply coded within the cinematic language of the western, and their ongoing reproduction amounts to a trope in the genre's stylised grammar. Despite these firm associations, which are regularly acknowledged in critical and academic literature, they have never formed the focus of a systematic academic study. This thesis addresses that present lack.

When this relationship between composer and genre is addressed, it is typically considered within the context of Sergio Leone's influential westerns, which have served as the principal vehicle for the cultural propagation of Morricone's western-genre music, and the process of generic coding outlined. Leone is the composer's most famous collaborator, Morricone having scored six of the seven films (five of them westerns) in the director's oeuvre. Their partnership is one of the most renowned in film history, equalling the likes of Hitchcock and Herrmann, Fellini and Rota, in terms of strength of affiliation and of the joint cultivation of a 'wholly individual' creative profile (Brown 1994, 175). Accordingly, much of Morricone's best-known work is derived from their shared filmography. Given this, and the fact that the success of Leone's debut western *Per un pugno di dollari* (1964; for English translations of non-English-language film titles, see Appendix Two) was the catalyst both for the Italian-western movement itself and the ascent of Morricone's personal celebrity, it is

logical that commentators often contemplate the composer's relationship with the genre, and aspects of his general film-scoring practice, through the lens of Leone's films.

A survey of key texts in the field of Morricone studies serves to demonstrates these trends and situate the present enquiry in its literary context. For instance, in the pertinent volume *Music in the Western*, Charles Leinberger (2012) explored Morricone's music in its generic context, analysing the scores for Leone's 'Dollars' trilogy – *Per un pugno di dollari*, *Per qualche dollaro in più* (1965), and *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (1966) – and drawing on his book-length study (2004) of the last of those; that same popular film was Jeff Smith's case study in his enquiry into the links between film music and populism (1998). In Michel Chion's appraisal of the machinations of music in film (1995), his examples of Morricone's western music are all taken from Leone's cinema. The auteurist methodology of Jim Kitses' magisterial account of western-filmmaking (2004 [1970]) all but necessitated considering Morricone's music within the confines of the director who reinvigorated the then listless genre. And in the substantive Morricone monographs written by Sergio Miceli (2021 [1994], 117–205), Christiane Hausmann (2008, 66–98), and Franco Sciannameo (2020, 47–76), all of which rise to the task of assessing a large body of work and far-ranging practice, the boundary of the composer's exchange with the genre is effectively aligned with that of Leone's (though Sciannameo does recognise the fuller scope of the western filmography). These key sources are exemplary in their approach to Leone's admittedly vital films, and each has offered essential support to the research informing this thesis. It is not accurate to suggest that everyone writing about Morricone looks to Leone, merely that those concerned with his music for westerns tend to uphold that 'wholly individual' profile as representative of the former's inherent approach to the genre.

The bias towards the collaboration with Leone has traditionally been sharper in the English-language cultural sphere, where the westerns, which engage directly with a distinctly American narrative tradition (and superficially appear American-made), have made a deep cultural impact. Moreover, as Morricone – a lifelong Roman citizen – mainly worked on Italian productions in the popular industry, particularly in his early career, many of his scores are comparatively less accessible to English-speaking audiences. With the exception of some reputable Italian features like *La battaglia di Algeri* (dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) and *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (dir. Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988), or high-profile international titles such as *The Thing* (dir. John Carpenter, 1982) and *The Mission* (dir. Roland Joffé, 1986), this frequent oversight of the substantial remainder of Morricone's output has enhanced the relative prevalence of the westerns, which, despite being Italian-made, have always enjoyed a broad international audience, aided by ready availability of dubbed English versions. This provides an explanation as to why commentary that most extensively considers Morricone's achievements outside the genre chiefly occupies the realm of non-Anglophone European (particularly Italian) scholarship; the aforementioned monographs and a range of biographical studies (for example, Comuzio 1982; Lhassa and Lhassa 1989; Tifiou 2018; Manuceau 2020; Moscati 2020) demonstrate this weighting. It is possible to trace this lineage to flourishing interest in the Low Countries at the turn of the 1990s, which gave rise to pathfinding

publications on the subject of Morricone: Anne and Jean Lhassa's *Biographie* (1989) and *The Ennio Morricone Musicography* of H. J. de Boer and Martin van Wouw (1990). The latter text constitutes the spiritual predecessor to the most dedicated, substantial body of Morricone literature: the serial *MSV* (ed. Van Wouw, 1980–2012), reincarnated in 2013 as *Maestro* (*The Ennio Morricone Online Community*, n.d.).

There is a wealth of published material exposing Morricone's personal insight on his life and work. Much of this is expressed in interviews, which can be found in periodicals, magazines, and, most significantly, books (Morricone 2010; Caramia 2012; Morricone and Tornatore 2018; Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016]). Related to this is the material he has authored himself, including an article for the inaugural issue of *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* (2007), and the autobiographical *Life Notes* (2016). Singular among this collective is *Comporre per il cinema* (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001]), a volume transcribing a series of lectures given by the composer and Miceli in the 1990s. It presents the pair's implicitly aligned (though occasionally explicitly incongruent) theoretical perspectives in outstanding detail, and its appendices include two essays outlining Morricone's fundamental tenets of film composition. Problematic as it can be to lean on an artist's interpretations of their own work in an analytical survey like this enquiry, these amount to a prized resource nonetheless. The present study handles it cautiously, taking advantage of its anecdotal value while also using it as means to hold the composer to his word – as a means to gauge alignment, or disparity, between principle and product; readings of Morricone's music are frequently compared with his own statements.

Particularly important in this context is a fundamental taxonomical distinction he established between his *musica assoluta* (literally 'absolute music', meaning concert music) and *musica applicata* (applied music), a system which classifies his output twofold and prescribes respective methods of conceptualisation and evaluation for each category. This corresponds to a deeper, perceived tension between professional expedient and artistic impulse with which he long grappled and sought to assuage, if not reconcile, through this system (and through a related idea he termed 'double aesthetics'; see below, p. 75). The dualism of these models manifests in the work of various scholars. Enquiries such as those of Hausmann (2008), Miceli (2014), and Manuceau (2020) employ creative, titular polarities serving as frameworks to contain their subject's broad and versatile practice. Both Miceli (2021 [1994], 209) and Hausmann (2008, 177) invoke the two-faced ancient Roman deity Janus to analogise Morricone's dichotomous musicality.

The full extent of Morricone's music for Italian westerns is more widely recognised in literature on that genre. Numerous studies of and encyclopaedic guides have, in their shared attempts to outline the sprawling movement's topography, explored the composer's music as it exists in the expansive country beyond Leone's cinema. Christopher Frayling's landmark 1981 study *Spaghetti Westerns* (reissued in 2006) set the precedent for this, and others have since followed suit (for example, Lhassa 1983–7; Weisser 1992). But this matter is, generally speaking, focused neither on music nor Morricone, so although it realises the extent of the

composer's work, it can afford limited musical insight. Exceptions include Laurence Staig and Tony Williams' pioneering book *Italian Western: The Opera of Violence* (1975), and the more recent volume, Federico Biella and Massimo Privitera's *Quando cantavano le Colt* (2017), but these do not centralise Morricone's practice.

Leone's shadow is cast with especial opacity over Morricone's other westerns, most simply because they are inherently akin, and therefore more comparable (and seemingly inferior) to the director's work. Leone's cinema fuelled, and was the stylistic cornerstone of, the industry phenomenon precipitating the vast majority of western productions scored by Morricone. But it is also canonic in a more general sense, having garnered general popular affection and critical acclaim far eclipsing anything else in our filmography, *The Hateful Eight* (dir. Quentin Tarantino, 2015) being the sole exception. Complementary to this are frequent implicit assumptions that Morricone's music, at least as far as the westerns are concerned, fulfils its potential only in a Leonian setting. Several additional and convergent factors compound this condition. First, Leone's progenitorial status and singular prestige nurtures the inverse inference that the several hundred other films in the exploitative movement are imitative and thus without merit. Second, the Italian-western guides aside, enquiries on the whole do not enjoy the luxury of giving wide coverage to that movement, and so resort to sampling, whereby films (usually Leone's in this context) are selected for choice qualities to speak for this large corpus, 'because they somehow seem to represent the genre more fully and faithfully than [these] apparently more tangential films' (Altman 1984, 7). Third, there is a tendency in Italian film scholarship to segregate popular Roman genre cinema from more prestigious repertories such as those of Neorealism, the 'art film', or the *commedia all'italiana*. This attitude has restricted even Leone's standing within certain academic and critical circles, so the work of comparatively more obscure western directors like Sergio Corbucci and Giulio Petroni are much less likely to receive attention. Finally, Morricone's own celebrity often overshadows works in his filmography perceived to be 'beneath him'; in the *Maestro* fanzine, for instance, Didier Thunus (2020, 60) opens his article 'Good Scores for Bad Movies' by observing that the composer 'is often said to have beautifully scored many unworthy' films, a remark demonstrating the hagiographical tone one can discern in much Morriconian commentary, including academic work. Such a predisposition logically attracts the analyst to music they consider an effective or befitting example of the given compositional attribute(s).

Leone's influential work is of undeniable relevance to any enquiry situating itself in this space, and it exerts a substantial gravitational pull. However, to approach Morricone's music as western music in the context of one individual's films is to introduce an auteurist leaning that compromises attempts to interrogate a more direct relationship with the genre, including the composer's response to the creative challenges posed by the very traits of imitation and repetition that many denounce – as Corey J. Creekmur (2012, 21) analogises, the 'theme and variations' model of the western. This thesis pursues its systematic appraisal above all by centralising the dialectic between composer and genre, and, in doing so, by treating Leone's films as one albeit important segment of a more extensive catalogue. It builds on extensive

generic coverage achieved in Italian-western literature, and extrapolates the understanding yielded by the abundance of research into Morricone's practice to place the remainder of this work in the genre under the spotlight. We are thus re-evaluating a renowned and impactful, though frequently generalised relationship between composer and genre, and this perceived opportunity for a more nuanced understanding of a subject of this stature helped to steer the present research focus. However, partly as a result of that high profile, our findings also amount to a particularly accessible and repercussive case study, which can inform a variety of broader research questions arising in the course of our discussion and pertaining to topics including film-scoring practice, the relationship between artistry and commerce, or creative negotiation with formulaic expectations of genre and industry – Italian or otherwise.

Methodology

The thesis examines the formal characteristics of Morricone's scores and considers them in relation to the musical development of the western, Italian cinema as a cultural and industrial environment, the composer's career development and practice, and technical questions pertaining to film composition. Chapter One presents histories of the first two of these contexts, while Chapter Two explores the place of the western scores in Morricone's artistic and professional biography, as well as the rise and fall of the Italian western. Chapters Three through Five appraise the musical attributes that distinguish, unite, and divide the corpus – with Four specifically targeting how the music operates as a tool of narration – and a study of *The Hateful Eight* closes the dissertation, assessing what is by some distance the most stylistically and chronologically isolated text, and contemplating other intersections between Morricone's western music and Tarantino's cinema. Appearing 34 years after the composer's 33rd and penultimate western (*Occhio alla penna*; dir. Michele Lupo, 1981), and less than five years before his death at the age of 91, *The Hateful Eight* constitutes an appropriate platform on which to consider aspects of Morricone's legacy, and his own stance on the music that features in our core filmography.

Morricone's practical compositional engagement with the western is the fundamental object of study. With a handful of exceptions, considered accordingly, this occurred within the confines of the film western – making this first and foremost a genre-orientated film-music enquiry. The location and course of that generic boundary can be indistinct, but there is reasonable accord about which films do and do not constitute westerns. As we shall see, the character of the composer's authorship also varies, and so the scope of this study is aligned with westerns featuring an original Morricone score; excluding *Django Unchained* (dir. Tarantino, 2012), which features one original song, this comprises 34 films, laid out in Appendix One.

These films and their music are treated as the primary vessel of interaction between composer and genre. It is recognised, following the writings of Altman (1999, 15–6), that genres constitute notional frameworks existing as the product of a dialectical process

established between the industry that creates the texts and the audience(s) whose experiences, preferences, and expectations continually determine and re-determine the schemes by which they are manufactured. As such, the western serves as an intermediary, through which Morricone's decision-making responds to the determinant economic, political, and socio-cultural factors. Although the western is thus approached in this study, the dynamic it shares with the composer is of central concern. Rationalisation of this relationship is in keeping with theories more typical of literary studies, as authors' engagement with genre is a more common object of focus than that of film composers. Anis S. Bawarshi (2003, 18), who has explored this mechanism, positions genre as a site of action for writers, which hosts the 'production and regulation' of activity; despite the more contained agency and scope for ideological expression in film composition, conventions prescribed by generic models situate the creative act in the same way, between polarities of continuity and originality, derivation and innovation. Morricone's practice is to be seen as the product of exchange between his personal creative impulses and generic conditioning – as imposed by the Italian popular film industry which, as we shall see, utilised genre as a tool by which to negotiate and exploit the shifting tastes of urban Italian audiences. Because these two modes of conditioning intertwine through the Italian western, they represent the two essential contextual settings explored in Chapter One.

Given that a composer's response to these generic and industrial stimuli is the main concern of this enquiry, it is frequently appropriate to treat Morricone's scores with a degree of autonomy, especially during attempts to discern compositional techniques and understand the patterns of style he cultivated and subverted. Analyses often examine musical form alone, as through the use of transcribed extracts, guided by the belief that it is possible to obtain the insight we require using methods traditionally applied to scrutiny of concert music (see Neumeyer and Buhler 2001). It is recognised, however, that film music constitutes but one parameter of a composite artwork entailing other aural elements as well as imagery, text, and drama. The study strives to always maintain awareness of the relationship between music and these concomitant elements, not least because the salient aspects of their interplay inevitably impact musical form itself. For this reason, attempts to explain the significance of creative decisions without recourse to these factors will be limited. More than exerting a bearing on the stylistic presentation of the music, the nature of this interaction partly determines the functions music can fulfil. It is possible for music to carry out any number of functions in film, and not only can any given function be achieved through different stylistic combinations, but the same music can also be used to achieve a multiplicity of functions, lending support to our endorsement of autonomous analysis.

A range of formal theoretical systems that have been developed to describe film music have linguistic underpinnings (Buhler 2019, 88, for example), and academic commentators have leaned accordingly on 'syntax' and 'semantics' as conceptual models to explain the machinations of film music, particularly as it relates to overall narrative structure. Hausmann (2008, 51–3) applies them in her study as taxonomical groups into which the most readily identifiable functions can be broadly divided. Connecting separate scenes and facilitating

continuity through cuts are well-known syntactic functions; semantic functions, on the other hand, pertain to the denotation, connotation, and citation of textual content, often harder to discern unambiguously. Examples of functions in both categories are discussed in Chapters Three through Six, in tandem with the pertinent stylistic qualities Morricone fashioned to execute them.

The linguistic distinction between syntax and semantics has also been appropriated by genre theorists in order to categorise elements defining a generic matrix, and is referred to periodically in the text. Altman's seminal statement in the field (1984, 10) employed the western as a case study, with respect to which he exemplified both types: visual and technical semantic components, such as landscape, horses, close-ups, and six-shooters; and syntactic 'dialectical' tensions from which western narratives arise, between figurative themes of civilisation and wilderness, virtue and villainy, community and individual (see Kitses 2004 [1970], 9–22; Altman builds on Kitses' ideas). Altman advocates for a combined semantic-syntactic analytical approach, effectively adopted in this thesis by its consideration of the relationship between Morricone's music and generic elements of both kinds.

It is further recognised that the titles in our filmography, exclusively belonging to the order of narrative film, serve the essential purpose of storytelling, and contemplation of that *raison d'être* demands brief consideration of certain questions pertaining to narrative theory. Chapter Four introduces and discusses a number of principles in this area of study as it approaches Morricone's music from a narratological standpoint, but it is necessary to preface our enquiry by addressing a key theoretical concern: musical placement in film. Music that is presented as a product of the fictional world portrayed in the film, as through the depiction of a musician or a gramophone, is most commonly referred to as 'diegetic' music; that which has no place and is inaudible therein is 'nondiegetic'. Rationale behind these qualifications and the descriptors themselves remain subject to debate. However, even divergent film-music theory, such as semiotics and neoformalism, share the general belief that music can be interpreted as either manifesting within the notional story, externally to it, or somewhere between these classifications; as Guido Heldt (2016, 111) writes, 'film musicology has rarely ventured beyond the basic diegetic/nondiegetic distinction'. They moreover hold that music can shift – or at least appear to shift – between levels of narration (in this study such movement is termed 'transdiegetic'). These designations are applied with varying degrees of nuance and ambiguity and there are numerous posited subcategories, several of which are explored in Chapter Four. Differing nomenclature one can find describing music within ('diegetic', 'source', 'story' music) and without ('nondiegetic', 'score', 'discourse' music) the fictional world depicted will not be interrogated especially deeply. The traditional and still the most conventional dualism as Heldt labels it is normally deployed here, although subtleties, implications, shortcomings and alternatives are explored. Drawing on the aforesaid linguistic approach to film-music function, and prioritising interpretation of meaning and communication in narratologically orientated discussion, this study generally scrutinises the mechanics of narration in the semiotic tradition. It nonetheless maintains interest in formal analysis of the characteristic craft, style, and devices of Morricone's film music.

One final matter to be discussed concerns the present impossibility of accessing the composer's manuscripts and private archive. With the exception of those analysts personally acquainted with Morricone (such as the late Sergio Miceli, Alessandro De Rosa, and Stefano Cucci), others, including Hausmann, Leinberger, and Sciannameo, have had to resort to aural analyses and transcriptions. Methodologically speaking, this is not substantially problematic: because the audiovisual text, is treated as the essential object of study, the acoustic rendering of music on the soundtrack constitutes the authoritative manifestation of the compositions addressed. Naturally, the condition of Morricone's documents remains of inherent historical interest, and discrepancies between their notation and the resultant audio could, for instance, shed light on score-recording and production procedures, but these concerns must be left to other investigations.

1. Contexts

The study begins with a survey of relevant contextual developments. The first of these concerns the historical evolution of music in the western, representing the genre's pre-existing contribution to the stylistic exchange that was established with Morricone when he began engaging with this tradition, as described in the methodology. The other significant contextual factor is the industry setting within which this exchange took place, which, as we shall see, was profoundly exploitational, utilising genre as a vital means of negotiation with audiences. The Italian western is the best-known exemplar of this dynamic, which itself consummately demonstrates Altman's dialectic (above, pp. 15–6). Musical and non-musical elements of the western, as well as these industrial machinations, influenced creative decisions the composer made, and would be repercussively impacted in turn by his work.

The western genre

In the words of David Hamilton Murdoch, no 'other nation has taken a time and place from its past and produced a construct of the imagination equal to America's creation of the West' (2001, vii), and after over a century of continual propagation across a range of media, this construct is now one of the most recognisable narrative arenas in global popular culture. The tradition of literary occupation with the frontier stems from American literature and popular entertainment of the nineteenth century, but the fictional West as prescribed by the western genre we recognise today crystallised in the 1890s. This was a mythic vision of the nation's past that, while historically informed, was contrived and disseminated in response to a socio-political crisis perceived as a result of the epochal closing of the frontier (Murdoch 2001, 63–80). Theodore Roosevelt is widely held responsible for the generation and promulgation of

this fantasy, but another key ‘myth-maker’ is the author Owen Wister, in whose foundational 1902 novel *The Virginian* this world coalesces, its chapters reading in retrospect as strikingly familiar snapshots of the western-film repertory. The expression of aspects of this narrative is fundamentally what all cultural artefacts under the ‘western’ moniker have in common.

Almost simultaneously, this construction was rendered in the embryonic medium of cinema; among the earliest films in the wider film canon is *The Great Train Robbery* (dir. Edwin S. Porter; 1903), regarded by many as the first western. Films depicting the historical West immediately gained a foothold in the industry and were soon abundant. By 1910 the western emerged as the ‘first truly cinematic genre and the first distinctively American contribution to the new art form’ (Buscombe 1988, 24). Films belonging to the genre increasingly assumed semantic consistency, sharing temporal and geographical settings, and featuring stock synopses, characters, costumes, and props. Gradually they emulated the more nuanced syntactic engagement with the myth attained in literature. Altman points out that the western assumed its identity slowly and only in response to ongoing critical commentary, evidencing already the reciprocity between industry and audience intrinsic to the establishment and evolution of genre frames (1999, 34–8).

The western has always shared a deep relationship with music, which established a multifarious rapport with the spatiotemporal, mythological, and dramatic facets of the genre. Even in the silent era, music performed and heard alongside westerns was distinctive. While cue sheets did not dominate accompanists’ practice throughout the period, the western-specific material many of them contain illustrates the unique vernacular utilised to score the West, though these were supplemented by more ubiquitous cues with cross-genre applicability. Music, especially songs, of the parlour, minstrel, and traditional varieties also populated the western lexicon in silent cinema, substantiating a ‘historically informed’ accompaniment that made use of a generalised ‘folk’ idiom (Stilwell 2016, 216–8). This idiom manifested timbrally in the auditorium, too, via instruments like guitar and harmonica, giving audiences a visceral indicator of what the West might have sounded like. Cultural codes set in, and the myth acquired an aural dimension.

After the coming of sound, the prolific production of westerns continued, though the genre’s esteem waned as it was scorned by major studios in the 1930s. The ‘B-western’ prevailed in this period, with many such films perpetuating the earlier emphasis on song to acquire an archetypal musical quality, encapsulated in the singing cowboy, the iconic protagonist of the B-western and a symbol of the West for a generation of Americans. His diegetic performance the showpiece of the films in which he appeared, the cowboy’s musicality was the heart of his identity and that of the cinema he defined. His repertoire drew stylistically on ‘hillbilly’ music (which would evolve into ‘country–western’; Kalinak 2012, 3), a fledgling commercial genre whose popularity was surging among the working-class audiences targeted by B-westerns, and whose personnel and paraphernalia became enduringly associated with the singing cowboy (Stanfield 2002, 154). These connections to the popular-music industry notwithstanding, his songs of the trail tap into western lore, and into a lineage

of cowboy balladry tied to the heritage of American song. Such is the foregrounding of music in B-westerns, they possess kinship with the musical genre, as Cari McDonnell (2014) notes in a comparison that serves to demonstrate the developing genre's complex musical grammar. Films featuring the singing cowboy were widely produced until the late 1940s, with the figure making a lasting impression on the western's relationship with music.

As for the higher-budget western features that were released at this time, some composers trod the other path carved by silent-film accompanists: the addition of a smattering of stock 'western' cues to an otherwise all-purpose score, an approach demonstrated in Max Steiner's music to *Cimarron* (dir. Wesley Ruggles, 1931; see Stilwell 2016, 218–9). *The Plainsman* (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, 1936) is another A-western, George Antheil's score for which, on the other hand, boasts a defter integration of classical scoring textures with old-time forms and traditional instruments. This folk-orchestral hybrid to some extent presages the significant developments in western film-scoring that lay just over the horizon.

The impact of *Stagecoach* (dir. John Ford, 1939) on the western was so momentous that generic accounts frequently overlook everything that preceded it. The film undeniably resurrected the genre, restoring cachet ahead of two decades of industry hegemony. Its music famously incorporated folk songs (arr. Richard Hageman et al.) in a manner that has been championed as innovative, though utilising such content was not unprecedented; we have seen how folk had previously influenced music heard in western-genre cinema, even if the more recent prominence of B-westerns implied a deficiency of 'authentic' (see Vannini and Williams 2009, 3) engagement with traditional music. Moreover, despite the score's presentation in the title credits as being 'based on American folk songs', its melodic basis was an amalgamation of the triumvirate of forms that long constituted the cornerstone of director John Ford's film music: folk song, hymnody, and period music – a mixture that, while recalling the vocabulary of the silent era, combines forms of historical music that were not so readily distinguished from one another at the time. With the film's score heavily marked by instrumental arrangements of an abundance of this source material, the heart of its musical legacy resides in its elevation and centralisation of 'folk' more broadly, especially with respect to the looser application of that term.

Guided in no small part by Ford's own musical preferences, this musical dynamic also distilled events in a wider cultural struggle for American musical identity, which largely occurred in the arena of art music, practitioners of which also seized upon folk in their search for a quintessentially American compositional language. Coming promptly to mind is Aaron Copland's idiosyncratic populist repertory, which spearheaded these developments especially where penetration of cinema and formulation of a national style were concerned. Kalinak, however, is right to approach it as a milieu to which several eminent individuals contributed alongside Copland, like Virgil Thomson, Louis Gruenberg (one of the *Stagecoach* arrangers), and Roy Harris. His Americana was certainly a model with which composers interacted variedly during the western's golden age, but a turn towards traditional music marked the endeavours of other individuals, too, and preoccupied a burgeoning community of folklorists.

Increasingly convinced of the cultural credibility of these exploits, producers were motivated to endorse engagement with folk-music idioms in the cinema (Kalinak 2007, 49–75).

The historical association between folk songs and the frontier long predated the inception of the western, binding the music to the geographical space and all it symbolised: progress, possibility, Manifest Destiny. So long as Americans at least partially negotiated their national identity through films depicting a mythic West infused with frontier mystique, as many scholars argue (Slotkin 1998 [1992]), that mystique would be readily tied in turn to their understanding of what it was to be American. It follows that musicians looking to access that essential identity would be lured to forms deeply connected to it. Folk songs seeped into the concert hall as they did into the cinema, and music wielded its timeless character to revive a bygone era, giving audiences a direct line to the past enriched with cultural and emotional connotations.

These developments were critical to the western's musical identity, but this mythic whitewashing of the illusory frontier restricted the scope of material that allowed artists and audiences to relate effectively to it. This particular category of folk offers up not the true American music but a branch of it, whose subsequent dominance masked the innate heterogeneity of the New World experience. As emphasis on it ostensibly magnified its accuracy, the handling of everything incongruent with its associations appeared increasingly superficial. The most familiar outcome of this process is the musical stereotyping and othering of Indigenous Americans by devices like pentatonic brass and metronomic percussion – a convention that *Stagecoach* reinforced. Westerns might have been endowed with an ever greater degree of dramatic realism as the years passed, as Robert Warshow contemporaneously observed, but so long as the falsehood of its mythic basis was sustained, symptoms of that original fabrication would inevitably manifest (2004 [1954], 709; see also Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000).

The musical landscape of the western was neither immediately nor uniformly transformed by *Stagecoach.* Many westerns of the early 1940s were negligibly impacted, as the bleak Romanticism of the acclaimed western *The Ox-Bow Incident* (dir. William A. Wellman, 1943) demonstrates. The turn towards folk proliferated later in the decade and took on a range of aspects, notably in Ford's cinema. His subsequent westerns augmented and diversified the emphasis on the triumvirate demonstrated in 1939, epitomising 'genuine' interaction with historical American music. These forms were rendered vocally and instrumentally, within and without the diegesis, and most conspicuously during main-title sequences. In films like *My Darling Clementine* (1946) they were extremely dominant; in others like *The Searchers* (1956), less so, though even the typically golden-age score that Max Steiner supplied still could not entirely suppress the presence of traditional music in Ford's soundworld. Few westerns were as thoroughly permeated by this music as his, but it became a characteristic feature of the genre nonetheless, audible in celebrated productions such as *Duel in the Sun* (dir. King Vidor et al., 1946) and *The Gunfighter* (dir. Henry King, 1950).

Vocal engagement was less prevalent than instrumental, but it was certainly more noticeable, its presence likely owing as much a debt to the familiar motif of the singing cowboy than to the Fordian reverence for folk song. One notable dimension of this tendency concerns set-piece diegetic performances, which became a hallmark. In many cases folk songs featured, as in *Pursued* (dir. Raoul Walsh, 1947) and *Red River* (dir. Howard Hawks, 1948), while at other times original songs were written and performed in the style, effectively carrying the B-western's 'cowboy pop' torch. This happens in *Rio Bravo* (dir. Hawks, 1959), courtesy of Dean Martin and Ricky Nelson, and in *Canyon Passage* (dir. Jacques Tourneur, 1946), where a bardic Hoagy Carmichael comments on the drama through song.

The same stylistic dichotomy marks the western's other significant song-related fixation: the title song, all but invariably performed by male voices, singing either alone or as part of a chorus. Ford is undoubtedly preeminent where folk-song themes are concerned, though he also strayed into country–western territory, nuancing his relationship with folk-related styles. At once the groundwork and centrepiece of a film's soundworld, these songs typically reached beyond title sequences by transitioning into subsequent underscore. An example of this is *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (dir. John Sturges, 1957), which parallels *Canyon Passage* by featuring recurring narration, this time from an unseen commentator who recapitulates the title song. This is not to say the diegesis imposed an impermeable boundary; transdiegetic shifts were common, but still conspicuous. 'Oh My Darling, Clementine', the recurrent theme of the nondiegetic score to Ford's namesake film, momentarily penetrates the diegesis when it is whistled by Henry Fonda, his tentativeness suggesting awareness of his infringement. Persistent attempts to engender a historically suitable soundtrack facilitated a degree of musical coherence that made this kind of transition especially easy to carry out. In addition to strengthening the western's connections to the musical, this pervasiveness of song further accentuates the importance of music to the fabric of the genre (Creekmur 2012, 21–36).

Bespoke theme songs were cemented not only as the industry standard but also as a generic hallmark in the wake of *High Noon* (dir. Fred Zinnemann, 1952). Ubiquity in the score and an influentially proactive marketing campaign combined to establish 'The Ballad of High Noon' as a musical wellspring, narrative engine, and commercial asset. Moreover, it effectively renegotiated the close relationship the western had fostered with the recording industry since the 1930s, when the latter underwent rapid, dramatic transformation (Smith 1998, 59–60). The composer behind this phenomenon is Dimitri Tiomkin, responsible for the score of *High Noon* and those of many films already cited. As a composer best known for his western scores, Tiomkin is the closest thing to a generic predecessor of Morricone.

Interaction with folk music that originated in white European culture as demonstrated in *Stagecoach* set another important precedent: implementation of a cohesive compositional language organically derived from traditional-music forms. The quotation of specific folk tunes constituted but one dimension of the experiments conducted by Copland and his contemporaries; more essential was the cultivation of an underlying idiom patterned after the characteristic melodic contour, harmonic clarity, and rhythmic simplicity of that music.

Concert works were key vehicles for these forays, but so, too, were scores for documentary films such as Thomson's for *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (dir. Pare Lorentz, 1936; which also featured music influenced by African-American musical traditions) and Copland's for *The City* (dir. Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke, 1939). Although aspects of this music are tangibly folk-derived, these scores offered a fully fledged soundworld, whose innovations met a desire held by musicians and filmmakers to supplant the inheritance of Romanticism that had influenced American film music to excess. Caryl Flinn (1992, 20–7) interprets this mechanism as the perception and embrace of a utopian musical vision, a candid metaphor of American identity in its freedom from European sophistication and artifice. Copland's music became more aligned with this notion in time. It breached the world of cinema, and as it matured, acquired greater renown, and influenced more composers, it left an increasingly indelible mark on filmic representations of Americanness.

The cohesion of Copland's populist output makes it easy to refer to it in broad terms, but different elements of his oeuvre and style underpinned a range of film-music tropes, in Hollywood cinema generally and in the western particularly. First connecting his music to the mythical West via his 1938 ballet, *Billy the Kid*, the composer solidified generic connotations in his music for the contemporary western *The Red Pony* (dir. Lewis Milestone, 1949), his last feature score, whose comparatively late release again leaves the prescience of *Stagecoach* open for emphasis. Ford's precedent-setting is most evident in the film's transitional sequences of visual symbolism, depicting the gradual advance of the titular vehicle dwarfed by the expansive Monument Valley backdrop. Here the music, offering variations on the diatonic title fanfare in combination with thumping rhythmic ostinati, owes the clearest debt to the folk-derived experiments of the 1930s, the fruits of which were thus bound to some of the innermost elements of the genre. For Stilwell, the theme represents 'the future of the western score in chrysalis' (2016, 222).

With few westerns immediately following suit, musically speaking, a particular quality of Copland's music was given time to move front and centre in the cinema. Picking up Flinn's thread, Neil Lerner explains how the Copland sound became strongly affiliated with landscape, especially when portrayed with nostalgic idealism. This association was facilitated by the composer's nurturing of certain compositional devices in creative response to the wistful and bucolic texts in *Of Mice and Men* (dir. Milestone, 1939) and *Our Town* (dir. Sam Wood, 1940): diatonicism, parallel harmonic movement and sparse textural voicings. These techniques were archetypally expressed in the ballet *Appalachian Spring* (1944), whose retrospective programme (Friesen 2013, 104) tied them to similar imagery. For Lerner, these musical features amount to an accessible and influential 'pastoral' trope, the cultural coding of which was compounded through application in Copland's own works, and in subsequent film scores by successive composers on whom his music left a significant impression (2001, 491–9).

In retrospect it seems all but inevitable that music entwined with idealistic representations of America would find a home in the western setting. Regarding this

encounter, *The Red Pony* is positioned at a chronological watershed. A number of notable features released in the ensuing years are marked by a kindred musical aesthetic. Hugo Friedhofer is one composer who owes such a debt, audible in scores such as *Hondo* (dir. John Farrow, 1953). Fuelled by both sheer quantity of production and broader political-ideological developments, the genre's classical syntactic attributes consolidated in the post-war years, as narrative frameworks came to hinge on Kitses' syntactical tensions. Moreover, with the ideological tensions of the Cold War becoming ever starker, westerns began to strive self-consciously for emblematic and optimistic association with a national origin myth. The unfolding of these processes only strengthened the suitability of music channelling the pastoral; while it recedes in the face of drama and tension, it surges in scenes celebrating the land and the virtues of frontier life.

The rise of the pastoral trope notwithstanding, one could argue that scores such as *Hondo*, like *The Red Pony* and parts of *Stagecoach* before them, take most discernibly after earlier Copland work. *Billy the Kid* stands out in this regard, a work anticipating not only the pastoral codes, but also others that Lerner identifies in compositions of the 1940s: 'patriotic' and 'Western' (2001, 478–9). The latter is of immediate interest, and Lerner cites the 1942 ballet *Rodeo* as its prime vehicle. This work seems the obvious reference point for the most significant scores of the twilight years of the genre's heyday, for which the composers responsible are Jerome Moross – Copland's friend and erstwhile orchestrator – and Elmer Bernstein. Through their respective scores for *The Big Country* (dir. William Wyler, 1958) and *The Magnificent Seven* (dir. John Sturges, 1960), they sealed the exchange between Copland and the western and expanded the genre's horizons to symphonic proportions. Alongside this orchestral grandeur, they also drew on *Rodeo*'s increased energy and textural activity, integrating false relations and staggered, asymmetrical rhythmic patterns – many of these developments notably leave folk music a little further behind. There remains a close connection to the pastoral codes, though, despite the direct overtones of *Rodeo.* This is markedly true of Moross, who synthesises the strands of his colleague's layered contribution to the western score. As regards Bernstein's offering, of special note is the pointed influx of Mexican musical influences, amplifying traits previously more latent in the genre.

Numerous 1950s western scores do not share as profound a relationship with Copland's music, and predictably their connections to the lineage traced above are varied. Victor Young's music for *Shane* (dir. George Stevens, 1953) assumes the form of largely orchestral underscore. But whereas strains of folk can be substantially heard in its motivic construction, the score's lush orchestration and harmony demonstrate greater loyalty to Romanticism. Furthermore, the colouristic inclusion of harmonica and mandolin and the diegetic presence of folk music together draw the music towards older practice. On the other hand, in the distinguished oeuvres of genre filmmakers Anthony Mann and Budd Boetticher, atmospheric orchestral scores are similarly in tune with contemporary Hollywood innovations. Yet their cinema, which tends to spurn mythic optimism in favour of darker, psychological tales, frequently opts for traditional film-music idioms in place of a utopian sound. Title songs, appearing in films such as *The Man from Laramie* (dir. Mann, 1955) and *Seven Men from*

Now (dir. Boetticher, 1956), as well as countless westerns of the post-*High Noon* years, also effectively alienate Copland's model, though his legacy is far from wholly absent in these directors' work.

Tiomkin occupies similarly nuanced ground in this context, a figure at once conventional and pioneering, and worth reconsidering given his close alignment with westerns and his subsequent impact on Morricone. His wider compositional conservatism, which has been noted by Cooke, does manifest to some extent in his genre work (Cooke 2008, 119). In many of his scores, from *Duel in the Sun* to *Giant* (dir. Stevens, 1956), his orchestral handling shadows the classical template idiomatically and functionally. Moreover, reminiscent of techniques prevalent since the silent era, the western flavour is often instilled by the timbral embellishing of 'folk' instruments, or by quotation of historical source music. Especially when considered against the Copland school, these features of Tiomkin's music, which endured in his work until the turn of the 1960s, represent the continuation of a sentimental, homespun approach that had been present throughout the western's history. Particularly in the context of the 1950s, his country–western style is a stark contrast to the symphonic ambitions of Moross and Bernstein.

Even so, examples of fresher, innovative scoring techniques can be found in his work. He was influenced by the American music he referenced, translating melodic structures into characteristically rousing, *Stagecoach*-like melodies, like the *Red River* themes. Contrary, however, to the breathless music of Moross and Bernstein, his tunes are marked by a balladic nonchalance that rarely ventures far from the feel of the cowboy songs that he began composing himself. From *Red River* to *The Alamo* (dir. John Wayne, 1960), notably by way of *High Noon* and *Rio Bravo*, he drew on the B-western legacy by fatefully increasing the proximity between popular music and the western. Other instances of his pioneering musical solutions include the climactic *High Noon* sequence cut to a pre-written cue, and he was also responsible for the imaginative narration of *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral.*

Other significant examples in the context of the present study pertain to Tiomkin's utilisation of idioms with Hispanic associations. The land, people, and culture of Mexico became ever more prominent thematic elements in the western's generic constellation, and accordingly acquired defter musical treatment over time. In earlier Ford's films, for instance, Mexico was denoted by the mere sound of a guitar (Kalinak 2007, 77), and Phrygian orchestral inflections acted as another basic signifier, as in *Vera Cruz* (dir. Robert Aldrich, 1954) and *High Noon*. But Tiomkin's 1959 take on the Mexican bugle call 'El Degüello' in *Rio Bravo* not only presented a more mature handling of that country's musical heritage but also heralded fateful incorporation of traditions beyond the remit of Anglophone folk, American art music, and Austro-German Romanticism – all in a prominent musical set piece discussed by the film's characters as it hovers enigmatically at the borders of the diegesis.

Developments surrounding Mexican music form part of the broader musical enterprising that marked music in the western from the mid-1950s, catalysed by the genre's industrial and cultural zenith. *The Big Country* sparked a revolution in 1958, while Tiomkin's characteristic

scores had been innovating since 1952 at the latest. Boundaries were also pushed in subtler ways, and the western was making the first of its decisive international steps. In addition to acquiring a musical identity that was distinctive and integral to the genre, the western had asserted itself as fertile ground for film-music experimentation.

Italian cinema

Morricone's initiation in this lineage occurred within the context of the Italian-western movement, one of the most protracted and influential of the Roman film industry's notorious *filoni*, cycles of genre-film production that operated in accordance with the shifting tastes of Italian audiences. The surge in Italian-western production and popularity followed the downturn of the 'peplum', the industry's preceding flagship *filone* (singular) whose resources and personnel were by and large transferred to the manufacture of the new genre. Beginning with the prospective exploitation of the western's timeless appeal, this shift was catalysed by the extraordinary popularity of Sergio Leone's stylised reinterpretation of the genre – first presented in *Per un pugno di dollari*. Identification of that commercial potential marked an industrial watershed, before which *Per un pugno* and the few other westerns produced in Italy in the early 1960s amounted to an unremarkable subplot of the broader 'Eurowestern' trend. The Italian western was also a symptom of a larger and ongoing cultural transfer particular to the US and Italy, which saw the latter's film industry imitating the former's exports through *filoni*, a process unpacked further below. But given the contextual developments outlined, the Italian western is best introduced with recourse to the Eurowestern milieu, a continuation of western-genre tradition.

The conventional timespan of the Eurowestern begins at the turn of the 1960s, but transatlantic appropriation of the western ties in to a longer lineage of preoccupation with the Old West. Beginning with the late nineteenth-century novels of Karl May, it was furthered in the first half of the twentieth by Europeans in a range of media (Frayling 2006 [1981], 3–33). Although produced sporadically and with insufficient uniformity to be considered a distinct movement, there was a moderate swell of cinematic westerns in the 1950s which signalled increasing interaction with elements of the genre and the nebulous onset of the Eurowestern, the leading progenitors being the mid-1950s films of Spanish director Joaquín Luis Romero Marchent. Britain boasted a longer domestic tradition of western-making, which first corresponded with continental developments with the 1958 comedy *The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw* (dir. Walsh), an American co-production filmed in Spain; this film and *Savage Guns* (dir. Michael Carreras, 1961) influentially demonstrated that the country's arid regions could double cheaply and convincingly for the American West. Founded on May's cornerstone, Germany's relationship with the genre enjoyed a renaissance courtesy of Winnetou, the author's Indigenous-American icon, who featured in a series of sentimental westerns from 1962. Back in Spain at this time, Marchent was directing films far more recognisable as belonging to the film genre, which served as exemplars for an increasingly coordinated

European operation. *Tres hombres buenos* (1963) was a milestone for him that, as a Spanish-Italian co-production, also signals the escalation of Italian involvement.

Films categorised in retrospect as Eurowesterns share stylistic peculiarities, but the term functions as little more than a geographical descriptor. Grant asserts the absence of factors distinguishing or uniting this first wave of pictures, aside from the prevalence of stock narratives, unimaginative cinematography, and poor production values (2013, 39–44). Applying a more positive spin, Frayling perceives an aesthetic of homage in revitalisation of old stories (2004, 163), while Lee Broughton has argued that the distanced European perspective enabled the portrayal of a more expansive, inclusive West than that permitted by American mythos (2016, 192–201). As far as music is concerned, there are few idiomatically striking traits, though the influence of Hispanic music in the westerns of Marchent stands out as pre-empting Morriconian techniques, and there is a real air of subversive austerity about Antón García Abril's music for *Savage Guns*.

This sprawling phenomenon owed much to financial pragmatism. The traits Grant condemns in Eurowesterns likewise plagued their 'moribund' American counterparts (Cooke 2008, 371), and were symptomatic of a faltering Hollywood assembly line. In 1953, the US produced 92 westerns, accounting for 27 per cent of all films; ten years later these figures decrease respectively to eleven and nine (Buscombe 1988, 48). Statistics reflect the broader television-induced crisis in the American industry, but the arrival and success of premium small-screen westerns such as *Gunsmoke* (1955–75) and *Rawhide* (1959–65) particularly exacerbated the blight of the cinematic western. Such shows gave domestic viewers their dose of the frontier on television, but dwindling film exports left audiences abroad wanting. Having been a valuable outlet for Hollywood for decades, European markets had nurtured a continent's worth of eager consumers of American films – one-in-four of which was a western at the genre's pinnacle. European eclipsing of the American appetite for the genre is well exemplified by the performance of *The Magnificent Seven*, one of the last golden-age classics – a box-office disappointment at home but a triumph across the Atlantic.

Coming, therefore, after American westerns had long saturated both domestic and international markets, sudden downturns in standard and supply provoked European-industry investment to satisfy ongoing demand. This explains why Eurowesterns not only imitated Hollywood precedent but also masqueraded as American imports, not least in Italy where use of anglicised pseudonym credits was customary. While the likes of *Der Schatz im Silbersee* (dir. Harald Reinl, 1962) may have proved that homemade productions offered a feasible remedy for the shortfall, the runaway success of *Per un pugno* proved they could turn a massive profit – on a tight budget. The subsequent rush that Leone triggered thrust the Italian industry into the spotlight. The 'Italianisation' of the European western would be set in motion, bringing the genre to maturity and enabling it to transcend its derivative roots and fulfil its long-standing purpose, as Frayling saw it: to generate critical commentary on its American precursors (2006 [1981], 33).

Evidence that homemade westerns could financially mitigate the Hollywood western's decline – important among a range of causes for the Eurowestern's inverse international ascendancy – was the principal stimulus in Italy, a country possessing close connections to American culture and where, at least for Cinecittà studios in Rome, profit was sovereign. These connections were built on and nurtured by a deeper cultural relationship. As an occupied, underdeveloped, and fractious country recovering from Fascism – with a robust political Left on the frontline of capitalist Europe – Italy was swiftly targeted by post-war US foreign policies that were ever more ideologically motivated, and brought firmly within the American sphere of political-economic influence. Support from the Marshall Plan fuelled rapid industrialisation in the 1950s (the so-called economic miracle), which partly entailed the expansion of the entertainment industries, the means by which Italy would also suffer the great power's cultural imperialism. These proliferating media, while disseminating American products and narratives directly to Italians, also advertised the wholesome lifestyle advocated by the governing party, Democrazia Cristiana (DC), whose 1948 election campaign prevailed with the assistance of US funding (Gennari 2009). While most visibly exalting traditional Italian social values, like family and religion, that lifestyle subtly endorsed consumerism, individualism, and everything else associated with the American Dream (Ginsborg 1990, 239–47).

This strengthened a much longer-standing cultural exchange. American films had enchanted Italian audiences relentlessly since the 1920s. Assessing the 'virtually hegemonic' dominance of Hollywood competition in an Italian film industry dependent on foreign productions from the silent era onwards, Bondanella and Pacchioni point out that the total percentage of domestically produced films in the national market never exceeded approximately one-third of the total number of films in circulation (2017 [2009], 21). This entrenched disparity was partially alleviated by Fascist-era measures seeking to boost the national industry – including subsidies for domestic productions and restrictions on foreign films, which led to the withdrawal of several major Hollywood studios from the Italian market during the war years – but the reduction of the deficit was short-lived (2017 [2009], 55). In 1946 hegemony was restored as the lifting of Fascist embargoes unleashed a six-year Hollywood backlog; that year foreign films, the majority American, received 87 per cent of Italian box-office receipts (Wagstaff 1998, 75). Then buttressed by monetary packages, the American foothold in the Italian consciousness grew firmer and soon precipitated political and industrial action.

Westerns comprised a substantial proportion of those US exports, and they duly elicited great affection in Italy, of which the country's own engagement with the frontier, christened with Puccini's 1910 opera *La fanciulla del West*, is symptomatic. Exceptional audience enthusiasm is arguably a better indicator, however, and while this is best exemplified by the sensational success of the Italian western, it was first fostered by the American variety. Austin Fisher spotlights this cultural phenomenon as interpreted by Luchino Visconti in his 1951 film *Bellissima*, for whose protagonist, mesmerised by a screening of *Red River*, the big-screen 'romance … merges with a desire for the freedom of the mythical America on

show' (2011, 23). Frayling's interviews with Leone (2000) reveal a post-war cinema scene suffused with western-genre iconography; the escapist fantasy realm it depicted and sustained would captivate viewers increasingly conditioned to be enticed by all things American, and inspire a generation of young Roman cinephiles spearheaded by Leone.

The education offered by this environment was a prerequisite for the consummate literacy and reverence that the work of these filmmakers later demonstrated. But this exposure also spurred the Italian western's tenets of defiant revisionism. For Frayling and numerous other commentators, the genre's cynical vision of the West could only have been conceived and realised from the distanced cultural standpoint of the 'outsider', within an industry apart from Hollywood – as it functioned at the time (2000, 23–4). The peculiarly Italian nature of that vision has been emphasised, while others (Campbell 2010) perceive a general Mediterranean aesthetic. Both interpretations risk overlooking the intermediary role of Japanese cinema; Akira Kurosawa was also influenced heavily by Ford and Hawks, and his *Yojimbo* (1961) was an equally foundational text for the 'spaghetti western', given that *Per un pugno* is a scarcely veiled remake. At any rate, the sentiment is a reverberation of Frayling's earlier reflections on the European western's unique and overarching capacity to engender critical cinema. It resonates moreover with Moravia's resounding insight of 1967: the 'Italian Western was not born from ancestral memory, but from the herd instinct of film-makers … head over heels in love with the American Western … the Hollywood Western was born from a myth; the Italian one is born from a myth about a myth' (Moravia, quoted in Frayling 2000, 118).

The presence of American cinema in Italy would also be felt more tangibly. The 1950s saw the era of 'Hollywood on the Tiber', when Rome was an international hub for foreign filmmaking. Among those from other countries, US film studios and production companies established themselves in the city and at Cinecittà, which was from inception 'a replica of Hollywood's studio system, producing mass-appeal genre films' (Fisher 2011, 30). Many American blockbusters of the period were shot here at the continent's largest complex in developments again precipitated by expediency; in 1949 the Italian government stipulated the reinvestment of revenue earned by American films on the Italian market in domestic productions – more political intervention to support national film and combat American dominance (Fisher 2011, 35; Ginsborg 1990, 112–3). By relocating 'runaway' productions to Italy, US studios could utilise this frozen income. Given the lower overall cost of making films in Italy, access to subsidies, and the ongoing profitability of the European box office relative to the stuttering American one, it became prudent to relocate to Rome. Hundreds of Italian industry professionals received first-hand technological, methodical, and aesthetic experience of Hollywood filmmaking, but international relations soured after a series of box-office disasters and unsavoury on-set incidents, precipitating the exodus of US agents. The sobering experience would be reflected in the Italian dismantling of America's origin myth.

In an ironic inversion of the imminent shift in Italian genre priority, American money that might have funded prestige westerns was being diverted to bankroll a new Hollywood

craze. *The Big Country*'s Wyler and *Vera Cruz*'s Aldrich were making *Ben-Hur* (1959) and *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1962). Not coincidentally, pictures of biblical, antiquated, and mythological provenance soon preoccupied Italian production companies as the peplum picked up momentum in the late 1950s; sets, props, heroes, and plots were repurposed for the cause. As Fisher stresses, however, these Italian efforts – derided by American onlookers as ersatz 'sword-and-sandal' pictures (pre-empting the 'spaghetti' pejorative) – exhibited a tendency towards parodic irreverence that undercut Hollywood's 'earnest grandeur' (2011, 38). This important distinction relates to his broader assertion that Italian popular cinema did not merely exist and profit by borrowing genres from American film, but that genre itself was a vehicle through which popular film negotiated with the influence of American culture in Italian society (Fisher 2017), a mechanism that would be renewed in the Italian western, and far more poignantly given the western's relationship with American identity.

The *filone* system was a product of conditions peculiar to Italian cinema, some of which have been alluded to. The threat to domestic film posed by the dumping of Hollywood films on the post-war Italian market provoked the legislative measures of 1949, but, as Christopher Wagstaff attests, the emergence of Neorealism itself can be interpreted as an earlier, cultural response (1998, 75). Its unrefined aesthetic capitalised on the low-cost approach that was necessary if the struggling economy and industry were to compete. But while these canonical films were abundant in cultural capital, drawing international attention and acclaim, they lacked the entertainment allure to generate the revenue to alleviate American supremacy. Neorealist films were not entirely unpopular, but they only ever represented a fraction of overall productions and attracted a minority audience domestically (Bondanella and Pacchioni 2017 [2009], 67–8).

A debate ensued between those arguing that only production of like-for-like, homemade genre films could supplant Hollywood imports, and those who advocated for the respect and investment that the prestige of quality exports would earn. The 1949 interventions ultimately benefited both parties, polarising the industry. The state credit, tax rebates, and screen quotas for Italian films stimulated domestic production, and high-quality pictures were made and exported that elevated the status of Italian cinema abroad. However, as the rebates were proportionate to box-office receipts, there was also reward for, and impetus to make, films with mass appeal. Furthermore, Italian film internationalised: openings for foreign funding of domestic projects afforded financiers abroad the opportunity to access protected Italian market as well as subsidies. As American studios were arriving to exploit the situation and access their locked takings, other European countries established film-exchange agreements with Italy and capitalised on co-production beneficence, later enhanced through the 1965 *legge Corona* (Wagstaff 1998, 75–6; 1992, 250). A litany of international Eurowestern collaborations indicates that this occurred against a backdrop of growing official sponsorship for film co-production in post-war Europe, intended to assuage Hollywood's command of the continent by allowing films to compete in multiple countries and benefit from home-market protection in the co-producing national markets (Nowell-Smith 1998, 8).

Rome became the centre of popular film, producing vast quantities of genre pictures on low budgets: opera films, 'weepies', comedies, and so forth. Neorealist filmmakers and their arthouse successors, meanwhile, constituted a faction with northern and leftist associations, producing fewer pictures generally considered to be of originality, social substance, and cosmopolitan appeal (comedies were also a mainstay for this group before, during, and after the rise of the 1950s art film). As time progressed, measures of 'quality' evolved, shaped less by cultural and more by production value (A-list actors, spectacular locations, historical settings), though the capital such features required forsook a foundational Neorealist principle (Wagstaff 1998, 76). Nevertheless, the creatives, critics, and intelligentsia associated with that movement disparaged the Roman industry, whose films remain conventionally estranged from the national canon (see O'Leary and O'Rawe 2011). In a climate marked by readiness to disavow Fascism's legacy, they were suspicious of Cinecittà's ties to the regime, most essentially questioning its lack of 'political commitment' (Frayling 2000, 77–8). This broad admonishment was grounded in the ideological stance of the influential Italian Communist Party (PCI), which, demonising mass media's usurpation of what it regarded as the 'genuine "popular culture" … of provincial traditions', represented and guided the views of the larger leftist Italian subculture at the apex of which was situated (Fisher 2011, 20).

Both wings can be mapped on a shared, idiosyncratic industry system in which the production, distribution, and exhibition sectors were organised. As Fisher observes, the relative autonomy of the three sets this infrastructure somewhat apart from Hollywood's, despite the strategic reason for this being to reach as wide an audience and secure as large a profit as possible (2011, 35). Cinemas of the era could be categorised threefold: *prima*, *seconda*, or *terza visione*. The first, located in urban areas, exhibited prestige films on their opening run and generated the most revenue. The second screened the same films on their second run alongside cheaper productions. The last, mostly comprising modest establishments situated in smaller rural communities, comprised third-run cinemas – the primary, often initial outlet for low-budget genre films. Cinemas of all three types populated a considerably large exhibition sector that, due to a combination of factors like the sustained influx of American pictures, was marked by an excessive quantity of films in circulation. The characteristic response to this situation was a low level of exploitation of a large number of pictures. Despite the protective policies mentioned previously, the situation was detrimental for Italian producers who still struggled to compete with imports, and were forced to resort to 'the production of cheap films in large quantities rather than well-financed ones in moderate quantities' (Wagstaff 1992, 249).

At least that seemed the correct *modus operandi* from the standpoint of the Roman film industry, accountable for producing the bulk of Italian films and earning the lion's share of receipts. Wagstaff extrapolates, demonstrating that extension of output without that of resources provokes repetition, which, when a winning formula is replicated, also guarantees return. This was the fundamental logic behind *filone*, explaining why there was a charge to imitate a formula once it had been successfully tested – and before its appeal was exhausted. The fragmented nature of the production sector, with many companies producing just one or

two films a year, exacerbated the large-scale commitment to reliable ventures (Wagstaff 1992, 249–50). Furthermore, the majority of these films were aimed at direct distribution to *seconda* and *terza visione* cinemas, and their content was curated accordingly. These were environments where entertainment and consistency were expected in lively, communal, small-town, open-air spaces, where smoking, chatter, and seat-switching prevailed, where scenes of lengthy dialogue were overwhelmed with noise, and where ear-catching cues indicated to the audience that something worth watching was imminent (Wagstaff 1992, 253). This was popular cinema, a consumer-led phenomenon. While acknowledging that *filoni* 'should be considered in the context of the cultural choices of their intended audiences', Fisher warns that 'it should also be remembered that these were audiences for whom American popular culture was becoming ever more recognizable; the films' status as popular artifacts rests, partially at least, upon their documenting of this experience' (2017, 263–4).

The decline of Hollywood on the Tiber occurred hand-in-hand with that of the peplum, putting Cinecittà under intense economic pressure in the early 1960s. Confronting mass unemployment and plagued by declining attendance correlating to rising television ownership (almost a decade behind Hollywood's blight), the industry searched for a new *filone* to resolve the predicament (Wagstaff 1992, 249; Fisher 2011, 39). In the midst of the concurrent and gradual growth of the Eurowestern, Italian producers were particularly reassured as to the feasibility of pursuing the genre by the popularity in Italy of West Germany's earliest 'Winnetou' films (Frayling 2000, 120–1). Investment in the western was at first tentative and imitative, the crutch of the counterfeit Italian approach betraying both the trepidation of production companies and the complementary role played by the US western's downturn. This betrayal is especially evident if one considers Italy's relationship with the frontier. From Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* to cowboy-themed *fumetti* comics and the sporadic film westerns produced between the 1910s and '50s, Italian engagement with the Wild West had, as Fisher argues, entailed an often parodic process of cross-cultural blending (2011, 22–8). It is telling that, at first, industrial necessity overruled that trend.

In most ways, early developments in Italian film music were in step with wider patterns marking the young cinematic medium. The perceived need to supplement silents with sound and the diversity of exhibition spaces that screened silents, frequently alongside other forms of entertainment, triggered a haphazard scramble for accompaniment solutions. Although venues regularly repurposed inhouse players for performance, there was variety regarding the kinds of musicians and ensembles supplying the music. This diversity extends to the material they played, but here there is one notable and lasting idiosyncrasy that distinguishes Italian practice from that of other countries: a propensity for opera, the shadow of which looms large over Italian film-music practice and discourse. As a precursory form of narrative musical composition, opera was long a logical reference point for film composers internationally, but the cultural predominance and formal peculiarities of the national tradition single out Italian film-scoring, especially in contrast with the Germanic through-composed idiom on which émigré European composers in the US leaned. This difference is immediately apparent in the referential approach adopted by accompanists, aided by the prevalence of extractable

numbers in Italian opera. Alongside popular tunes and dances, arias were widely performed, with the concurrent emergence of phonograph recordings of classics serving to consolidate these works in the vernacular, in some of the earliest significant developments in Italian popular-music history.

Again in step with wider changes, perceived inadequacies in improvised accompaniment provoked a standardisation of content with the appearance of 'repertoires' and cue sheets, many of which were assembled by composers of concert music. Controversy erupted, however, over the artistic integrity of a 'by-numbers' method, with reprimands alluding to the sullying of the nation's operatic pride (D'Onofrio 2017, 378–9), a seemingly speculative threat that reflected the precarious position of the new medium in the cultural order – aggravated by the lofty subject matter of numerous historical epics, and adaptations of classic literary works. Emerging as a popular art form suspended between highbrow culture and commercial enterprise, cinema became riddled with antagonisms, some of which affected musical practice; Emanuele D'Onofrio (2017, 377) describes hierarchical conflicts between 'academic and industry establishments … art and business … tradition and innovation'. Such tensions motivated the first purpose-written film scores in Italy (perhaps even worldwide), commissioned from composers associated with conservatories and prestigious musical institutions, like Romolo Bacchini and Luigi Mancinelli (Mosconi 2006, 132). Perceiving film as a modest, even shameful outlet for their creativity, however, they composed mostly for remuneration and were reluctant to experiment or innovate (Mosconi 2006, 152–63; D'Onofrio 2017, 379).

A watershed for film music generally, the mid-1920s was also significant for Italian musical culture. Concurrent with the dawn of the sound era, the death of Puccini in 1924 saw the 'curtain drawn on opera as a contemporary genre', and the advent of radio saw canzonette delivered to the masses, establishing the form as the cornerstone of Italy's burgeoning popular-music scene (D'Onofrio 2017, 380). Light music of this kind was soon showcased in comedic films often named after the featured canzonetta, which also served as a landing ground for opera singers exchanging stage for screen. This inaugurated a lineage of Italian musical films that was nurtured under Fascism before coming under the stewardship of the post-war popular industry, first through the opera film in the 1950s and then the *musicarello* at the beginning of the 1960s, designed to appealed to a younger generation of viewers. Comedy offered an important platform for musical set pieces, which included interpolated songs as well as diegetic performances from the likes of Vittorio De Sica and Totò. As the most consistently popular genre in Italian-film history, comedy bears a strong but complicated legacy. It endured as a major branch of B-feature cinema, both as a genre in its own right and through comedic offshoots of other genres – the Italian western included – to which it often donated its penchant for music. The flowering of the *commedia all'italiana* in the late 1950s brought such techniques into the context of higher-value productions and satirical narratives, though the genre became distanced from its performative roots. The contemporaneous apogee of the Italian art film arguably owes as much to this heritage as it does to Neorealism; Bondanella and Pacchioni exemplify that even Federico Fellini, whose

experiments with Nino Rota were to prove so repercussive, would have considered himself first and foremost a comedic director (2017 [2009], 185).

D'Onofrio emphasises that the diffusion of popular music through pre-war genre film is of sociological pertinence; widespread use of songs 'revealed a significant new effort by companies and directors to reach the largest audience possible' (2017, 381). Frayling, arguing that opera-film production in the 1950s amounted to a scheme to promote distinctly Italian films abroad, speculates that the genre was consequential for the Italian western in that it confronted Leone – and by extension other aspirant filmmakers training in the industry – with the challenges of choreographing music, movement, and image (2000, 52–4). However, responding to Frayling's suggestions in interview, Leone quickly dispelled the thought, challenging the stereotypical 'operatic' tag frequently applied to the Italian western. Indeed, Sergio Corbucci directed such musical films in that decade, though Morricone would likely testify that his musical awareness benefited little from the experience, as the composer derided the director's handling of music on more than one occasion (see below, p. 58).

Of the broadly conventional if accomplished scores for films produced under Fascism, there are few especially influential stylistic developments to note. In dramas, propagandist war films, *telefoni bianchi* comedies, and even the daring 'calligraphic' literary adaptations of the 1940s, music remained written by conservatory-trained individuals who eschewed experimentation in favour of sentimentality. A melodic approach to composition and stylistic pathos was the standard, which largely satisfied the authorities under whose watchful tutelage the above genres blossomed. As the regime loomed over 1930s Italy, so philosopher Benedetto Croce's doctrines dominated musicological thinking at the time. Endorsing among other things musical superiority over other media in hybridised art forms, Croce perpetuated perceptions of cinema as a humbling vehicle for music, further dissuading composers from striving to innovate in a medium that many already held in contempt (D'Onofrio 2017, 381–2; Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 254).

To an extent, this situation endured beyond war and drastic change in the political climate. In spite of ongoing debate regarding progenitorial films and figures of Neorealism, the movement's onset nevertheless occurred quickly and powerfully (Garofalo 2020, 333–40). Already established in the industry, leading director Roberto Rossellini was in a position to effect this seamless transition, taking to the capital's war-torn streets to film *Roma città aperta* (1945) and catalyse the burgeoning process of negotiation with post-war trauma and reconciliation with the past facilitated by Neorealism. Among legion innovations that such films enacted, however, was a nuanced but broad commitment to authenticity and rawness, which – working in combination with aforementioned financial realities – precluded lavish music and posed a radical creative challenge which often went unmet. Champions of Neorealist film music justly point to economic handling of material, continued aversion to Hollywood-style narrative underscore, and emotive use of music in films like *Ladri di biciclette* (dir. De Sica, 1948). But in Cooke's estimation, 'Italian film music only truly

escaped from the melodramatic shackles of a stagnantly operatic idiom … when the eccentric talents [of Fellini and Rota] collided headlong in the 1950s' (2008, 366).

The 1950s witnessed the ascent of the art film, in which category many of Italian cinema's most influential and acclaimed works are situated. At the crest of these developments one finds the figure of Fellini, ever close to whom is Rota, who scored each of the director's films from *Lo sceicco bianco* (1952) until the composer's death in 1979. In Fellini's cinema, the social commentary of Neorealism and comedy combined with the latter's whimsy and an increasing touch of the fantastical in a distinctive blend that appealed to daring film-music solutions duly supplied by Rota, characteristic traits of which include stylistic pastiching, heightened narrational agency, traversal of the diegetic boundary, consummate handling of abundant melodic and motivic material, and a quintessential 'ironic attachment' to image and action. The last of these was coined and scrutinised by Richard Dyer, who, by exploring how such attributes cohere a substantial body of work, helped to liberate the composer from Fellini's magnetism (2010, 40–127). As Cooke points out, this so often dragged Rota into the burlesque, tragicomic world of circus music, which the composer still navigated with flair and nuance (2008, 366–71).

Rota was, like Morricone, an alumnus of Conservatorio Santa Cecilia and the author of numerous concert works. He was ostensibly able to reconcile his work in this sphere and in film with minimal fuss, comfortable adopting an experimental approach to film composition. This simple lack of snobbery towards his craft is, in D'Onofrio's opinion, a major reason why Rota was able to develop such an original style and acquire a level of status not held by any preceding Italian film composer (D'Onofrio 2017, 384–5). While Morricone did not achieve reconciliation with such ease, he, too, would treat film music as a legitimate channel for his innovative impulses, and both individuals thus bucked a prevailing, inhibitive trend in Italian film composition. Again like Morricone, Rota was a prolific industry professional who lent his pioneering approach to a multitude of lesser-known genre films, as well as to the classic works of Fellini, Luchino Visconti, and others. This illustrates that it is more difficult to segregate musical practitioners along popular–arthouse lines as directors. Rota and Morricone occupy a rather exclusive film-composing category in the discourse, frequently being placed alongside one another as the two great icons of Italian film music (Miceli 2011, 103–12). Dyer (2010, 30) asserts their counterbalance, however, contrasting Rota's 'unsubservient but discreet closeness' with Morricone's dominant, visceral, and immersive music; this, Dyer explains, is why Morricone became so central a figure to genres that depended on such techniques, namely the Italian western and the *giallo* (mystery thriller/horror), which, despite their prevalence in the 1960s, are conspicuously absent in Rota's filmography.

Visconti and Michelangelo Antonioni represent two more figures of significance in this aesthetic context, whose works also functioned as important vehicles for developments in Italian film music. Befitting the period settings and aristocratic fixation that marked his films, music in Visconti's work involves extensive citation of classical pieces, especially Verdi's operas and works by other High Romantic composers. Placement, function, and provenance

of this material often engenders an operatic quality in Visconti's films (Premuda 1995), and while a continued reliance on operatic precedent may suggest a degree of conservativism, his more deliberate cinematic engagement with the medium, which could more simply be identified in his general recognition and exploitation of music's narrative potential, yielded a more complex, engaged *commento musicale.* This was usually supplied again by Rota, whose innate compositional disposition accorded with these sensibilities, almost as audibly in, say, the contemporary drama *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960) as in *Senso* (1954), partially set in an opera house and featuring arrangements of Bruckner's symphonic music. Fellini's passionate if ambivalent perspective towards opera (Costantini 1995, 119–20) may have influenced his peculiar amplifications of the dramaturgical mechanics of music, which in his cinema would cause Rota's scores not only to assume the substance of an active player, but also to firmly symbolise characters and motifs, and directly trigger and steer events in the plot from an ambiguous narrational locus. This was never more acute than in *La strada* (1954).

Antonioni's work, meanwhile, is probably the most noteworthy outlet for the music of Giovanni Fusco, whom D'Onofrio positions next to Rota as the composer who most powerfully contributed 'to the definition of a new concept in Italian film music' (2017, 384–5). Like Rota, Fusco's language was grounded in nineteenth-century forms. His willingness to experiment demonstrated a lack of prejudice towards film composition, and his music was definitively implemented almost as a recurring protagonist through a lasting partnership with one director. From *Cronaca di un amore* (1950) through Antonioni's lauded 1960–2 trilogy – *L'avventura* (1960), *La notte* (1961), *L'eclisse* (1962) – and beyond, Fusco imbued Antonioni's cinema with atmospheric soundworlds, typically generated by reduced, often solo forces prioritising colour within sparse textures. One of Morricone's earliest professional engagements in film composition (he would play trumpet in orchestras from the 1940s) involved orchestrating Fusco's music. This work lasted several years, from 1955 until *L'avventura* at the earliest (Miceli 2021 [1994], 111–2). It is tempting to speculate as to the influence of this important colleague of Morricone's.

Federico Savina outlines the composer's role in the Italian filmmaking process during this time, revealing that a score's composition, recording, and production was a complicated operation that included numerous individuals and phases, and that collaborative discussions regarding music often began as early as the screenwriting process (2014–5, 43). While the former condition may ostensibly dilute the composer's creative input, the latter suggests a growing appreciation accorded music in the development process, which – permitted by the enduring technical idiosyncrasy of recording and incorporating all sound in postproduction – inspired directors such as Fellini, Visconti, and later Leone to play pre-recorded music on set where possible to engender ambience and guide the actors' performances.

Moreover, despite such restrictions, not to mention those that prioritised commercial viability and therefore tried-and-tested conventions, composers were still enterprising in their activity. Two such figures in the popular arena are Mario Nascimbene and Angelo Francesco Lavagnino, to both of whom Morricone can be connected. Nascimbene rose to international

prominence in the 1950s, scoring many of the more prestigious features during the period of co-production with American studios, alongside films in a wide range of popular genres. He displayed a propensity for unorthodox instruments and bizarre non-instrumental timbres, often utilising real-life sounds like clocks and bicycle bells. His music for the epic *Barabba* (dir. Richard Fleischer, 1961) is exemplary in this regard, utilising the 'mixerama', a device he helped design and by which he generated surreal electroacoustic effects (D'Onofrio 2017, 384). Morricone worked alongside Nascimbene to produce a supplementary version of the main-title cue for the *Barabba* soundtrack recording (Ex. 2.1 below), back to which certain characteristics of his western film music can be drawn. Lavagnino's career followed a similar trajectory to that of Nascimbene, though he did not manage to court Hollywood producers to the same extent. He, too, developed a taste for timbral and idiomatic blending. Ermanno Comuzio even points out that ethnomusicological research distinguishes several of his 1950s film scores (1980, 57); such engagement with regional folklore echoes certain aspects of Rota's music. Lavagnino also composed music for Leone's first two directorial efforts, *Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei* (1959; uncredited) and *Il colosso di Rodi* (1961), the sole entries in his filmography Morricone did not score.

The 1960s ushered in a new era for the Italian film industry and its musicians. Factors including the decline of Rome's status as an international filmmaking hub, the fall of the peplum, and the crisis triggered by the growth of television fostered the financial imperative to find new *filoni.* As has been shown, these cycles were fundamentally timed, shaped, and funded in response to audience preferences, and as audiences grew larger, more diverse, and more modern in step with societal shifts, the industry responded by diversifying the generic palette: the western, the *giallo*, the spy film, the *poliziottesco*. These shifts of course extended to music, as composers tailored their methods to genres that acquired distinct aural identities. Such individuals became regarded as *specialisti*, revered for their flexibility and readiness to innovate as they rose to fresh challenges. 'Multiplication of this articulated "underworld" stimulated film music composers to specialize and develop new formal canons … and to draw with no prejudice from all kinds of influences, not only musical' (2017, 385).

Musical tastes themselves were changing; while the canzonette featured in *musicarelli* appealed to a conservative middle class, many Italians, particularly among the youth, tuned in to contemporary pop, rock, and jazz from the 1950s onwards. The approach adopted by many *specialisti*, guided by those tastes, evolved in tandem. Composers drew on a wider musical vocabulary, and designed scores with the increasingly pressing parameters of commercial soundtrack recordings in mind, reflecting the contemporaneous upheaval in the landscape of popular music. Despite his protestations (below, p. 87), there are few better places to look for evidence of this than the work of Morricone, pin-up of the *specialisti*. A range of 1960s genres were shaped by his experiments with such idioms, none more famously than the western.

2. Charting Morricone's West

This chapter explores the topography of Morricone's music for westerns, presenting the present study's core filmography, and situating it in relation to his biography and to the evolution of the Italian western. Its purpose is to expose prominent characteristics and themes distinguishing that body of work, and to initiate pertinent lines of enquiry continued later in the thesis. By offering an expositional survey of those works, broadly conducted in accordance with chronology, it also clarifies and justifies the exact boundary of the subject area, which can be complicated by generic definitions and questions of musical authorship.

Relevant developments in Morricone's education and early career are traced first, and his acquaintance with the western is introduced in this context. This period witnessed the emergence of creative tendencies, principles, and tensions fundamental to his compositional activity, which exerted a powerful bearing on discourse pertaining to his work. As noted previously, such tensions have been repeatedly rationalised as dichotomies, mapped by commentators and by Morricone himself on to his practice. Examples include avant-garde–commerce (Hausmann 2008), emotion–reason (Manuceau 2020), and *assoluta–applicata* (Morricone 2016, 69). From the emergence of these polarities, one can begin to chart the development of his music for westerns.

Beginnings

Sergio Miceli was pointed out that divisions in Morricone's practice manifested early on when, in the 1940s, the adolescent composer was studying trumpet by day at Conservatorio Santa Cecilia, and substituting for his father, also a trumpeter, at dance-band gigs by night

(Miceli 2021 [1994], 47–8). At this point Morricone the younger was already aspiring to writing over performance, opting to pursue composition after obtaining his instrumental diploma in 1946, aged eighteen; from then until 1954 studies were carried out under the tutelage of Goffredo Petrassi. Despite the creative nourishment this learning environment offered, however, Morricone found the conservatory tradition constrictive, unable to provide him with the practical, apprenticeship-like training he sought. Miceli posits that this desire was rooted in a predisposition for ethical incentives as opposed to abstract aesthetic ideals, stemming from the influence of Morricone senior and a 'proletarian' background (Miceli 2021 [1994], 47–50).

The financial implications of this question became ever more apparent and pressing as the need emerged in the later 1950s for the composer to support a growing family. Petrassi's own inclinations regarding composition for the popular industries exacerbated the tension further. Of most note is Petrassi's typically derogatory stance on composing for film. Like numerous Italian composers before him who possessed connections to academic institutions, Petrassi himself had resorted to writing film music with reluctance, and was not the first to justify the degradation by foreswearing any attempt to create material of originality or artistic merit. Celebrated for his part in detaching the Italian classical tradition from the protracted legacy of *verismo*, Petrassi embraced in the 1930s various musical innovations of the early twentieth century, practising first and perhaps most significantly Neoclassicism, as well as post-tonality in the mould of Stravinsky and Bartók, and, later, atonality and serialism. It is possible to trace this stylistic evolution in his eight concerti for orchestra (1934–72), among the most important works in his oeuvre. Morricone tackled the form in his own *Concerto per orchestra* (1957), demonstrating the influence of Petrassi, its dedicatee, through musical allusions to his instructive compositions (Sciannameo 2020, 14–22).

At any rate, it is unsurprising that Morricone neglected to inform his mentor about many of his initial professional engagements as a composer outside the concert hall: writing and arranging music for radio, and composing and performing music for musical and dramatic theatre – as he continued to write for Petrassi's class. This friction endured until the end of Morricone's studies. Thereafter Morricone was permitted to divide himself between the two creative arenas, and resolved to sustain parallel efforts in both as a jobbing composer and an independent artist. The seemingly healthy co-existence of endeavours in the ensuing years is revealing; Morricone worked tirelessly and flexibly, and continued to acquire experience in different capacities, orchestrating film music (the previously mentioned work with Fusco) and arranging popular songs in the ascendant Italian recording industry. The latter constitutes his most important work of the period. It enhanced his stature greatly and was an important outlet for experimental impulses. Still, Morricone maintained interest and engagement in the art-music spheres, demonstrated by his prolificacy in these years and attendance at the 1958 Darmstadt *Ferienkurse*, where Nono's music and Cage's theatrics left a lasting impression. Here, Morricone gained awareness of wider developments in music and the rapidly moving frontier of the avant-garde. As Miceli saw it, this watershed visit facilitated the composer's gradual but significant emancipation from Petrassi's school, catalysing a lasting shift of focus

away from the technical mastery of form, orchestration, and contrapuntal writing, and towards such concerns as the reduction of materials, the sonic and colouristic treatment of music, and the social responsibility of art (2021 [1994], 55–7).

Morricone's deliberately cultivated versatility precipitated a characteristic eclecticism that marked not only his occupational endeavours but also his compositional style – as will be shown in the context of the western scores. Miceli alludes to this condition when he attests to the interdependence of the composer's efforts in various arenas at this time, observable in the crossing-over of techniques and styles and reappropriation of his own materials (2021 [1994], 54–5). This circumstance endured until the mid-1960s, at which point the deluge of film-score commissions overwhelmed other compositional channels and forced Morricone to pursue practical variety within a reduced vocational scope. At the turn of the 1960s, however, multifariousness remained definitive of Morricone's practice. The television show *Piccolo Concerto* (1961–2) is exemplary in this regard, being both microcosmic of this condition and noteworthy as regards the inception of Morricone's western film music. This musical-variety series, produced by public broadcast service Rai (Radiotelevisione italiana), assumed an imaginative format in the context of surging small-screen ownership in Italy, featuring performances of myriad musical content – *canzoni*, folk tunes, musical numbers – arranged for a reduced stage orchestra which usually supported celebrity instrumentalists and vocalists. Morricone, whose daring studio arrangements for RCA Victor were attracting attention and repute at this time, was recruited to assemble and conduct the repertoire. In his plentiful, successful work for the label, Morricone continuously strived, as he put it, to 'break the rules of the craft', to indulge in experimentation as well as accessibility – even if his motivation for this was fuelled by a simple desire to alleviate the tedium of the work (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 10). It is certainly possible to observe this as work in his work on *Piccolo Concerto*, testifying to the cohesiveness of his practice. For Sciannameo (2020, 34), the show was a creative crucible, an 'ideal laboratory for experimenting with … bizarre arrangements', presented as entertainment with a touch of intellect. It functioned as a platform for Morricone's resourcefulness, through which he could acquaint himself with a diversity of idioms, exercise fusions, and probe ideas with an orchestra at his disposal.

As stated, the show also hosted Morricone's first purposeful engagements with concepts and forms associated with the western, if in a non-cinematic setting. That these engagements occurred during a time of expansive activity offers the first indication of the status of western composition in the context of his career: stimulated ultimately by practical industry necessity, this music emerged as, and would remain, one dimension of a far broader occupation, with other aspects of which it nonetheless interacted. Furthermore, these arrangements themselves had differing ramifications for Morricone's film music. Some items merely introduced him to the concept of the West, others anticipated later work, while others still were recycled in subsequent scores. First, the selection comprises several adaptations of pre-existing western film music, including instrumental arrangements of material from *Blowing Wild* (dir. Hugo Fregonese, 1953; music by Tiomkin) and *The Magnificent Seven*, and the aforementioned 'Degüello', incorporated into Tiomkin's scores for *Rio Bravo* and *The Alamo.* In addition to a

vocal arrangement of ‘The Ballad of High Noon’, all these instances bar one represent Morricone’s direct handling of western music by Tiomkin.

Three more items are noteworthy, the first two of which are a traditional ‘Square Dance’ and another vocal adaptation, of the popular western ballad ‘Ghost Riders in the Sky’, written by Stan Jones in 1948. Evidencing basic treatment of old-time idioms, the dance was reused in *Per un pugno di dollari*, and the composer would revisit the form in later films. As for ‘Ghost Riders’, based on the popular Civil War-era song ‘Johnny Comes Marching Home’ (likely based in turn on a folk tune; Lighter 2012), beyond its strong association with cowboy culture it bears more than a passing resemblance to standard melodic and harmonic patterns implemented in Morricone’s western film music. This kinship was recognised as early as 1967 by critic Bosley Crowther in his review of *Per un pugno* for the *New York Times* (1967, 24). Two popular instrumental interpretations of the song were incidentally released in 1961, one by the Ramrods, the other by Lawrence Welk and His Orchestra, featuring Neil Levang on electric guitar. Both are strikingly prophetic of Morricone’s later scores, courtesy of their instrumentation.

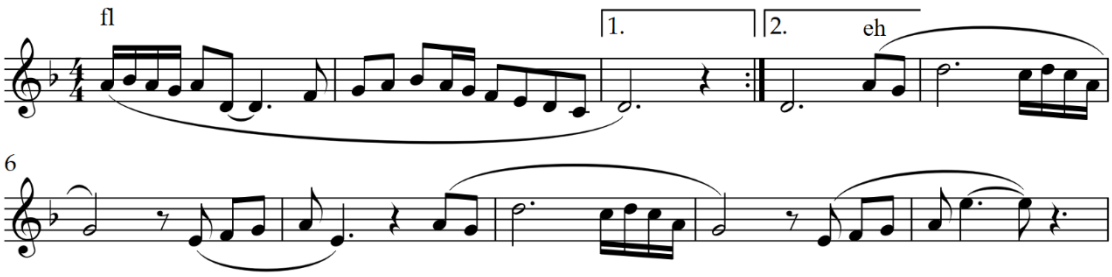
The third is doubtless the most important piece of this kind that featured in the series: the song ‘Pastures of Plenty’, a reworking of the 1941 original by Woody Guthrie, itself based on the folk-song ‘Pretty Polly’ (Gold 1998, 90). A performance of ‘Pastures’ by singer Peter Tevis – a Californian expatriate who collaborated with Morricone on *Piccolo Concerto* and in the RCA studio – featured in the broadcast of 28 February 1962, and a recording by Tevis and Morricone was also released as the A-side of an RCA single the same year (Tevis, 1962). Beyond the retention of words, sentiment, and general melodic contour, the Morricone–Tevis version of ‘Pastures’ departed from Guthrie’s original, aptly demonstrating the experimental flair that Morricone brought to popular-song arrangements. It inhabits a distinctive soundworld. Its thin texture moves through minor-key triadic harmonies, it features modal melodies, and is populated by the vivid colours of an unlikely ensemble of instruments: nylon-string guitar, men’s chorus, recorder, strings, and percussion comprising drums, whip, bell, and anvil. These attributes make ‘Pastures’ the closest thing to a musical progenitor of the composer’s characteristic western vernacular. The significance of this, however, remained unrealised until 1964, when the arrangement was brought to Leone’s attention. Mesmerised by the soundworld but displeased by Tevis’ vocal presence (both on the recording and in the two western scores Morricone had completed by this time), he requested that the composer retrieve a master excluding the singer’s part. The whistled melody and additional electric guitar of regular collaborator Alessandro Alessandroni was overlaid, and the title music of *Per un pugno* was born (Frayling 2000, 155–6).

That re-recorded versions of ‘Ghost Riders’ and ‘The Ballad of High Noon’ were released, along with an assortment of western-themed songs – some of which are associated with classic westerns – on an RCA album by Tevis (1965), is testament to Miceli’s assertion of the entwinement of Morricone’s creative endeavours (see also Cumbow 2008 [1987], 189–90). Sciannameo (2020, 39) alludes to this phenomenon when he writes of the ‘polyvalence’

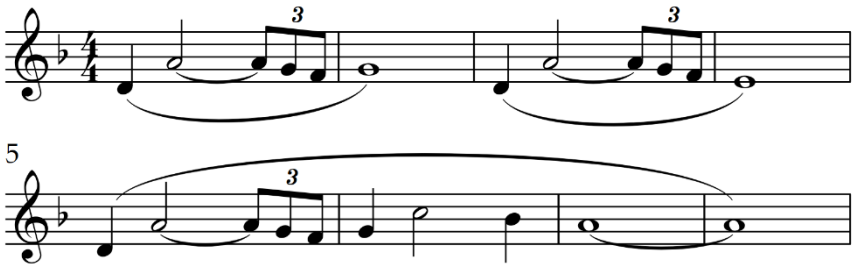
of Morricone's practice, demonstrated by the abundance of songs premiered on *Piccolo Concerto* that appeared on later RCA compilations – Tevis' songs were not the only ones so repurposed. While this is standard Morriconian practice, it is also a natural response to challenges faced by a busy composer working in multiple fields. One might even say it is typical of the industry; Rota is another prolific figure for whom recycling became something of a signature (Dyer 2010, 4–19). At any rate, none of the songs on Tevis' album, in the final analysis an orthodox collection of western ballads, rivals the originality of 'Pastures' (which does not in fact appear on the album, all but certainly due to the fact that the starkly similar *Per un pugno* title music does). Nevertheless, the significance of the record resides in the evidence it provides of Morricone's awareness of, and on-brand engagement with, the American tradition of western film music, particularly Tiomkin's. It should be noted that the album also includes the themes from Morricone's first two westerns, 'A Gringo Like Me' from *Duello nel Texas* (Dicky Jones' interpretation features in the film) and 'Lonesome Billy' from *Le pistole non discutono*.

Alongside works like 'Pastures' and 'Square Dance' that would wind up in future westerns, another work dating to this period also laid groundwork for later film scores. Unlike those examples, however, this music was conceived entirely without association with the genre, which undermines assertions that there is something innately and definitively 'western' about either the construction of these specific ideas or any distinctive attributes they possess. Sciannameo (2020, 47) identifies a supplementary arrangement by Morricone of Nascimbene's theme music for *Barabba* (Ex. 2.1 below) as a work in which various characteristics of his western-genre music originate. Absent from the film but included on the Italian and American commercial soundtrack pressings (Nascimbene 1962a; 1962b), the piece elaborates Nascimbene's Kyrie-inspired melody within the insistent rhythmic framework of a bolero. Compositional traits such as the florid treatment of a sweeping modal theme, gradual heightening of dynamics and textural density, repetition of diatonic chord cycles, and prominence of choral voices and wind instruments – especially the cor anglais and trumpet – strikingly pre-empt the language employed by Morricone for gunfight cues. A comparison between the *Barabba* arrangement and 'L'arena' from *Il mercenario*, appearing seven years later, illustrates the point.

The eponymously titled cue from *Per un pugno di dollari*, which first accompanies the hostage exchange, and secondly introduces the final shootout, derives from another, earlier composition. As per the instruction given by Leone to Morricone, the melody for these sequences was to closely emulate Tiomkin's 'Degüello', from *Rio Bravo*. For this assignment Morricone repurposed a tune (Ex. 2.2) he wrote for a 1962 television adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's play *The Moon of the Caribbees* (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 24). Exceeding mere incidental music, the melody, sung in the adaptation by African-American vocalist Edith Peters, represents the ethereal lullaby of a West Indian character, who, in a somewhat exoticist conceit on O'Neill's part, enchants white sailors anchored off the shore of a Caribbean island (Holton 1995).



Example 2.1 Nascimbene's main theme from *Barabba*, arr. Morricone. (For a list of instrumental abbreviations, see Appendix Three. All transcriptions are at sounding pitch and, unless otherwise stated, by the author. Some may appear to be in the wrong key, owing to pitch alterations that can occur in the transfer of analogue soundtracks to DVDs due to discrepancies in video frame rates. In such cases keys are transposed down a semitone to adhere to the original sounding.)



Example 2.2 The melody originally composed as the *Caribbees* lullaby, which also forms the basis of 'Per un pugno di dollari'. Transcribed from Morricone's autograph notation (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 25).

It is curious to think that this cue, prominently implemented in two key scenes of *Per un pugno*, spawning a popular single (Morricone 1964) and remaining a stylistic touchstone for Morricone and others in Italian-western composition, was created with such contrasting connotations. Of course this music, hand-in-hand with 'Pastures', was adapted to comply with its new generic backdrop, but this genealogy once again subverts any proclamation that connotations of the western stem from inherent formal qualities. Rather, such material fulfilled a complementary musical potential recognised by Morricone when he chose to reuse it, and only then by association did it acquire its quintessential character. It is apparent that these early works involved a degree of deliberate engagement with music connected to the West, especially as scored by Tiomkin, and that they predate Morricone's acquaintance with the film genre. The import of this last point is magnified by the reality that the foundational

material of *Per un pugno*, his pivotal score as regards the consolidation of a generic style, entailed the use of unoriginal material.

Transition to cinema and the genesis of the Italian western

With several years of experience as an orchestrator behind him, Morricone was first commissioned to compose a feature-film score in 1961 by director Luciano Salce, with whom the composer had previously worked in revue theatre and popular-song arrangement. But Salce was also a filmmaker, directing four of the eight features Morricone scored before *Duello nel Texas.* Producers twice had vetoed Salce's decision to recruit the unproven film composer before the partnership was rubber-stamped for *Il federale*, a satire. The film's ironic treatment of political themes presented an opportunity for compositional flair, seized by Morricone in a score that parodies militaristic music through misplaced rhythmic emphases and inappropriate dissonances. Salce's comedies *La voglia matta*, *La cuccagna* (both 1962), and *Le monachine* (1963) – all scored by the composer – would follow.

Idiomatic interplay, popular-music forms, implementation of unusual instrumentation, and humour are distinguishing features of these early scores, and these observations can be extended to the rest of Morricone's pre-western output. 1962 comedies *I motorizzati* and *Diciottenni al sole* (dir. Camillo Mastrocinque), and *Il successo* (dir. Mauro Morassi, 1963), another comedy, extensively feature popular music ranging from surf rock to bossa nova, for which Morricone leaned heavily on his arranging experience. Only Lina Wertmüller's drama *I basilischi* (1963) invited a more earnest and essentially classical approach at this time. The working relationship with Salce was unquestionably the most significant of the period. Morricone later said that the director taught him to 'approach every type of job … including the most frivolous, with the highest professionalism' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 22). Upon hearing Morricone's music for Leone, however, Salce terminated the collaboration, concluding that the composer was not an author of comic music, but a 'sacral' artist. In retrospect Morricone agreed, despite feeling he had closely attuned to the director's sensibilities, a task he considered of equal importance in film composition as writing music appropriate to context, to the artist's own needs, and to audience expectations (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 19–22; Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 4–5).

I motorizzati was co-produced by Roman company Jolly Film. Its co-founders were Arrigo Colombo and Giorgio Papi, and their drafting of Morricone for this picture heralded the beginning of the most formative business relationship in the remit of the composer's relationship with the western. In 1963, Jolly would co-produce *Duello nel Texas*, the first major Italian contribution to the expanding Eurowestern movement, and Morricone's maiden score in the genre. As employees of Jolly, many of these individuals, including Morricone, would work on two more westerns, *Le pistole non discutono* and *Per un pugno.* In the wake of the latter's momentous release, some of them became key figures in the filmmaking team spearheaded by Leone, whose skyrocketing status quickly courted the attention of more

prestigious backers. The director gladly aborted his brief, largely unsatisfactory affiliation with Colombo and Papi, but Morricone would score two more of their co-produced westerns: *Sette pistole per i MacGregor* (1966) and a sequel, *Sette donne per i MacGregor* (1967), directed by Franco Giraldi under the pseudonym 'Frank Garfield'.

As two of the earliest Italian westerns, *Duello* and *Le pistole* serve the industry expedient of feigning American provenance. The anglicisation of directorial credits – as with Giraldi – and those of crew members is most indicative of these intentions. Even so, certain attributes distinguish these films from American counterparts, and are prescient with an eye to Italian-western hallmarks. Despite the quite liberal basis of *Le pistole*, for example, on the mythical saga of Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid, the films tell simple tales of revenge and law-and-order, with clear emphasis on action – the staged gunfight in *Duello* being especially striking in this last respect. Prospective frontier settlements are also exchanged for Hispanic border towns in a geo-cultural shift southwards typical of early Eurowesterns, a move rooted in a pragmatic response to the realities of European production. Caiano himself, also an uncredited co-director of *Duello*, alludes to this in comments on Spain's suitability as a filming location, mentioning its architectural and scenic affinity with Mexico, as well as the presence of gypsy communities adept at horse-riding (Giusti 2007, 166–8; Grant 2013, 18). He also alludes to ethnic connections between the nations, which enabled Spanish performers to assume the roles of individuals living in this territory, a principle that Italian producers did not hesitate to extend to their acting compatriots.

Morricone's name was another to be substituted by a pseudonym in *Duello* and *Le pistole*. Indeed, two that he utilised appear alongside one another in both; music is credited to 'Dan Savio' and conducting to 'Leo Nichols' (see Fig. 2.1 below). Morricone had ulterior motives for this: while he acknowledged Papi and Colombo's wish for the film to seem American-made, anonymity was in his interest, too, in light of his good repute as an arranger. Film composition per se was scorned by the musical elite, but westerns – the epitome of the formulaic genre film – represented the nadir of artistic integrity (Tornatore 2021, 36:40). In time, however, the perceived need for deception gradually vanished. The Italian western's indigenousness became a source of pride and ironically a marker of authenticity; homegrown names were something to flaunt, not conceal. The Morricone moniker moreover became a commercial asset as his celebrity soared after the success of *Per un pugno*, which he scored as Savio for director 'Bob Robertson'.

The first two scores to Savio's name donned an American disguise with only partial success. Their derivativeness was intentional; Papi and Colombo explicitly commissioned from Morricone 'a watered-down version of Dimitri Tiomkin' (Morricone, quoted in Frayling 2000, 151). As has been demonstrated, the composer was experienced at emulating Tiomkin, and in certain respects these early scores are reminiscent of the latter's work. The inclusion of a theme song in both films honours that famous pioneer of western ballads. Curiously, the main theme of *Duello*, 'A Gringo Like Me', is more in the Moross–Bernstein idiomatic mould – even though songs are not at all associated with that duo – but 'Lonesome Billy' of

Le pistole has great affinity with Tiomkin. The foregrounding of folk instruments in the orchestration evokes that composer's idiosyncrasies, and several unaccompanied cues for such instruments are likewise distinctive. A similar mechanism is at play with regard to Morricone's adoption of Hispanic instruments and idioms. Although this kind of engagement marks Tiomkin's work from *Duel in the Sun* through *The Alamo*, these decisions by Morricone presage later, deeper engagement with these traditions.

Figure 2.1 Morricone's pseudonyms in the credits of *Duello nel Texas*. All but reserved for westerns, they were first dispensed with for *Una pistola per Ringo* but continued to appear sporadically until 1967's *I crudeli*. Remastered editions of *Per un pugno* still credit music to Dan Savio.

Leone's *Per un pugno di dollari*, produced back-to-back with *Le pistole* as the lower-budget bottom-half of a double feature, astronomically overwhelmed its modest expectations. Papi and Colombo decided to invest upon reading the director's screenplay, whose basis and authorship has been the subject of much conjecture. Suffice to note that Morricone's would-be collaborator Duccio Tessari was a significant co-writer, and that the primary source material, which Leone opaquely adapted – unlawfully, as it turned out – was Kurosawa's *Yojimbo.* The producers screened *Duello* to an unimpressed Leone, who took a dislike to Morricone's music in particular; the director wanted to bring on board Angelo Francesco Lavagnino, who had written music for his peplum debut, *Il colosso di Rodi*, but the producers insisted he pay a visit to their inhouse man. Founded on an immediate mutual connection as well as the serendipitous discovery that they were one-time schoolmates, the two-decade-long collaboration between Leone and Morricone began (Frayling 2000, 151–7).

Strong aesthetic alignment was instantly evident in their exchange, as revealed by Morricone's later recollections. They initiated a dialogue, the depth of which eclipsed that of any other he had previously established with a director, concerning not only the immediate course that the project at hand was to take but also more fundamental principles to do with the form and function of film music. The two men expressed their mutual distaste for the scores Jolly had requisitioned from Morricone, and were in agreement that the music of *Per un pugno* was not to be 'inspired in any way by the American Western', the gravest misstep of which was the 'symphonic' over-orchestration of pastoral folk melodies, creating an auditory clash with the genre's naturalistic sound effects. In their identification of that sensuously and dramaturgically problematic result, one can ascertain a desire to pursue greater realism. In sentiments contemplated in more detail below, Morricone reflects on their decision to implement a musical solution that engendered more faithfully a sonic experience of the frontier. Legitimising the music in this fashion would then, he reasoned, facilitate their vision for an integrated multimedia dynamic that exhibited 'interaction between music, sound and visual images' in which 'each silence and each sound of any kind … [has] a *raison d'être*' (Morricone quoted in Frayling 2000, 150–6).

The present study shall reflect on these mission statements, most pressingly arguing against the absolute subversion of American-western music. It is also posited that these objectives were fulfilled with incomplete success within Leone's filmography, and that despite the significant influence of his work on the imminent western *filone*, Leone was but one agent in this wider, ongoing process. Finally, there is the possibility that subsequent emphasis on Leone and on the collaborative relationship itself may have exaggerated the detail and importance of these early discussions. The protraction of their partnership could have muddied the waters in retrospect, too. It is easy to allow the stylistic continuity of the 'Dollars' trilogy – so often automatically extended to the entire Italian-western movement – to nurture the impression that the scheme of a new film-music language was established at this point. However, such a perspective overlooks the development that occurred in these years within the context of Morricone's and Leone's collaboration, as well as the contribution of the composer's experiences with other filmmakers.

There can be no doubt that the idiosyncratic music of *Per un pugno* is immediately reflective of a radical film-music manifesto corresponding to Morricone's aforesaid declarations. The music track is fragmented and spacious, notably discarding the conventional sung title theme. Its amalgamation of instrumental forces is unorthodox, distinctive, and sensitive to the period and landscape of the fiction – and the clearest exception to that (electric guitar) is pointedly contemporary. Colours are brash and piercing, and the conspicuity of the score is heightened by synchronous interjections and extended set-piece sequences in which musical lyricism combines with stylised visual rhetoric to intensify dramatic affect.

Many of these features would remain musical tropes of Leone's cinema and mark the wider genre, but some were pre-existing, having manifested in music with wester-genre

associations that Morricone had previously composed. The entire soundworld of the *Per un pugno* score stems from 'Pastures of Plenty', for one. It has been noted that on hearing the recording, Leone asked Morricone if he could secure a master that omitted Tevis' vocals, the crooning western-ballad style being the focus of the director's ire; canny studio operator that he was, Morricone had kept such a version. But for the substitution of Tevis' part for a new melody shared by Alessandroni's quietly revolutionary whistling and electric guitar, the film's eventual title music, 'Titoli', is otherwise identical to the original arrangement. Moreover, an abundance of the score's material stems from that composition: the full melody is recapitulated numerous times; motivic and structural segments are extracted and reworked; the recorder-quintuplet gesture, an aural marker that characterises Clint Eastwood's protagonist, is plucked directly from the supportive texture; and the score in its entirety utilises instrumentation fundamentally based on that which Morricone selected when arranging 'Pastures'.

That the score's second-most prominent cue, 'Per un pugno di dollari', which appears twice in different arrangements, was also constructed using pre-existing material is also significant – despite the lack of association with the western in its conception. That decision itself was motivated by Leone's insistence that the 'Degüello' be included. Avowedly uncomfortable with plagiarism, Morricone elected to revamp the *Caribbees* lullaby, but the process underlying the development of this consequential cue involved concerted and continued engagement with the music of Tiomkin, and thus with western-genre precedent. That this large-scale repurposing of material (to which the 'Square Dance' can be lastly added) suggests that Morricone did not go to extraordinary effort to produce material for a project he may not have perceived as exceptional; he could scarcely have foreseen the remarkable impact it would make. Even so, the fact that Morricone called extensively on extant compositions is noteworthy for its indication of Leone's more prescriptive, hands-on approach, a natural enough consequence of his recognition of music's cinematic potential. After Morricone had proved his credentials, he was understandably awarded greater freedom by Leone and others, but this approach nonetheless anticipated the magnified focus on music – in product and, usually, in production – that would characterise his experience scoring Italian westerns.

Lastly, Morricone's earlier arrangement of 'Pastures' entailed an extant attempt to exercise a realistic musical depiction of the West. His professed attempt to convey the solitude of life in a desolate and unforgiving natural landscape, by emulating the aural experience of that environment, demonstrates a musical responsiveness to textual content and vocal timbre that he routinely exercised in his arranging work, which could be traced as far back as his exposure to Nono at Darmstadt (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016] 25; Miceli 2021 [1994], 59–61). However, the extensive formal concessions that he made to the commercial viability of *Per un pugno*'s music, effectively active from the moment 'Pastures' was utilised, problematise these suggestions (Smith 1998, 133–41). This populism, working in conjunction which the prevailing eccentricity of these compositional decisions (which in Cooke's analysis are the two most significant features of Morricone's western film music;

2008, 371–6), serves to undercut any appeal to realism; in short, there is nothing remotely 'realistic' about an electric guitar. Advocations for greater realism are pervasive in Italian-western commentary, and are further interrogated below.

The Italian-western rush

Much was changed after the triumphant September screening of *Per un pugno* in a modest Florentine picture house. The Italian critical reception was mixed; the film's entertainment value and maturer handling of generic themes were praised (see Castellani 1965), but the excessive bloodshed frequently came under fire (Giusti 2007, 356–71). Crucially, *Per un pugno* proved wildly popular with audiences both domestic and European, and the Cinecittà machinery set to work on the new *filone*, though this activity would not be reflected in the quantity of westerns that made it to Italian cinema screens until 1966; only 31 were released in 1965, one fewer than in 1964 (Fisher 2011, 224). Many were imitative of Leone's formula: *Un dollaro bucato* (dir. Giorgio Ferroni) was one of numerous films that sought to cash in on the 'dollar' tag. Several directors who would be major figures in the genre also asserted themselves more distinctly. *Minnesota Clay*, the second western directed by Sergio Corbucci (who was also involved in the treatment of the *Per un pugno* screenplay, and with whom Morricone would collaborate most frequently in the genre), was released two months after *Per un pugno*, and six after his western debut, *Massacro al Grande Canyon.*

Things likewise changed for Morricone, if neither immediately nor drastically. The quantity of film music that he produced in 1965 (twelve scores, two of which were co-written, and a title song) scarcely exceeded that of the previous year, and of the 31 westerns, he scored just three: Tessari's duology, comprising *Una pistola per Ringo* and *Il ritorno di Ringo,* and the sequel to *Per un pugno*, *Per qualche dollaro in più.* This relatively small output of music in general and western scores in particular can be explained by Morricone's ongoing activities as an arranger and the gradual establishment and acceleration of the *filone.* His continued use of pseudonyms deflected some attention, but his receipt of the *Nastro d'argento* award for Best Score for *Per un pugno* greatly boosted his profile. That the single featuring that film's music topped the domestic charts in the film-soundtrack category boosted this publicity (Smith 1998, 135). Morricone, who was already in the process of consolidating his reputation among the film-genre *specialisti*, was at once proclaimed *the* western composer and courted by esteemed arthouse filmmakers outside the Roman sphere, such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Gillo Pontecorvo.

Another associate of Leone's, Tessari was also involved with *Per un pugno* as a significant contributor to the screenplay. He was already a respected industry figure, and is considered another founding father of the Italian western. For Kevin Grant, Tessari's two 'Ringo' films, produced back-to-back in Spain with all but identical cast and crew, provided reassuring proof in the genre's ascendancy that 'more than just Leone imitators [were] waiting in the wings' (2013, 236). Just as Tessari eschewed idle mimicry of *Per un pugno*,

his composer distanced himself from his own precedent in the 'Ringo' scores, which offered little indication that the music for *Per un pugno* was to serve as such a touchstone for both Morricone himself and his composing colleagues. Although Tessari's work exhibited a sardonic, myth-debunking streak similar to Leone's, his lighter and more ironic touch left room for respectful tribute to American classics in which he was well versed. The 'Ringo' films are distinguished by such co-existence of parody and homage, mirrored astutely in music that hybridises elements of traditional Americana that marked the first Jolly scores, and the more radical idiomatic and dramaturgical features of *Per un pugno.* Prophetic instances of stylistic diversification also feature, including the familiar use of ragtime in *Una pistola per Ringo* and concerted engagement with Mexican idioms in both films.

Morricone's music for Tessari's westerns is most remarkable for the recurrent obfuscation of narrational placement. In several cases (as when the performers of an apparently nondiegetic cue ride into shot on the back of a cart in *Una pistola*; Fig. 2.2) this amounts to little more than humorous subversion of expectations. In *Il ritorno di Ringo*, however, such techniques form part of a more coherent scoring solution that establishes an important rapport with that film's epic source material and moreover with the western's roots in mythic storytelling. As two of the highest-grossing pictures of 1965 (Giusti 2007, 437), the 'Ringo' films were also imitated en masse. Numerous 'sequels' and spin-offs emerged whose claim to Tessari's originals lay solely in the titular inclusion of the hero's name. (This typical exploitation strategy was soon eclipsed by the furore over Corbucci's *Django* (1966)). Despite directing several more westerns of reasonable note, Tessari only collaborated with Morricone as a director on one further occasion, for the comedy *Forza "G"* (1972).

Figure 2.2 In *Una pistola per Ringo*, a cue is briefly presented in an apparently nondiegetic capacity, only for that designation to be undercut by the emergence of musicians – a time-honoured film-music gag.

Leone's second western, *Per qualche dollaro in più*, was released in December 1965. The keenly anticipated appearance of the first 'Dollars' follow-up, which broke the standing box-office record by a factor of three – and in 1967 became the highest-grossing film of any nationality in the history of Italian cinema – ignited the Italian-western surge, contributing to a restructure of the entire industry (Frayling 2000, 201). Ground for this was prepared by the passing of the *legge Corona* earlier in the year, with legislation entailing improved subsidies for international co-operation and rebates for films failing to make a profit. Leone's success then triggered a deluge in co-productions, widespread re-establishment of offices for Hollywood firms in Italy, and the sudden appearance of countless minor production companies making features destined for *terza visione* – many of them westerns (Frayling 2000, 199–201; Smith 1998, 135). *Per qualche dollaro* also proved momentous for the genre as a text, signalling the maturation of Leone's 'Dollars' style, cementing the bounty hunter as a stock antihero, establishing Lee Van Cleef as a generic mainstay, and so on.

It broke musical ground accordingly. Leone and Morricone were dissatisfied with the cine-musical results of *Per un pugno* (in fact, the composer denounced the score as one of his worst), and identified potential for far closer, more meaningful musical interaction in their follow-up (Frayling 2000, 194; Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 27). Idiosyncrasies of the *Per un pugno* music are certainly reinforced, to the point of caricature, but, transcending the effective miscellany of the prequel's source material, and with more funds at his disposal, Morricone was in a position to refine and articulate afresh a more mature and cohesive scoring language within a soundtrack of greater ambition. The music looms larger in *Per qualche dollaro*, exhibits a more integrated thematic plan, is more deftly integrated into the overall sound design, and characterises with heightened nuance.

By far the most significant innovations, however, concern the narrative integration of music and the implementation of transdiegetic musical movement. Given more time to prepare for their second project – Morricone started writing before seeing the screenplay, but the turnaround was still too short to realise their professed ideal of pre-recording music to be played on set – Leone and his composer were better equipped to exercise the multimedia philosophy discussed when they met (Frayling 2000, 155). Accordingly woven into the story itself, music is empowered to engage in the kind of diegetic interaction notably absent in *Per un pugno*. This is encapsulated by the renowned pocket-watch sequences where dramatically significant diegetic material dovetails ambiguously with nondiegetic score. Traits of this solution are notably shared with *Il ritorno*, itself featuring similar dramaturgical application of music with a complex relationship to the diegesis. In no small part a consequence of the film's own example, transdiegetic movement became a trope of Italian-western films after *Per qualche dollaro*, and that involving Morricone's music has been celebrated and analysed by numerous commentators in the setting of Leone's cinema. Parallels between that film and the near-contemporary *Il ritorno*, however, complicate the lineage of this device.

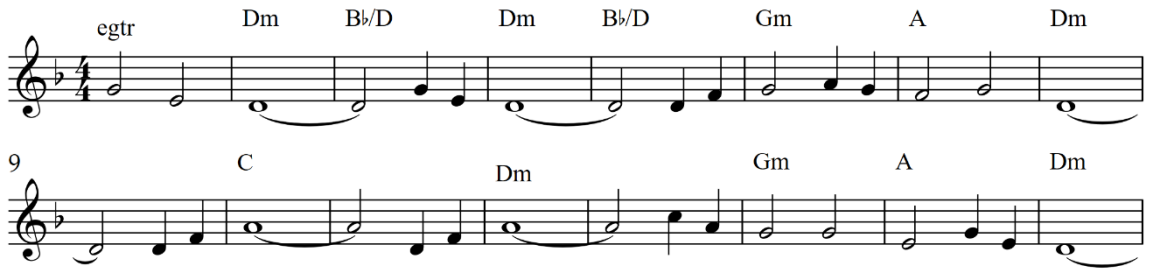
The *Per qualche dollaro* score was conducted by Bruno Nicolai, Morricone's friend and colleague, who also attended the composition course at Santa Cecilia. Nicolai's occupation of

the podium here was rooted in Morricone's desire to better oversee production from the recording booth, a custom he frequently practised for many years thereafter (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 27). For a time, their professional relationship occasionally extended to compositional collaboration, before complications put an end to such arrangements. These projects provoked erroneous assumptions regarding the regularity of their working together, which would cause the composer lasting consternation (Frayling 2006 [1981], 265; Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 82–3). Attempts to disentangle authorship regarding the pair's co-written scores, three of which are in our filmography, remain inconclusive.

In 1966, the Italian-western rush came into full swing, seeing the completion and release of the wave of productions stimulated by the popularity of the pathfinding films: *Per un pugno, Minnesota Clay*, the 'Ringo' brace, *Un dollaro bucato*, and *Per qualche dollaro.* 58 homemade westerns were released in Italy in 1966, almost doubling the previous year's tally. As alluded to, Morricone, whose name was attached to four of those six films and etched on a *Nastro d'argento*, courted attention from the more 'prestigious' circles of Italian cinema, composing this same year for Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* and Pontecorvo's *La battaglia di Algeri*, two highly acclaimed Italian films. In the same timeframe, Morricone scored four more westerns: *Sette pistole per i MacGregor*, *Un fiume di dollari* (dir. Carlo Lizzani, as 'Lee W. Beaver'), *Navajo Joe* (dir. Corbucci), and *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (dir. Leone). In Lizzani and Corbucci's films, Morricone resumes the alias of Leo Nichols. This collective of films are noteworthy for heralding the onset of intra-genre diversification, entailing the inception of two important relationships with directors, and witnessing the culmination of the 'Dollars' trilogy and a landmark score that can justifiably be considered the most popular and influential of Morricone's entire career, and enduringly symbolic of his relationship with the genre – a title for which only *C'era una volta il west* competes. Given these developments, combined with the overall acceleration of his western-genre output between 1966 and 1968, as well as the accelerating growth of Italian-western production per se, it is prudent to begin considering the films that emerged as the genre approached its apogee with greater recourse to characteristics than chronology.

It is also necessary to address the false accreditation of western-genre music to Morricone, both to clarify the boundaries of 'Morricone's West' and to reflect on the phenomenon itself. Two films appeared in 1966–7 including a credit without a score, and both instances can be considered indicative of desire on the part of producers to exploit his prestige. The first is *Per pochi dollari ancora* (dir. Giorgo Ferroni, 1966), featuring 'Musiche di Ennio Morricone e Gianni Ferrio ... arrangiate e dirette' by Ferrio. The carefully expressed wording is accurate; Ferrio's score features arrangements of 'Penso a te' (Ex. 2.3), a cue written by Morricone for the 1964 documentary *I malamondo* (dir. Paolo Cavara). It is likely that Morricone's affiliate label, CAM (producer of the score and soundtrack recording), negotiated the borrowing without his permission (Giusti 2007, 348). The second of these films is the acclaimed Italian western *Quién sabe?* (dir. Damiano Damiani, 1967), Morricone's participation in which was even less tangible – if now 'above board'. Despite the fact that the film's composer, Luis Enríquez Bacalov, could already boast the accomplished

score to *Django*, it was determined that his credit as composer of *Quién sabe?* would be enhanced by Morricone's involvement as 'music supervisor', a position effectively amounting to his award of a congratulatory seal of approval to Bacalov upon hearing the already-recorded score (Giusti 2007, 414). The pair were well acquainted; they worked together as arrangers at RCA, and would soon, alongside Armando Trovajoli and Piero Piccioni, co-found Ortophonic recording studios, where the quartet would produce many subsequent film scores as well as numerous popular-music recordings under the label General Music.



Example 2.3 'Penso a te' theme from *I malamondo.* Ferrio utilised this theme widely in the *Per pochi dollari ancora* score, most notably substituting the original swung rhythmic accompaniment for more on-brand hoofbeat dactyls.

Morricone's financial circumstances began to befit a composer renowned for a 'magic touch' as an arranger and in possession of a near-starlike drawing power in film; by the end of the 1960s, 25 million copies of records bearing his name would be sold internationally (Sciannameo 2020, 61). The immersion in popular industries such prosperity necessitated, however, blemished perceptions of him among avant-garde musicians and the intelligentsia, whose ideological commitment, as has been shown, yielded an especially profound and entrenched scepticism of commercial activity. If Morricone did not manage to mitigate this through the continued output of concert works – between 1958 and 1969 he completed only *Requiem per un destino* (1966), adapted from music written for *Un uomo a metà* (dir. Vittorio De Seta, 1966) – his contribution to the leftist polemics of Pasolini, Pontecorvo, Marco Bellocchio, and others, proved his political acumen. *La Cina è vicina* (dir. Bellocchio, 1967), *Teorema* (dir. Pasolini, 1968), and *Queimada* (dir. Pontecorvo 1969) were important such projects.

Morricone's involvement in the Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza (GINC or 'Il Gruppo', active 1964–80) helped maintain his highbrow credibility in this period and beyond. The GINC was the performing wing of Nuova Consonanza, a nebulous experimental collective founded by Franco Evangelisti circa 1959–60. He invited Morricone to join in the capacity of trumpeter and composer; the latter first performed with the group in 1966 and

remained one of the more stable participants of the association (Bertolani 2019). Membership entailed direct consequences for his film music. The GINC lent its strident improvisatory soundscapes to a range of scores, particularly those in the ascendant genre of *gialli*, like Elio Petri's *Un tranquillo posto di campagna* (1968). Also featuring in Petri's film, and occupying similar stylistic territory, are the fruits of the composer's personal experiments with modular synthesis. Such techniques marked a selection of his scores around turn of the 1970s, notably that of Leone's final western, *Giù la testa* (1971), and would be extensively developed in the series of LPs entitled *Dimensioni sonore, musiche per l'immagine e l'immaginazione*, an early 1970s venture by RCA into the field of library music, for which the label produced a collection of 45 discs of music by Morricone and Nicolai intended specifically for licensing use (Sciannameo 2022).

Subgenres and directorial partnerships

In the life cycle of a *filone*, the emergence of 'sub-*filoni*' is common – the 'Herculean' pepla, the *commedia erotica*, or the zombie/cannibal horrors of the turn of the 1980s. Looking to the late 1960s, by which time a number of popular genres were thriving alongside the Italian western, certain tropes can be appreciated as the products of interaction among concurrent and overlapping generic threads, forces themselves guided by contemporaneous shifts in the Italian socio-political fabric and overarching historical trends in the national cinema. For instance, in assessing the characteristics of the *poliziottesco* crime film, Bondanella and Pacchioni note kinship to *gialli* in the elements of mystery and procedural storytelling, while asserting that its particular brand of violence derives from the Italian western, an inheritance symptomatic of the industry's desire for newer genres to appeal to the established audience of older ones (2017 [2009], 475–81). It is worth reconsidering Fisher's observation that each such genre, possessing a progenitorial counterpart in American cinema, uniquely negotiates with the influence of American culture in Italy.

Directors with whom Morricone worked moved freely between these genres, on numerous occasions with the composer in tow. Furthermore, core attributes defining the primary subgeneric strands of the Italian western, which are identified below, are to some extent archetypal in Italian cinema more widely, prominent in both contemporary and uncontemporary genres; patterns of violence play out in all the aforementioned *filoni* of the late 1960s, for example, while comic sensibilities resound throughout Italian film history. Such underlying processes in popular film come to the fore in this period, and the Italian western's diversification, and Morricone's musical representation of a cross-section of these strands, warrants recourse to this context.

Subgeneric divisions define the years following the 'Dollars' trilogy. Grant describes how the adulteration attributed to the Italian western's decline in the 1970s began in the post-Leone era (2013, 281), as directors spied and exploited the opportunity to undercut and modify the patterns that Leone had just established. As explained, these offshoots signify the

magnification of themes extant at various levels: in popular genres and elsewhere, but also in the pioneering Italian westerns themselves. Just as the process was decisive in determining the landscape of the films that Morricone scored in the late years of the 1960s, so it elicited creative responses in the composer. Jan Švábenický summarises that Morricone adapted his approach in response to a changed landscape, accommodating the new thematic, iconographic, sociocultural, and transgenre inclinations of other directors (2015, 143–4) – even if the pull of his popular 'Dollars' idiom, now consolidated after three films, proved difficult to resist entirely.

One branch of this scheme is the comic spaghetti, which thrived after 1970. Comedy springs forth in all corners of the Italian cinematic landscape; barely a film genre exists of which there is neither a comedic offshoot nor an intrinsic irreverence – testament to Giacomo Leopardi's (2014 [1824], 65) old observation that the distinctive cynicism of the national psyche manifests in Italians' compulsion to *ridono della vita*. Bondanella and Pacchioni (2017 [2009], 479–80) point out that the appearance of comic parodies, usually signifying an attempt to reinvigorate a flagging *filone*, is an all but inevitable stage in a genre's life cycle (see also Baschiera 2020; Fisher 2011, 219). This was carried out successfully in the Italian western's case courtesy of the enormously popular *Lo chiamavano Trinità...* (dir. Enzo Barboni, as 'E. B. Clucher') and its sequel and spin-offs.

Irony had long been established as an intrinsic part of the Italian-western formula, but the light-heartedness of *Sette pistole per i MacGregor* and its 1967 sequel *Sette donne per i MacGregor*, telling the story of a lively family of Scottish-American ranchers, pre-empts the whimsy of these later comedic westerns. Morricone in fact only composed original music for the first 'MacGregors' film, which was recycled (along with some music for *Per un pugno*) for the quickfire sequel. The two most prominent thematic cues featured on either side of two separate RCA singles, which were identical but for subtle changes to the artwork (Morricone 1966b; 1966c). For the most part, the music is notable for its more traditional idiomatic character, but more flippant moments are scored by 'Marcia dei Mac Gregor' [*sic*] (Ex. 5.6), for which Morricone exercised a typically off-the-wall approach to instrumentation inspired by the nationality of the protagonists. The composer would lean into this eccentricity to accentuate the humour in later westerns.

Only a handful of films in our corpus fall unequivocally into this category, with many of the most frivolous (particularly Corbucci's final films) better classed as political westerns, further evidencing the ubiquity of comic sensibilities in the genre. Those that do were mostly released in the period 1972–5 and constitute the majority of films released in this timeframe: the two 'Provvidenza' films, *La vita è molto dura, vero Provvidenza?* (1972) and *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?* (1973; music co-composed with Nicolai), as well as *Un genio, due compari, un pollo* (1975) and Morricone's final Italian western, the outlying *Occhio alla penna* (1981). They demonstrate a significant idiomatic shift in response to the embrace of caricature that followed *Trinità*. Noteworthy overarching characteristics include emphasis on absurd, frequently synthesised timbres, and tendency towards self-parody. Where earlier

scores demonstrated formal likeness to popular-music structures, these later films feature interpolated easy-listening instrumentals; sung title songs, once common, become a rarity. The only other comic western of the 1960s is *...e per tetto un cielo di stelle* (1968), which notably juxtaposes light-hearted material with music of surprising pathos, reflecting the film's tragicomic tone. This is itself microcosmic of director Giulio Petroni's wide-ranging sensibilities: his other Morricone-scored westerns include the first 'Provvidenza' film, the epic political western *Tepepa* (1969), and one of the genre's bleakest entries, *Da uomo a uomo* (1967).

The second subgenre to consider, to which the last of those films belongs, also problematises attempts to delineate it. Like the comic western, the *western nero* effectively amplifies attributes that already characterised the genre: amorality, cruelty, the macabre, racial hatred, revenge narratives, and so forth. Violence was a feature of all *filoni* in the late 1960s, and although critics of the Italian western fixated on its gratuitous abundance (see Fisher 2011, 228–32), a series of films emerged that centralised this theme alongside the others above, aligning the western with darker contemporaneous genres and drawing it still further from American precedent. Courtesy of the release of Corbucci's overwhelmingly nihilistic *Django* (see Fig. 2.3 below), 1966 was pivotal again. An avowed anti-western and one of the most popular, imitated, and controversial films of the cycle, *Django* is suffused with lurid iconography, black humour, and sadistic butchery, all elements that, as Franco Piermolini observes, were subject to repetition and variation in the ensuing *sottofilone* (Piermolini 2018, 17; Faldini and Fofi 1981, 293). Long one of Cinecittà's most reliable pairs of hands, and the first Italian-western director to see his own name credited (Hughes 2004, 58), Corbucci found his stride with this, his fourth western. With his next three, *Navajo Joe*, *I crudeli* (1967), and *Il grande silenzio* (1968), he would contribute to the consolidation of the *western nero*; this trio of westerns and several later ones for Corbucci feature music by Morricone, and each man was to be the other's most regular collaborator in the genre in their respective roles.

Like the films themselves, Morricone's first three scores for Corbucci are quite distinct from one another. *Navajo Joe*, the earliest, is characterised by gritty, contemporary-rock instrumentation and coarse engagement with Native-American music, which perpetuates an unfortunate western-genre tradition and blunts the film's broad condemnation of racism. The Confederate renegades in *I crudeli*, meanwhile, channelling the subgenre's penchant for Southern extremism, are accompanied by a jazz-inflected score led by a trumpet soloist. And in the unrivalled pessimism of *Il grande silenzio*, Corbucci's anti-western polemic culminates in what has been described as 'the most subversive denouement in the history of narrative cinema' (Newton 2011), complemented by the haunting dissonances, arresting ostinati, and singular instrumental choices of Morricone's most anomalous western scores. *Il grande silenzio*'s allegorical subtext indicates the director pivoting towards more openly political narratives that still retained the *nero*'s quintessential gloom. This transition would be completed only a month after *Il grande silenzio*'s opening, with the release of *Il mercenario* (1968; music co-composed with Nicolai).

Figure 2.3 The coffin Django drags relentlessly through the thick mud, inside which he keeps a multiple-barrel machine gun, encapsulates the *western nero*'s morbidity.

Despite the breadth of Morricone's working relationship with Corbucci, comparably little has been written about this partnership, compounded by the dearth of dedicated scholarship on the director. For his part, Morricone offered the following sentiments regarding his music in Corbucci's films, which say more about the composer's standards than the director's handling of music:

> Sergio Corbucci, for example, did not pay attention to me, and in fact in his films one does not hear the music. For that reason and not by its own fault the music can make a bad impression. If it is there and one does not hear it, it is as if it were ugly or as if it were not present.
>
> (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 190)

> [The sound has been too quiet] several times. To name a few names, it occurred with Carlo Lizzani, Sergio Corbucci, even with Pasquale Festa Campanile, who never came to the recording room to listen to the music before editing.
>
> (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 80)

The reference to Lizzani is fortuitous, for his *Un fiume di dollari*, suffused with the bitterness of betrayal and vengeance, is also classifiable as a *western nero*. In that quotation, Morricone was likely to be referring to one or more of the other four films he scored for the director, for the music certainly does not suffer in this film's mix. Morricone's orchestral score ranks

among his more conventional, reflecting the overall presentation; aliases are used for Lizzani and Morricone, among others, and there some impressive American actors on the billing. *Un fiume* represents the only venture into the genre of a figure well respected among critics, who co-wrote Neorealist masterpieces for Rossellini and was a prolific writer on film (Lizzani 2016 [1979]). Lizzani's aesthetic aversion to escapism is noted by Bondanella and Pacchioni (2017 [2009], 15). Favouring a realist sensibility over the theatricality typical of popular genres, Lizzani's straight handling of *Un fiume*'s dark themes cause the film to approximate Hollywood's 1950s 'adult westerns'. Somewhat suspended between American and Italian western, it is in the end neither, and is left to represent an uncomfortable clash of opposing subcultures in Italian cinema, which one might argue is reflected in a relatively poor performance at the domestic box office.

No such tension hampers Petroni's *Da uomo a uomo*, a film fully embracing the extravagant gothic in its own grim tale of revenge. It gives Morricone's music its usual, freer rein, allowing it to veer between adventurous chromaticism and more outright use of popular-music forms. The choir is used prominently, extended instrumental techniques are exploited, and music again interacts unconventionally with the diegesis. While Petroni's next western, the aforementioned *…e per tetto*, is decidedly less intense, the legacy of this precursor resounds in some of the former's more earnest scenes. It endures in his third western, *Tepepa*, enriching the political themes that characterise the third and final subgenre to be examined.

With the possible exception of the exceedingly comical later westerns, the most easily discernible of the *sottofiloni* is the political western. In terms of textual content, it is the richest subgeneric branch, and the easiest to situate meaningfully in the socio-cultural context of the Italian western. Its narratives, moreover, tend to occupy a definite historical setting. All these traits lend to Morricone's music greater commentative, intertextual, and ideological opportunity – and to analysts, more potential for insight. The politically minded Italian western undermines enduring perspectives on both sides of the Atlantic that the genre was merely concerned with entertainment or élan, and questions the validity of critical disdain for Cinecittà's lack of political substance. Testament to these claims is *Radical Frontiers*, a monograph on Italian-western politics, in which Fisher argues for the propagation of revolutionary ideology in an array of films that utilise the cultural artefact of the western genre as an integral vehicle:

> the radicalism of such films … is defined by a purposeful negotiation with the codes of the Hollywood Western. Far from rejecting this model, [directors such as Damiano] Damiani and [Sergio] Sollima work within its central oppositions and with its established signifiers, reflecting the cultural shifts of post-war Italy and embracing the 'belching stomach' of the Roman studio system.
>
> (Fisher 2011, 203)

But, he immediately adds, this approach to genre cinema was not the only one available to militant ends, and was contentious in the milieu of late 1960s European discourse. The debate raged in Italy with a ferocity inflamed by Fascism's legacy. Underpinning criticism of mass-media forms – already regarded with mistrust due to the industrial oversight of the right-wing DC (see Gennari 2009, 38–61) – was the question of whether their commercialism precluded the transmission of truly revolutionary philosophy to the populace, despite an undeniably effective communicative apparatus. Some of the more militant critics of the late 1960s and 1970s were wary of such 'middlebrow' compromise and questioned the potential for subversion within a cinematic vehicle of petty-bourgeois motive and design (see Ungari 1969). Many leftist writers echoed this stance, according with the Marxist doctrines of Antonio Gramsci (the founder of the PCI), which called for a 'national-popular' culture born of the people that would lead to socio-political emancipation – a perspective rooted in a distinctly paternalist conception of popular culture (Forgacs 1990, 101). Flavia Brizio-Skov comments that the Left loathed 'evasive' escapist genre cinema in general, and indeed the western especially for 'keep[ing] the plebs in ignorance' by hiding in myth (2011, 97; see also Resmini 2023), but film press situated closer to the mainstream was more prepared to validate westerns as an arena for political reflection (see Natta 1968).

At the other end of the spectrum, the dilemma facing the contemporary artist was 'whether it was possible to use modernist language to expose social problems' (Boyd-Bennett 2018, 196). Director and regular Morricone collaborator Bernardo Bertolucci (quoted in Frayling 2000, 230) suggests not, admonishing the ideologues of Italian and French cinema for endorsing a 'non-communicative model … cinema for the elite'. One such was Pierre Baudry, among few to scrutinise Italian-western political acumen conscientiously. Writing in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1971 (Fairfax 2021, 702–6), he denounced the mercantile sabotage of the revolutionary cause in the superficially radical polemics of films such as *Vamos a matar compañeros* (1970). The politics of this second instalment in Corbucci's 'revolutionary' trilogy – comprising *Il mercenario* and *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?* (1972) – are not untenable, but the film is guilty of perpetuating the farce and violence that, as well as demonstrating the crossing-over of subgeneric elements that has been alluded to, betrays the remnant commercialism in an Italian-western mode of militant discourse. Italian critical resistance to the ideological substance of popular film softened by the 1980s (see Pellizzari 1981), but the offering of westerns was seldom apprehended seriously by those discussing cinema and politics.

Regardless of their radical credibility, such political westerns nonetheless offer commentaries into which humour, bloodshed, and music, can be poignantly integrated. In some cases, they are expressed through subtextual critique, articulated in negotiation with syntactical elements of the western. *Il grande silenzio* is among numerous Italian westerns implementing what Fisher coins the 'Repressive State Apparatus' plot template, specifically concerned with the censure of authoritarian institutional oppression and the attempt to 'unmask an outwardly civilised society whose outward mechanisms are predicated on violent tyranny' (Fisher 2011, 82). Some of the most intricate, hard-hitting political critiques of this

nature can be found in the westerns of Sergio Sollima, erstwhile *partigiano* and playwright: *La resa dei conti*, *Faccia a faccia* (both 1967), and *Corri uomo corri* (1968), a loose sequel to *La resa dei conti* (Piermolini 2018, 33–5). Morricone's music featured in Sollima's work beyond the western, too, most notably in the popular *poliziotteschi* films *Città violenta* (1970) and *Revolver* (1973).

Based on a story by Franco Solinas (co-writer of Pontecorvo's politicised films *La battaglia di Algeri* and *Queimada*), *La resa dei conti* contains elements of Fisher's 'oppressive justice' narrative, but also, by raising questions pertaining to Mexican identity and US–Mexico transcultural relations, grapples symbolically with capitalist colonialism. Indeed, Frayling highlighted early on that such political westerns were read as parables for Cold War international dynamics (2006 [1981], 232), and Christopher Robé would later emphasise the connections between the political *sottofilone* and cinema in the Third World: the former's 'primary appeal to a peasant population that felt exploited by their northern countrymen allowed it to resonate with many of the issues that also defined Third Cinema' (2014, 164). *La resa*, like its revolutionary precursor *Quién sabe?* (also written by Solinas) and numerous later westerns, moreover draws implicit geopolitical parallels between Mexico and Italy, reinforcing the emerging potency of the wild American West as a metaphor for the lawless Italian South, and helping to crystallise the film's political import and relevance for Italian audiences (see below, pp. 166–9). For his part, Morricone propagates many of the 'Dollars' innovations in Sollima's film, but begins to offset them, notably by incorporating pre-existing music into the score in accordance with the political messages. Certain aspects of this process reinforce overtones of a critique of right-wing ideology, and assert the essential righteousness of frontier heroism.

Such overtones come to the fore in *Faccia a faccia*, whose meticulous portrayal of a professor's descent from liberal enlightenment to violent megalomania is, for Fisher, a clear allegory for the rise of Italian Fascism, which amounts, 'by some distance, [to] the most loquacious and intellectually sophisticated of all Spaghetti Westerns' (2011, 78). Without the intertextual support of 'Für Elise', Morricone's music is not so empowered as to offer such a clear sense of commentary as in *La resa* (see below, pp. 214–18), but the score's patchwork structure offers a turbulent reflection of the film's startling themes, as well as a medley of devices distinguishing Morricone's western music to date. Harnessing the full scope of a compositional language that by 1967 was becoming familiar, Morricone's score exploits its popularity to transfer the audience to a more contemporary mindset in which they are better positioned to appreciate the real-world relevance of this subtext.

Compared to this, the score for *Corri uomo corri* may appear meagre in terms of variety, but in its jubilant idiomatic embrace of Mexican traditional music, it heralds the substantial absorption of a Mexican musical vernacular that characterised Morricone's response to the so-called Zapata westerns (see below). Following the Mexican peon Cuchillo, protagonist of *La resa*, *Corri* openly tackles matters of Mexican identification and insurrection, which would distinguish these political westerns at the heart of the political *sottofilone*. This is why

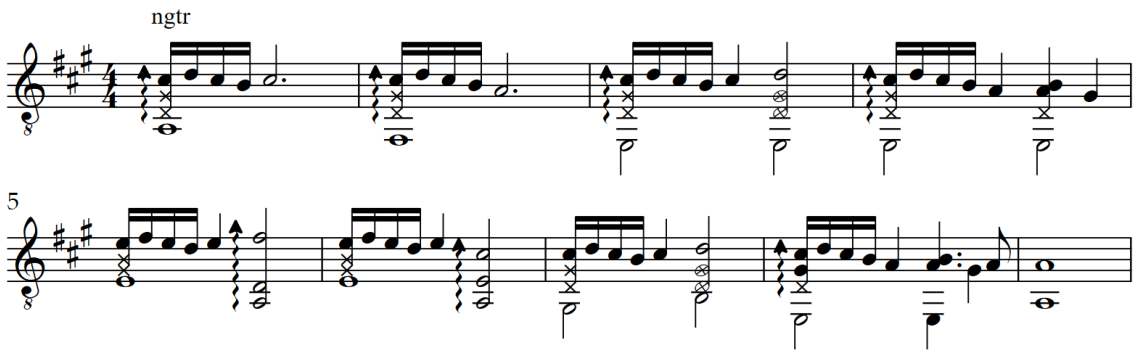
Piermolini (2018, 80–1; see also 47–9, 64–5) stresses that of Sollima's three films, only *Corri* is a true 'tortilla western'; while acknowledging the political metaphors in *La resa*, he prefers to classify both it and *Faccia a faccia* as psychological westerns. In the film and on soundtrack recordings, music in *Corri* is credited to Nicolai. Few published sources contest this attribution, but two key sources that do are Miceli's monograph (2021 [1994], 529) and Morricone's autobiographical *Life Notes* (2016, 120). These texts, listing *Corri* among the composer's filmography, corroborate the claim made by Sollima in the documentary interview *Run Man Run: 35 Years Running* (dir. Gary Hertz, 2003) that Morricone wrote the music, but could not be credited due to contractual stipulations (this predicament may have been akin to that which compromised Morricone's involvement in John Huston's 1966 film *The Bible: In the Beginning…*; Hublai 2012, 71–3). Morricone would acknowledge that credit was shared on occasions where one of them authored an entire score (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 83). The issue of creative ownership is a vexing one, and difficulties inherent in establishing it was a probable factor in the termination of their collaborative relationship. This inhibits efforts to determine the extent of their individual contribution to co-composed scores (*Il mercenario* and *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?*), but this music remains included in the present study. As far as *Corri* is concerned, it is perhaps most probable that Morricone composed thematic material that Nicolai subsequently orchestrated and produced.

Baudry categorised Italian westerns twofold: as Type A or B. Where Type A westerns – from Leone's earliest onwards – 'presented a constellation of characters consisting of "the Gringo/Mexican bandits/Mexican victims," a newer Type B … shifts this schema to a more politicized system consisting of "the Gringo/Mexican revolutionaries/Mexican counter-revolutionaries"' (Fairfax 2021, 706). These Type B westerns are better known as 'Zapata westerns', christened in honour of Emiliano Zapata, icon of the Mexican Revolution (1910–20). They constitute the heart of the political *sottofilone* and likely the most distinct offshoot of the Italian-western movement. Following the lead of *Quién sabe?*, Italian westerns established the conflict as a historical platform on which they could wage a political discourse while continuing to satisfy audience demand for action and violence. Zapata plots typically involve a white American outsider, who, now that the West is settled and policed (the dates of the revolution are well beyond the traditional timeframe of the western, which ends with the closing of the frontier in the 1890s), crosses the border to find 'an atmosphere more commensurate with their [nefarious and avaricious] lifestyle'. Once in Mexico, the 'gringo' foments or sidesteps – but always exploits – the struggle, before being compelled to reinterpret his 'brigandage in the new context of political–military conflict' (Cumbow 2008 [1987], 84). They tend to form an uneasy partnership with a gutsy Mexican of humble birth, who reluctantly assumes the mantle of the revolutionary figurehead thrust upon them.

Of course, a subtext still shadows this direct engagement with revolutionary subject matter; that this plot template generates proxy narratives for proxy wars is clear. But, in contrast to countercultural critiques of violent oppression in films such as *Il grande silenzio*, Zapata westerns advocate open insurgency, 'proffering confrontational and violent solutions' to that oppression (Fisher 2011, 82). Capitalist imperialism and fascist totalitarianism are

most fiercely attacked in these films, which resonated with the 1960s sociopolitical climate, especially in Italy. Mexico's surrogacy for that country and others is most perceptible in this context of leftist resistance. Zapata narratives echo not only Italy's own political and cultural relationship with the US but also the simmering contemporary activism of the New Left, which – fuelled by revelation of atrocities in Vietnam – culminated in the momentous student protests of 1968 (patently aped by the youthful, idealistic upstarts in *Compañeros*) and the *anni di piombo.* A wealth of Italian westerns emerged that wrested cinematic stewardship of the charged topic of Mexico's revolution – as it did the western itself – from Hollywood, which had hitherto approached the conflict on only a handful of occasions, and always in reactionary fashion.

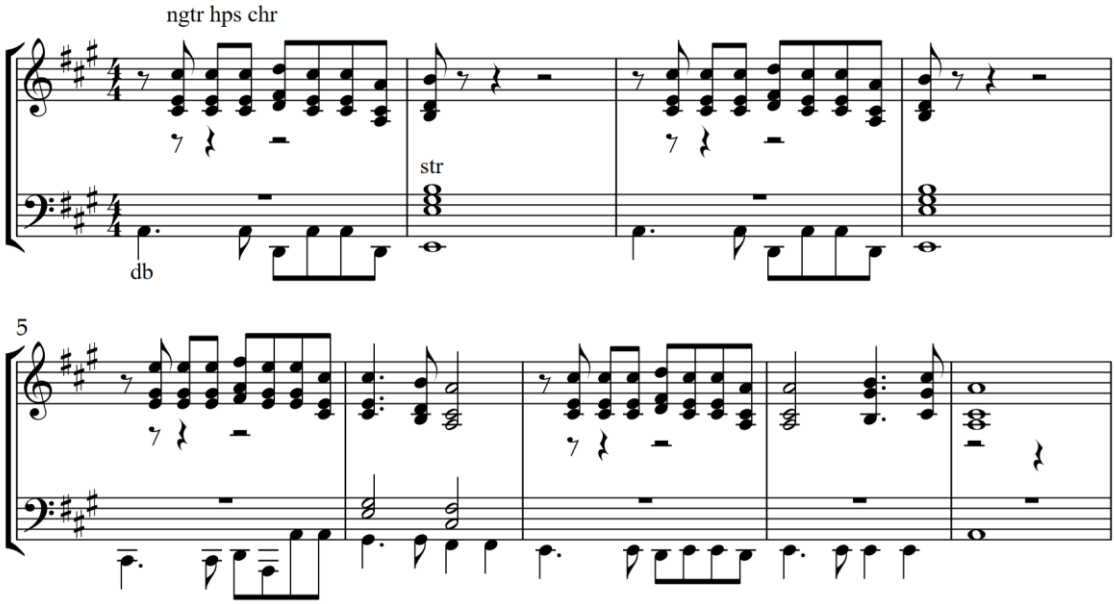
Mirroring this reversal, Morricone's wholesale idiomatic absorption of Mexican music outstrips that of the likes of Tiomkin or Bernstein. It erodes Mexico's traditional subservience in the western's idiomatic musical hierarchy, and brings a musical dimension to these narratives fit for a cause that often had its own vibrant soundtrack (Lim and Sweeney 2021, 305). Corbucci, Damiani, Sollima, and Petroni directed the definitive Zapata westerns, and with the exception of *Quién sabe?*, all films of theirs in this tradition feature music composed by Morricone. They are collectively notable for hosting the continued growth of this Mexican vernacular, mostly achieved through emulation of mariachi orchestration. In *Il mercenario*, this is deftly hybridised with 'Dollars' tropes – prominent use of whistling, for example – as part of a scoring strategy appropriate for Corbucci's most stylised, Leone-like film. One of its key musical themes (Ex. 2.4), somewhat equidistant between these stylistic poles, is a concise motif of repeated turns poignantly aligned with revolutionary sentiment, with the Mexican nation, its hardship, and the promise of liberation. This is Morricone's musical focus, the heart of the film's politics as conveyed through music. The theme's reiteration with bombast in the standoff somewhat weakens these associations, however, contributing to Corbucci's



Example 2.4 The first theme of the 'Libertà' cue from *Il mercenario*, performed on acoustic guitar and sounded as the protagonist, Paco, expresses his patriotism and the desire for freedom for his countryfolk.

failure to resolve the political themes expressed in Solinas' screenplay. As Frayling points out, the susceptibility to inane gags in this film and subsequent, more farcical Zapatas often 'swamp[s] whatever "disguised" political themes there are' (2006 [1981], 236).

The second section of the 'Libertà' cue from *Il mercenario* (Ex. 2.5) is constructed from a cyclical harmonic scheme, similar iterations of which also appear in *La battaile de San Sebastian, Tepepa,* and *Compañeros* – and its lineage can be traced back to the *Barabba* bolero. It is tempting to interpret it as a metanarrative representation of Mexican identity, a notion with which all these films are concerned. On the other hand, it is also indicative of the fact that, as Morricone begins to establish techniques for this distinct subgenre and navigate this particularly busy phase of the *filone,* both generic compositional strategies and specific compositional ideas begin to reappear. A more singular and explicit example of engagement with such themes is the song 'Muerte donde vas?' from *Un esercito di 5 uomini,* its words – sung diegetically by an oppressed Mexican community – protesting to their persecution by the military.



Example 2.5 A reduction of the second theme in the 'Libertà' cue, sounded in the same sequence and repeatedly in the film's climactic shootout. Cues with a similar melodic contour, harmonic scheme, or repetitive development feature in *La battaile de San Sebastian, Tepepa,* and *Compañeros.*

Distancing himself from the 'romance of the sombrero', Leone consistently denied that his sole Zapata and final western, *Giù la testa,* was about the revolution, or was even a western at all (Frayling 2000, 225; Sciannameo 2020, 63). Dubious as these claims are, Morricone's music does steer clear of Zapata tropes, instead combining stubborn elements of

the ‘Dollars’ style with techniques that typified his later scores, namely more preposterous timbres, polished easy-listening arrangements, self-parody, and bricolage. These are juxtaposed with the kind of Romantic orchestrations used in the preceding *C’era una volta il west*, and there is the presence of synthetic music. That Morricone entitled some cues in honour of ‘absolute’ genres – the sprawling frieze ‘Invenzione per John’, for example – demonstrates his occasional classical conception of form in film music.

At the beginning of this period of branching out for the Italian western, which prompted Morricone to adapt practices accordingly, the release of *Il buono, il brutto, cattivo* marked the end of the ‘Dollars’ era, as well as the appearance of what is probably the composer’s most recognisable score. This film at once consolidated and expanded the compositional language that distinguished that trilogy, paving the way for subgeneric diversification, and it is apt to consider it here as the containment of its story in the scope of a historical conflict (the American Civil War) engenders a certain political commentary. It does assume this definite temporal and cultural setting, predating the western-genre timeframe as the Zapatas postdate it, but it portrays what Robert Cumbow (2008 [1987], 56–60) describes as an ‘ethereal, abstract version’ of the war, which facilitates, in contrast to most political westerns, neither an oppressive-justice nor a Marxist-insurgent subtext, seeking instead to ridicule the conflict; it is anti-war. For Christian Uva, while the inconvenience and futility of the war for the profiteering protagonists underpins the anti-war stance, they remain bound to these events by the dialectic Leone establishes between individual and collective history (2020, 67–70); in this sense, it also condemns capitalism. And there is an encroaching sense of postmodernism. In their deliberately banal violence and superficiality, the ‘Dollars’ films and other westerns reflect the zeitgeist of the 1960s, mimicking ‘the social anxiety of the era … [and] ushering in the self-reflexive, deconstructive terrain of the contemporary western’ (Smith 2000, 80).

The establishment of the war setting, giving the three main characters a backdrop to roam against and ultimately repudiate, injects element of the picaresque that allow music to assume an epic scope and overshadow the previous ‘Dollars’ scores in terms of scale, ambition, and heterogeneity. Assisted by the ghostly integration of military music and Civil War balladry, the film begins to transcend the fabular sense of a symbolic fairy-tale landscape, unchanging and detached from the real world, within which the narrative’s moral geometry is drawn – a trait that for Kitses is quintessential of Boetticher’s 1950s westerns (2004 [1970], 173–99; see also 282), which deeply influenced Leone. It does not, however, achieve this transcendence, courtesy of the constant elusion of the war’s reality on the part of plot and protagonists. In this sense, it belongs to the ‘transitional’ phase of Italian-western narrative development identified by Frayling (2006 [1981], 51), when historical backdrops began to contextualise action, without fundamentally intersecting with the fundamental plot. The Zapata westerns would complete this process, as would *C’era una volta il west.*

Reflecting the inflated budget, expectation, and length marking the production of this film, Morricone’s score was his most ambitious and substantial yet in the genre. But this was its downfall for Miceli, who argues that the sprawling edifice suffers from pretentiousness, a

lack of formal coherence, and from the excessive compactness of its constituent parts (Miceli 2021 [1994], 166–7). Nonetheless, the score can be considered, if only as a result of its popularity, the definitive articulation of the 'Dollars' idiom. Most importantly, Morricone and Leone were able to operate as they had first envisaged. Two years since their enterprising discussion, they found themselves with sufficient time and money to plan, compose, and pre-record music in order to influence the tone and pacing of performance in principal photography. As per Leone's account, some of this music was played on set, though only Van Cleef recalls this, and unfavourably at that. At any rate, all the music was finally re-recorded to the image (Frayling 2000, 234–7; Cooke 2008, 372). Through partly implementing this method, they anticipated the inversion of the received audiovisual hierarchy that would be carried out decisively in their next collaborative effort.

Westward re-expansion and postmodern perspectives

If 1966 is the watershed year in the context of Morricone's early professional development and in that of his relationship with the western, it is difficult not to perceive 1968 as equally pivotal in other respects. This was a year in which six films in the genre were released with an original score by Morricone, the highest such annual total. His gross film-score output for that year is eighteen, an unprecedented personal tally heralding a period of outstanding prolificacy: 1969, 1971, 1972, and 1975 witnessed the release of 22, 24, 28, and 19 film and TV productions with original music credited or co-credited to Morricone; these figures decline only gradually through the decade (Fig. 2.4 below). He was also able to dedicate more time to concert music, composing four works between 1969 and 1972, and the GINC released two studio recordings in the period 1970–73 (Gruppo d'Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza 1970; 1973).

The year was a greater milestone for the western itself – not only of the Italian variety – an the most significant repercussions for Morricone really stem from this fact. 73 spaghettis were released in Italy in 1968, the most of any single year, but of even greater portent, and perhaps catalytic for this peak of production, was the staggered release of Leone's 'Dollars' films in the US, its three instalments opening in sequence in January, May, and December 1967. Keenly anticipated following an assertive and enigmatic marketing campaign (as well as the ongoing litigation between Kurosawa and Leone over *Per un pugno*'s unauthorised borrowings, which achieved notoriety and delayed the stateside release in the first place), the trilogy and the torrent of Italian westerns that followed it sparked a crisis. US critics rapidly waged a virile discourse admonishing the Italians' crude appropriation and besmirching of the American national genre, their opinions echoed by veteran filmmakers like Anthony Mann and Boetticher (Frayling 2000, 181–2) in what Frayling coined the 'cultural roots' controversy (2006 [1981], 121–37). Antipathy was contrasted by recognition on the part of a younger generation of filmmakers (and producers) of the value of the Italian contribution, the innovations of which were assimilated back into the great but floundering American lineage of western-filmmaking. The classic US westerns of the late 1960s and early '70s – *Butch*

Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (dir. George Roy Hill, 1969), *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (dir. Robert Altman, 1971), and the films of Sam Peckinpah, Don Siegel, and subsequently Eastwood himself – owed much to Italian-western achievements that were belatedly laid bare by the 'Dollars' releases, and by the landmark film their success facilitated: *C'era una volta il west.* This reciprocity then reverted to Italy, as westerns produced on both sides of the Atlantic tended towards reflexive revisionism, increasingly seizing on the epochal closing of the frontier as a metaphor for the twilight of West and western alike.

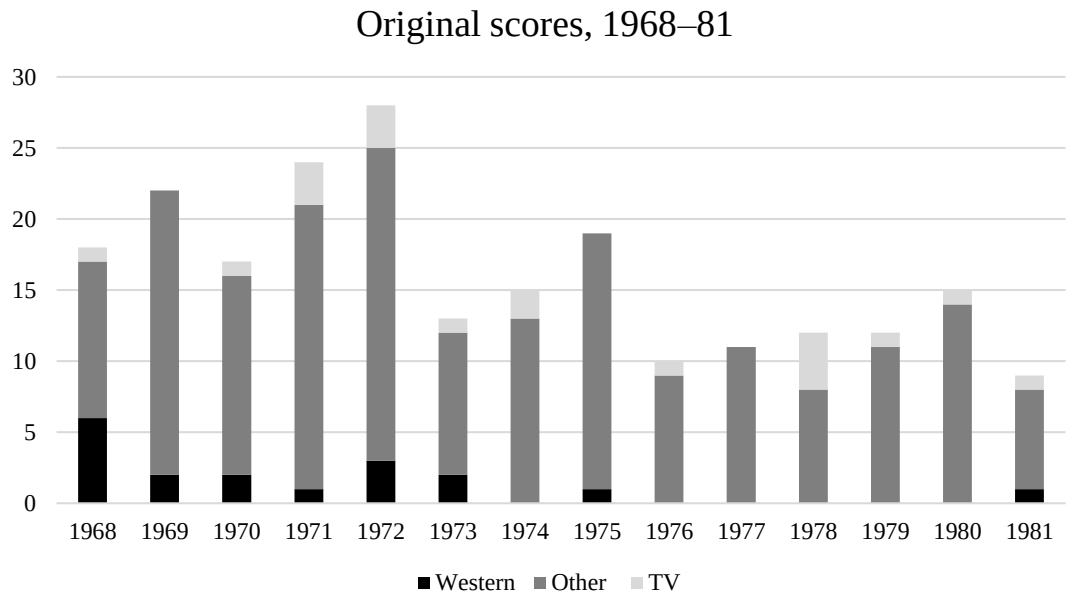


Figure 2.4 Scores composed by Morricone for film and television productions between 1968 and 1981, the year of *Occhio alla penna*, his final western before 2015's *The Hateful Eight.* Morricone's work on the television production, *Io e…* (1972–4) is excluded; he scored 28 of the series' 31 short episodes.

Audiences also appreciated the Italian exports, which enjoyed a popular reception that from an industry standpoint ultimately enabled this resurrection of the dormant genre; in the same fashion, this prosperity functioned as the prime stimulus for developments concerning Morricone, who found himself courted by American executives and scoring for the first time a film produced exclusively outside of Europe: Don Siegel's *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, the composer's sole American western before *The Hateful Eight.* The experience proved unsatisfactory for Morricone, however, who was disappointed at Siegel's lack of involvement (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 107). Only in the late 1970s did he rekindle his involvement in American productions.

In a concurrent development indicative of wider shifts, he was also commissioned to compose a theme for the ailing television programme *The Virginian* (1962–71), reinvented as

The Men from Shiloh in its ninth and final series in a desperate attempt to overcome the TV western's demise. Despite being 'the most atmospheric [musical] evocation of the Old West ever created for television' (Burlingame 1996, 93), the theme was, by measure of financial success, written in vain. Clearly the producers looked to Italian-western aesthetics for contemporary relevance: the music, an unashamed pastiche of the 'Dollars' themes, and the vivid comic-strip title sequence (Fig. 2.5) most obviously honour Leonian precedent. The show was only loosely based on Wister's novel, but a connection was nonetheless established between Morricone's music and a foundational western text. Other contemporary developments also signified the initiation and acceleration of the impact of Morricone's western film music in popular culture. The potential of its populist characteristics was realised as music almost exclusively drawn from the 'Dollars' films was rearranged and covered by a gamut of artists from 1967, including Hugo Montenegro, Henry Mancini, Little Anthony and the Imperials, Billy Strange, Leroy Holmes, and British rock group Babe Ruth.

Figure 2.5 Title card for the final series of *The Virginian*, retitled *The Men from Shiloh* and broadcast on NBC in 1970–1.

Morricone's growing celebrity continued to be a desirable asset for producers of films and records, and steadily empowered him to demand more in kind. The fee he charged to score the 1969 western *Un esercito di 5 uomini* would deter producer Italo Zingarelli from soliciting the composer's services again; Zingarelli instead turned to Franco Micalizzi to score *Lo chiamavano Trinità…*, which might have proved a prophetic turn of events with an eye to Morricone's dwindling western output (Baschiera 2020, 126). Fisher overlooks *Un esercito*, an MGM-distributed Zapata, which is better placed in this context of American–

Italian transaction. Its score demonstrates a particularly colourful deployment of timbral novelties, a keen embrace of the language that Miceli describes as 'archaic' (see Chapter Five, pp. 171–83), and the prominent use of a double-stopped fiddle (largely unused as a solo instrument since *Per un pugno*) that manages to approximate both white-roots music and the Wixárika violin. Nevertheless, the conspicuous references to the general style and specific motifs of the 'Dollars' films suggests that the producers were keen to maximise their investment. As the aforementioned statistics indicate, however, while the composer might have afforded to be more selective, this neither put off all producers nor dampened his work ethic.

Two obscure westerns of the early 1970s throw light on the allure of the Morricone's brand, and on the precise borders of his western film music. Producer Enzio Doria may have gladly paid less to procure old material for *Il ritorno di Clint di solitario* (dir. Alfonso Balcázar, 1972), which recycles music composed for earlier westerns, including *I crudeli*, *Tepepa*, and *Vamos a matar compañeros.* Morricone was known to director Balcázar, who co-wrote Tessari's 'Ringo' films, and their acquaintance may explain the peculiarity of this example. A similar instance is *Il giorno del giudizio* (dir. Mario Gariazzo, 1971), the score of which lifts some cues from *I crudeli* but is otherwise authored by and accredited to Claudio Tallino – attesting to the appeal of Morricone's music, if not his name. The composer's use of the Nichols alias for *I crudeli*, as well as the absence of the film's music from commercial recordings until 1978 (Morricone, 1978a), indicates that such recycling may have been premeditated. *I crudeli* itself also alludes not through sound design to *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*: the entrance of actor Al Mulock is synchronised to a 'coyote call' effect, the same that sounds on his appearance in the opening frames of Leone's picture. Such citations contribute to the ascendant postmodern aesthetic under discussion.

1968 resounds loudest because the zenith of the Italian western is normally placed in that year, not due to the genre passing its peak of production but to the premiere of *C'era una volta il west.* A highly influential film, it is for many Leone's finest work and ergo the finest Italian western – if it is appropriate to categorise it as such. Critical opinions deeming it the greatest western per se are not uncommon; Frayling is one of many who places it among 'the greatest films ever made' (2005, 204). Encouraged by the 'Dollars' successes, Paramount Pictures recruited Leone to direct this $5 million western (*Per un pugno*'s budget was just $200,000) that integrated Italian rhetoric into American tradition in his most patent homage to the West's mythic romanticism. This process is augmented by the inclusion of iconic American exteriors (Monument Valley) and A-list stars, distancing the film from the Italian-western corpus and aligning it with the broader western canon. Replete with allusions to Hollywood classics, and grappling notionally with the final conquest of the frontier in its Pacific-railroad plot, the film is self-consciously styled as a generic swan song. Such characteristics have inspired numerous appraisals of the film's postmodernist offering: Frayling calls it 'the first truly postmodernist movie' (2000, 266), and for Oreste De Fornari it is a 'meta-Western … deconstructionist … self-reflexive cinema' (1997, 9). For the swift,

decisive impact of these qualities on both Italian and American westerns, *C'era una volta* serves as the fulcrum upon which the entire dynamic traced in this chapter turns.

In discourse on Morricone's western music, its score vies for primacy with that of *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo.* This is partly a consequence of its substance and perceived quality, but is more indicative of the depth and intricacy of its narrative integration as part of the film's audiovisual 'impinge[ment] on the sensorial domain' (Durrand 2017, 60) of the audience. This manifests in the deft interaction of diegetic and nondiegetic musical content, and in the influence of Morricone's score on the tone, pacing, and form of the dramatic performance, deriving from the full realisation of the film-music dynamic idealised by Morricone and Leone at the outset of their collaboration. Co-ordinating with Leone from the earliest stages of development and thus impacting his directorial approach, Morricone again composed and pre-recorded music in advance of principal photography, but on this occasion it enjoyed substantial on-set presence. Permitted to do so by the time-honoured Italian custom of adding all sound in postproduction, the actors 'acted with the music, followed its rhythm, and suffered with its "aggravating" qualities', as per Leone's recollection (quoted in Frayling 2006 [1981], 196) – corroborated by Claudia Cardinale, who singled 'out the on set music as the most important feature of Leone's direction' (Cooke 2008, 372). At least as far as the western genre is concerned, potentially further, *C'era una volta* represents the high-water mark of Morricone's musical command of the composite filmic dynamic (Fig. 2.6).

Figure 2.6 In *C'era una volta*, diegetic musical material intersects with the nondiegetic score and its narrative importance is withheld, as in *Per qualche dollaro*, until the film's denouement.

Commentary on this film frequently gravitates towards analogies concerning opera: 'sooner or later, everyone who writes about Leone calls him "operatic"' (Cumbow 2008 [1987], 213). Since the publication of Staig and Williams' monograph, *Italian Western: The Opera of Violence* (1975), the comparison has been made self-evidently in the literature

regarding the film's – and the wider genre's – handling of music. *C'era una volta* codifies this sensibility, and not solely due to the deference to Morricone's score. Demonstrating sensitivity to the syntactical shift away from the 'Dollars' trilogy that Leone undertook for this film, Morricone adapted his approach correspondingly, turning towards more conventional leitmotivic dramaturgy by supplying more substantive thematic compositions for the leading characters, and effecting a greater sense of characterisation and commentary (Brown 1994, 230). He is more reliant on the orchestral ensemble and owes a larger idiomatic debt to Romanticism, while he perpetuates trademarks established in earlier westerns, and anticipates the sentimental, 'saccharine' lyricism that Cooke identifies in many subsequent scores (2008, 375–6). In step with the film's other elements, his music is simultaneously retrospective and radical, and a handful of the later westerns reflect this ambivalence.

One is the contemporaneous international co-production *La battaile de San Sebastian*, another picture bankrolled by MGM. It was overseen by experienced director Henri Verneuil, who, after a string of international successes that gained the confidence of Hollywood studios and the contempt of the Nouvelle Vague in equal measure, personally requested Morricone's services for the composer's first foray into French cinema (Grégoire 2020, 129). It was the first of six films on which Verneuil and Morricone would collaborate, with their next feature, the crime film *Le clan des Siciliens* (1969), featuring a popular Morricone score that anticipates the *poliziotteschi Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* (dir. Elio Petri, 1970). *San Sebastian* exhibits semantic and syntactic genre tropes, but the seventeenth-century setting alienates it from the Italian-western canon. Morricone handles the orchestra more traditionally, but idiosyncrasies endure in colourful instrumental additions and emphasis on gesture. It is of greater significance that the aforementioned inter-filmic development of thematic material denoting Mexican nationhood, soon furthered in *Il mercenario*, released nine months after *San Sebastian*, commences in this score (see Rossi 2022, 49–54). Conversely, *Two Mules for Sister Sara* represents an American attempt to embrace Italian-western rhetoric, for which Morricone configured an array of techniques prevalent in his westerns: modal melodies, soloistic deployment of aerophones, twelve-string guitar ostinati, and animal mimicry (of the titular asses). The ecclesiastical high-voice choral music is distinctive, but – juxtaposed with these other attributes – it perpetuates the patchwork character of preceding scores, a process condensed in the medley-like title sequence.

In the later years of the Italian western the deepening embrace of caricature – always signalling a *filone*'s decline – would impact Morricone's approach to the comedic majority of his late projects. As this broad shift was heralded by *Trinità* and its sequel, *...continuavano a chiamarlo Trinità* (dir. Barboni, 1971), so the musical style that these films (particularly the first) articulated helped to steer Morricone's reorientation, the composer clearly recognising the need for alternative, parodic scoring solutions. The intense involvement and minor-key grandeur of many earlier scores was eschewed in favour of either the effusive frivolity of the 'Provvidenza' films and *Un genio, due compari, un pollo*, or the *laissez-faire* swing heard in *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?* and *Giù la testa*. Morricone's penultimate western for

Corbucci, *La banda J. & S. – Cronaca criminale del Far-West* (1972), attests to the attraction of more passive, easy-listening scoring solutions in the 1970s, by which time the composer enjoyed great personal repute, popular music had embedded itself in Italian genre cinema, and enthusiasm for the Italian western was waning. There is little music altogether, which helps explain why Morricone could achieve such prolificacy in these years. The soundtrack recycles a cue derivative of the lightly swung banjo–whistle combination of 'Addio a Cheyenne' from *C'era una volta il west*, a forerunner of this late approach (which predates Micalizzi's *Trinità* music). The cue also features utterances of the protagonist's name, a device discernible in both 'Provvidenza' films and *Giù la testa*, all released in 1971–3.

Parody of a different, more interesting kind is the defining feature of 1973's *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, directed by Tonino Valerii and produced by an infamously overbearing Leone, who, while long incorrectly thought responsible for directing several scenes and excessively credited for the film's merits, was involved to a protective extent in Morricone's recruitment and participation. According to Roberto Curti, he 'personally supervised [the score] as customary, insisting on being present alongside Valerii on all discussions about the music' (2016, 94). *Nessuno* satirises the construction and perpetuation of myths, critiquing the integrity of the western's cultural cornerstone, and aspiring to be 'the final tombstone of the Italian Western' (Curti 2016, 97). Epitomised by the involvement of Henry Fonda – famously cast against type in *C'era una volta* and now playing an over-the-hill gunfighter in *Nessuno* – Valerii's film should be positioned alongside Leone's as a postmodern western. Exercising an irreverence more typical of the spaghettis, somewhat eschewed by the 'earnest grandeur' of *C'era una volta*, Valerii is enabled to wage the kind of reflexive discourse that permits the name 'Peckinpah' to be symbolically etched on a gravestone. And as the film cites Leone's pioneering films alongside Hollywood classics, music becomes an 'anthology of references and self-references' (Curti 2016, 94). Morricone self-effacingly ridicules the very formulaic scoring techniques he established, lampooning his shootout music, and practising intertextuality by distorting themes from his older westerns and other pre-existing works – reducing Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries' to absurdity as Rota did in Fellini's *8½* ten years prior. *Nessuno* features one of the composer's most interesting and overlooked scores, and can be interpreted as a creative appraisal of his own western film music.

The *filone* declined sharply after 1972. That year 42 Italian westerns were released, and come 1976 the annual total had dwindled to four. Morricone, in the inverse ascendancy, would score only two further Italian westerns, the comedies *Un genio, due compari, un pollo* (1975) and *Occhio alla penna* (1981). *Un genio* was directed by Damiano Damiani (of *Quién sabe?* fame) and was, like *Nessuno*, co-produced by Rafran Cinematografica, Leone's own production company. Morricone's work on *Un genio*, representing the final western in which the director was involved, can again be partially attributed to the pair's personal relationship. Offering parodic musical content of its own, the film could be satisfyingly appreciated as the duo's poignant joint farewell to the Italian western, if it were not for Morricone's later work on Michele Lupo's 1981 film, *Occhio alla penna.* But that later commission is satisfying in its own right for the film's conclusive status; it is, to quote Giusti, 'the last western with a real

budget and a solid seal' (2007, 328; author's translation). Although a true comedy-western score, it is at times an imaginative one, to which Morricone appears more committed than others of the later years. Upon its completion, the composer undertook a three-decade hiatus from westerns, ending when director Quentin Tarantino coaxed him back to the genre.

3. Compositional Techniques I

> To function well in a film, music has to have and to conserve its own formal characteristics – tonal relations, melodic relations … rhythmic relations, instrumental relations – in sum, a correct internal dialectic. If this formal correctness and technique is present in the music and is applied to the images, the result will certainly be better.
>
> (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 54)

This first of two chapters examining the techniques that make Morricone's western film music coherent and distinctive begins with a summary of his most salient principles of film composition. His creative philosophy was governed by an overarching taxonomic distinction, between *musica assoluta* and *musica applicata*. Apprehending the latter and its subcategory of film music, in which western music is almost exclusively contained, he discerned the film composer's role as one of effective subservience: they are obliged to adhere to a director's vision, are answerable to the expectations of audience and producers, and to the sociocultural context in which they operate. As they negotiate these correlated dynamics, composers must nevertheless, he declared, 'aspire to be true to themselves [as creators], strive for their personal progress, and … be happy in their work' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 119).

Morricone divided films threefold: arthouse, commercial, and 'those in between … ambitious enough to attain a good artistic level' without renouncing accessibility (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 117). Never is the aforementioned negotiation of parameters more

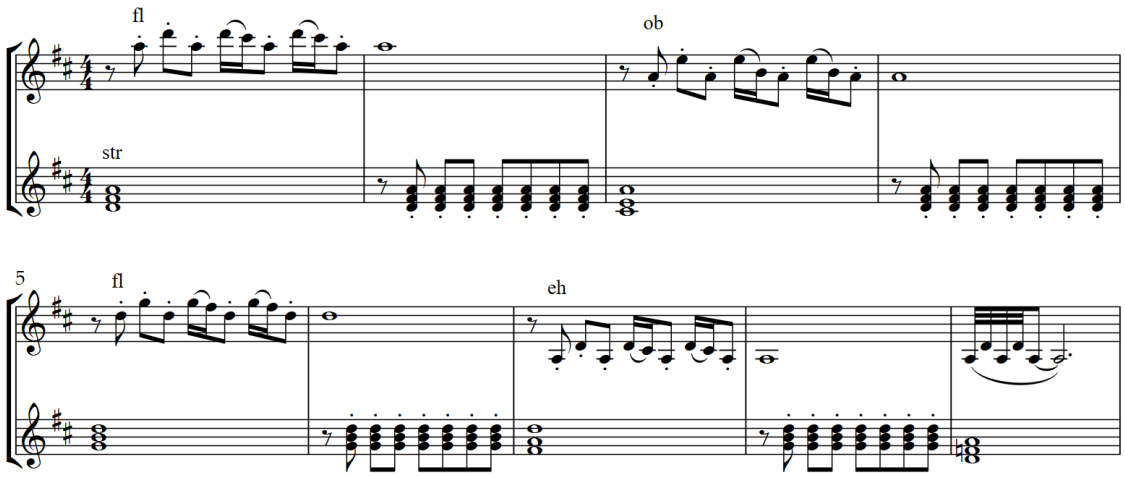
nuanced than when composing for films occupying that central ground, the formation of which category can be understood as Morricone's identification of a cinematic middlebrow, which, as we shall see, was symptomatic of an ongoing desire to reconcile deeper artistic tensions. Primarily in response to such assignments, Morricone developed what he coined his 'double aesthetic', mediation of these external impositions and his innate creative desires: 'it is necessary to respect and inform the audience, by suggesting to them, even unconsciously, that other things exist beyond what one is accustomed' to hearing (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 117). In the concurrent evasion of banality and facilitation of both commercial success and artistic integrity, he perceives the ideal solution, a successful exercise of 'freedom under conditioning', as the Lhassas express it (1989, 161).

Most of Morricone's westerns belong not to this third category but to the second, the commercialism of which still should not preclude innovation, as his attitude to arranging popular-songs helpfully demonstrates. In commercial contexts, however, the composer evidently prioritises intelligibility and clarity of musical communication, the technical means to which include 'regularity of phrases, the incisiveness and brevity of melodies, employing the traditional tonal system, and …reducing the variations of these parameters to a minimum, aiming for repetitiveness and timbral nuancing. These are the keys to commercial success' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 118). Here he speaks with respect to advertisement music, an extreme example, but principles of accessibility and appeal remain relevant where exploitational *filoni* are concerned.

If working in accordance with industry precedent and expectation amounts to a film composer's responsibilities – and the sentiment quoted at the outset of Chapter Four below encapsulates his stance regarding the dramaturgical *purpose* of film music – then the attributes just listed pertain to proper compositional practice and the efficacy of form. While they represent a strategy of service to commercial incentives specifically, they relate to, and are encompassed by, a more widely applicable technical theory, quoted at this chapter's outset. Morricone articulated this idea in the context of a methodical survey of how film scores are planned, written, and produced: 'the composer should [first] analyze how the director has structured a film. Then [they have] to invent appropriate musical structures that take into account that film's form and the director's style' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 53). The epigraph indicates his related belief that the composer should strive to create music in correspondence both to the pattern and content of the images to which it is joined, and to its inherent formal logic. It is this dual coherence that, he reasons, explains why pre-existing music – he exemplifies Bach and Mozart – often functions well in cinematic contexts (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 53), though not all would agree (see Greig 2021, 16–8). Although it appears a relatively uncontroversial opinion, its vagueness inhibits close scrutiny, for a correct 'internal dialectic' is not easily determined.

Using Ex. 3.1 as a practical example, however, one can infer the kind of musical mechanics to which Morricone seems to refer: quadratic phrasing, regular harmonic rhythm, call-and-response gestures in balanced ensemble interaction, and so on. In *Il buono, il brutto,*

il cattivo, the passage functions ambiently, accompanying sequences with dialogue. Only the statement of the film's ubiquitous 'coyote call' motif – and the innocuous coincident shift to the tonic minor – effects a clear sync point, signifying a sudden internal realisation for a character. One might most obviously contrast the techniques executed here with heavily synchronised narrative underscore, but even such an approach can exhibit what could justly be described as a sound internal dialectic when examined in isolation. Morricone himself evidently perceives synchronism to be antithetical to this concept of intrinsic formal integrity: music 'must follow its own specific discourse, have its own unity; privileging synchronism means renouncing all this' (Morricone, quoted in Comuzio 1980, 161).



Example 3.1 Reduced extract from 'La missione San Antonio', from *Il buono, brutto, il cattivo*, which exhibits little evidence of formal concession to the demands of accompanying images.

It would be remiss to argue that it is a feature singular to his music for westerns, but the idea serves to introduce this chapter's enquiry in a number of ways. First, it demonstrates a theory that guided his method and influenced his musical form. Second, it suggests why his material is often (with apparent ease and success) detached from its original setting, and occasionally repurposed in another. Third, it explains how he could frequently afford to compose in advance of photography, or despite falling asleep in postproduction screenings (Sollima, quoted in Tornatore 2021, 57:45). Finally, and most importantly, the notion assists in justifying the evaluative approach adopted here: partial disassociation of music from its filmic context in order to identify 'compositional techniques'. Despite the present study's methodological advocation of audiovisual intertextuality, the enquiry initiated in this chapter and resumed in Chapter Five awards music a greater degree of analytical priority.

The purpose of this and the following two chapters is to recognise this compositional logic in Morricone's western film music. In her analysis of a broad temporal and stylistic cross-section of film scores, contained within a wider study of Morricone's compositional output, Hausmann approaches his film music from a perspective similar to that adopted by this thesis. Despite warning against the potential issues in extrapolating insight in the face of such contextual and musical variety, she still concludes that certain underpinning compositional strategies can be identified in restricted categories of the composer's work (2008, 155–70). While not looking to effect quite such a broad coverage, these chapters outline these techniques as they are used in – and to define – Morricone's western music, drawing external connections as and when appropriate.

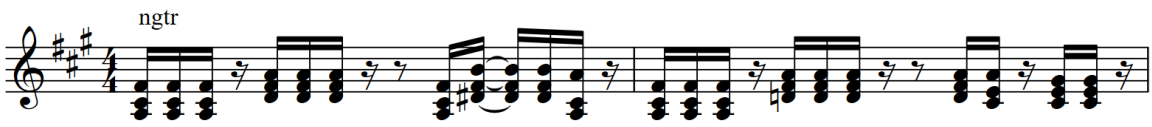
Between Americana and 'italianità'

First there was 'Americana' – here a byword for the sum of directorial, industrial, and audience expectations regarding film music for westerns imposed on Morricone at the inception of his relationship with and response to the genre. At first he was compelled to perpetuate western musical tropes, his familiarity with which has been demonstrated. But even here the picture is not so straightforward, with elements more characteristic of Italian scoring practice evident from the outset, a consequence of several factors. Italian audiences, although familiar with the classical western score, were nonetheless used to certain cine-musical conventions, themselves predicated on traditional score-production procedures. Complementing this is the fact that Morricone, idiomatically versatile though he was at this point, lacked experience in handling mature Coplandian or Romantic styles, and would not have found it simple to produce such material in substantial quantities. But the need for such solutions was also lacking in what were, at first, modest 'B-western' productions designed to assimilate seamlessly into the *terza visione* circuit. Therefore, 'Italianate' scoring customs also appear, even in pictures seeking to imitate American-western precedent.

Then in Leone's films the composer explored an alternative solution with which he grappled as the Italian-western movement progressed. This formula can be more accurately defined as the 'Dollars' idiom but, with an eye to the overarching musical developments in the genre, *italianità* signifies the establishment of the dialogue between traditional musical elements of the western, and the innovative elements borne by the broad Italian response to the classical Hollywood genre – of which Leone's 'Dollars' films continue to function as an exemplar. Morricone emulated this style to varying degrees, in deference to the demands inherent in popular, commercial genre film and the exploitation of its successful populist attributes in the interests of the industry. But, to reconsider his personal creative position, he also did this because it was *his* formula. That he would be so instrumental in determining his own creative conditioning, but also find himself restricted by it, is an interesting notion in its own right, aptly demonstrating the Lhassas' earlier summary. If it were not for his relative musical authority over the Italian-western movement, it would not be possible to speak of his influence so exclusively.

Working within a generic setting of which he never seemed to think highly, and which, as the years passed, competed with an increasingly congested workload, Morricone generally appears content to practise the kind of subtle variation to 'break the tedium' that marked his earlier popular-music arrangements, but this did not preclude thoughtful scoring solutions, demonstrations of originality, or evolution. Although, as this study broadly argues, the idiom articulated in these films maintains a more ambivalent relationship with extant western-genre music than often suggested, it still represented a newly constructed compositional blueprint that would briskly supplant its predecessor; this became the second dominant 'conditioning' under which Morricone produced his scores. As alluded to, however, tensions remained, between radical 'Italian' elements and traditional 'American' ones, but also, and perhaps more pressingly, between that idiom as defined in Leone's films, imitation of which was a constant expedient, and the variation of that idiom, towards which Morricone generally claims to have tended in his composition.

Given all this, it is fitting that Morricone opens his generic account with a device that a 1963 audience would have entirely expected: a title song. 'A Gringo Like Me', the opening number of *Duello nel Texas*, begins with an ostinato played on solo nylon-string guitar (Ex. 3.2). The guitar is joined by percussion, strings, and brass consecutively, doubling and embellishing the figure's voices in the same rhythmic pattern in a gradually intensifying introduction. The texture builds to a climax, whereupon vocalist Dicky Jones enters (singing in English). The song assumes an AABA structure, with an additional A-section transposed to G minor, and the first half of each A-section features *tutti* statements of the introductory pattern, which give way to more sustained harmonic, countermelodic material, notably supported by swung rhythms from a drum kit – less often heard in western songs of the era.



Example 3.2 The principal ostinato of 'A Gringo Like Me', from *Duello nel Texas*.

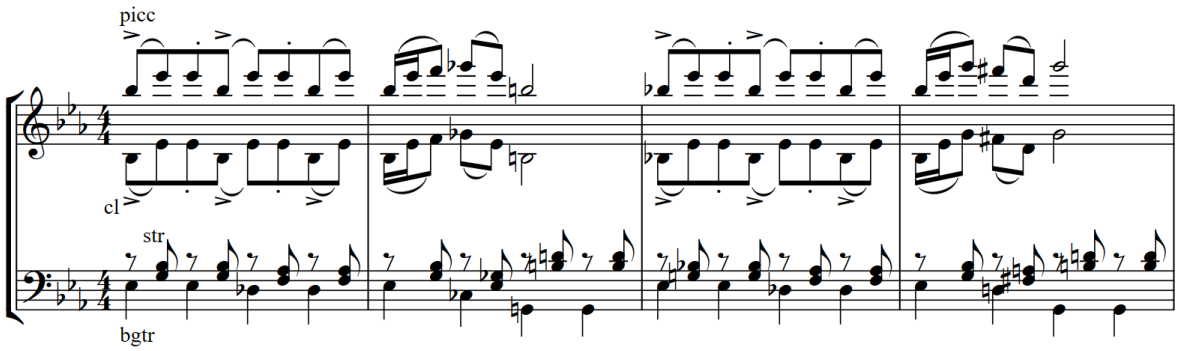
That the initial statement in the western corpus is made by a guitar may seem portentous, but the instrument was long a mainstay in western songs: in the instrumental title music of *Love Me Tender* (dir. Robert D. Webb, 1956), for instance, or the title song of *Cimarron* (dir. Anthony Mann, 1960). Less customary is the dramatic, up-tempo arrangement, estranging 'Gringo' from breezier ballads like Franz Waxman's for *Cimarron* or Tiomkin's paradigmatic 'Ballad of High Noon'. Contrary to this is a more familiar and contemporary harmonic and textural idiom, deriving from the symphonic branch of the Copland legacy (built on Lerner's 'Western codes'), and not from the folk-influenced style of Tiomkin. This is noteworthy for failing to bear out Morricone's recollection regarding the instructions of the

Jolly producers (to emulate Tiomkin), but it chimes with other remarks: asked by Giuseppe Tornatore in interview, 'up to [the release of *Per un pugno*] what was traditional American-western music like?', the composer answers,

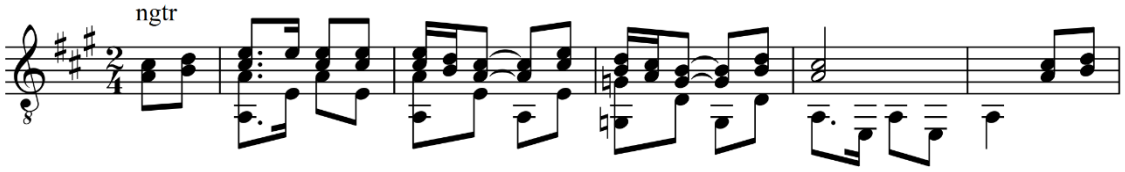
> I don't know what it was like, it's not like I listened to it much. I was especially impressed by Elmer Bernstein in *The Magnificent Seven*. That rhythmic part intrigues me. And when I made *Le pistole non discutono*, I wrote a piece with that rhythm, and then added my own melody and the novel orchestration. But that rhythm is very important, it may seem to matter little, but it is crucial.
>
> (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 145; author's translation)

Despite the fact that Morricone does not mention *Duello nel Texas*, the construction of its theme 'A Gringo Like Me' corroborates the composer's suggestion that Bernstein's music for 1960's *The Magnificent Seven* – a box-office smash in Europe – served as a paragon. Present are the 'symphonic' proportions, false relations, and staggered, syncopated rhythms distinguishing not only Bernstein's score but also Moross' landmark 1958 work for *The Big Country* and Copland's progenitorial compositions. While the use of 'folk' instruments is more reminiscent of Tiomkin's work, guitar does feature prominently in *The Magnificent Seven*, denoting the Mexican setting and characters. Morricone similarly utilises it in *Duello* and *Le pistole*, films set near and across the Rio Grande. He thus extends a lineage of musical stereotyping that extends back to early Ford and beyond, but, anticipating later, more sincere engagement with Mexican traditional music (which Bernstein himself undertook by drawing on Copland's *El Salón México* (1936); Cooke 2008, 130), Morricone begins to erode the instrument's novelty, the first signs of which process occur in *Duello* (Ex. 3.2). Interpolated Spanish-language love songs accompanied by nylon-string guitar in both films reinforce that mechanism, which is admittedly curbed by the brashness of the villainous Mexicans' cue in *Le pistole* – a parallel to Bernstein's own scoring of Eli Wallach's antagonist, Calvera. That said, the potential for a composer to provide a more nuanced solution is inhibited by problems inherent in the dramatic portrayal.

Analysis of *Le pistole* reveals traces of Bernstein's influence. In the film Pat Garrett, arriving in Mexico on the tail of 'Lonesome Billy' (the Kid), hitches a wagon ride with two children. They canter to a boisterous, Tiomkinian accompaniment (Ex. 3.3), the false relations of which are redolent of those that, following Copland's example in *The Red Pony*, became 'a staple of western themes' (Cooke 2008, 129) like Bernstein's. The likeness is uncanny given that Morricone professed unfamiliarity with such themes. Such writing is exceptional in his western-genre music, but his use of modality makes relatively pronounced tritone relations involving the flattened seventh (between C sharp and G natural in Ex. 3.4, for example) less rare.



Example 3.3 Reduction of the 'wagon ride' cue from *Le pistole non discutono*, the adventurous harmonic palette and playful rhythm of which are quite irregular in our filmography.

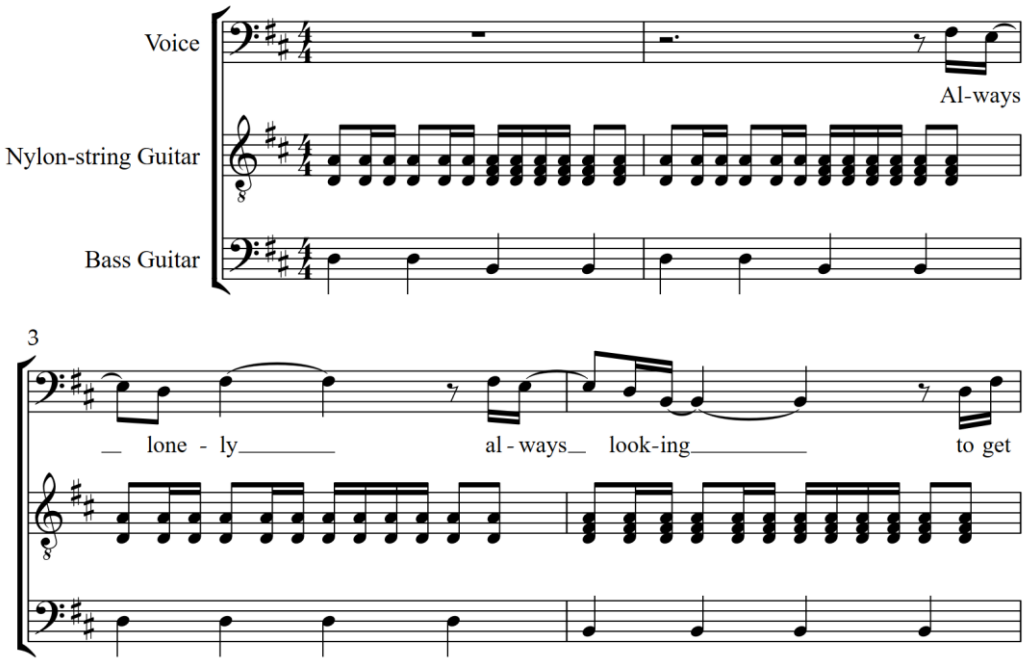


Example 3.4 The initial bars of a cue for solo nylon-string guitar from *Duello nel Texas*, heard as Gringo arrives at the saloon, looking for Maria.

Distinctive accent displacements in the wind parts and the strings' oom-pah pattern lead on to Morricone's reference to rhythm, the only parameter he mentions regarding pre-existing western music. Responding to that, Tornatore asks if the importance of this 'crucial' pattern derives from the imitation of a horse's gallop; Morricone answers in the affirmative, adding that the custom descends from Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624), in which trotting horses are rhythmically denoted. In *Le pistole*, the most striking, persistent rhythmic figure that could be construed as sounding a gallop is the 'hoofbeat' dactyl, appearing in the title song 'Lonesome Billy' (Ex. 3.5 below) and a recurrent 'galloping' cue. Certainly, this figure is littered throughout *The Magnificent Seven*, as it is through countless older western scores and Morricone's westerns. In the film's few cues, there is no sign of the more distinctive, 'impressive' syncopations (Ex. 3.6 below), more likely to be the rhythm Morricone says is 'not a true gallop [but] a precise, well-caught rhythm' (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 145; authors translation). There is similarity about the rhythm and contour of his vocal phrases and of Bernstein's main theme, but this can be considered neither gallop-like nor 'crucial'.

Such syncopation is channelled more crucially in *Duello*, in the accompaniment to 'A Gringo Like Me'. These patterns feature not only in that title song, which scores a speeding

horse-and-cart during the main titles, but also in instrumental reprises of the song. Given their attributes, and that in the same interview Morricone mistakenly recalls *Le pistole* as his first western, it is possible that these are the rhythms to which he refers. It is apparent that Morricone's understanding of western-genre precedent came partially through Bernstein, and furthermore that he consciously drew on that lineage through what he rightly terms a 'crucial' device on which he would never cease to call in westerns. His comments on the gallop echo those of Copland, who relished supplying 'inevitable steady rhythmic accompaniment to simulate cowboys on horseback' (Copland and Perlis 1992, 88). Contrary to the American, criticised for the overbearing rhythmic character of his film music (Winter 1941, 164), Morricone restricted his use of the kind of hoofbeat drive evident in the wagon-ride cue largely to where it functioned best: title music, action scenes, and the ubiquitous, usually transitional horse-riding sequences.

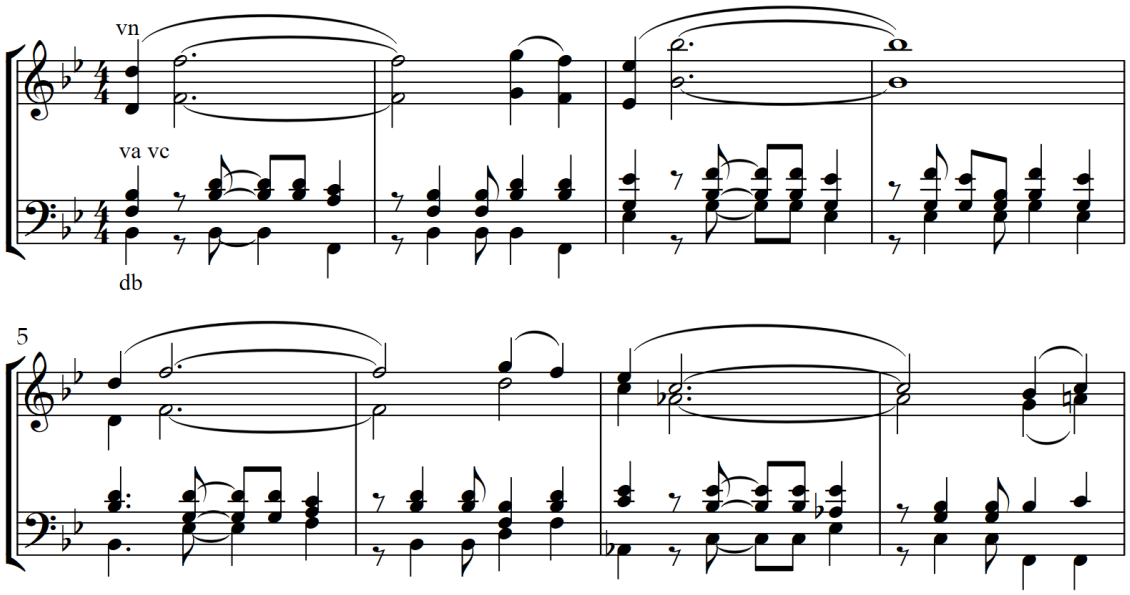


Example 3.5 Excerpt of 'Lonesome Billy' from *Le pistole non discutono*, omitting string parts.

Later examples of this approach include 'Santa Fè Express' (Ex. 5.23 below), featuring in scenes with train-related drama in the 'MacGregors' films, and the cue composed for the pulsating wagon chase at the outset *Un fiume di dollari*, the *tutti* stabs of which are evocative of Bernstein's rhythms. These films are deliberately in closer stylistic proximity to American westerns, but even more idiosyncratic spaghettis are marked by these characteristics: the title music of each 'Dollars' film is replete with dactylic patterns as well as variations on that rhythmic motif in melodic and textural material. Cooke notes how such use of title music 'to

accompany horse-riding in open countryside' in Leone's films honours Hollywood's precedent (2008, 371).

If *Le pistole*'s inheritance from Bernstein is by and large discreet and generic, the film connotes the music of Tiomkin more directly, and in a form that is far from 'watered down', and the influence of the latter composer is also perceptible in *Duello*. This should come as no surprise, given Morricone's earlier work. The title song 'Lonesome Billy' immediately effects a shift away from the frenetic, orchestral 'Gringo Like Me' and towards the lyrical sentimentality of Tiomkin's archetypal country–western ballad. The shift corresponds to the song's textual content and the slower pace of the visuals, admittedly, but firm allusions to a Tiomkin original, and the reduction in quantity and idiosyncrasy relative to the *Duello* score may suggest a degree of intervention on the part of Jolly's producers to 'water things down'. Those allusions concern certain compositional likenesses to Tiomkin's title song to *Gunfight at the O. K. Corral*; there is resemblance about the whistled responses to the vocal calls, which are themselves not dissimilarly phrased, commencing with an anacrusis, spanning a perfect fifth, and culminating in a sustained tone (Ex. 3.7 below).

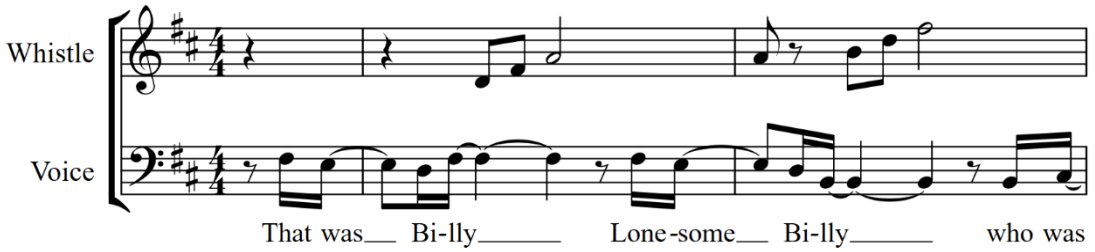


Example 3.6 Reduction of the main theme from Elmer Bernstein's title music for *The Magnificent Seven*, complete with 'galloping' accompaniment. Note the flattened seventh introduced in bar seven.

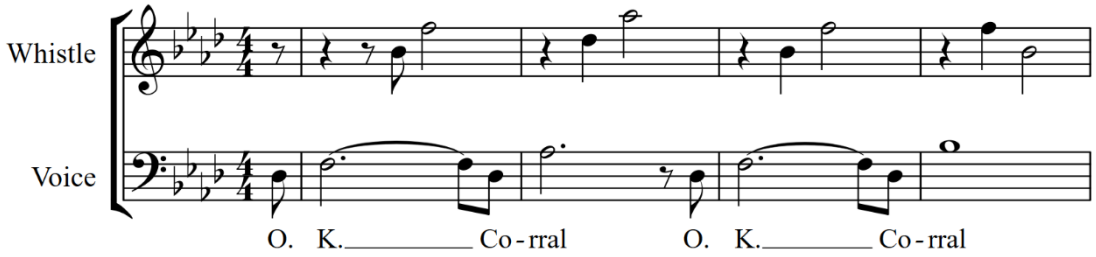
Importantly, these scores also exhibit more original techniques that would characterise Morricone's western music. Stylistic diversity is on display in the rendering of vaudevillian saloon music, sung love ballads, and the engagement with traditional American-western music under discussion. A recapitulated theme in *Duello* is, on its first sounding, marked by a

characteristic brand of homophony, featuring strings performing a triadic harmonic progression in slow, marching homorhythm, distinctly separated from a *cantabile* melody, played by trumpet; in other words, a proto-Degüello. This cue is identified with Richard Harrison's protagonist, but also (without trumpet and with less ceremony) introduces the climactic gunfight. Widespread use of lead trumpet in both scores already reflects the composer's inclination to use this instrument. In suspenseful scenes, instruments combine in dissonant gestural exchanges reminiscent of his earlier, *Klangfarbenmelodie*-influenced chamber works, such as *Distanze* (1958; Ex. 3.8 below). Miceli offers a similar observation about 'Musica sospesa' from *Per un pugno* (2021 [1994], 144), and this pointillistic gestural style becomes a stock solution. Meanwhile, in a number of action sequences, percussive and agitated left-hand piano is used in conjunction with snare drum, anticipating later westerns and notably the title themes of *La battaglia di Algeri* and *The Untouchables* (dir. Brian De Palma, 1987).

(i)



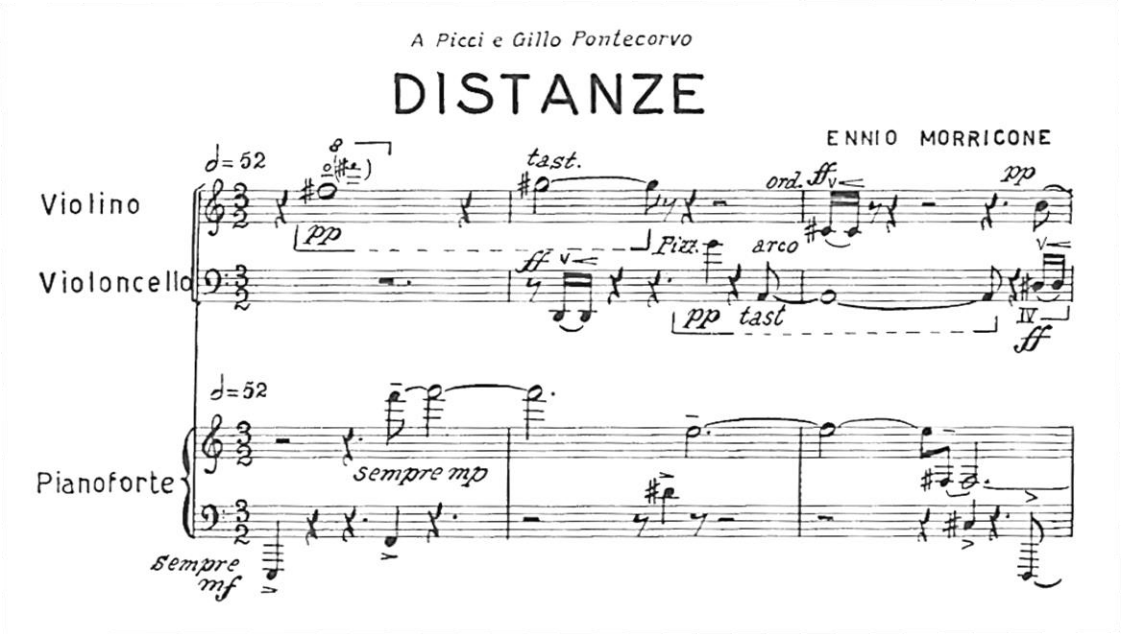
(ii)



Example 3.7 Kinship between Morricone's 'Lonesome Billy' (i) and Tiomkin's 'Gunfight at the O. K. Corral' (ii).

These observations are more pertinent with respect to *Duello*, ultimately the more Morriconian of the pre-Leone scores. *Le pistole* broadly offers more derivative orchestrations and less varied content. This may be reflective of intervention by Papi and Colombo in response to more daring elements in *Duello*, which, if true, would demonstrate an instance of

antagonism between the twin strands of Morricone's double aesthetics, and of an early victory in that regard for professional pragmatism over creative impulse. Nevertheless, in a western-genre context, even the most apparently traditional material in these scores possesses novel, 'Italianising' aspects when other aspects of its formal construction are considered, and such curiosities derive not necessarily from Morricone's compositional individuality but from industry-procedural conditioning. The so-called 'numbers' framework of these scores is perhaps the outstanding example – addressed in the following section.



Example 3.8 Extract from *Distanze* by Ennio Morricone, copyright 1973 Éditions Salabert. Reproduced courtesy of Éditions Salabert.

If speculation as to the Papi–Colombo retaliation is accurate, then the pair certainly did not prevail in the case of *Per un pugno*, whose music enacted a resounding reverse in that conflict, to which Leone's reinforcement was doubtless vital. If nothing else, the director's singular vision and obstinacy enabled – demanded – his composer's indulgence of his innate sensibilities and further cultivation of the earlier scores' peculiarities. This process hinged on the director's acute musical sensitivity and targeted instructions, explicitly insisting on the repurposing and renovation of 'Pastures' and the invocation of the Degüello, once again raising Tiomkin's spectre. The gritty, subversive amorality for which Leone strove appealed to a dispassionate soundworld, shorn of associations with Romantic utopianism, Manifest Destiny, and a WASP frontier. The composed visual rhetoric, stark editing, and austere sound design in his films conformed with Morricone's colouristic, accented, economical cue constructions. But most obviously, a contemporary overhaul of West and western alike required a contemporary sound. Royal S. Brown summarises: 'Within this context of realism,

revisionism, and multiply transplanted myth, it is fairly obvious that traditional film/music interactions could have no comfortable place' (1994, 228). In spite of the 'traditional' aspects this study argues are retained in Morricone's film music, the formula was innovative, and numerous compositional traits sounded strikingly new. If Jolly did question the suitability of the end product, their low initial expectations, lack of investment, exasperation with Leone, and the recording's already-complete condition, are factors that likely expedited its approval.

'Pastures of Plenty', implemented as *Per un pugno*'s title song (but for the melodic substitution of whistling and electric guitar for voice), was the kernel from which that film's score and the broader 'Dollars' idiom sprang forth. Arranging a song by an icon of American music whose text addressed the landscape of and life in the West, Morricone was guided by that engagement in his most striking compositional decisions, which he claims constituted an attempt to evoke its aural environment. In this manner, his handling drew on the frontier's cultural heritage. Indirectly, he drew further on the tradition of its scoring, and on principles underpinning it. Throughout its lifespan, the American western had inspired attempts to engender a distinctive, historically and culturally informed soundtrack. This end had inspired various means: the utilisation of 'folk' instruments; manipulation of traditional and period music both 'authentic' and 'ersatz'; and reconciliation of such material with the conventional, fundamentally orchestral, narrative-underscore schema of Hollywood film-scoring. Music in *Per un pugno*, and in the westerns that succeeded it, remains characterised by these principles to some extent. Morricone only renegotiates the terms of their interaction, perpetuating historical trends in a modernised stylistic synthesis.

An important aspect of that dynamic, and of its reinvention by Morricone, concerns the precise method of 'reconciliation': just how music conjuring the frontier setting is made into a functional film score. The formal properties of 'Pastures' serve as the stylistic foundation of the film's music, just as 'Titoli' serves as its motivic source. Already an eccentric composition for its skeletal textural design, modality, and particular instrumentation, the title music functions almost as a traditional opening medley, the fragments of which – comprising not only themes but the most compact motifs – are recycled in a manner that enables all the hallmarks of the 'Pastures' soundworld-in-miniature to be disseminated in the score. Implementation of the pre-existing song and the wholesale expansion of its musical template enabled the proliferation of smaller-scale innovative techniques. This, followed by the coveted success of film and soundtrack, would swing the compositional dynamic firmly, if not decisively, towards the vision of *italianità* the 'Dollars' music presented. This was a process absent in *Duello* and *Le pistole*, the scores of which, while not without their quirks, are cohesive idiomatically and motivically. As in Eurowestern-filmmaking more broadly to that point, the expedient of imitating Hollywood westerns meant that idiosyncrasies largely stemmed from procedural novelties or individual creativity. With the proclamation of the Italian western, a whole new arena was established.

The other important idiomatic kernel, more so for the Italian western than for *Per un pugno* itself, was the homage to the Degüello. The presence of Tiomkin's exemplar and an

antecedent in *Duello*, however, makes it not quite as original a device as some assessments would suggest, though the way this material was applied in *Per un pugno* was transformative. Other features of the score were also derivative, such as the chronic reliance on stock horse-riding figures, or the old-time-influenced (and pre-existing) 'Square Dance', which most notably channels the iconic dance scene in *My Darling Clementine*. Even in the film's most idiosyncratic musical traits, a spiritual facet of the genre is honoured in some way. This mechanism offers one explanation as to why such musical unorthodoxy was a resounding triumph (as far as the box office was concerned) and why it became enduringly characteristic. It would have been difficult to avoid traditional elements altogether, given that for all their revisionism the spaghettis are westerns after all. For a film even to exist as a western necessitates a degree of engagement with generic elements; Leone debunks frontier chivalry with one hand as he celebrates its grandeur with the other. This essential ambivalence between tribute and critique finds a correlate in the co-existence of seemingly oppositional aspects of Morricone's music. Many such characteristics thereof, traditional and progressive, would evolve variably over time, maintaining that ambivalence.

Produced in parallel to *Per qualche dollaro*, before that film would consolidate the 'Dollars' language, Tessari's 'Ringo' films encapsulate the dichotomous tension. In these pictures the director's career-long penchant for ironic subversion of the generic modalities in which he was forced to operate is juxtaposed with western-literate citational storytelling. Morricone accordingly curtails the more immediate eccentricity of *Per un pugno*'s offering, gravitating towards a more classical vernacular, while also practising humorous and earnest dramaturgical experimentation, and engaging with Mexican musical idioms. In later productions seeking closer proximity to Hollywood westerns, such as *Un fiume di dollari*, the 'MacGregors' films, *La battaile de San Sebastian*, and even *C'era una volta il west*, Morriconian peculiarities are likewise retained but in a more conventional orchestral context. Curiously, the two westerns that Morricone scored with American backing after the success of Leone's films in the US (*Un esercito di 5 uomini* and *Two Mules for Sister Sara*) offer retrospective scores, markedly reminiscent of 'Dollars' tropes when the diversification of *sottofiloni* had made such a 'straight' scoring solution seem almost anachronistic. The recurring title music of *Un esercito di 5 uomini* makes veiled references to 'Dollars' motifs, including the recorder quintuplet from *Per un pugno* and the distinctive rising fifths of the *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* theme – in the ubiquitous D minor. Any such instructions from *Two Mules for Sister Sara* director Don Siegel or his producers to rehash 'Dollars' ideas would not have been appreciated by Morricone, and may have contributed to the project marking a discouraging experience for the composer. This alludes to the fact that for Morricone personally – doubtless less mindful of how the antagonisms described manifested in his western scores – tensions of a different kind were of far greater concern. He spoke in detail in his interviews with Tornatore about the difficulties encountered in the wake of early successes with Leone:

> I had to refuse some [westerns]. I didn't want to be categorised as a western composer and excluded from the rest of the cinema. I absolutely had to put an end to the habit of always calling me. It became a dead end. [*Per un pugno*] gave me the role of the specialist, and I was no specialist.
>
> (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 147–8)

Despite the capacity to reject less appealing commissions that presumably grew in accordance with his status, one can easily imagine the pressure to stick to his tested formula that was exerted by producers and directors Morricone did elect to work with. Neither the willingness to make concessions prescribed by his compositional philosophy nor an enhanced personal profile necessarily alleviates the occupational challenges of working in film composition. Indeed, the latter condition is inflammatory, especially in the context of an exploitative industry apparatus in which recruitment was in many cases predicated on expectations steered by the exemplar of Leone's films. Just as those productions remained the totem of the Italian-western movement, their music was a keystone in the imaginations of Morricone's collaborators, and therefore in his subsequent scores. He would have doubtless preferred that not to be so, but he nonetheless had to contend with this reality. The following sections reflect on the salient elements of this blueprint, the ways in which they emerged, solidified, and evolved, and the extent to which their prescriptions were obeyed and undermined.

Score form and structure

In a film score, compositional techniques at the uppermost level can be understood as those concerning the structure of the music track, namely the placement of cues and the arrangement of material. It is possible to identify distinct characteristics in this regard, and various relevant observations have been made in the literature. Wagstaff suggests, for example, that the positioning of music in Italian westerns is motivated by social customs of *terza visione* cinema-going, an environment in which audience members would enter, exit, and converse freely. Music was utilised, therefore, as an attention-grabbing tool, indicating that a scene was worth watching (Wagstaff 1992, 254). It is in these often 'dialogue-free climactic moments', Cooke observes, that the music is prone to its 'drawn-out hyperbole' (2008, 372). Brown offers similar insight: 'Morricone's developed themes are at several points in most of [Leone's] films allowed to play through, creating moments of cine-musical lyricism that more than one critic has described as operatic' (1994, 228). Leinberger is one critic who applies the operatic analogy that often surfaces in discussion of such instances: 'Morricone's scores often consist of short musical pieces, very much like a number opera in which choruses, arias, and recitatives are clearly defined' (2004, 17).

Various characteristics of Italian film music are seen to demonstrate the influence of Italian opera. One of the most noteworthy of these – especially when compared to American

convention – concerns score structure. Italian film music is often seen as emulative of Italian opera in its cues' inheritance of a more closed, serial form, a 'numbers' scheme placed in contrast to the through-composed, Wagnerian underscore of classical Hollywood cinema from the sound era onwards. Initially, likeness derived from the material handled (aria favourites, *canzonette*, etc.), but music-production procedures, adapting to this aesthetic, lent themselves to this method of scoring (Ladd 2018). Individual cues were more autonomously organised and constructed, and more frequently were designed to convey emotion or establish ambience than to trace movement or action or follow a linear dramatic contour. Dyer attributes this to the legacy of popular 1930s cinema, taken on by Neorealism (2006, 29–30). That cinematic movement awarded music relative formal independence, but scores were still sparse, quiet, and backgrounded, and – counterintuitively – there was less melodic content than the operatic tag would suggest. Cooke also observes its striking quietness and a stagnant idiomatic reliance on Romanticism (2008, 365–6). Scores, then, were less synchronised, more fragmented, and, in many cases, insubstantial.

For Emilio Audissino (2014, 59–60), the numbers structure and a reduced adherence between sound and image are features of European film music more generally, a corpus owing debts to French as well as Italian number opera. At any rate these alternative structural and functional scoring philosophies – and the jazz and popular-music languages that increasingly expressed them – would contribute to the partial international supplantation of the Romantic, orchestral narrative underscore in the 1960s. He summarises:

> the classical-style "spatial perceptive function" (the case in which music directs the viewer's attention to a particular element inside the framing) holds a minority position in the new style. Consequently, the Mickey-Mousing and leitmotiv techniques became obsolete. Modern style favored the emotive function (adding or reinforcing the emotional tone of a scene) or the cognitive function (clarifying or implying the connotations and implicit meanings).
>
> (Audissino 2014, 59)

As we have seen, Italian popular cinema was ahead of the larger scoring curve in the adoption of popular styles in the 1950s and 1960s. Dyer, besides noting the debt to 1930s popular cinema, places these developments within the long tradition of Italian cinematic song, finding that such attributes were influenced not just by opera but in complementary fashion by 'forms such as *café chantant*, cabaret, *varietà* and *rivista*', which are even more discontinuous than opera. This cinema accorded 'with an aesthetic … not concerned with [establishing] spatial-temporal continuity [through music] but with variety and change' (2013, 71–3). The emergence of films and *filoni* with a popular-music presence may have brought music to the fore and effected obvious stylistic changes (Morricone composed a great quantity of material including numerous songs for 1962's *La voglia matta*, for instance) but

the ‘numbers’ approach is certainly perpetuated. Even in genres seeking to emulate American scoring customs by using a traditional orchestral vocabulary, such as pepla and Eurowesterns, that structural framework persists.

And it persists strongly in Morricone’s western scores, unsurprisingly given that he professed little knowledge of extant American westerns, had mostly handled popular songs and incidental music for TV, radio, and theatre in his career, and composed concert music distinguished by the serialist reduction of materials. In other words, such historical observations find a complement in Morricone’s personal inclination towards stylistic and idiomatic mixture, and formal independence and integrity. *Duello* and *Le pistole* already feature distinctly compartmentalised scores, comprising clearly demarcated cues with unambiguous functions and associations. In the former: ambient material for diegetic honky-tonk piano and nondiegetic Hispanic guitar, a diegetic song, a recurring piece for melodica (posing as harmonica) solo, the prototypical Degüello, title-music recapitulations, and so on. In the latter, which is rather less variable: another song, more ambient guitar, and recurring cues matched to horse-riding, the Mexican villains, the brothers Clanton, and the baking-desert scenes. There are sync points, but most cues cohere to autonomous structural principles, are monothematic, and can be easily extracted and recycled.

It is important that excessive credit is not awarded to *Per un pugno di dollari* for the Italian western’s distinctive musical character. There are structural idiosyncrasies in the pre-Leone scores, which among other traits distinguish them from Hollywood antecedents. This is despite incentives for both productions to appear American-made, though the fundamental motive was not to achieve that specifically but to be as commercially successful as possible. Morricone was adept with this language, but it would be an exaggeration to imply that its application here at his hand, or at those of other European composers, was unprecedented. The western’s musical brand having been influenced itself by the increased autonomy of song and dance forms, the scores to many American films are in truth positioned far from the through-composed extreme about which commentary often generalises. Even so, both wider customs as well as Morriconian compositional traits, of which there is evidence in *Duello* and *Le pistole*, nonetheless laid groundwork for distinctive structural attributes in *Per un pugno.* Furthermore, it must be remembered that innovative and traditional elements co-exist in Morricone’s music for westerns: the interesting musical sequences of that score and many that would follow are situated alongside unremarkable stock cues that – any novelty about their instrumentation or idiom notwithstanding – basically function in a conservative manner, reinforcing the genre frame and its conventional musical narration. Even in scores for Leone’s films, there is functional material that conventionally generates tension, imbues ambience, and glorifies equestrianism.

Quantities of music remain high thereafter in Morricone’s filmography, evidencing the esteem in which music was long held in Italian-western-filmmaking, but the relative dearth of material in some later westerns, like *La banda J. & S., Un genio, due compare, un pollo* and *Che c’entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?* is indicative of the changing musical and stylistic

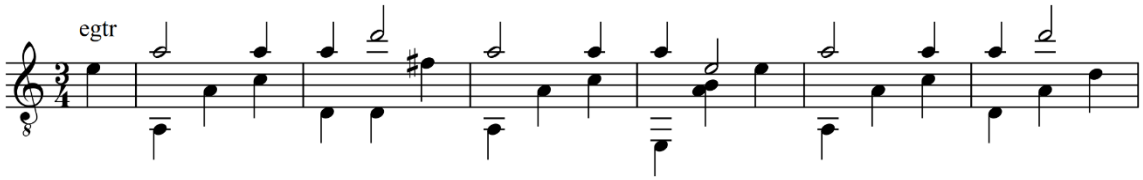
demands of the genre, the composer's intensifying workload, and perhaps also his fatigue. In the last of these films, barely fifteen of its 98 minutes are scored by original music, which almost exclusively consists of variants of two compositions – there is nothing that could be described as underscore. It is telling that his last score for an Italian western that can be considered substantial in both form and content is *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, which was produced by Leone.

Despite caveats regarding the roots of numbers form, the aforementioned structural features of *Duello* and *Le pistole* can be observed in Morricone's subsequent western scores. Given the theoretical alignment with the internal-logic doctrine he had expounded since at least the early 1980s, this is sensible. Such attributes are congruent with – perhaps even causal with regard to – the formal independence that typically follows when accompaniment techniques like wholesale synchronism are rejected. This intermedia relationship will be explored in a handful of representative examples.

In 'The Widow' from *I crudeli*, an electric guitar lilts between tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmonies in steady triple time (Ex. 3.9 below). The cue sounds twice in brisk succession in the film, and the recording is clearly truncated in both soundings, each of a different duration. The material itself remains unchanged, however; it seems structurally indifferent to the contour of visual movement or that of textual content in the two scenes it underscores, which both feature dialogue between the same two characters. Although the composition is at a functional level in keeping with underscore, it complements the sentiments being discussed not through the nuances of its structural movement but through the mood engendered in its totality. In *Faccia a faccia*, 'Clandestinamente' is heard when a few heavies attempt to dispatch Beauregard (Fig. 3.1 below). It is a typical suspense cue that consists of strings and winds layering hushed, sustained, and dissonant intervals against an electronic drone, with no tangible concessions made to the scene's nuances, again despite its underscore function. The one clear gestural event, an accented cluster, only corresponds in the loosest fashion to the villains' convention before Beauregard – an 'implicit' sync point (see below). And in *La banda J. & S.*, when Sonny, lying in tears, expresses her true feelings for Jed, a small rhythm combo led by solo trumpet plays 'Sweet Susan', a lyrical, backbeat, interpolated pop ballad that would function no less effectively in any number of contexts. Just as the quantity of music Morricone composes broadly diminishes as the genre wears on, so does this level of disconnect, which – compounded by the predominant pop idiom utilised in the 1970s films – creates an firmer sense of a sequence of numbers, even of a compilation score. Such mechanics seem a reasonable consequence of Morricone's disposition regarding the internal dialectic, as well as aforementioned factors regarding formula and workload.

It follows, then, that a number of counterexamples can be found – though far from exclusively – in Leone's films, in particular the later, bigger-budget and higher-profile productions. If Morricone did not devote greater time and energy to these prestige projects, then they almost certainly entailed closer co-ordination with respect to music and sound design between composer and director. Sync points of varying precision are especially

perceptible at the conclusion of cues. Two similar examples serve us here: ‘Il tramonto’ and ‘Padre Ramirez’, from *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*. The former furnishes the introduction of the villain, Angel Eyes. He approaches the camera from a great distance against the sunset, to a florid, metrically liberal melody for nylon-string-guitar, sounding over widely spaced, nearly static D-minor strings. Just as his menacing expression becomes discernible, the guitar gradually accelerates through perfect fourths rendered with a rough and percussive timbre. ‘Padre Ramirez’, meanwhile, accompanies the later reunion of Tuco and his brother. It comprises a *cantabile* melody again played on acoustic guitar over gently paced chordal strings. This is repeated once, before the material segues into a recapitulation of a section of the title music, led by electric guitar at a fast tempo; this shift aligns with a wry smile betraying inner realisation for Tuco.



Example 3.9 The opening bars of ‘The Widow’ from *I crudeli*, performed by solo electric guitar.

Figure 3.1 Beauregard is confronted outside the saloon in *Faccia a faccia.*

Further reflection on these sequences offers insight regarding Morricone’s relationship with synchronism, a method that, as has been noted, he deems incompatible with the notion of a logical internal dialectic. Mainly resulting from smooth technical execution on

Morricone's part, and the appropriate sense of grounding that a familiar theme offers after a scene of exceptional tenderness, the overt synchronism in 'Padre Ramirez' is cinematically satisfying. But at a purely 'musical' level, at which Morricone advocates for autonomous logic, one could say there is incongruence. The coda may proceed to offer the kind of formal closure to which Audissino alludes, but the internal dialectic is arguably disrupted by the transition to starkly contrasting material. Nevertheless, in spite of this musical submission to visual and dramatic demands for synchronism, the construction serves the composite filmic whole. Furthermore, one might argue that internal logic is achieved not within the cue but in the context of the wider score of which it is part. The deviation in 'Padre Ramirez' is triggered and justified by the essential agency of drama and image, but musical isolationism threatens to invalidate this. Such issues can arise when constituent multimedia strands are segregated (though this process can also yield insight; see Cook 1998, 133–46), and indeed when sections of a work are extracted from the whole.

'Il tramonto' throws light of a rather different kind on the present enquiry, not merely as a result of its heightened sense of a natural flow into the concluding and less contrasting material, but for its lack of such a clear sync point provoking that shift. There is no precise, momentary visual stimulus inviting a corresponding event in the music. Instead a somewhat more discreet and gradual event occurs in the drama – to which it is possible to attach a looser sync point in the spotting process – that can correlate to an accordingly less-apparent musical development. Morricone and Miceli describe such an opportunity for audiovisual interaction as an 'implicit' sync point:

> Implicit sync points […] can be defined as those that perhaps maintain an autonomous musical course. Together with a filmic event, they only slightly modify the structural musical characteristics of a composition. Also, they are slightly and, above all, subtly allusive. In other words, the implicit sync point underlines sentiments more than events, thoughts more than actions.
>
> (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 76)

They offer an example from *C'era una volta in America* (dir. Leone, 1984), in which the protagonist's reminiscence, triggered by a photograph, corresponds to the faint emergence of 'Deborah's Theme' (Ex. 3.21 below). That this synchronisation occurred coincidentally on the application of the composer's pre-recorded music (material that was indeed written for another film entirely; Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 70) illustrates that in cases where pre-existing audio is utilised, or where footage is re-cut to music, the benefits of synchronism can be reaped without compromising musical coherence. Morricone and Miceli oppose implicit sync points to 'explicit' ones, attached to unambiguous motions inviting mickey-mousing, stingers, or anything that 'accentuates in a very obvious way' (2013 [2001], 76). The example of 'Deborah's Theme' demonstrates implicit synchronisation at the onset of a

cue, facilitated here by a gentle pedal-point opening that reflects Morricone's professedly favoured method of easing audiences in and out of cues with subtlety and 'good manners' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 191).

While examples of softer beginnings abound in the western scores (hushed, sustained strings are a hallmark), the rather less subtle explicit onset is also a prevalent technique in the genre, and most typically occurs alongside a cut as opposed to a diegetic event – the quintessential usage is the sudden cut to a character's screen-filling, stone-faced expression, usually confronting an opponent during a shootout, but not always: consider the hard cut to Tepepa's face, punctuated by the V–I motif that forms the score's motivic bedrock (Fig. 3.2; incidentally, the sync point at the next cut *does* damage the musical integrity, courtesy of clumsy sound editing). But despite the exactness of the required synchronisation, the presence of a singular point once again asks little of the music by way of formal concession. Even when such a sequence involves multiple points, it is possible for music to demarcate a singular moment with greater freedom than when it imitates motion or cutting patterns. In other words, the composer can more easily maintain internal coherence.

Figure 3.2 Hard cut to the character Tepepa, from the eponymous film.

'L'estasi dell'oro' from *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, one of Morricone's most celebrated cues (often extracted for his concert performances), is revered for such heightened formal integrity in the face of an extraordinarily busy interplay of cuts, framing, and camera motion. Jeff Smith opines:

> the cue's harmonic progressions and rhythmic drive suggest that it advances according to a musical rather than a narrative logic […] the length of the cues ['L'estasi dell'oro' and 'Il triello'], their melodic songlike character, and their

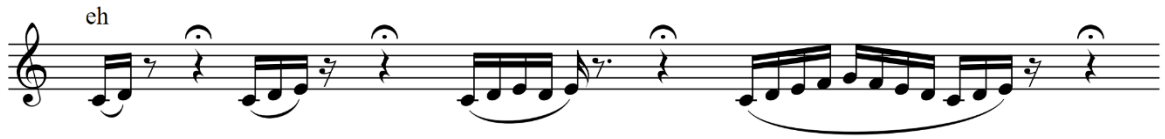
> clear formal demarcations suggest that Leone has used cutting and camera movement to develop set pieces attuned to the specific mood and expressive character of the music. Instead of using Morricone's music to score the film, it seems rather that Leone has "imaged" the music.
>
> (Smith 1998, 151–2)

The validity of Smith's insight into the cinematic result notwithstanding, Morricone's later revelation that its realisation involved meeting two-dozen sync points brings the method Smith envisaged into question (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 179). The cue was recorded in one sitting with all 80 orchestral players, and there were imperfections in the synchronisation. However, as the composition met the sync points implicitly in the first place through mostly delicate shifts in tempo and orchestration – and as no more footage with which to edit out these imperfections was available – the musical unity that Smith rightly perceives was maintained at the expense of precise synchrony. This was a sacrifice Leone consciously made, according to Morricone: 'a new [recorded] execution would almost certainly have been less spontaneous, less effective, so Leone decided to sacrifice the visual synchrony a little to the advantage of the music' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 179–80). In the pursuit of internal musical logic, even where synchronisation is to some extent targeted, there will always be such disconnect. In cases like this, however, one would not necessarily infer that the music stemmed from such a detailed sync-point scheme, given its overall cohesion. At times the objective will be to obscure the fact that such artifice was pursued in the first place.

The most identifiable and contained examples of synchronisation in Morricone's western film music relate to the technique just mentioned: the stinger. His stingers are frequently used conventionally, to punctuate movement. The most overt such case can be found in a gunfight in *Da uomo a uomo*, when the saloon pianist is instructed to give the customary count of three – but on a keyboard: 'Piano-player, hit three notes!' Morricone augments the diegetic strikes with three resounding, richly orchestrated, and synchronous Cs. (He adds a D to the third chord – perhaps in response to the pianist visibly pressing D as well as C, but the second strike, clearly on D, still prompts a C from the soundtrack.) More distinctively, such concise musical events can serve a characterising function, their 'sting' to some extent aligned with the actions or aura of the dramatic players; in *Una pistola per Ringo*, the steps that Ringo takes in his game of hopscotch are emboldened by increasingly elaborate flourishes from a cor anglais (Ex. 3.10 below) – before a pop-and-whistle effect mimics the raising of his head and lifting of his hat. The humorous thrust of that effect anticipates its application in later comedies, and Chion (1994, 64–5) himself exemplifies the technique's comically subversive potential in Jacques Tati's comedy *Mon oncle* (1958).

Such devices, often implemented in a tongue-in-cheek manner, are prevalent in the 'Dollars' films, something as suggestive of the detail in which their music was attended to as

it is of Leone's sonic sensibilities. In these films, musical material, often in an extremely reduced form, characterises with such specificity and constancy of instrumentation and form that many gestures closely approximate – and are better discussed in the context of – leitmotif (see below, pp. 106–10). Morricone's practice develops from the idiosyncratic employment of musical micro-markers in the 'Dollars' films to the substantial thematic schemes exercised in *C'era una volta il west*, *Il mercenario*, and *Giù la testa*. Moreover, that formal conciseness is itself noteworthy, it being a product of the fragmentation process that has also been mentioned, which possesses kinship with the material austerity distinguishing Morricone's concert works. However, due to the fact that many are too brief to constitute compositions in the truest sense, there is in truth scarcely any intrinsic musical logic to be sacrificed for synchronisation, and because, once again, the sync points to which these events must adhere tend to be solitary, there is no pattern of synchronisation to impose such a sacrifice; it is merely a matter of timing. In their brevity these events do foster pinpoint attachment to images, but they do not mimic action explicitly.



Example 3.10 Transcription of the English horn part, as heard when Ringo takes his hopscotch steps in *Una pistola per Ringo*, to which each phrase (between pauses) is timed.

Conversely, the most renowned, characteristic examples of asynchronism are those moments of 'drawn-out hyperbole': primarily gunfights but also other musical set pieces (the reunion of Ringo and Hally in *Il ritorno di Ringo*, for example, or the botched hanging of Harry in *…e per tetto un cielo di stelle*) in which there is want of dialogue, action, and often any movement at all. When so little occurs visually and textually, music is freer to assume any form, the integrity of which justifies, even induces, the reduced pace of the action. Rare is the instance where the music is required to obey the rapid and long series of sync points Leone prescribed for a passage that is the epitome of his audiovisual meticulousness. In cases such as 'L'estasi dell'oro' and 'L'arena', which concludes *Il mercenario*, that integrity is supplied by regularity of phrases and harmonic rhythm, recurring melodic material and cyclical chord progressions. Others, such as 'La condanna' from the final duel in *La resa dei conti* and 'Il pollo' from *Un genio, due compare, un pollo* are marked by greater rhythmic looseness, their elaborate melodic flourishes unfolding in looser time between widely spaced chord changes and punctuated gestures. This horizontal expansion engenders flexibility as regards potential audiovisual correspondence, and it offers an aesthetic complement to the stark cuts and rapid zooms that became characteristic of the genre's visual style.

In interview with Miceli (1982, 319), Morricone placed the onus on music in these moments, becoming one of many to draw the operatic analogy:

> I think that music should be present when the action stops and crystallizes; as in musical theater we can find the *recitativo* and the aria, music in cinema should be placed in correspondence with the aria, when the action stops and there are thoughts and introspection, not when the action has its own narrative dynamics
>
> (Audissino 2014, 60; Audissino's translation)

In older, stricter number opera, vocal lines adhere to the libretto during recitative to advance the narrative, while music can demand textual concessions in return during arias, when regularity and quality of melodic content is more pressing. Morricone perceived the capacity for similar dynamics in film, and his western music generally that he found a suitable arena in which to fulfil it, seizing the opportunity to make fewer formal concessions of his own. It is in accordance with the western's most enduring features (duels, landscape shots, horseback sequences) that set-piece scoring opportunities analogous to 'arias' can be found. Low demand for synchronism in such scenes appealing to expansive lyricism aligns with the composer's own philosophical and creative disposition, and is what enabled him to work so independently of the cut. This is what Brown gets at when he opines that the 'cue mentality per se is almost totally lacking in Morricone's Sergio Leone scores, as well as in many of his other efforts … [he] had the luxury of writing developed themes that have musical logic while generating ample amounts of cinematic effect' (1994, 228). Cues in Morricone's scores are not usually constructed in response to horizontal particulars of visual sequences. Form and contour are determined not merely by an intrinsic musical dialectic but often, as the following section illustrates, by thematic content which is often sourced from elsewhere in the score, the integrity of which depends on the overarching conservation of that material. It is clear that Morricone purposefully fostered this looser, distanced relationship with imagery; such methods would contribute to the onset of Audissino's 'modern style' (2014, 57–68). The less dependent multimedia exchange they facilitated also effectively exercised the kind of intertextual mechanics that would preoccupy prominent later film-music theorists like Chion (1994) and Nicholas Cook (1998).

These moments of hyperbole, encouraging the concession of narrative agency and experiential primacy in the audiovisual dynamic, constitute the most acute instances of the generally heightened perceptibility of Italian-western music. Such perceptibility is facilitated by contained and independent cue structures, by extreme motivic reduction discussed in the following section, and by the characteristics of orchestration addressed in Chapter Five. But a further enabler was this material's situation in a sound design deliberately manipulated so as to reduce competition between music and other elements of the soundtrack (dialogue and other diegetic sound). Through careful management of the interplay of these elements, which

effectively amounted to the restrained utilisation of speech and sound, the overall prominence of music relative to other sounds and visual content in turn – in both a vertical and horizontal sense – could be enhanced, especially during 'arias'. For commentators such as Frayling and indeed Morricone himself, Leone served as an exemplar, demonstrating the potency of this approach throughout his filmography. And while other directors were likely not as hyper-attentive to the nuances of their soundtracks, nor as sparing in their use of dialogue and diegetic sound, a more economical approach to sound and the starker musical presence this facilitated would distinguish the Italian western and compound the immediacy of music.

Morricone was quite content to work within such a dynamic. He stated in an impromptu 2004 interview in a Milanese bookshop,

> [u]pon confronting John Cage's [1958] lectures and performances I slipped into a very heavy state of shock […] music once separated from the instrumental context, or the human factor […] acquires another meaning. I refer here to the […] fact that music needs in cinema absolute silence. When they say that I gave my best to Leone's films it is absolutely false. The merit is Leone's who leaves music isolated, cleansed of other sounds and elements of reality. […] The screen generates a flat image, which without music could remain as such. Music offers it a sense of vertical depth and horizontal dynamism all possible if surrounded by silence. This is necessary because the auditory system, therefore, the brain is not in condition to hear, comprehend multiple sounds of different contemporary provenance. We will never be able to understand four people talking simultaneously.
>
> (Morricone, quoted in Sorice 2005, 9)

Morricone's references to what 'surrounds' music aurally, and what sounds 'simultaneously' to it, captures the notion of music's audibility relative to its horizontal and vertical contexts. He alludes to these two dimensions himself with regard to the musical enlivening of the flat screen (an idea taken up in Chapter Four; see p. 133). Bookending music with silences and curtailing the interference by extraneous sound is, for him, vital. Such practices fundamentally concern the wider maintenance of sonic contrast, which is why, as the composer's disinclination towards *recitativo* demonstrates, Morricone is averse to underscoring dialogue: he prefers music to be independent, to occupy a central perceptual position, and under no circumstances be – as 'good film music' proverbially should – unobtrusive. Recalling the composer's previously quoted sentiments regarding what he perceived as Corbucci's antithetical handling of his music, the nature of and reason for this frustration is easier to understand. Corbucci certainly utilises Morricone's music as muted underscore ('The Widow' being a case in point) and applies it somewhat arbitrarily and far from immediately in films such as *La banda J. & S.* and *Che c'entriamo noi con la*

rivuluzione?, to which instances Morricone himself may be accessory. But there are moments in films such as *Navajo Joe*, *Il grande silenzio*, and particularly *Il mercenario* in which Morricone's music is hardly less prominent than in many of the most paradigmatic Leonian sequences.

The Italian western lends itself to the Morriconian compositional philosophy. Industrial factors fostering greater noticeability are ingrained in the national cinema, as are stylistic ones in the western itself. The genre was, as Brizio-Skov (2011, 94) explains, at its heart an action-adventure vehicle that always treated dialogue frugally, and whose frontier setting presented fewer stimuli for diegetic sound. Compounding this were the idiosyncrasies of Leone's 'Dollars' films; the director was sensitive to the soundtrack's particulars, and Eastwood's deletion of reams of his lines from the *Per un pugno* screenplay (Frayling 2000, 140) inspired the leaner dialogue that proved advantageous for music's perceptibility. The tight lips of Giuliano Gemma in *Il ritorno di Ringo* and Franco Nero in *Il mercenario*, and the mutism of Jean-Louis Trintignant's titular hero in *Il grande silenzio* all concede aural space to Morricone. Discernibly absent when it is not sounding, and highly conspicuous when it is, music establishes a symbiotic relationship with silence. While experiences with the western and perhaps other genres in the Italian popular repertory could be said to have influenced Morricone's later perspectives regarding musical acoustics, his exposure to the Cage shock was evidently pivotal. There is conceptual accord between his standpoint and Cage's polemic, and in turn the subsequent aesthetic concerns of the compositional school the latter inspired. Hausmann notes the sudden, lasting cessation of concert-music composition after 1958, Morricone seeming 'not to have lost his heart to Darmstadt' (2008, 31–2). She adds that he would soon indulge these sensibilities with the GINC in the mid-1960s, but surely a salient, if less direct, connection must also be extended to Morricone's film music.

It is worth considering briefly the theoretical ramifications of the composer's quoted thoughts. Chion's tripartite division of the soundtrack, as consisting of music, dialogue and diegetic sound, has remained influential, but while he endorsed the analytical separation of these independent constituent elements, other commentators, such as James Buhler (2001, 18–9), prefer to consider them holistically, as an 'integral, parallel track to the images'. In broad accordance with Chion's ideology, Morricone seeks in principle to un-synthesise the soundtrack by advocating for practical segregation of the aural media so that music might realise its potential. On the other hand, certain compositional decisions of his undermine these assertions, appealing to Buhler's school of thought (see below, pp. 204–8).

In the years following the Second World War, technical restrictions imposed by optical-sound recording gave rise to the widespread use of automated dialogue replacement (ADR), which remained customary for decades. As Maurizio Corbella and Ilario Meandri explain regarding repercussions for Foley artists, the consolidation of these limitations, 'together with the ingenious solutions conceived to remedy it', evolved into 'a stylistic trait that persist[ed] over time even when these very limitations [we]re theoretically overcome' (2014–5, 14). Although Chion notes that Italian post-syncing, taking 'into consideration the totality of the

speaking body, particularly gestures', was executed in a more inexact fashion than in French practice (1994, 65), the process of ADR, for both replication of native speech and dubbing of foreign-language dialogue, invites one to make similar conclusions about the dialogue track. It is unlikely that such idiosyncrasy would have failed to impact how and what composers wrote (Cecchi 2014–5). Observations such as tendency towards closed structures marking wider practice and Morricone's personal aversion to the underscoring of dialogue may be partially explained by the procedural reality that composers in the Italian industry frequently spotted films and began assembling material before audio was fixed in postproduction. As Savina (2014–5, 42–3) opines, 'dialogue is born in writing, in acting; but its musicality and informative content are enhanced and transmitted by the recording'. The delayed completion caused by reliance on ADR – in conjunction with the imprecision of the process – discourages closely synchronised scoring solutions, appealing therefore to greater musical autonomy. Divisions between what is seen and heard are exacerbated in the Italian western's case by the multilingual nature of production: ADR is at work *and* at least one actor (usually many) will be dubbed in a foreign language. Another industrial component thus emerges that influenced both Morricone's composition process and perceptions of his music.

The especially involved nature of sound design in the Italian context enabled the kind of deliberate aural planning that has been discussed. Although Morricone's increasing reliance on Nicolai's conducting left him 'free to sit next to the director during [this] delicate synchronization process' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 82), in only one instance did he assume the role of sound engineer, for *L'ultimo uomo di Sara* (dir. Maria Virginia Onorato, 1974; Bonsaver 2006, 31). For that reason he must not be awarded undue credit for the formulation of these larger aural designs. Though he will have responded to the nuances of preliminary mixes and liaised with directors and engineers (he always emphasises correspondence with the former in his writings, and in fact seems to play down exchange with the latter in the interview just cited), he possessed limited agency with respect to the realisation of the end product, a reality compliant with his wider theoretical outlook.

In addition to their impact on the compositional process, these procedural factors carry certain phenomenological implications pertinent to the interpretation and experience of Morricone's music. All sound heard when 'watching' an Italian western, or indeed any Italian film, is endowed with a degree of unity courtesy of its capture in and 'emergence from' a studio space of relative acoustic consistency. Yet technical and technological imperfections have the potential to foster a more pronounced distinction along the margin – or across the intersensory 'rift' (Durrand 2017, 47–9) – between sound and image. This disjunct can have negative consequences. As Audissino illustrates regarding the application of post-synchronised dialogue, a range of technical, expressive, and linguistic issues can arise that can expose artifice and therefore jeopardise the integrity and verisimilitude of soundtrack and film (2012, 24–8). But intriguing results can be achieved in the liminal 'fantasy space' prised open when the aural and visual are disassociated from one another (Buhler and Neumeyer 2014, 22). Although the overwhelming efficacy of post-synchronised sound indicates that a modest such gap would be only perceived subconsciously, if at all, by an audience –

especially one accustomed to this practice – it may, in conjunction with other idiosyncrasies pertaining to the soundtrack, at least contribute to the sense of musical prominence. Certain compositional choices can harness and compound these mechanics, enhancing musical conspicuity.

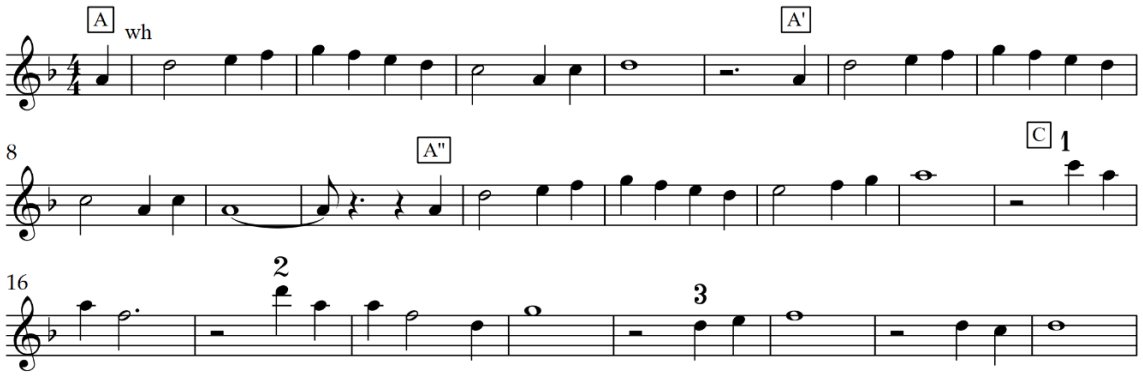
Thematic content and development

Due to its status as a curtain-raising musical statement, a thematic cornerstone, and a hallmark of the western genre, the title song (or title music more generally) is a sensible place at which to begin considering the compositional material substantiating Morricone's scores. The shadow of the traditional opening ballad was cast long over the Italian western, its maintenance supported by the lasting prevalence of opening credits – and title music to accompany them – in 1960s global cinema. Even so, like numerous genre tropes, it did not survive Italian-western innovation unchanged. In the formative years of the movement, economic incentive prescribing the emulation of authentic-seeming Hollywood westerns ensured that producers sought to preserve its core attributes; hence the derivative title songs 'A Gringo Like Me' and 'Lonesome Billy'. Compared to these offerings, and despite its origins as a frontier-themed folksong, 'Titoli' did exhibit a strikingly novel idiom.

For all its sonic, modal, and textural eccentricity, however, a vital and customary aspect of its implementation concerns the exposition of musical content. As in *High Noon*, *My Darling Clementine*, and countless other films of the era (western or otherwise) that present material during a title sequence that then features prominently in the score, 'Titoli' announces the theme (Ex. 3.11 below) and indeed several gestures that will integrate the ensuing music. In this respect it functions as a typical western theme song, opening the film with a concise and autonomous number, and supplying thematic content. Notably, neither 'A Gringo Like Me' nor 'Lonesome Billy' does this: briefly reprised at the end of *Le pistole non discutono*, the latter lends no musical substance to the film's score; *Duello nel Texas*, meanwhile, merely features a handful of note-for-note orchestral arrangements of the tune to an accompaniment that identically outlines the pattern shown in Ex. 3.2; no further effort is made to extract or develop material thematically, and the 'closed' structural approach to cues extends to their disjointed treatment of ideas.

Furthermore, despite the absence of a voice to channel the bardic lineage of Gene Autry and Tex Ritter, 'Titoli' is effectively a wordless song. At just under three minutes in length, it formed the B-side of the *Per un pugno di dollari* single, which spent most of 1965 in the Italian top ten. This was far from the first time the western had acted as the vessel for lucrative title music. Ten years earlier, at Tiomkin's hand, 'the success of *High Noon* and … its title song fully established a new model and level of cross-media promotion and revenue' (Creekmur 2012, 23). The lack of a singer in 'Titoli' does problematise its definition as a song, but no vocalist performs in *Shane*, *The Searchers*, or – with whistling in mind – *The Proud Ones* (dir. Webb, 1956), and before 'The Ballad of High Noon' made its impact, themes were typically instrumental, if not necessarily as songlike. For Phillip Drummond, a

key innovation on that ballad's part was its hushed introduction, rejecting the 'full-orchestral *fortissimo*' quintessential of opening Hollywood fanfares (1997, 62–3); we hear the same in the calm classical guitar of 'Titoli'. None of this negates the importance of the orchestrational and idiomatic decisions Morricone made, epitomised by the penetrating, modal whistled melody.



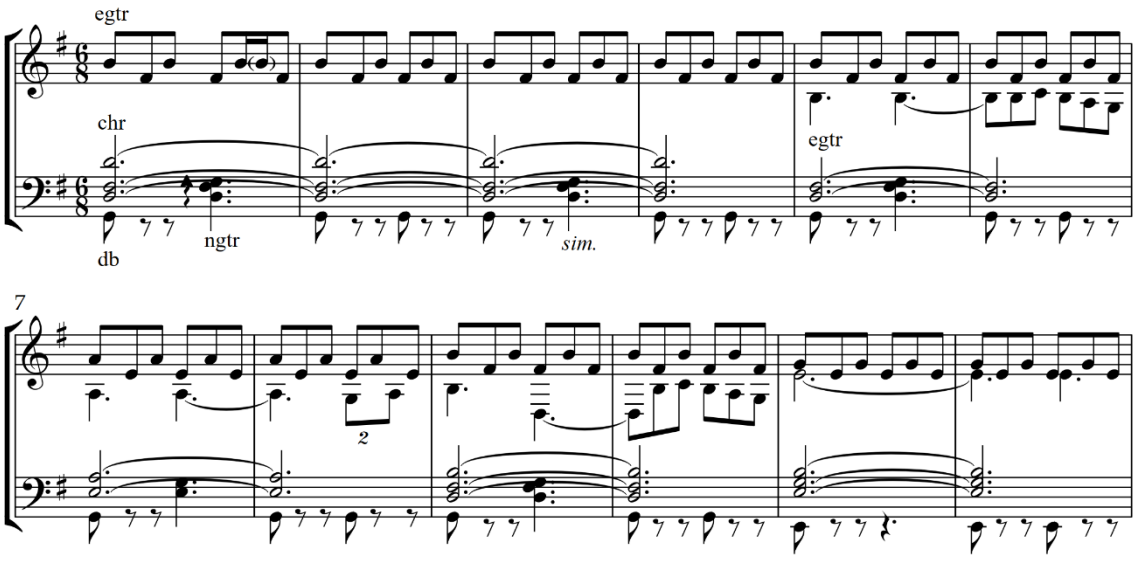
Example 3.11 The main theme from 'Titoli', whistled and developed on electric guitar by Alessandro Alessandroni. The transcription is based on one by Miceli (2021 [1994], 135), whose annotations have been included: 'A' denotes the primary melodic cell and its variants; C marks the coda, comprising three phrases (1–3).

These are some regards in which 'Titoli' conjures a more primal, mythical western theme, connections felt courtesy of Morricone's attempts to reconstruct aurally the space of the West. We do in fact hear voices, only in the collective: Alessandroni's Cantori Moderni invoke the 'cowboy chorus' described by Corey J. Creekmur, which, while vaguely traceable to the historical trail-song-singing cowhands, seems to furnish that environment with no less realism than a bell or a whip, courtesy of its ubiquity in western films. Creekmur, however, applies the term in a metaphorical sense, too:

> Like the Greek chorus, which marked a play's beginning and end by its own arrival and departure from the location of the stage, the title song itself occupies a curious, liminal space in relation to the cinematic drama that it surrounds … title songs acknowledge the formal function of conveying the cultural object of the western – the text itself rather than the fantasy within – to us as viewers and listeners.
>
> (Creekmur 2012, 25–7)

Even at its most radical, Morricone's title music continues to perform this traditional discursive role that was of high priority in the Italian-western context, given the imperative to Americanise productions. In this regard, although the later 'Dollars' themes – to which observations regarding 'Titoli' can be extrapolated – may continue to express an innovative idiom and serve as progressively more binding thematic keystones, they function ordinarily as nondiegetic narrative framing devices, which then lend material to the score. In these pivotal compositions one perceives once again an amalgamation of traditional and innovative elements at work, and a rewriting of the formula according to which they are combined.

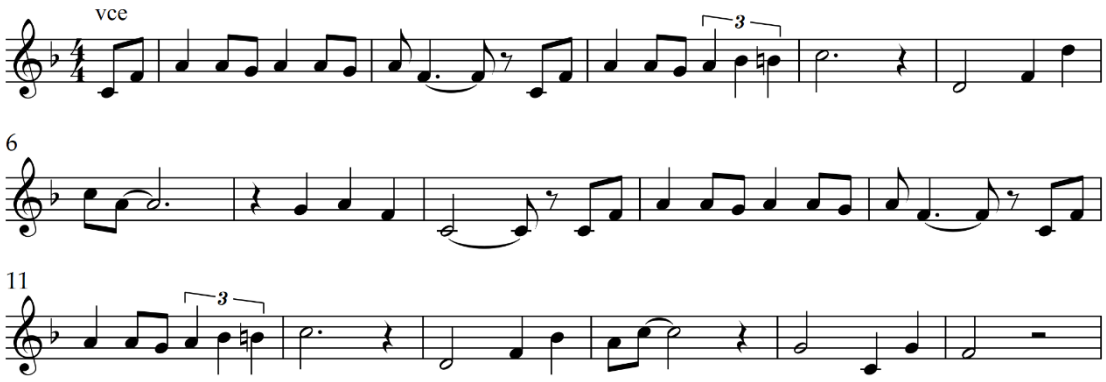
There are scores in which Morricone does not adapt the titular content into the score so organically. Instead the music is simply repeated, often with instruments standing in for voice in the case of sung themes – as with 'A Gringo Like Me'. Such an approach can be observed in *Una pistola per Ringo*, *...e per tetto un cielo di stelle*, and later westerns whose themes constitute fully fledged pop instrumentals. In *Una pistola*, instrumental reprises of 'Angel Face' (Ex. 3.12) co-exist within a mixture of cues in a score marked by Dyer's sense of *varietà*, but in other films in this category, such as *La banda J. & S.*, repetitiveness combines with a more modest quantity of overall material to suggest that these iterations are less considered in terms of score organisation. When they occur during sequences of reduced action, as the leisurely 'Angel Face' does, repetitions recall and partially restore the sense of 'choral' narrative framing associated with their initial sounding, distancing the audience from the narrative, as an intermission might. This contrasts with films in the other category, the



Example 3.12 Reduction of the first instrumental reprise of 'Angel Face', the title song of *Una pistola per Ringo*, sung by Maurizio Graf. His sung melody (beginning in b. 5) is here taken up on electric guitar. Besides this, all else remains as it was in the original arrangement, making for what is essentially an interpolated repetition of the title song.

themes of which are incorporated into the score. The eponymous title song of *Vamos a matar compañeros* is repeated several times, its energy fueling action in critical moments. The song is also led not by a solo vocalist but a choir which sings each iteration, and while its melody is not integrated into other textures, an embellishing harmonica fragment is extracted and associated with the character Il Pinguino (Ex. 3.25 below).

Some scores re-integrate title music more extensively than others, material can be much less fixed than that which can be easily delineated as a 'theme' in the traditional sense, and in some cases Morricone adopts an entirely different approach. The main theme of *Corri uomo corri* (Ex. 3.13) is repeatedly recycled in various orchestrations and, unusually, keys. It also – like the melody of 'Run Man Run' (the title song of the film's prequel, *La resa dei conti*) – pointedly sounds inside the diegesis, whistled by the main character. (This method of treatment, and the theme's atypically well-rounded and periodic melodic structure, are features that arguably cast doubt on Morricone's authorship of at least this facet of the score). Less precise recapitulation occurs in *Faccia a faccia*: the recurring chromatic guitar figure that sounds suddenly over the title card is better distinguished by its gestural effect than pitch–rhythm construction; accordingly it is via looser, more colouristic means that thematic identification and recollection is carried out. As Chion emphasises, Morricone's themes are often inseparable from the timbre articulating them (1995, 138).



Example 3.13 Transcription of the melody of 'Espanto en el corazon' (sung by Tomas Milian), which is utilised as the principal musical theme in *Corri uomo corri.*

That said, orchestration becomes a key developmental parameter, as the composer infrequently modifies a theme's innate form: although 'Titoli' is definitively whistled, the theme is also played on electric guitar and ocarina. *Da uomo a uomo*, meanwhile, opens in unique fashion, its dark, muddy, rain-drenched title sequence unfolding to the jarring soundscape of 'Tortura', a cue lifted from *Per un pugno*. This accompanies the vital action depicted alongside the opening credits, delaying the appearance of the main theme, which coalesces through the gradual emergence and convergence of its constituent parts. The title

music of *Il mercenario* begins with a quasi-overture (Ex. 5.20 below), sounding material that does not return, before the recurring 'revolutionary' mariachi theme is stated. Even more exceptionally, *C'era una volta il west* famously lacks title music per se, and the music that accompanies the opening credits of *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?* is diegetic and pre-existing, taken from Bellini's 1835 opera *I puritani.*

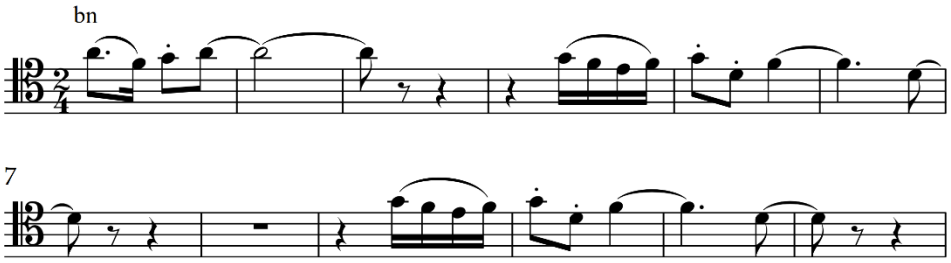
The visual and dramatic content of the title sequence itself has a bearing on the scoring solution. While a mainstay of the 'Dollars' films, animated title sequences – or those that feature a photographic montage – are not always called upon in the other films in the corpus. When the device is implemented, music typically assumes a form that is more enclosed, thematic, and songlike, complementing the contained, independent visual sequence to install an extraneous 'peritextual' space (Heldt 2013, 23–7). Diegetic action portrayed in a title sequence offers less of a blank slate in terms of possible solutions, but few are the instances in which, as in *Da uomo a uomo*, Morricone elects not to present fundamental thematic material in an accessible title-music composition. Even when action of narrative weight is depicted, as in his other Morricone-scored westerns *…e per tetto un cielo di stelle* and *Tepepa*, such compositions presenting important motivic material are still utilised. Diegetic montage sequences are often employed in the later comedies, which were of little enough narrative consequence to enable the adoption of the relaxed pop-instrumental, where peculiarity of style and forces curtails the prominence of theme as a compositional element.

In some cases there is an important secondary theme, a 'supplementary' (Brown 1994, 228) whose relationship to its primary resembles that shared by the twin thematic pillars of *Per un pugno*: 'Titoli' and the eponymously titled cue. For Miceli the relationship is one of contrast: the former 'dynamic … contrapuntal', the latter 'static … monodic' (or, rather, homophonic), a dichotomy consolidated in *Per qualche dollaro* (2021 [1994], 133). Classifying material in the 'Dollars' scores, Miceli distinguishes between 'thematic' music, derived from those two cues, and 'athematic' music. He counts a 'remarkable' 38 minutes of music in *Per un pugno* (100 minutes in length), with athematic music making up a 'mere' 12 minutes (p. 133). In *Per qualche dollaro* (132 minutes), meanwhile, there is 48 minutes' worth, 18 of which are athematic (p. 147). While there is in fact more music in both *Duello nel Texas* (approximately 44 minutes) and *Le pistole non discutono* (40), which are both shorter films than *Per un pugno*, the ratio of athematic to thematic material is higher in both films, and much more of the material is repeated. This speaks again for *Per un pugno*'s milestone status with respect to treatment of musical content.

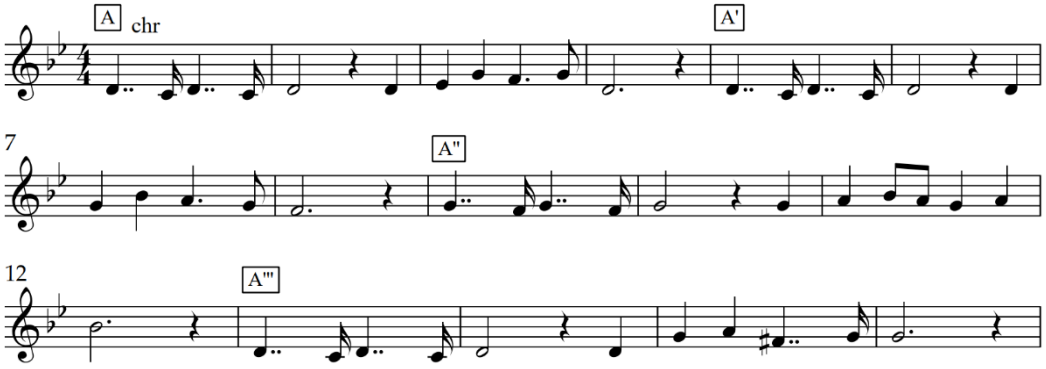
Much later, *Un esercito di 5 uomini* features two principal themes with contrasting characteristics reminiscent of the *Per un pugno* duality. The title theme (Ex. 3.14i) is, like 'Titoli', dynamic, contrapuntal, brusque, and eccentric. 'Muerte donde vas?' (Ex. 3.14ii), conversely, is static, monodic, dirge-like – another spiritual descendant of the Degüello. While the distribution of material may suggest otherwise (of roughly 52 minutes of music in a film 105 minutes in length, thematic music amounts to 25½ minutes), these themes dominate the soundtrack, sharing it with stock content providing inconspicuous ambience or

rhythmic drive – in a picture produced with greater deference to Hollywood custom. Other scores are structured according to more intricate thematic frameworks. In *Il mercenario*, there are four important themes, three of which are associated with characters, and one of which features in the title music; all assume a distinct quality in terms of form and orchestration. And despite the omnipresence of the motivic elements from the title music of *Il buono il brutto, il cattivo*, a multiplicity of themes populate that film. Inhibiting formal and expressive cohesion, this potpourri is exactly what arouses Miceli's displeasure, and is likely why he offers no hierarchical breakdown (Miceli 2021 [1994], 166–7) as he did for the previous 'Dollars' scores.

(i)



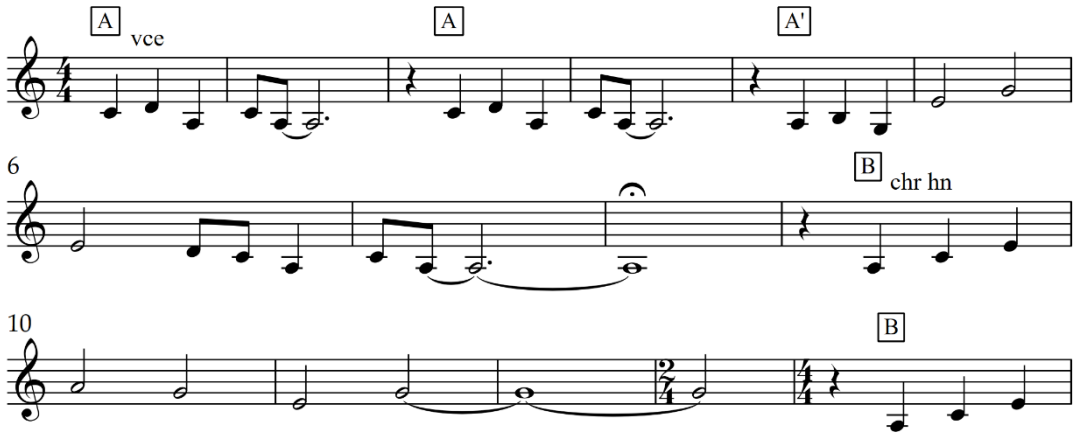
(ii)



Example 3.14 The principal themes of *Un esercito di 5 uomini*: the title theme (i), introduced on bassoon, and 'Muerte Donde Vas' (ii), first sung diegetically by protesting Mexican peons, and then taken up nondiegetically. Cellular repetitions and variations annotated per Miceli's method.

As Brown attests as he writes of Morricone's eschewal of cue mentality, the structural autonomy exhibited by his music typically derives specifically from *thematic* integrity; cues that sound in scenes of particular dramatic significance and generate 'cine-musical lyricism' are often fuelled by the completeness of a worked-out theme – whether or not that theme is

sourced from the title music. Take for instance the melodic line that unfolds in *Un fiume di dollari* (Ex. 3.15), during a poignant scene in which the fugitive protagonist realises he must be caught if his companion is to escape. It demonstrates gradual, incremental development of a concise idea. Any potential for close association with the particulars of the image is effectively precluded by adherence to a regularity of tonality, phrasing, and movement that is easily sensible without recourse to the image – a sound internal dialectic.



Example 3.15 Thematic transcription of 'Un fiume di dollari', from Lizzani's eponymous film.

Partly due to Morricone's favouring this technique, it is rare for themes already presented in a fuller form to then be adapted, dismantled, and reworked in what could be considered a traditionally 'leitmotivic' manner. Audissino (2014, 60), placing leitmotif alongside dialogue-underscoring and mickey-mousing as one of the principal 'classical' film-scoring procedures, attests that leitmotif, as conventionally applied, is a device rejected by Morricone. Several others agree: Brown opines that the composer (and Leone) eschew 'literalizing the film/music associations created by such devices as the leitmotif and mickey-mousing' in favour of 'broadly based scoring' (1994, 230). Cumbow also positions Morricone in opposition to this tradition: '[he] doesn't generally write *leitmotif* music in the "So-and-So's Theme" sense, as … Wagnerians of film music tend to do' (2008 [1987], 204); Cumbow's italics). And while Leinberger might concede that Morricone's scores of the period are 'thematic, employing themes as signifiers of people or things', he adds the caveat that the manner in which they do so is 'similar to, but easily distinguished from, the leitmotif technique employed by Max Steiner' (2004, 37).

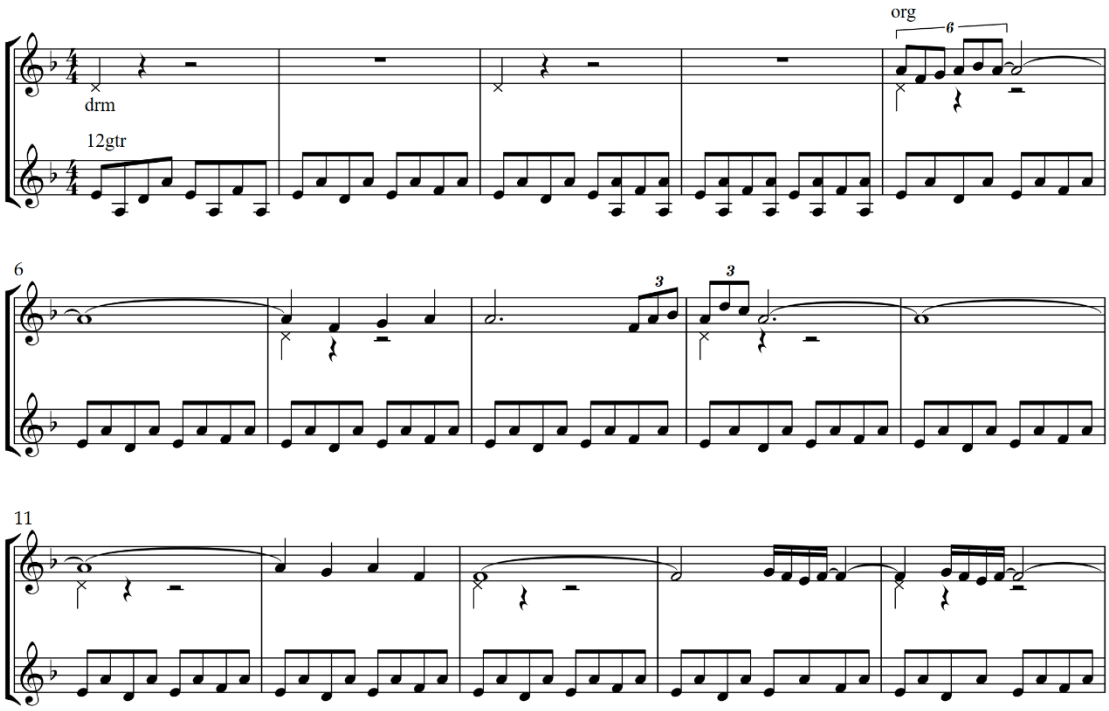
There is substance to these claims. One departure from orthodoxy concerns methods of development. Defining 'developed' themes, Matthew Bribitzer-Stull stipulates the following criteria: they 'must be altered enough that they are heard as distinct from the original. On the other hand, the themes must share a unifying idea that is *central to the themes' identities*'

(2015, 60; Bribitzer-Stull's italics). Granted a degree of subjectivity as regards ascertaining distinction and unification, there are few examples where Morricone composes a theme whose relationship to another fulfils both criteria outright: he may reassign a melody to an alternative instrument, and, where melody or accompaniment comprises smaller motivic units (cell 'A' in Ex. 3.15, for example), extract material for reuse as an individuated fragment, but he rarely alters the fundamental contour of a melodic line to achieve genuine differentiation. Even the ubiquitous 'return' theme of *Il ritorno di Ringo* (Ex. 4.4 below), written and handled in a unique fashion that has a significant bearing on the leitmotif question (Maloney 2023), does not undergo essential structural modification. This paradigmatic Late Romantic mode of motivic development – whereby the structural and musico-dramatic permutations of a theme's elements are exhausted – is renounced. Then again, it is problematic to keep invoking this analogy, as there is a leitmotivic tradition in the cinema that is valid in its own right; Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler's timeworn insistence on interpreting leitmotifs in film music in this Wagnerian–Straussian context – and their condemnation of the technique as lazy (1994 [1947], 4–6) – remains repercussive.

The other dimension of leitmotif pertains to its narrative mechanics. As sophisticated as the accumulation of dramatic content and the manner of expressive commentary in a work can be, it is basically fuelled, as Bribitzer-Stull (2015, 83) asserts, by association. And this is a tenet of narrative composition that Morricone embraces. Primarily through clarity of form and singularity of timbre, Morricone's music fosters unambiguous associations, usually with characters but also with concepts and objects, and they do so to varying degrees of intricacy; most simply they enact this through the rudimentary introduction and subsequent recurrence of material in conjunction with the associative object, but more complex networks of references are also established.

Outstanding instances of this are considered in the following chapter, but suffice to stress here that formal foundations are laid for them through the repetition of content. Once a link is established through synchronised sounding of a musical idea, repetition of that idea to denote and recall constitutes the essential process that distinguishes a leitmotif from a motif. And although, as Bribitzer-Stull (2015, 57) argues, subsequent development of musical material can grant 'expressive power', a degree of such power and dramatic amplification through musical association can be attained through exact repetition alone. This is a notion upheld by Morricone (quoted in Caramia 2012, 36; author's translation), who declared, 'I say it often to directors: "We repeat the theme we have already inserted in the other scenes; it becomes more effective this way because the audience has already heard it … its recognition will amplify the emotion"' (see Gorbman 1980, 192; this resonates strongly with her writings on accumulated meaning). Bribitzer-Stull (2015, 34) acknowledges that '[o]f all parameters', repetition is the one that establishes significance the most forcefully'. It ought to be reiterated that rearranging music for new instrumental combinations, which Morricone frequently does, can bypass the need to produce new material, making some soundtracks rather light on substance.

Morricone's wholesale thematic repetition extends beyond melody to many important elements of the arrangement, which itself usually possesses striking orchestrational attributes. This causes the entire closed composition to acquire specific associative content and assume thematic status. The theme associated with the antagonist Curly in *Il mercenario*, 'Ricciolo' (Ex. 3.16), is primarily conveyed by the florid organ line, but scarcely less integral to its 'theme' is the accompanying ostinato (also appearing in *La battaile de San Sebastian*) and the periodic percussive strikes, which also recur when the cue is recapitulated, the melody taken up by electric guitar. This is not the only repetition scheme: in a number of cases – the 'Run Man Run' theme from *La resa dei conti*, the 'Espanto en el corazon' theme (Ex. 3.13) from *Corri uomo corri*, and the 'return' theme from *Il ritorno di Ringo* – a complete melody reappears in markedly reorchestrated settings. On occasion, Morricone manipulates metric and rhythmic characteristics, but even in these instances, general contour is preserved, and the pitch sequence is not altered.



Example 3.16 Reduction of Curly's theme from *Il mercenario.* The ornate Aeolian melody is later played notatim on electric guitar.

Where a parameter is modified for a theme's recurrence, the change typically concerns instrumentation or orchestration, as is the case regarding themes exemplified in the previous paragraph. Hausmann (2008, 157) perceives the variation of instrumentation and sound design as a key enabler of thematic polyvalence in Morricone's film music more generally, but in his westerns, in the midst of a soundworld of timbral distinctiveness, a sense of

evolution is instilled by instrumental substitutions. The thematic connection to the original sounding is made intelligible by formal constancy, and expressive recollection is better facilitated. Further to Bribitzer-Stull's endorsement of the potency of repetition is his identification of texture as a common parameter 'for modifying thematic association in film music' as well as opera (2015, 293), and Kalinak (1992, 198) also asserts that, even in a more sonically homogeneous orchestral context, instrumental changes can signify development for dramatic purposes. Morricone can at once magnify expressive potential while making minimal changes to the content. He also practises a fundamental leitmotivic function by 'developing' his themes for affect, if on his own terms. That said, themes treated in this way are far from exclusively representative: while melodic themes like 'Da uomo a uomo' and 'Titoli' acquire associations, they are not linked concretely to dramatic elements.

Why does Morricone impose such terms? Clearly it was to some extent a personal preference: in theory, it should make musical cohesion, independence, and perceptibility easier to maintain, and he evidently recognised the basic efficacy of repetition as a film-music device. But such strategies may have ulterior ramifications of a more pragmatic nature. The resultant need to produce less material would, for instance, ameliorate the demands of a congested schedule. In light of this wider enquiry, it is curious to note Morricone's aversion to practising melodic-thematic composition per se, which comes into conflict not only with his aesthetic preferences but also with a tenet of middlebrow thinking: insistence upon the masses' capacity for learning (Chowrimootoo and Guthrie 2020, 329):

> Personally, I can do without a melodic theme. […] I have tried to disguise the melodic theme within rests, pauses, and silence, and to encourage the [audience] to identify those sentimental sensations with musical colors instead of a theme. Unfortunately […] the [audience] still wants to hear a melody.
>
> (Morricone, quoted in Burlingame and Crowdus 1995, 77)

Morricone got to the heart of the issue when he was asked about his reputation as a *melodista*:

> It is as if they had called me an amateur. After all, if you make a melody and then someone else has to arrange it, you are an amateur. […] In my work for records and especially for cinema, I felt that the theme was something that didn't change and was always repetitive. […] Because of this I reacted, and I progressively began to create themes with fewer tones […] If the audience has to remember only a few tones, the product is more acceptable.
>
> (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 13–5; author's translation)

He cites ‘Se telefonando’, the song composed for vocalist Mina in 1966, as one of the earliest such reactions to perceptions of him as a *melodista*, rooted in his recording-industry background. Hostility towards melodic-thematic writing seems to have involved a degree of disenchantment with this reputation, but perhaps more importantly with the demand for popular appeal entailed in ‘commercial’ cinema, which encouraged exploitation of this talent. In searching for a solution, another way to exercise ‘freedom under conditioning’, the composer pursued a material minimalism in order to simultaneously satisfy his philosophy of economy and maximise memorability. He spoke repeatedly of the struggle to persuade directors to endorse compositional ‘novelty’, and saw the comfort and reliability of thematic film composition as factors impeding the acceptance of more experimental scoring solutions. As for the western’s part in this, it can only be seen as an arena that epitomises such conditions. In addition to the entrenchment of the genre’s tropes and the exploitational motives of its production are certain film-music conventions that aggravate the thematic impulse bemoaned by Morricone. On these conventions and the composer’s response to them, Chion writes,

> The western lends itself particularly well to [melodic themes] because, of all the cinematic genres that are not directly musical, it is the one that has always maintained privileged links with ballads and songs ... It is therefore not without reason that the revolution unleashed a few years later [than the mid-1950s], at the beginning of the sixties, by the themes of Ennio Morricone in the films of Sergio Leone – themes brought to the fore not only by their writing and their instrumentation, but also by the dramaturgy of the films themselves, by their slow and stylized rhythm – occurred in this genre and not in another.
>
> (Chion 1995, 138; author’s translation)

Although the composer may develop his western themes in a manner distinct from the customary handling of leitmotif, their application and associative function, perpetuates tradition more closely. Extended melodic themes, sometimes outright cues, are positioned and repeated to consolidate associations with specific dramatic elements, with instrumental development often employed to reflect subtle changes in dramatic context: ‘Ricciolo’, for example, or ‘Mucchio selvaggio’ from *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, or the multiple instances where identification is explicitly established by vocalisations of characters’ names, as is the case in the ‘MacGregors’ films, *La vita è molto dura, vero Provvidenza?* and *La banda J. & S.* Such examples undermine suggestions that writing a ‘So-and-So’s Theme’ is not in Morricone’s armoury.

This technique is writ large in *C’era una volta il west*, the protagonists of which are firmly represented in music manipulated according to more typically leitmotivic means. Nevertheless, effectively absent in the wider filmography is the assimilation of succinct,

representative musical ideas into an enveloping texture setting, which emerge at precise moments in order to connote a particular narrative aspect. This traditional method appeals to more fundamental structural development of a leitmotif, and is effectively precluded by Morricone's rejection of an orchestral idiom, which encourages such a method. If the composer's thematic handling is contemplated in the context of conventional leitmotivic practice, it is clear that while it draws on some formal and functional customs, it must be regarded as particular. Leinberger's assertion that a distinction can be drawn between the composer's relationship with leitmotif and that of Romantics like Steiner is, then, quite accurate.

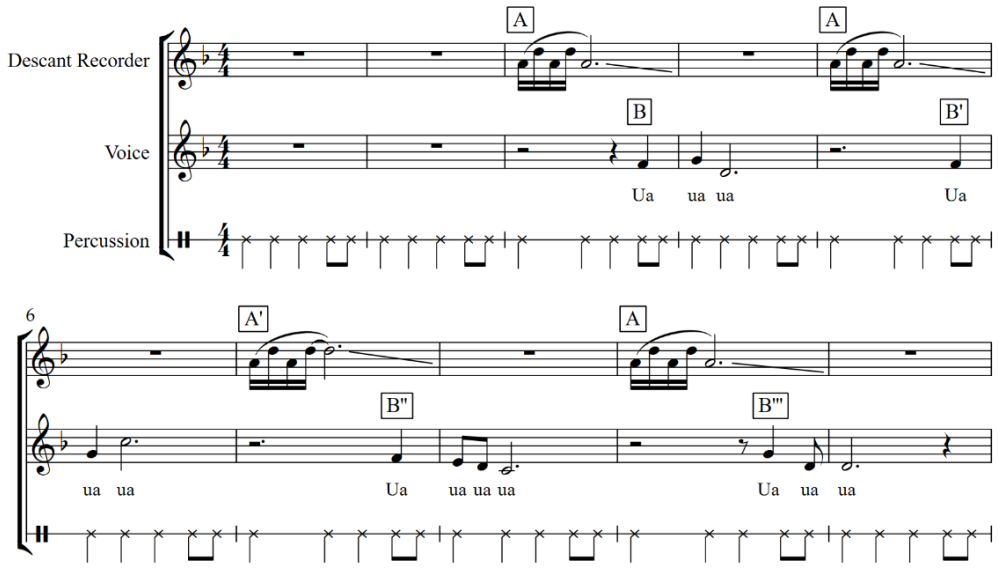
Because the discussion has thus far focused on 'themes' as fuller melodic and textural entities, Morricone's treatment and use of smaller musical units – namely motifs – has not been adequately considered. At this order of structural magnitude, analysis reveals a creative approach that is not just peculiar but an essential facet of his practice, which again corresponds in an ambivalent fashion to film-music precedent. A further compositional factor discouraging a more orthodox approach to development (in the leitmotivic sense) is Morricone's manner of constructing melodic lines, accompaniment figures, and the textural schemes that comprise them, out of smaller, cellular components, which invite partition and extraction in development – as opposed to the kind of essential structural modification that has been discussed. Brown contrasts allegiance to 'cue mentality' with, on the one hand, the prevalence of worked-out themes, and on the other, the isolation of 'tiny fragments – occasionally even a single note – from [the] musical raw material' (1994, 228).

Confronted by the practical emphasis on thematic composition and the routineness of melodic diatonicism, Morricone felt driven in the mid-1960s to pursue 'tonal reduction', an idea he researched actively; '[t]he reduction of tones in themes was a hang-up of mine in that period', he recalled (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 209). This obsession influenced thematic conception in particular but also his creative attitude more generally, even beyond the cinema. These experiments would eventually inspire *Suoni per Dino* (1969), Morricone's first concert work since 1965, and only the second completed in eleven years.

That this aesthetic transcended the cinema demonstrates Morricone's practice in the realm of *applicata* (especially in that of his westerns which, perhaps above all not only prompted this shift and but also resoundingly exemplified its fruits) influencing that of his *assoluta* compositions – and vice versa. The decision to adopt a reductive approach at this time represents a conscious resurgence of an innate philosophy that manifested in prior concert works and, in a more tempered and less melodic guise, in earlier film scores. Miceli (2021 [1994], 56) writes that this tendency was partly inspired by the 1958 attendance of the *Ferienkurse*, immediately influencing the conception of *Musica per 11 violini* (1958), but the aesthetic is also evident in *Tre studi* (1957–8) and *Distanze*, both completed before the composer's departure for Darmstadt. Morricone himself recalls that he 'first planted this [reductive] seed right after composing' the first of those works (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 213).

In the cinematic sphere, Miceli (2021 [1994], 146) recognises that the music for *Per un pugno* (predating 1966) heralds the consolidation of a compressed scope – in terms of pitch range and durational brevity – as a hallmark of the western idiom. This process culminated in the famed coyote-call motif (Ex. 3.17i, recorder part, b. 3) from *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, considered the quintessential 'microtheme' by Miceli (2021 [1994], 169) for its elemental makeup and structural ubiquity. Hausmann (2008) believes that the propensity for reductive writing – epitomised by pentatonic and hexatonic melodies defined by just two to three intervallic relationships and ostinato-based accompaniment figures – to be characteristic of the western themes (p. 155) and the preeminent recurring feature of Morricone's underlying film-scoring technique (p. 95). Morricone himself acknowledged that the *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* title theme and the transdiegetic harmonica motif from *C'era una volta il west* (3.17ii) are products of this embrace of austerity (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 60–1). But if one considers the approach to motif demonstrated in themes such as 'Un esercito di 5 uomini' (Ex. 3.14i), 'Un fiume di dollari (Ex. 3.15), the *Navajo Joe* title music (Exs 3.17iii and 3.17iv), and 'Un monumento' (Ex. 3.17v), it is clear that he honoured this sensibility more widely.

(i)



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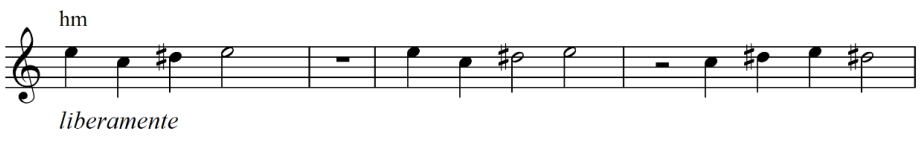
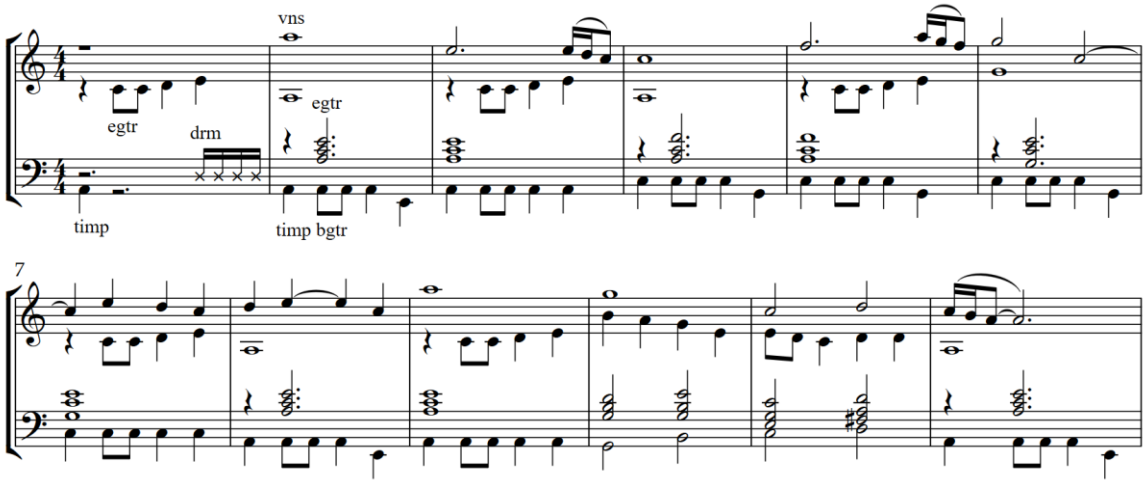


(iii)


vns
egtr
egtr
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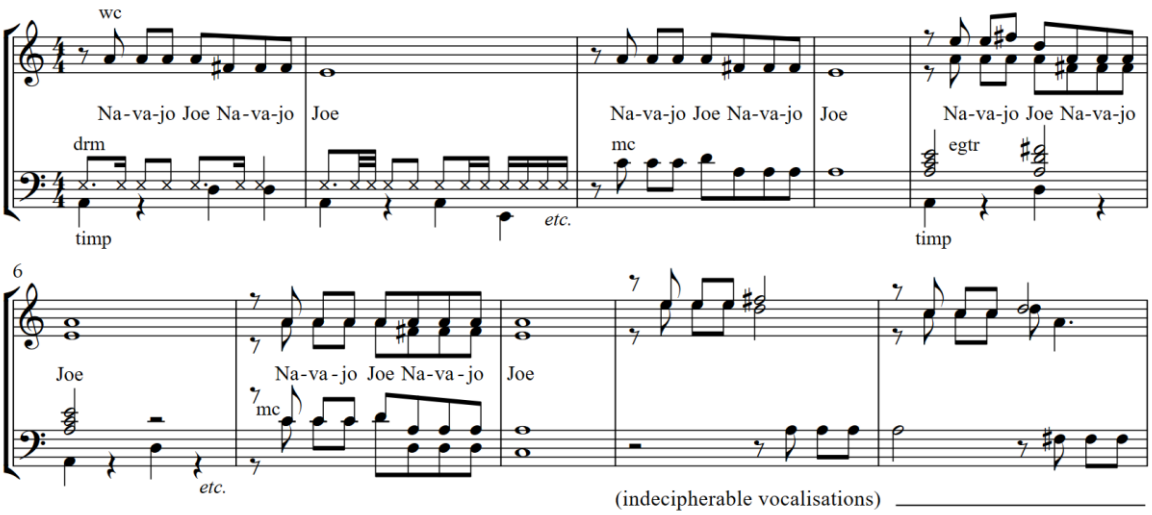
7

(iv)


wc
Na-va-jo Joe Na-va-jo
Joe
Na-va-jo Joe Na-va-jo
Joe
Na-va-jo Joe Na-va-jo
drm
timp
etc.
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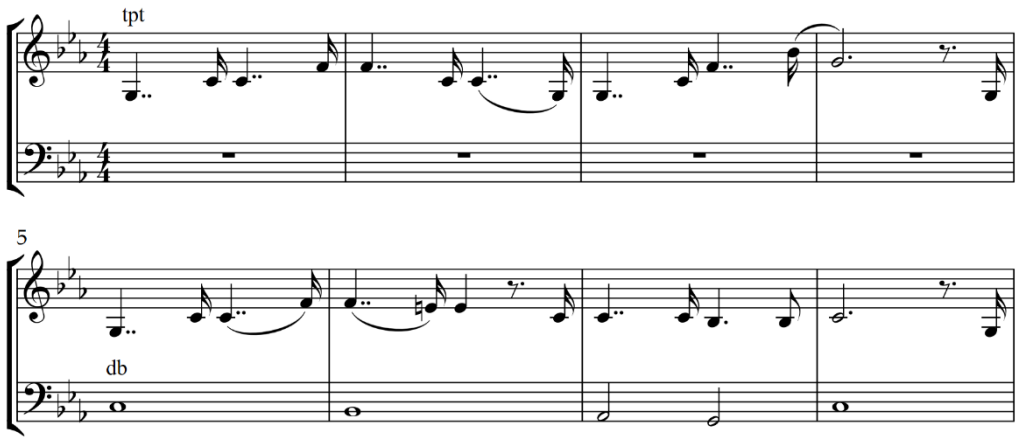
timp
6
Joe
Na-va-jo Joe Na-va-jo
Joe
mc
etc.
(indecipherable vocalisations)

(v)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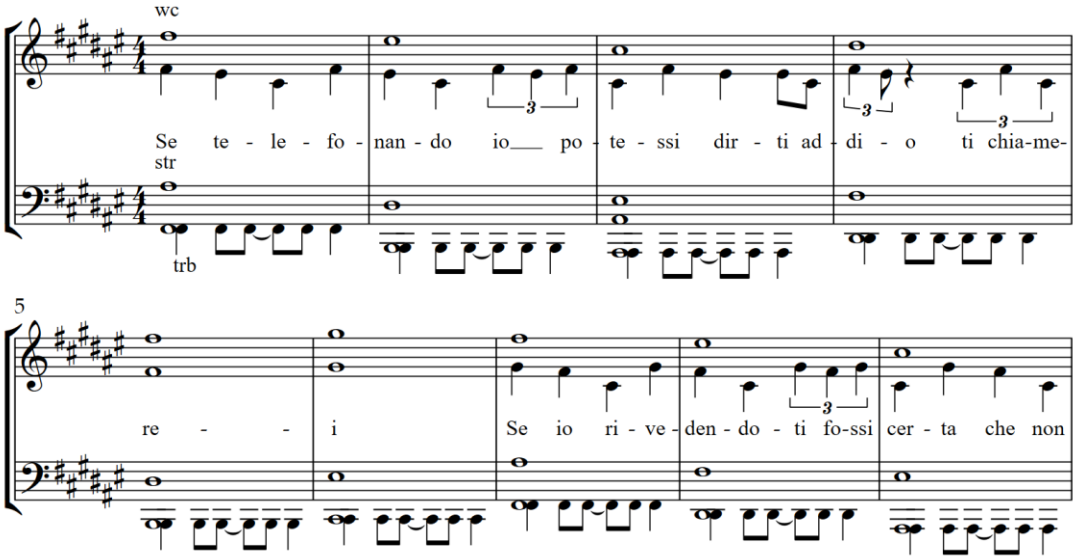
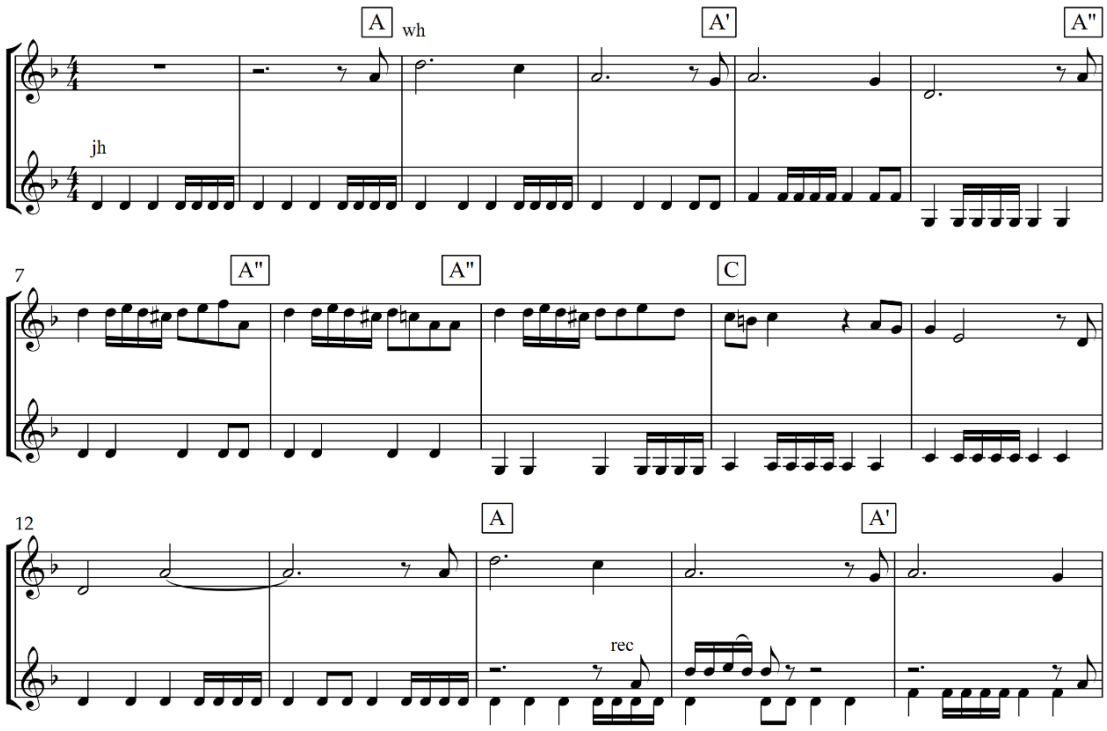


Example 3.17 Themes from the period 1966–8 marked by tonal reduction, durational brevity, and segmentation: title theme from *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (i); Harmonica's theme from *C'era una volta il west* (ii); two extracts from the title music of *Navajo Joe* (iii, iv); 'Un monumento' from *I crudeli* (v); and 'Se telefonando' by Mina (vi). Extracts (i) and (vi) are based on transcriptions by Miceli (2021 [1994], 168 and 108) and (ii) is based on an autograph version in Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 60).

Miceli's pioneering dissections of the segment (or segmentation) technique have been applied by analysts like Robert Rabenalt (2005) and Stefan Drees (2014), who also recognise the exemplary status of the themes for Leone in the wider context of Morricone's film composition. Miceli first demonstrates Morricone's 'filmic application of this fundamental technique' (2021 [1994], 134; author's translation) using the whistled melody from 'Titoli'; the complete thematic statement (Ex. 3.11) initially consists of a concise and clearly delineated phrase, repeated and varied to develop the cell itself and the larger theme it begins to substantiate. For Rabenalt (2009, 333–6), expansion and elongation are key processes, achieved in this case through inversion and extension of pitch range, the latter evident in the second variant (A") of 'Titoli'. Besides inversion, precisely these means of segmentation can also be observed in 'Un fiume di dollari', 'Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo', and 'Un esercito di 5 uomini', among other items. In the last two examples, Morricone delineates phrases with especial clarity, dividing the theme between different instruments in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* and interpolating wide rests between statements in 'Un esercito', encouraging greater identification with timbre, as per his previously quoted statement regarding thematic disguise. Hausmann (2008, 72) implies that the technique provides a means to make material malleable and therefore mobile, adding that closedness necessitates fuller repetition.

One may note that, despite the compartmentalisation of the ‘Titoli’ melody, the cells themselves are relatively long, and in omitting only the sixth scale degree outright, do not demonstrate marked tonal reduction. The same remark can be made of the title theme to *Per qualche dollaro* (Ex. 3.18). Moreover, while the less ‘dynamic’ shootout melodies of the ‘Dollars’ films (Exs 2.2 and 3.19 below) are all segmentary in a similar sense, they do not exhibit stark tonal or motivic reduction – something in effect ruled out by the prerequisite Degüello template. This point is made to differentiate between tonal reduction (economical exploration of parameters) and segmentation (a particular method of motivic treatment). The compression process previously noted with regard to examples 3.18 and 3.19 demonstrates a diminutive form of segmentary development, which can be contrasted with the augmentative function alluded to by Drees; this process is at work in Morricone’s almost identical handling of the respective motivic cells in ‘Un fiume di dollari’ (Ex. 3.15) and the title theme of *Navajo Joe* (Ex. 3.17iii, electric-guitar part).

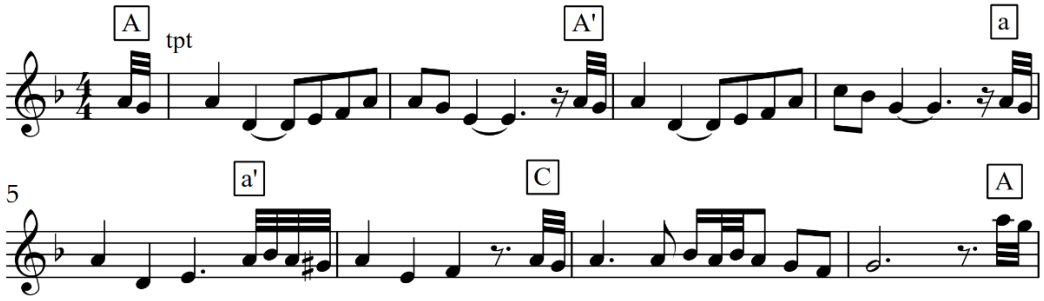


Example 3.18 Reduction of the opening bars of the title music from *Per qualche dollaro in più*, based on Miceli’s transcription (2021 [1994], 151). Although a less strict form of segmentation is in evidence in comparison with ‘Titoli’, the primary cell remains subject to variation (A') as well as compression and embellishment (a, a', a").

If extreme motivic conciseness, perhaps the most distinctive facet of tonal reduction and segmentation, does not characterise the composer’s melodies until around 1966, pithy

motivic writing nonetheless marks preceding scores. In the supportive voices of the contrapuntal ‘Dollars’ title cues, one can identify what Miceli describes as ‘microelements’ (2021 [1994], 137): the classical-guitar figure and recorder quintuplet in ‘Titoli’ (Ex. 3.20 below), and the Jew’s harp strikes and recorder motif (Ex. 3.18, b. 14) in ‘Per qualche dollaro in più’. These terse accompaniment figures are prominent and quirky, but they are effectively ostinati; their being reductive is itself unremarkable. Moreover, that these ideas are recontextualised elsewhere in their respective scores (the ‘Titoli’ guitar figure in Ex. 3.22 is soon taken up on piano in ‘Quasi morto’, for instance, a process repeated with the motif in Ex. 3.17iii, *Navajo Joe*’s title music) is notable in an enquiry concerning motivic development, but it cannot be considered an extraordinary technique. What is peculiar about the treatment of these elements, however, is their isolation and the narrational implications thereof – for which motivic brevity is all but essential.

(i)



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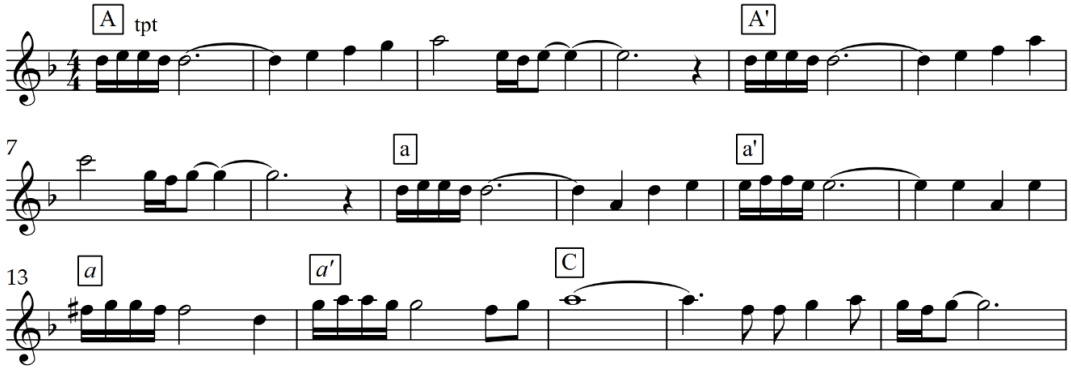
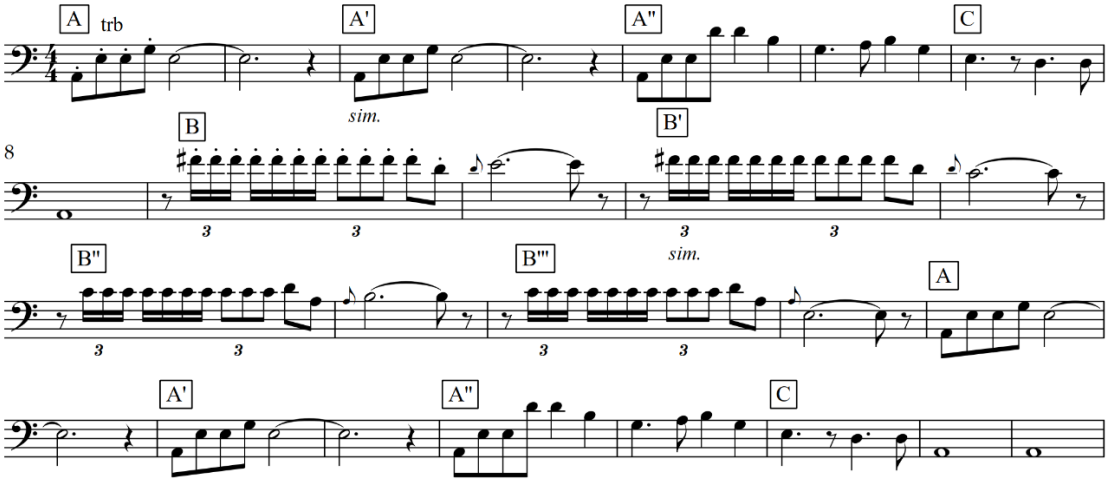
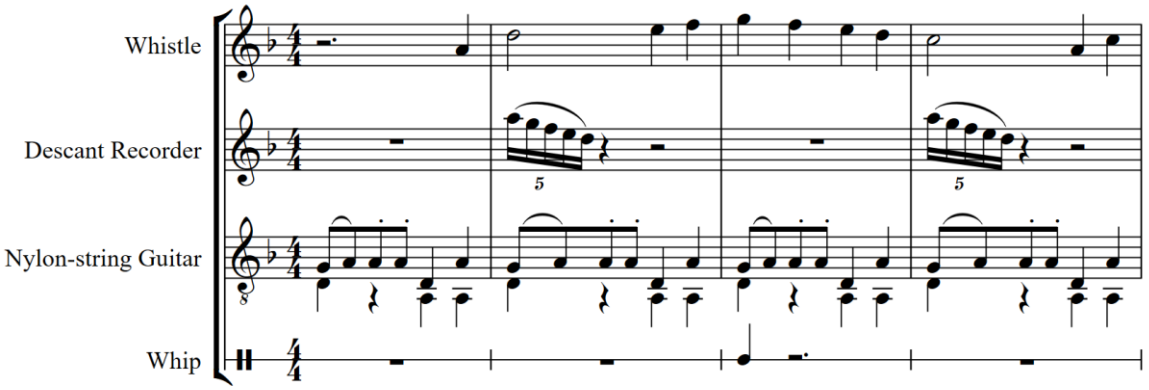


(iii)



Example 3.19 The 'secondary' shootout theme of *Per qualche dollaro* (i) and the more independent shootout themes of *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (ii); and *La resa dei conti* (iii). Note that in (ii) the cellular compression – akin to diminution – is doubled; quartered cells are italicised. A contrasting cell features in (iii), and in all examples (C) is used to signify material that functions as a coda – again in accordance with Miceli's system.



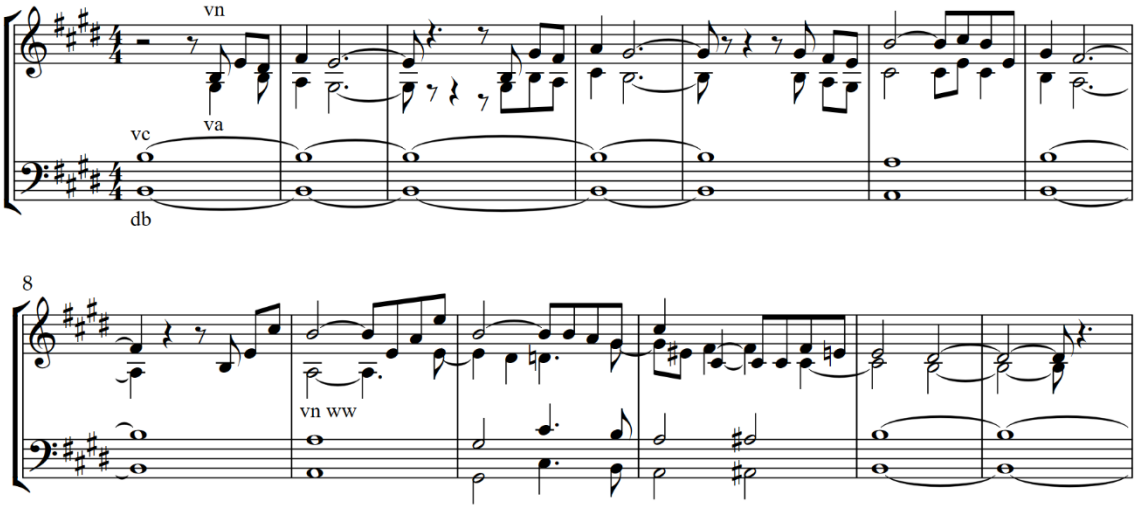
Example 3.20 The first repetition of the 'Titoli' theme (Fig. 3.13, also accompanied by guitar on its initial statement). With its concise gesture, the recorder – followed by whip and other percussion instruments – begins to forge Miceli's 'dynamic' and 'contrapuntal' texture.

These are the so-called fragments (recall Brown's remarks on cue mentality), the isolation and application of which amount to a highly distinctive technique. Pioneered by – and in its purest form existing almost exclusively within – Leone's films, 'fragmentation' constitutes the extraction from title cues of innately reduced material, strategically located in the score to achieve stylistic idiosyncrasy and commentative effect. (This is a terminological application of the term that diverges from that of Classical theory; Caplin 1998, 41.) The use of solitary motifs is not critical to the process, rather their sourcing from the title music. In some instances, gestures and effects of a fragmentary nature are pointedly solitary, but they are not fragments in the absolute sense; they do not constitute shards of a larger whole. The melodic segmentation evidenced in 'Titoli' and the shootout themes above is, while a Morriconian attribute, again an unexceptional technique, being similar to normal modes of melodic phrasing, and even to small-scale Classical structures like the sentence. It is of greater interest when applied to reduced writing in the tonal sense, giving rise to the narrower motivic segmentation analysed by Drees. Composition of miniature melodic motifs in the early 'Dollars' scores and their being subject to fragmentation, however, is a more original technique precursory to tonal reduction in broader melodic themes.

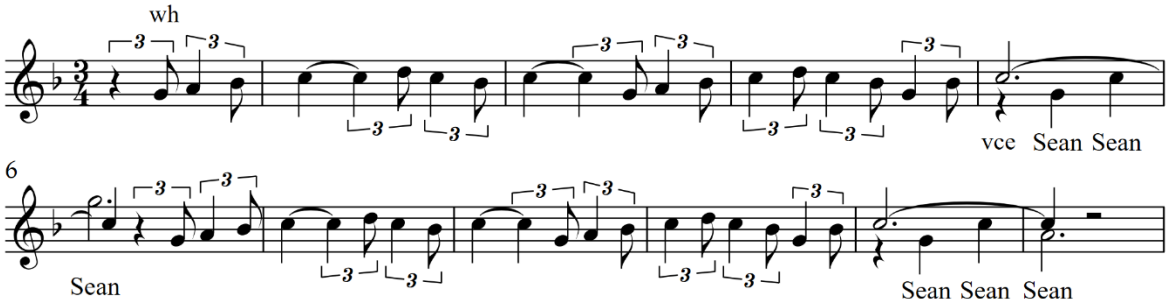
On the subject of nomenclature, and in the context of Morricone scholarship, Hausmann's use of *Fragmentierung* is noteworthy (2008, 155–6). Although she refers to segmentation in her analyses of the 'Dollars' themes, in accordance with Miceli, she does not cite it in her survey of the composer's foremost recurring film-music strategies, instead emphasising *Fragmentierung* (alongside *Reduktion des musikalischen Materials*) with regard to smaller-scale structures. She uses the word to describe a theme constructed entirely from a single motivic element – 'motif' being understood conventionally as 'the shortest subdivision of a theme or phrase that still maintains an identity as an idea' (Drabkin 2001) – which is especially contained in terms of rhythm, and down to which the theme can be distilled (see Ex. 3.21 below). This is not unlike segmentation where it is applied by Drees and Rabenalt to compact gestural ideas composed post-1966 (Rabenalt also exemplifies 'Deborah's Theme'), whereas Hausmann reserves 'segmentation' for larger phrases, like those of 'Titoli'. Segmentation is interpreted more flexibly here, understood as a mode of cellular treatment that can encompass both smaller gestural and phrasal units. Also departing from Hausmann, motivic succinctness is considered a characteristic of tonal reduction, for the latter is scarcely achievable without the former.

Furthermore, Hausmann (2008, 155–6) argues that *Fragmentierung* is not characteristic of the manner in which Morricone treats his western themes. By her definition, this is true of 'Titoli', 'Per qualche dollaro in più', and the shootout themes. All exhibit symptoms of segmentation, but the units themselves are longer and more melodic, and the themes are not constructed solely out of an elemental motif, as her examples are (Ex. 3.21). But the same cannot be said of themes found beyond the Leone filmography, like 'Un monumento' or 'Navajo Joe'; indeed, 'Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo', 'L'uomo dell'armonica' (Exs. 3.17i and ii), and the theme associated with the character Seán in *Giù la testa* (Ex. 3.22) all demonstrate attributes of *Fragmentierung*. For our purposes, however, such instances are best described as

representing a confluence of motivic segmentation and tonal reduction. Our fragmentation specifically concerns the extraction, isolation and repurposing of motivic material, often sourced from contrapuntal voices of a larger texture (usually a title cue). This distinction is made partly because this is a signature trait of Morricone's western-genre style, in the context of discourse on which the term carries greater pertinence.



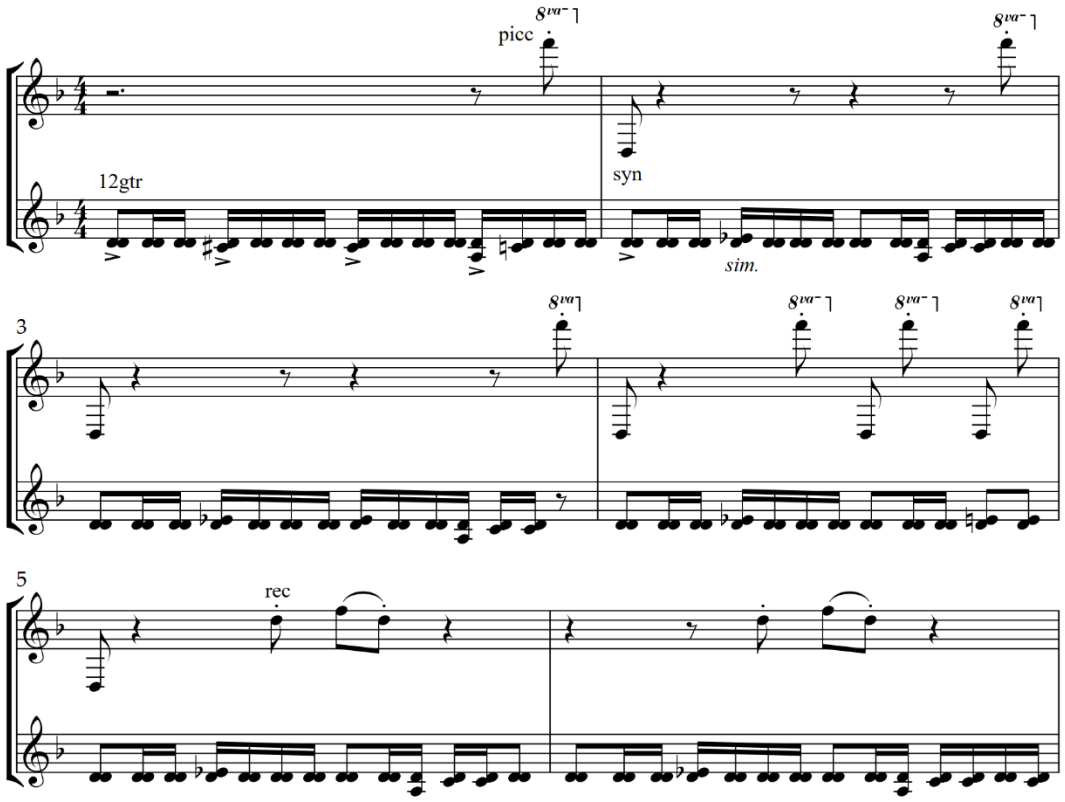
Example 3.21 'Deborah's Theme' from *C'era una volta in America*, which according to Hausmann – on whose transcription (2008, 109) this one is based – is an exemplar of *Fragmentierung*.



Example 3.22 The theme associated with Seán in *Giù la testa*. Segments can be identified at several tiers, but the theme can be reduced to a simple dotted pattern.

In *Per un pugno*, the opening acoustic-guitar figure is extracted from 'Titoli' and inserted into the early cues 'Quasi morto' and 'Musica sospesa', in which it is elaborated respectively by piano and electric guitar. This is a purely compositional form of fragmentation in which the briefest of ideas is recycled to foster continuity and integrity, and establish a platform for

expansion. But although the resoundings in *Per un pugno* are accentuated by the thinness of orchestration and textural setting, they are not truly isolated. Moreover, this is not an uncommon mode of motivic development. Nor is it restricted to Leone's films. In *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, which features music emulating the 'Dollars' idiom closely, a concise three-note motif in the title cue (Ex. 3.23, b. 5) functions as a jumping-off point for textural development in the subsequent score.



Example 3.23 A passage from the 'Main Title' from *Two Mules for Sister Sara*. In addition to the three-note motif introduced in bar five there is much to note here, including the marked timbral eccentricity, the aural mimicry of a mule's bray, and the 12-string-guitar ostinato.

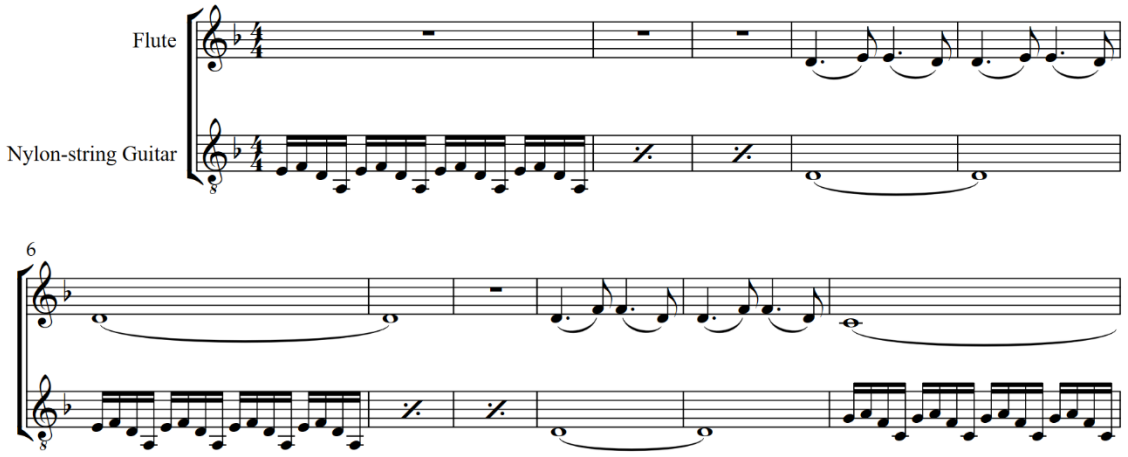
Of greater significance among Morricone's microelements are those entirely detached from surrounding texture and endowed with additional potency and function by their solitude. The 'Titoli' quintuplet as well as the six-note recorder motif and Jew's harp strike from 'Per qualche dollaro in più' are fragmentary, laconic, and isolated, but also indelibly associated with the protagonists of the two films. To rephrase Miceli's remark on the fragment characterising Clint Eastwood's 'Man with No Name' – which can be easily extended to Lee Van Cleef's Colonel Mortimer – these motifs are as 'taciturn as the character[s] to whom [they belong]' (2016, 274). The precise synchronisation of these singular stingers to the

characters' actions or, as in *Tepepa* (Fig. 3.2), to their sudden close-ups creates a firm association in an extremely concentrated fashion, such that the nondiegetic containment is strained. Miceli opines that these musical phenomena inhabit not only the 'external' (nondiegetic) but also the 'mediated' (metadiegetic) narrational levels (2021 [1994], 144–6); so firm is the association with characters and so explicit the synchronisation, it is implied that the music captures something of their subjective psychological experience, which enhances the importance of the fragmentation technique yet further. As with larger themes such as 'Ricciolo' or the 'return' theme, these fragments are leitmotivic in their characterising function, if not in their structural constancy. And while the sonic isolation of fragments precludes the textural assimilation typical of traditional leitmotif, they can be implemented within sparse gestural exchanges, which remain too insubstantial to be described as cues proper (Fig. 3.3).

Fig. 3.3 After the Man with No Name guns down a quarry and his henchmen, his five-note motif sounds as the picture cuts to frame his victorious pistol, triggering a brief dialogue between recorder and cor anglais, repeated shortly after as he holsters his weapon.

Littered throughout the closing instalment of the 'Dollars' trilogy, the coyote-call motif – 'a musical metonym for the American West, a cultural artifact as tied to that mythology as the Red Rocks of Sedona and John Wayne' (Pitchfork 2019) – represents the crowning instance of tonal reduction, segmentation, and fragmentation. Miceli might claim the 'Titoli' quintuplet to be one of the smallest themes in film-music history, but he only really considers it a 'theme' inasmuch as it belongs to and denotes the Man with No Name (2021 [1994], 146). The coyote call, however, which pre-empts *Two Mules* as an exercise in animalistic composition, is not merely a microelement, but the 'theme in itself' (Miceli 2021 [1994], 169). Serving as melody and not accompaniment, the call and its three-tone riposte are subject to the most concentrated form of segmentary treatment, enabling fragmentation and widespread repurposing (not only in the score but also in popular culture more generally), of

the two cells themselves. In step with Morricone's larger themes these cells cohere the score, functioning together as *Urmotive* and embellishing many of the film's cues. The three-note consequent thus bestows a prominent musical dimension to the film's numerical fixation with the number three (Leinberger 2004, 55–6), and is moreover positioned as an intermediary in Morricone's scheme of tonal reduction between the dual dominant–tonic antecedent and the incessant four-note ostinato that several important cues develop, such as: 'Il deserto', 'L'estasi dell'oro' (Ex. 3.26i below), and 'Il triello' (Ex. 3.24), with the latter two coming in quick succession at the film's conclusion.



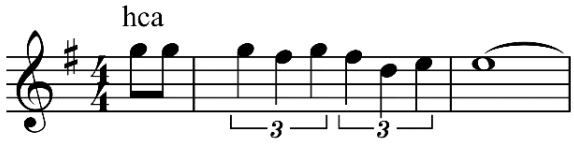
Example 3.24 *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*'s prevalent four-note ostinato in action in this excerpt from 'Il triello'. The same arpeggiated figure appears in numerous other cues, most notably in 'L'estasi dell'oro'.

Finally, this microtheme is moreover significant for a method of fragmentary characterisation unique among the 'Dollars' scores and Morricone's films in the genre. The same note-for-note cell pairing comprising the call and its answer, denotes all three of the titular characters, with each of the trio is signified by a particular instrument rendering the call: a descant recorder for Blondie, bass ocarina for Angel Eyes, and a wordless cry for Tuco – all of which variants are presented in the title music. This scheme offers a clear example of how instrumentation and timbre are used to evolve a theme and thereby alter its function.

Despite its distinctiveness, the fragmentation technique is extremely rare outside the remit of Leone's filmography. There could be a number of causes for this, such as the directorial insistence (and generic propensity) for developed thematic writing that Morricone bemoans, or the practical necessity for the kind of close composer–director coordination that the composer seems never to have achieved in scoring westerns for other filmmakers. Moreover, the stylised technique is prone to gimmickry, something Morricone clearly hoped to avoid; even *C'era una volta il west* and *Giù la testa* mostly relinquished the fragmentation

technique, with Harmonica's motif (Ex. 3.17ii) falling into a different category as a diegetic entity. This is not to say that explicit synchronisations performing a characterising function are a rarity – consider the 'Dollars'-like whistling concretely associated with Sergei Kowalski in *Il mercenario,* for example – but rather that examples such as this do not typically involve fragmentation.

There are exceptions: the event explicitly synchronised with Tepepa's close-up (Fig. 3.2) is the fundamental *Urmotiv* in that film's title music, and recurs frequently as a generative fragment; and subtle variations on a harmonica figure taken from the eponymous title song of *Vamos a matar compañeros* characterise Il Pinguino (ex 3.25). Of greater note are instances in which material that is fragmentary in a larger, structural sense – that is to say, not a motif or melody – is withdrawn from title music to represent particular characters or themes. In the main title *Two Mules for Sister Sara,* the interplay among the bizarre instrumental assortment (Ex. 3.23) is momentarily halted by a women's chorus, which offers up quasi-liturgical chant with church-organ backing, their tender cadence abruptly spoiled by the return of the braying-mule figure. Later the brief interlude is used in isolation as a theme for Sara, a prostitute masquerading as a nun, in a mechanism approximating the exposition of upcoming numbers in a traditional opening medley (Morricone rehashed the trick in *La vita è molto dura, vero Provvidenza?,* in which false religiosity is again ascribed to the titular character, courtesy of the divine connotations of his name).



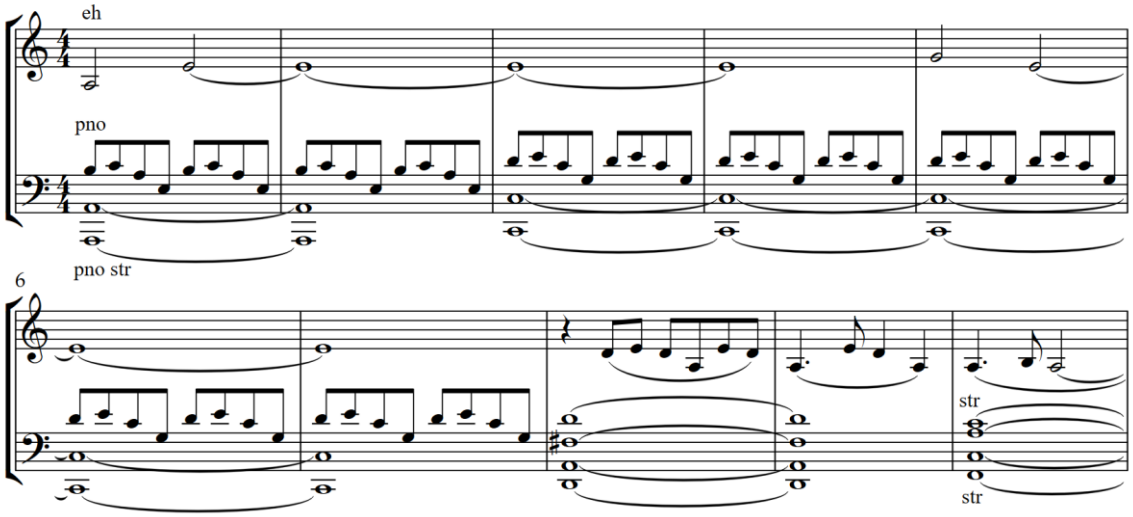
Example 3.25 Harmonica fragment extracted from 'Vamos a matar compañeros'.

Leinberger (2004, 26–7) identifies the prevalence of ostinati in the 'Dollars' style, Kristopher Spencer (2008, 263) flags it as a hallmark of his *giallo* sound, and Sciannameo (2020, 55) indicates that the device increasingly emerges as a staple as the composer's career wore on. Of great utility in the modern film-composing arsenal, the ostinato facilitates the easy expansion or truncation of cues during postproduction editing, and would seem desirable to a composer pursing memorability, regularity, and economy of material. Accordingly, a range of ideas discussed here have been likened to the overarching concept of ostinato, and it is possible to cite many further examples, from obsessive dactylic accompaniment to the pop-hook material featuring in interpolated instrumentals, such as 'Mystic and Severe' from *Da uomo a uomo* (reused in *Faccia a faccia,* albeit in a different arrangement).

Ostinato is a prevalent, frequently denotative device in our filmography, of which the four-note arpeggio that introduces 'L'estasi dell'oro' and the hypnotic three-note ostinato

derived from the diegetic harmonica motif in *C'era una volta il west* are the two most renowned examples (Ex. 3.26). The closest thing to a western-specific ostinato-technique is the typically chromatic contrapuntal guitar figure mentioned above. Few devices are recycled outright so frequently as this; only the idiomatic continuity of the 'Dollars' themes and the

(i)



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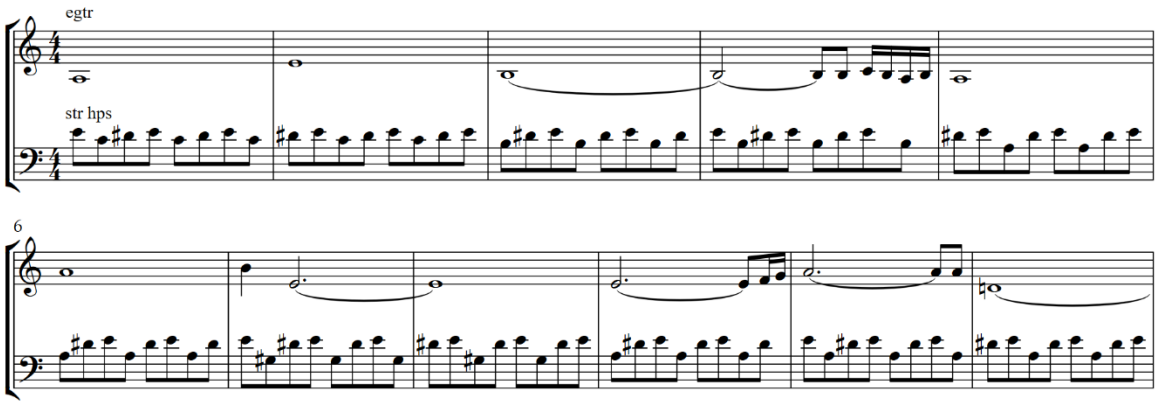
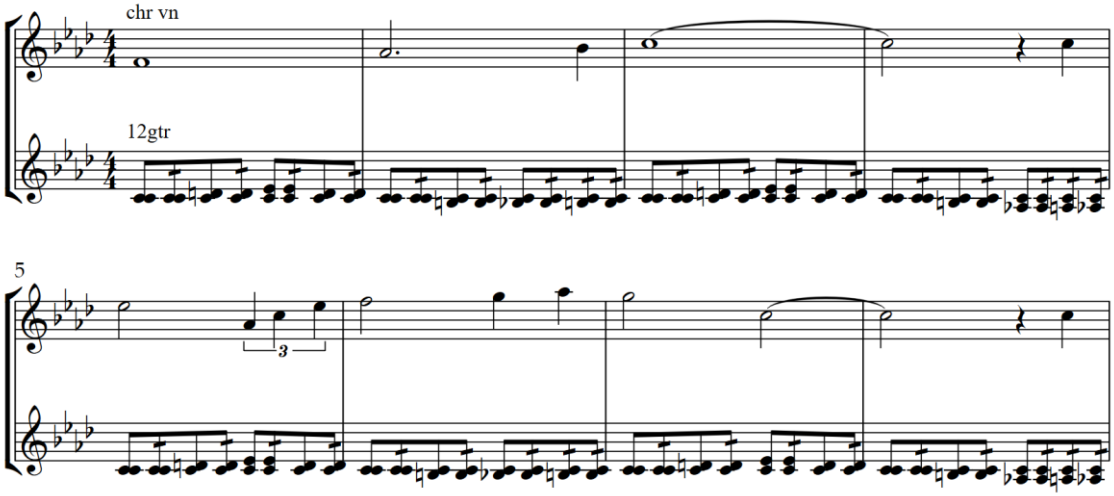


Example 3.26 'L'estasi dell'oro' (i) and 'L'uomo dell'armonica' (ii), both distinguished by ostinati. The latter's ostinato, rooted in Harmonica's diegetic motif, is juxtaposed with the melody associated with Frank, who gave Harmonica his namesake instrument and is the object of his pursuit of vengeance.

‘Mexican’ harmonic progression featuring in *Il mercenario*, *La battaile de San Sebastian*, *Tepepa* and *Compañeros* come close. This formula consists of repetitive rhythmic patterns made up of metric or intrametric units and strummed on acoustic (usually steel-string) guitar. In each of the five films where this figure forms a key constituent of a main theme – in *Da uomo a uomo*, *Faccia a faccia*, *Il grande silenzio*, *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, and *Occhio alla penna* – a form of biphony is expressed, consisting of one static voice or chord functioning as a pedal point, and a second that meanders chromatically around it (in the title music of *Il grande silenzio*, both voices shift, and there is no chromaticism). The transcription of the *Two Mules* title theme (Ex. 3.23) demonstrates this device at work.

The dissonance and cyclicism generates unease as well as a concurrence of stagnation and motion, microcosmic of the larger effect Morricone creates in these examples when he juxtaposes this stubborn figure with a melody of sweeping lyricism and a steady harmonic progression; as one textural dimension stalls, the other evolves. The main themes of *Il grande silenzio* (the title of which appropriately includes ‘Restless’ in parentheses) and *Faccia a faccia* (Ex. 3.27) are marked by this tension. In contrast, the sung melody of ‘Da uomo a uomo’ exhibits the same antagonism as the ostinato that supports it, due to its compactly segmented repetitiveness, and aggressive vocal colour. The *Da uomo a uomo* articulation of the biphonic guitar was notably reproduced almost note-for-note by Morricone for the theme of *Le Ruffian* (dir. José Giovanni, 1983), an adventure film borrowing various western-genre elements including a score that has a great deal in common with those in our filmography. It represents perhaps the clearest instance of the composer leaning on Italian-western techniques to score a film situated outside the genre while owing a stylistic debt to it (see Gonin 2022).



Example 3.27 A reduced extract from the main titles of *Faccia a faccia.*

Formal antagonism resonates with the personal musical sensibility that Morricone himself coined *immobilità dinamica* (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 208–22). Another aesthetic offshoot of his engagement with serialism, the notion is related to tonal reduction and alludes to the exhaustive manipulation of limited materials – usually a short series of pitches – to achieve a sense of simultaneous movement and constancy, particularly in concert music (he uses the term to describe the compositional ethos and phenomenal effect, and not necessarily the technical processes by which the effect is realised; it is something that 'informs [his] way of writing and thinking' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 219)). Morricone conceives of the exclusive application of the set as a form of 'modality', inasmuch as it constitutes the establishment of a mode in which the music is expressed. In this way he draws consciously on the reductive spirit of ancient and church modes, but although he frequently practises diatonicism in his film music, this is avoided in a some *assoluta* works marked by dynamic immobility in which the employment of chromaticism creates an atonal row. Traditional modality is emulated further by abandoning a vertical functional-harmonic framing, with Morricone preferring to focus on animating series using 'dynamic, gestural, and timbral elements' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 214). Miceli observes that while much of this was conceptualised later, such techniques are pre-empted in *Variazioni su tema di Frescobaldi*, and to a lesser extent in the *Sestetto* (both 1955), in which a mere six-note generative fragment contains the blueprint for 'overall linguistic synthesis' (2021 [1994], 63–7; author's translation). The composer drifted towards this manner of thinking that entwined various aspects of his musicality (concert-music experiments, film music, pop arrangements, membership of Il Gruppo) in the late 1960s, with *Suoni per Dino* marking a watershed within the sphere of concert music. In the composer's own summary, the mechanism is 'the combination of elements embracing diversity in a seeming stasis' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 219). The term fundamentally captures formal coexistence of stability and motion, suspense and flux, being and becoming.

As we have seen, and as Morricone concedes, there are numerous points of contact between *assoluta* and *applicata.* With regard to the latter, however, the composer mentions only *La migliore offerta* (dir. Tornatore, 2013) in his exposé of the techniques, and even then only with recourse to modal writing (in the orthodox sense) and the rejection of functional harmony. Jeff Smith (2020) is one of few scholars to have considered the ramifications of this discourse as regards Morricone's film music, and is indeed one of few English-language commentators to reflect on dynamic immobility. Smith describes the concept as the aural equivalent of watery 'swirls, eddies, and ripples', which creates the feeling of an 'endlessly deferred resolution', framing as opposed to fuelling the drama, cradling and not carrying the listener. He interprets the notion liberally, prioritising metaphor over technicality in his case study of a cue from *The Untouchables*, but Morricone essentially conceives of dynamic immobility in conceptual terms.

The thrust of this cue put forward by Smith is a crisp triplet ostinato, juxtaposed with an enveloping, polyphonic brass texture. The guitar ostinato under discussion, so prominent in the five westerns discussed and cultivated in the exact period during which Morricone was

beginning to formulate compositional strategies related to dynamic immobility in a deliberate manner, must be considered an equally pertinent symptom of this individual aesthetic in the context of his film work, both at the level of its inherent biphony and that of its contrast to the overlapping melodic material. That the technique can be regarded as one of his most distinct generic hallmarks and of relevance to important forays in the realm of *musica assoluta* only heightens its significance, in the context of the present enquiry and in that of any discussion of interactive strands in Morricone's creative practice. Ostinato also offers a secure, well-trodden route to the maintenance of musical cohesiveness (Adorno 2007 [1949], 111), but one that assumes a quite different form to, say, hyperbolic aria themes, which resolutely emphasise regular melodic phrasing and functional harmony, and starkly contrast the principles of dynamic immobility.

4. Music and Narrative

> Music in a film must not add emphasis but must give more body and depth to the story, to the characters, to the language the director has chosen. It must, therefore, say all that the dialogue, images, effects, etc., cannot say.
>
> (Morricone, quoted in Kennedy 1991, 41)

Morricone had much to say in his career regarding the purpose, place, and function of film music, but this statement is of special interest, capturing his thoughts succinctly and raising a number of questions. It is moreover one of the most repercussive statements of its kind in the literature, targeted by commentators including Laurence E. MacDonald (2013 [1998], 336–7), Leinberger (2004, 18), and Smith (1998, 257). MacDonald and Leinberger emphasise the passage in particular, and perceive the *raison d'être* espoused as fundamental to Morricone's broader film-scoring method. When asked what music's 'main function [was] in relation to' moving pictures, Morricone made reference to director Gillo Pontecorvo's philosophy: 'behind every story cinema tells there is a real story, one that really counts … music must find a way to bring out the value of that hidden story' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 98) – another revealing statement; in these two quotations Morricone refers to elements (dialogue, images, effects) and concepts (story, language, meaning) that situate the medium of cinema, and film music by extension, in the context of narrative art. Contemplating film music in this arena, assessing its relationship to these other constituent aspects and its overall functional efficacy, necessitates the adoption of a narratological analytical perspective, which is exercised in the following pages. Those who have approached Morricone's film music from this standpoint (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 115–9; Leinberger 2004, 35–6;

Heldt 2013, 197–217; Coulthard 2012) have identified highly distinctive narrational strategies at work, particularly in Leone's filmography and frequently regarding its ontological status relative to the diegesis. It is the objective of this chapter to consider these strategies in the wider filmography and assess their significance as a tool in western-genre storytelling.

Morricone refers here to film-music *function* (see above, p. 16). In his exemplary study of film-music narration, which is informed by several Morricone case studies, Heldt (2013, 7) makes an important distinction between the functional application of film music and its placement in the narrative structure of film, while recognising that the two 'intersect in complex ways'. Despite this difference, the present chapter considers both the function and placement of Morricone's music in our filmography, first because the composer's views on function ramify in relation to the place of his music in the westerns, and because the intersections are manifold and appear striking in that interpretative context. Acknowledging the considerable scope of narratology, Heldt (2013, 7) clarifies that his enquiry deals with the 'machinery of narration': the means by which stories are told, as opposed to their 'patterns and trajectories'. Although we shall consider how the latter manifests in Morricone's scores, Heldt's prioritisation is broadly emulated as we focus on the manner in which music is integrated into cinematic narration, and the means by which it carries out, nuances, and subverts its operation in this capacity.

Space and time: locating Morricone's music

Some previous musical observations can serve as a useful springboard for this enquiry, first among which is the peculiar role played by Italian-western music in a *terza visione* cinematic environment, according to Wagstaff. If it is neither accurate to say that Morricone's music was composed specifically for this arena, nor that it was first performed there exclusively, the particular customs of that refuge for exploitation cinema nonetheless exerted influence on the semantic and syntactic traits of the Italian western and its soundtrack. And while Hollywood precedent, among other factors, also affected these traits to some extent, it is difficult to posit a more suitable candidate as the spiritual home of Italian-western music than the *terza visione* auditorium.

The role of music as identified by Wagstaff – to stifle commotion and summon attention for moments of narrative significance – sheds light on social mores and score structure, but it appears unremarkable as regards narrative function. Take the two paradigmatic soundings of 'Per un pugno di dollari', for instances: each signals a moment of dramatic significance, as music in film ordinarily does, and the score appeals to this audience response ostensibly from outside the diegesis (that is to say, there is no empirical indication that music is emitted from within the town of San Miguel). In fact, in the final confrontation, the distant explosion of dynamite performs the task of seizing the attention of characters and audience alike in advance of the music (Fig. 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Attention! In *Per un pugno di dollari* the Man with No Name announces his arrival, and that of the climactic gunfight, with an ear/eye-catching ignition of dynamite.

Nevertheless, this operation has wider implications. Whether or not Morricone, Leone, or any Italian-western filmmaker intentionally positioned a loud, imposing cue with the express purpose of muting an audience, such a mechanism theorised by Wagstaff would involve a phenomenal process that exceeds the necessary vibrational transmission of acoustic waves, to achieve a pointedly spatial effect; music encroaches in the room, provoking a palpable response and bringing dimensionality, physicality, and a sense of the visceral to the narrative experience – as if it were emanating from a theatre pit. Music acts and interacts with a certain 'awareness' of the situation, hinting at the 'filmic artifice that takes a story as its subject', even as it contributes to the narration of that very story (Heldt's 2013, 13).

Just as gunfights served previously as a prime example of aria-like asynchronism, so they typify this narrational process. After all, they represent the most dramatic and unmissable part of a western, the inexorable, cathartic resolution towards which narratives are orientated. Music manages the cinematic event as much as it frames the story and steers the audience's response to it. This is facilitated by compositional attributes enhancing musical independence

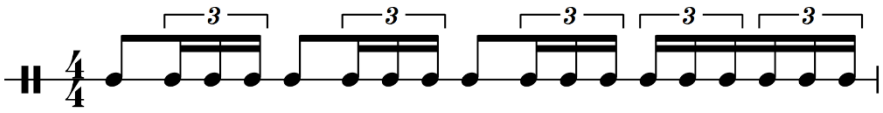
and immediacy examined in Chapters Three and Five. Assisted by its formal detachment from imagery, music can weaken the verisimilitude of the 'implied spatiotemporal world' the film constructs (Gorbman 1987, 21), presenting the action as something altogether more performative, spectacular, and separating the audience from the narrative, as if partitioning it from the screen. Director Roland Joffé has spoken of Morricone's ability to create a 'world that wasn't quite on the screen' (Tornatore 2021, 52:18), while De Rosa has expressed that the composer typically does not seek to induce immersion in the story, but compels the audience to contemplate it at a distance (Tornatore 2021, 124:13). Music thus induces an audience perspective associated with 'exhibitionist' or 'theatrical' cinema (Rushton 2004; see also Metz 1975, where this notion was most influentially articulated). Such films reflexively acknowledge their artifice and presentation before an audience – their 'to-be-looked-at-ness', as Laura Mulvey (1975, 11) summarised in her feminist interrogation of the mechanism.

This effect is magnified by the increasingly ritualistic proportions the gunfight acquired as the Italian western wore on, caricaturing the trope that Leone eulogised. Amidst this development, this musical function became as indispensable a part of the procedure as the weaponry itself. The ritual's aggrandisement was also fuelled by other elements that ultimately coalesced around, and tapped into, the essential theme of mortality, the fateful moment of reckoning. According to Frayling (2000, 158), 'in their circular, theatricalised presentation, [duels] become like a *corrida* or a roulette wheel – no longer face to face, but the climax of a 'fable' – the last chance of living, the moment of truth'. That circular presentation began in the final duel in *Per qualche dollaro in più* and was consolidated in the Mexican standoff of *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, but it arguably reached a cine-musical zenith in Corbucci's *Il mercenario* (Fig. 4.2). Here the recurrent device of the 'neutral' third party adjudicating through sound (the tolling of a bell) harked back to *Per qualche dollaro* – although the peculiar transdiegetic movement in Leone's film, discussed below, was not imitated.

Figure 4.2 Franco Nero's mercenary oversees the gunfight in *Il mercenario* inside an arena, which has just emptied after a circus performance.

Despite owing this debt to Leone, Corbucci surpassed him in his coding of the duel achieved through deep textual engagement with its cultural connotations – and Morricone's music responds to this. The *Il mercenario* shootout occurs in an arena proper that has just staged a circus performance – featuring a bullfight – in which Paco, one of the film's two protagonists, participated. He therefore duels in costume, the attire of a clown-cum-matador. As the lasting, unintended connotations of Julius Fučik's 'Entrance of the Gladiators' demonstrates, there is association between clowns and the combatants of antiquity, which Corbucci exploits to fortify his rich portrayal of the gunfight (the text and not the fantasy, to recall Creekmur's clarification; see above, p. 101) as modern-era blood sport. Corbucci's arena is equally circus, bullring, and amphitheatre, and the gladiatorial implications of a fight to the death are never more apparent than here. (This resonates, too, with the Fellinian fixation with the circus ring as a metaphorical stage for meditation on the most existential of life's questions.)

The cinematography emphasises the setting: the arena's seats appear empty, but the film's spectators are effectively its invisible occupants, who like the bloodthirsty Roman mob file in to witness competition under the highest stakes. The cue, 'L'arena', alludes in form to this overarching sense of fatal spectacle. With the single exception of a close-up of Franco Nero precisely matched to his chromatic whistled leitmotif, the cue offers a protracted exercise in total asynchronism. Following two soloists' recapitulations of the 'Libertà' themes – the first (Ex. 2.4) on trumpet and the second (Ex. 2.5) on guitar – the orchestra and choir take up the second and repeat its nine-bar scheme with some variations in orchestration in a considerably elongated coda. Meanwhile, the percussion beat outs a quasi-bolero rhythm (Ex. 4.1) with equal insistence, creating a hypometric pattern of repetition. The cycle is a musical representation of the circular space, and of the figurative circle of life invoked by Corbucci's showdown.



Example 4.1 The ubiquitous rhythmic figure of 'L'arena', effectively a common-time bolero pattern. A very similar figure underpins the *Barabba* suite, which features extensive repetition of a legato melody amidst intensifying orchestration.

Morricone's music here and in other similar instances is not subordinated to a dominant narrative level, working to legitimise the diegetic space portrayed by establishing visual–temporal correspondence, or to capture the audience emotionally by dictating their affective reaction. It is given freer rein to express itself formally at a stylistic level as it communicates meanings and connotations at the thematic level – all the while superficially amplifying the

drama. These mechanics crystallise in gunfights, suffused with a crude sense of magnitude, but they play out, too, albeit less sharply, in other sequences of narrative profundity or elaborate visual rhetoric – whenever music is granted its hyperbolic indulgences with little competition from other sounds or visual movement. The impact of these moments, enacted repeatedly throughout the genre, then bears on the perception of the surrounding score, even if much of its material is assigned a more conventional place and function. And because much of this wider material still demonstrates formal characteristics facilitating aural prominence, the result is the reinforcement of a more general disassociation of music from the onscreen action.

Such procedures are speculated with recourse to an original screening environment, and to the influence this space and its practice may have had on their underlying compositional decisions. Speculations regarding physical space and its narrational implications are problematised in alternative perceptive scenarios, from theatrical screenings outside *terza visione* cinemas to the vastly different setup of an individual streaming via a web-browser and listening on headphones (Elsaesser 2013); the existence and effect of these theorised physical phenomena are beholden to a certain mode of filmic experience. Still, the narrational 'place' of music manifests essentially in a conceptual way, and this need not preclude the evocation of a 'spatial' dimension. Morricone's own ruminations help us to unpack this suggestion:

> the 'horizontal application' of music to moving pictures occurs along the unrolling of images; music adds rhythmic values to visual perception […] 'Vertical application' instead concerns the perceived depth of the image; now, given that the cinematic image is essentially flat – in spite of its illusory potential – the vertical dimension is much more important than the horizontal, as it carries somewhat of a spiritual, rather than physical, component.
>
> […] Music replaces the image's illusory depth by providing, or rather, newly creating a poetic depth. […] It is essential that music be given the right space to release itself from the other sounds in the film.
>
> (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 98)

'Space' for Morricone principally concerns the formal space awarded music, a notion discussed previously. He always stresses that it is generously afforded in Leone's films, and while complaints about Corbucci might dissuade us from extending that notion to other westerns, analysis of 'L'arena' suggests that aural competition was eliminated elsewhere, too. There are physical repercussions to this, as indicated by the 'spatiality' segment of his 'EST' scoring formula (the others are 'energy' and 'temporality'), prescribing that music be given the space to 'reach and envelop the spectator without equivocation and interference from

other components on the soundtrack' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 252); his decision to exemplify a 2009 installation, 'Infinite Spaces', where music written for *Mission to Mars* (dir. Brian De Palma, 2000) permeated an open-air plaza, implies this additional sense of dimensionality (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 99). Presumably when music is given this spatiality, then its 'vertical application' is optimised, alongside its ability to instil what must be regarded as the more notional 'poetic depth' in consequence. This is what finally enables music to tell the 'hidden story', saying that which other cinematic elements cannot.

Despite his comments about Leone, Morricone evidently understood spatiality and depth as general principles pertaining to the audiovisual relationship, specific neither to westerns nor to his work. Even the effect extrapolated from Wagstaff's insight cannot be deemed unique to the *terza visione* picture house. Laughter and gasps are other, less restricted examples of physical and ritualistic 'spatial' responses that can be musically stimulated, and which indicate that the pivotal agent is the collective viewing experience. 'Awareness', too, is more broadly applicable. As an expression of the composer's will, music effectively always functions with anticipation and intent in communication with an audience; it is designed to elicit certain responses, and negotiates cultural conditioning and social habits in the process.

What, then, is peculiar to the musical 'energy' (to refer again to EST) of Morricone's western music? Time (or temporality), the final aspect of the formula, brings us closer to an answer, and once again, 'attention' cues can assist effectively. Thinking in a temporal, horizontal sense, the musical proclamation of an important scene is structurally and functionally ordinary as a physical marker in the flow of cinematic time. Cues are obliged to begin sometime; many commence in the absence of dialogue or substantial diegetic sound, and most are aligned with a moment of some narrative significance. In the context of the westerns, however, such proclamations frequently represent the activation stage of a larger and more peculiar narrational mechanism, the impact of which on how spectators receive surrounding musical material should not be overlooked.

These workings were addressed in the aforementioned interview between Miceli (1982) and Morricone. Here the composer drew the comparison between the film-music cue and the operatic aria, opining that the former should emulate the latter in its placement, and occur when 'action stops and crystallizes'. Although he was again speaking about film music in general, he invoked an analogy that had been active in Italian-western commentary for the better part of a decade at least, since critic Richard T. Jameson remarked that *C'era una volta il west* 'may be described as an opera in which arias are not sung but stared' (1973, 11). This idea was developed and popularised by Staig and Williams (1975), and a casual perpetuation of the kinship between the media littered the discourse until Timothy Summers (2014) conducted a more detailed study of the relationship, using that film as a case study. We return to this ongoing tradition of likening Italian westerns and opera; here we focus on the 'aria' question and on how the dramaturgical process Morricone alludes to plays out in westerns.

In exploring film music's ability to function as a 'spatiotemporal turntable' – arguing it is less constrained by the 'barriers of time and space that the other sound and visual elements' –

Chion (1994, 81) anecdotally cites an effect occurring in Leone's films, referring to opera as he does so:

> in the long confrontations in Sergio Leone's films, where characters do little but pose like statues staring at each other, Ennio Morricone's music is crucial in creating the sense of temporal immobilization. True, Leone also tried to stretch time without the help of music. Notably, at the opening of *Once Upon a Time in the West*, he made do with the occasional creaking of a weather vane or a noria. But there, the plot situation – a long period of waiting and inaction – was chosen to justify the immobility of the characters … Leone developed this sort of epic immobility with reference to opera and by generally using music overtly on the soundtrack.
>
> (Chion 1994, 82)

Picking up this notion of temporal immobilisation as instilled by Morricone's music in Leone's films, Coulthard examined the 'expansion of the cine-musical moment' and how it was employed by Quentin Tarantino in *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), with the help of 'La condanna' (a shootout cue from *La resa dei conti*). Analysing the opening scene of Tarantino's film, Coulthard isolates the musical manipulation of temporality as a device and considers it independently of the Italian western (see below, p. 214) but she also importantly looks beyond the duel as a vehicle for the device's implementation. One encounters various instances in which music expands a moment to pointed lyrical affect with minimal interference from speech, action, or general narrative advancement (Fig. 4.3 below), even if it does not stretch time as histrionically as in gunfights. (See Redner 2011, 145–8; temporal immobilisation, and to a lesser extent dynamic immobility, share kinship with Gilles Deleuze's conception of the 'time-image', incidentally influenced by Bergsonian philosophy – see below).

Cumbow turns, as Morricone did, to operatic comparison to encapsulate the narrational effect: 'From the *bel canto* era onward, Italian opera emphasized the moment rather than the flow, the scene rather than the story' (2008 [1987], 204). Between kinetic recitatives, during which flow accelerates through plot development, arias, choruses, and trios (numbers) then dwell on ideas and emotions within a narrow, fixed temporal span. This permits more autonomous, regular musical forms to be established and expressed without hindrance from narrative intricacies, a benefit relished in the revolution of pop-song usage in 1960s film-scoring. Cumbow continues: 'This was partly due to the limitations of the stage, but more to a classical view of time as a succession of isolated compartments … No longer is time a continuous, never-freezing moment, as Romantic apologists like Wagner, and later Bergson, insisted'. Cumbow says little of music in this short essay dedicated to operatic comparison, though he adds elsewhere that music in the director's cinema underscores not 'the mounting

suspense but the elemental triumph of that frozen moment of reckoning occurring just before explosive action' (2008 [1987], 190–1).

Figure 4.3 The opening sequence from *…e per tetto un cielo di stelle*. A typically asynchronous aria cue (Fig. 3.56) magnifies the pathos of this wordless scene in which the protagonists discover the tragic aftermath of a cold-blooded killing, and give the victims the dignity of a proper burial. All three westerns directed by Petroni with a Morricone score start with significant scenes featuring an abundance of music and a paucity of dialogue.

The reference to philosopher Henri Bergson as advocating for a Wagnerian, or Germanic, conception of operatic time is curious. Bergson wrote extensively and influentially about time as part of wider enquiries relating to free will and direct experience, in which he proposed his theory of *la durée* (duration): subjective, personal temporal perception existing independently of scientifically measurable time, attainable only through conscious intuition. He propounded the theory in his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (2013 [1889]; see also 1992 [1934]), a retort to the Kantian understanding of time as immobile and beyond subjective grasp, which, Bergson argued, needlessly problematised the notion of free will. Bergson's writings proved popular in *fin-de-siècle* society, endorsing liberational attitudes to will and desire according to Kae Fujisawa (2016), who traced the evolution of Puccini's love duets against this backdrop in her doctoral thesis. Although these duets are not technically arias, in the composer's operas they still occupy prominent slots in the *solita forma* scheme that dominated planning in nineteenth-century Italian opera structure. It is Fujisawa's assertion that while Puccini did not discard the conventions of *solita forma*, he nonetheless aspired to realise in his duets – critical vehicles of emotional and dramatic expression – a 'naturalistic emotional-temporal unfolding' in response to Bergsonian thinking (2016, 6). This gradually transcended the 'temporal snapshot' of the Italian aria of which Cumbow writes, moving into closer proximity to the Wagnerian influence that 'pervade[d] Italian

opera through the 1880s and early 1890s', in the shape of a 'continuous orchestral texture woven from dramatically significant motives … [and] extensive use of irregular phrasing, which blurred the distinctions between sections and increased the sense of continuity and development' (Fujisawa 2016, 35–6).

Fujisawa argues that in pursuing greater naturalism, Puccini's duets demonstrate increasing deference to the intuitive perception of time and the heterogeneous unfolding of feelings in our inner emotional reality; the constancy of 'becoming'. Emphasis on the continuity of *durée* superficially prioritises movement over moment, ostensibly dissuading 'crystallisation of action' and the introspective scrutiny of ephemeral thoughts and feelings (to look back to Morricone's initial reflections on aria placement) and encourages, where music is concerned, momentum, flux, wall-to-wall sound, and heterogeneity of colour and form. All of these features are hallmarks of the Wagnerian pit orchestra, particularly as it behaved following the German's epiphanic discovery of Schopenhauer's philosophy (Magee 2001, 126–51).

However, Bergson fundamentally asserts not only the subjectivity of *durée*, but also its elasticity in conscious experience, which does not preclude a perceived elongation of time come the moment of reckoning. After all, time never actually freezes in the shootouts; the drama of a few vital seconds is merely magnified in the viewer's experience – and, it would seem, the characters'. Music performs an essential role in narrationally conveying this process, facilitating and legitimising the cinematic portrayal of a singular 'emotional-temporal' experience that few will know in reality. Crucially for Bergson, *durée* is *réelle*: it is *true* time, and the unadulterated authenticity of intuition offers the sole means of comprehending it (Grosz 2004, 233–40). If the characters seem to experience some kind of temporal magnification, if music is to be considered an inductive agent in that process, and if that process constitutes an authentic unfolding of time, then one might deduce that music also induces a temporal effect for the characters. In other words, they can also 'hear' Morricone's music – or something of which it is representative (it is worth recalling instances of onset sounding of Morricone's music in Leone's filmmaking). In this constellation, the 'classical' conception of time underpinning number opera and Bergsonian *durée* combine.

These suggestions count on support from certain theoretical perspectives concerning the placement of music *vis-à-vis* the diegesis, which reject the traditional 'nondiegetic' classifier for music not audible within the story, due to the essential role of music in the establishment and sustenance of the diegesis itself. As Anahid Kassabian (2013, 91) – an influential voice in the debate – summarises, 'if [music] is part of the articulation of the diegesis, how can it post hoc be categorized on one side or another?' (see also Kassabian 2001; Neumeyer 2009; Winters 2010; Sbravatti 2016). These commentators broadly shun the assumption that film is a realist medium that strives to substantiate a spatiotemporal reality behind the screen and convince the audience as to its verisimilitude. The implications of a dissolution of the boundary that apparently divides 'nondiegetic' cinematic elements such as music (or, say, location captions) from notional events in the narrative world are obvious for our supposition

that onscreen individuals may be in a sense discerning those extraneous elements. By frequently wresting narrational control in the westerns, music seems to affect the nature of the implied phenomena that occur in the diegesis, and not just their presentation. It no longer comfortably occupies a position unequivocally external to that fictional realm.

The effects of Morricone's music on narrative temporality in scenes of accentuated lyricism, action, and drama, exploits the 'spiritual' potential of music to which he alludes (above, p. 133) – the poetic depth experienced internally by the audience. But in the sustention of this effect and in the poetic manipulation of the flow of time itself, the outcome is the paradoxical convergence of axes (vertical and horizontal, moment and movement, ephemeral and eternal, and even *immobilità* and *dinamismo*) when an impression of timelessness is grasped.

Narrational levels

Music that we are compelled to interpret as a product of the notional world presented to us – most unambiguously through the visual depiction of musicians – is, taxonomically speaking, the least contentious of the levels at which music in film commonly operates. Here music abounds in our filmography. The frontier of the Eurowestern, perpetuating a trope of the mythic arena with which it engaged, is a thoroughly tuneful West, and between the can-can of *Duello nel Texas* to the old-time musicians who perform in *Occhio alla penna*, diegetic music appears with great regularity in the filmography. With few exceptions, it is possible to divide items in this category threefold:

1. *Original compositions by Morricone*. For example, the honky-tonk music in the early saloon scene in *Il mercenario*, in which the mercenary taunts and shoots the gambler.
2. *Arrangements of pre-existing music by Morricone.* In the preceding scene from the same film, an arrangement of the 'Black Bottom' standard is heard accompanying the circus performance.
3. *Other music in the production of which Morricone may have been involved.* Also in that film, Mexican soldiers sing 'Adelita', a popular *corrido*, on a train. It is likely that this will not have been recorded onset, rather in the studio, possibly under supervision by Morricone (and/or Nicolai).

Much of this diegetic material pastiches the traditional styles ascribed by the myth to the historical period; some examples, such as the faux-folksong performed near the end of *Le pistole non discutono* by two characters, even attempt to pass themselves off as the real article. Anachronism of some degree also marks this music, and ranges from modest cases (liberal chromaticism in the square dance at the wedding reception in *La resa dei conti*, or the

unlikely inclusion of a celesta in ‘La storia di un soldato’) to more far-reaching ones (the persistence of mature ragtime well before the close of the nineteenth century). The folksy singing-cowboy set piece, a hallmark of the Hollywood western, is rare, having been roundly usurped by the ‘Mexican number’ (see below, p. 198) as part of cultural distancing from British-Irish America (Fig. 4.4). That said, instrumental numbers broadly aligning with old-time music are more common.

Figure 4.4 Rosita sings a Spanish-language ballad in *Il ritorno di Ringo*, accompanied by nylon-string guitar.

The technological limitations of the period depicted broadly prohibit the use of diegetic sound-reproduction equipment to render source music. This, in consequence, all but rules out the diegetic use of pre-existing music other than folk, and obliges Morricone’s authorship of such material (the same applies to any film or genre typically set before the twentieth century, like the peplum, though diegetic music is much less a feature of that genre), and the western’s prescription of frontier music gives Morricone singular opportunities to exercise eclecticism along these idiomatic lines. Rare exceptions to this, and to the categories outlined above, are the Bellini cabaletta (‘Suoni la tromba, e intrepido’, from *I puritani*) emanating from a gramophone in the opening frames of *Che c’entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?*, and Verdi’s ‘La donna è mobile’, played in *Il mercenario*. Playback is enabled by the later timespan of the Mexican Revolution (1910s) during which the Zapata is set, and in both instances opera is chosen to symbolise the elitism of reactionary military officers.

Diegetic music often serves as ambient locational music, the prime example being that heard during scenes in a saloon or cantina. So ubiquitous is this scenario in the wider western, it is a strong presupposition that music should be heard, and that it ought to be of the honky-tonk, music-hall, or ragtime varieties. There is no need to see performers, as it is assumed that

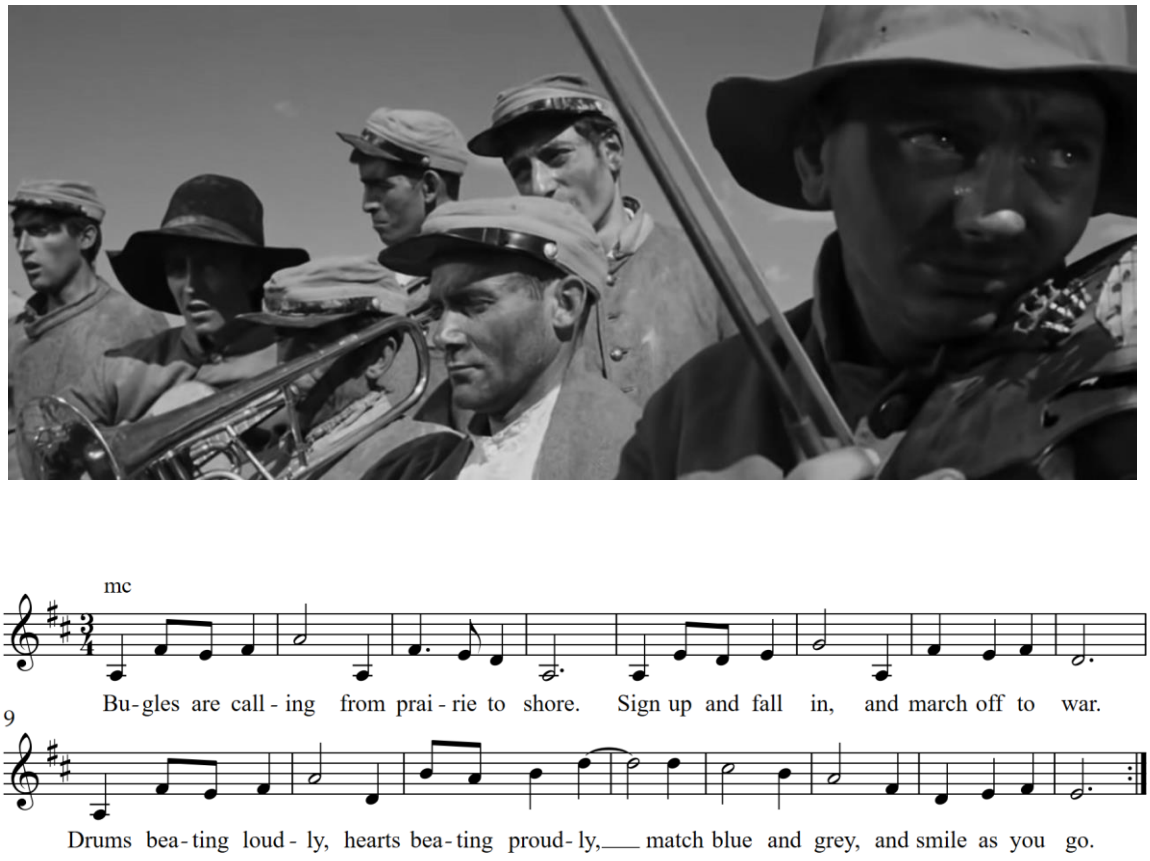
the music is produced and heard in the story; this music has, over the course of innumerable western films, been 'diegetised' (Heldt 2013, 55–7). This assumption, even complacency, enhances the potency of the time-honoured 'sudden silence' – the abrupt cessation of music following tension-inducing moves by the characters. It also permits this responsiveness to acquire incredible proportions without being called into question: during the glass-shooting scene in *Il mio nome è Nessuno,* the unseen player ramps up the dynamics and tempo as Nobody becomes increasingly inebriated.

Occasionally, diegetic music is more poignant with regard to the narrative, and will be centralised to underscore that accordingly. An example of this is the sequence in *Un esercito di 5 uomini* in which the oppressed Mexican community spontaneously strikes up 'Muerte donde vas?' (another original composition 'posing' as traditional music) in response to military brutality. Finally, a musical event can represent the diegetic manifestation of a 'transdiegetic' musical polarity. In *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, prisoners of war perform 'La storia di un soldato', written by Morricone in in the style of a Civil-War ballad. The melody (Ex. 4.2 below) recapitulates that heard earlier in 'La missione San Antonio'. The 'Muerte donde vas?' tune is inversely transferred to the nondiegetic level, and there are many other such instances. Diegetic occurrences can affect musical form in ways that might be considered 'unmusical'; the reproduction of these effects on soundtrack recordings risks perplexing listeners who have no knowledge of that initial cause. A striking example of this occurs in the 'La storia di un soldato' performance, in which a violinist overcome with emotion tails off mid-solo (Ex. 4.2 below), a sudden, otherwise inexplicable stoppage reproduced on the soundtrack.

Music that, as cinematic convention leads us to believe, stems from outside the diegesis, and is seemingly inaudible to the fictional characters portrayed in these westerns, is typically widespread. Much of the music that has been discussed in the present study belongs to this nondiegetic category, and the majority of it is, from a narratological perspective, unremarkable. Peculiar formal attributes undoubtedly exist, such as those pertaining to textual independence, audiovisual conspicuity, and stylistic idiosyncrasy, and these have been considered as facilitators of detachment, atmosphere, and 'commentary' (a term that becomes problematic when placed in superlative opposition to 'accompaniment'; Audissino 2017, 26–8). These observations inform how Morricone's music materialises and operates within a nondiegetic capacity, and the prior exploration of thematic and leitmotivic attributes sheds light on its interaction with aspects of narrative. Despite these features of interest, many cues still adopt a customary narrational placement apparently external to the fictional world, and do not undermine that position.

It has been suggested already, however, that the distinctive effects of the Morriconian 'aria' cannot be thought of as manifesting in isolation, entailing no repercussions for how nondiegetic music is interpreted elsewhere in a film and in the wider genre. As Coulthard argues, it is the foregrounding of music that most decisively enables expansion of narrational time and poetic lyricism. This is an underlying compositional strategy not restricted to just

these moments of dramaturgical interest, nor to Leone's directorial style. Relative to this, even synchronism – the approach seen to typify musical 'subservience' to the image (not least in Morricone's esteem) – exacerbates musical protrusion, because the instances in which it is applied are economically and deliberately selected; it is often the ubiquity of wall-to-wall underscore that fosters its inconspicuousness. When there is the characteristic hard cut, music erupts from inactivity to underline it, as if with wilful initiative. And as Cumbow points out, by punctuating camera movement rather than tracking interior action, the music interlocks with the visual syntax, protrudes in the narrative, and increasingly erodes distinction between story and the act of telling (2008 [1987], 190–1).



Example 4.2 'Play that fiddle, you!' The violinist struggles to perform 'La storia di un soldato'. The song's first strophe is transcribed (based on Leinberger 2004, 92; lyrics by Tommie Connor).

Even when music does align with character motion, as when Monco ('Manco' in English-language versions) spins and holsters his pistol (Fig. 3.3), its precision and brevity allows the specific act to be targeted and highlighted, generating a musical echo of the diegetic act that resounds somewhere beyond it, instilling an extraordinary, epic quality, to

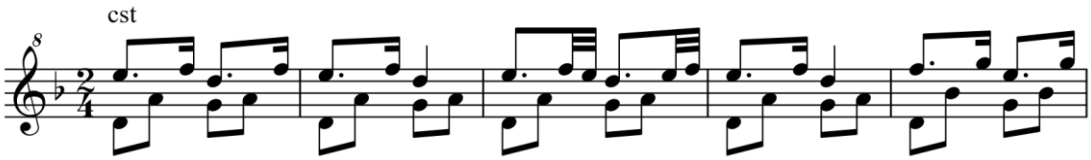
which the general foregrounding of music, as described by Leinberger (2004, 18), greatly contributes. But, especially when repeated, as with leitmotifs and fragments, an intimate connection can be established with a character; this is what Miceli detects when he describes the *Per un pugno di dollari* quintuplet as an event at the 'mediated' level (2021, 146; for definition of 'mediated', see 2013, 518–20), the mechanics of which generally correspond to those of 'focalisation' (Heldt 2013, 119–33). The greater the score's autonomy, the greater the poetic depth it can instil, and the more expansive the liminal 'pit' space from which it narrates – a process much like the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* (see Maloney 2023, 327–8). This helps to coax the audience into assumption of the onlooker's perspective. But, by other means, the music also draws itself towards the diegesis as it is conveyed to us, acquiring a presence that on occasion culminates in tangible diegetic infringement, as we shall see. Music can distance, while concurrently maintaining a direct line to the fiction.

Music establishes and maintains these cross-level routes not only within but also beyond individual films, making such movement a feature of Morricone's generic sound-scaping. It is well known that music is a slippery cinematic element that can effectively negotiate the so-called 'fantastical gap' (Stilwell 2007) between the two traditional primary levels (diegetic and nondiegetic). Chion recognises that music, especially the nondiegetic score, can 'function like the spatiotemporal equivalent of a railroad switch … being a little freer of barriers of time and space than the other sound and visual elements' (1994, 81). What, then, is special about the exploitation of this freedom in our case studies? First, the prevalence of transdiegetic musical movement is such that it is a trope in our filmography, and by extension in the wider genre. Second, the resultant perpetual threat that subversion will strike – that an apparent musical occupation of a level will be revealed as false – nurtures ambiguity as to music's exact placement and can provoke uncertainty, even mistrust on the part of filmgoers accustomed to functional underscore. And third, there are key intersections with the genre-frame of the western, which are alluded to at the close of the chapter, after analysis of noteworthy examples of transdiegetic movement in our filmography.

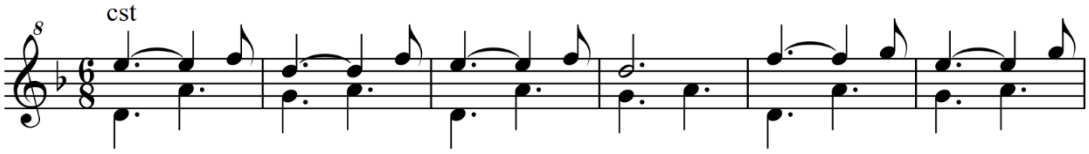
The first is familiar. Numerous commentators have, in their own narratological reflections on Morricone's music for westerns, looked to an archetypal example: the pocket-watch of *Per qualche dollaro in più* (Miceli 2021 [1994], 152–65; Leinberger 2004, 35–6; Cumbow 2008 [1987], 37; Heldt 2013, 198–201; Manuceau 2020, 80–1). This object within the story belongs to the villain Indio and plays a simple diegetic celesta ostinato (Ex. 4.3), which he activates at the beginning of duels, telling hapless opponents that the music's end gives the signal to fire. This preparatory routine plays out in an early exhibition gunfight in a church, and during the climactic confrontation. It involves a musical cycle that sees music seep out of the diegetic level to some extent, as the chimes are increasingly enriched by instruments in the pit. Those forces then dissipate, leaving the diegetic watch to wind down alone. This cycle in fact occurs three times. In the final duel, just before the chimes conclude, music emanating from a second watch, owned by protagonist Mortimer, is unexpectedly activated by Monco. This re-instigates the final cycle with additional momentum, causing it

to achieve the same apogee reached in the church shootout: the sounding of the shootout melody (Ex. 3.19iii).

(i)



(ii)



Example 4.3 Subtly different chimes produced by the respective pocket watches of Indio (i) and Mortimer (ii). The ostinato offers another important demonstration of reductive composition.

This could constitute ‘straddling’ of the narrative boundary: music at the diegetic level embellished simultaneously in the score. This is Leinberger’s take (2004, 35), and Miceli identifies activity at the ‘external’ (nondiegetic) level, too (2021 [1994], 160–1). Although this is a dramatic and ear-catching solution, it is not exceptional for diegetic music to be accompanied nondiegetically (Heldt 2013, 200). The expansion of music beyond what is clearly diegetic could also be read as movement to the mediated level: internal focalisation of the music, amplified by the watch-bearers’ shared memories and traumata. Heldt leans towards this reading, but prefers to look beyond the mechanics of the shootout to consider how material elsewhere in the score formally related to the chimes also alludes ambiguously to the interweaved past and destinies of the two men. This more complicated musico-dramatic scheme, of which the final shootout is the climax, implies more widespread focalisation of the pocket-watch music, and offers musical clues about critical information otherwise withheld from the audience until the film’s conclusion.

Miceli recognises that music is partially operating at a mediated level; tempted to receive Indio’s instruction (‘When the music stops…’) at face value, he goes as far as to say that the audience is encouraged to treat everything they hear as internal music (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 116). For his part, Morricone felt it ‘critical to link the object with a concept that transcended the images’, and saw the duel music as moving between ‘internal’ and

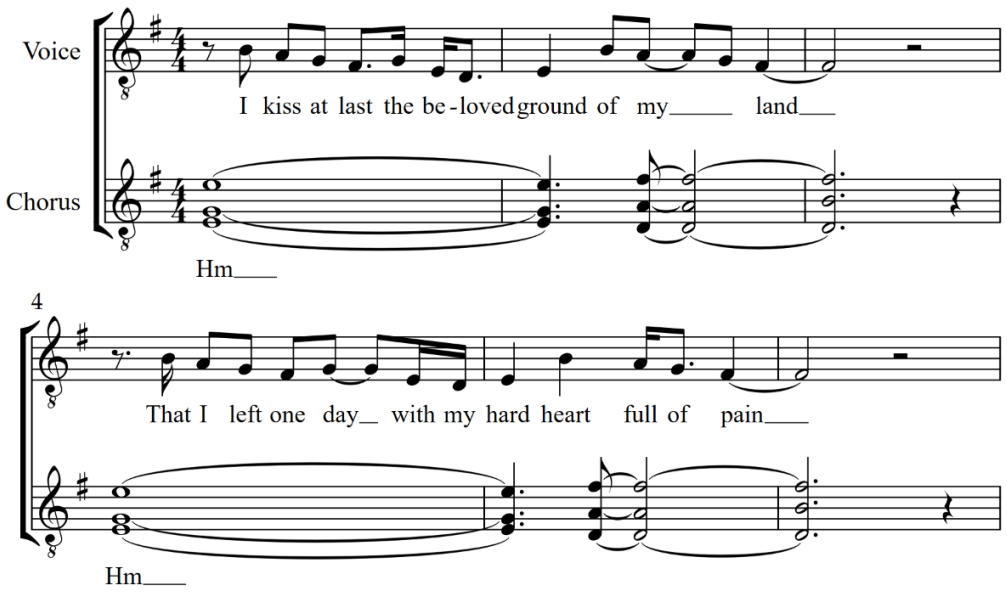
external' levels (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 28–9). These narrational characteristics of *Per qualche dollaro* are undoubtedly definitive, effective, and, at least as far as the Italian western is concerned, pioneering. But Leone's film is not the earliest in our corpus to problematise the diegetic–nondiegetic binary. Indeed, in the fragments of *Per un pugno di dollari*, one may infer mediated-level activity, but one can reasonably identify them as quirky utterances of the nondiegetic score.

Duccio Tessari was the first in the filmography to thwart straightforward distinction of source music and score, in the 'Ringo' films. The sight gag that occurs early on in *Una pistola per Ringo*, where a wagon-load of musicians roll into shot to reveal the source origin of music that fleetingly appeared to be nondiegetic (Fig. 2.4), has been discussed. For chiefly comic ends, Tessari here undermines conventional narrational placement of film music for the first time in a western scored by Morricone, and set a precedent that became an enduring conceit for transdiegetic movement in the genre. Whether such an instance constitutes the traversal of levels and temporary occupation of a 'fuzzy' space – or that its true ontological place is constant but disguised and it is our misapprehension that is corrected in response to delayed narrative clarification – is another matter for theorists to debate (Stilwell's presentation of the fantastical gap (2007) elicited a firm Neoformalist riposte from Jeff Smith (2009), exemplifying exchange on this battleground). Of greater importance here is Tessari's identification of musico-dramatic levels as a textual characteristic to be overtly toyed with – the false duel teed up in the opening frames of *Una pistola* (Fig. 4.5 below) immediately notifies us that our expectations will be persistently sabotaged.

He varies the gimmick in *Il ritorno di Ringo*, when Ringo leaves a saloon, the doors to which swing behind him. We would expect the usual creaking of hinges, and courtesy of the audiovisual phenomenon of 'synchresis' – 'the formation of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears' (Chion 1994, 5) – we infer that briefly, before the sound gradually reveals itself to be that of chromatic gestures played on string instruments, which become increasingly un-hinge-like as the pitches descend into the bass register. Tessari thus lampoons another western-genre trope, using Morricone's music as a tool, and this early move lends us a clue that music in the film will not behave conventionally. Later in the picture, a much less tongue-in-cheek challenge to taxonomies of levels is made when Ringo picks up and opens a music box, which then plays the same melody that has been singularly ubiquitous in the nondiegetic score up to that point (the 'return' theme; Ex. 4.4 below). He snaps it shut, cutting off the diegetic sound, but the theme is picked up immediately in the score, which continues to reiterate it to the film's end. This manoeuvre is different; the move is unexpected, but the music is lyrical, and the content sincere. There are meaningful ramifications of this crossing of levels and other such instances in *Il ritorno*, which imbue music with additional poignance, and encourage a revised understanding of the placement of music in the film and wider genre. These are revisited at the conclusion of this chapter.

Figure 4.5 'Merry Christmas, Chuck.' Tessari exploits the duelling stance as a cue for a joke. Sending up genre tropes is a hallmark of Tessari's cinema, and an understandable outcome of a career spent working in a *filone*-orientated industry.

Tessari's second western and *Per qualche dollaro* were released just ten days apart, so the question of who tampered with the levels first is arbitrary. *Il ritorno* could not have made an especially wide impact before the release of *Per qualche dollaro*, and Leone could not have integrated music so deeply into his narrative only ten days before its premiere. Produced more or less concurrently, however, the films shared a composer who implemented on both soundtracks a crossing of narrational levels by meaningful musical content, stemming from a percussive, diegetic musical object that, like the memories it represents, is cherished by its owner. It must at least call into question the provenance of musical slipperiness in the Italian western and – even in the face of his assertions that the pocket-watch device was inspired by the classic western *The Bravados* (dir. Henry King, 1958) – the extent of Leone's part in that, seeing as he claimed to have suggested using transdiegetic motion to Morricone (Frayling 2000, 196–8).



Example 4.4 The 'return' theme from *Il ritorno di Ringo* (as sung by Maurizio Graf in the title song), the basis for the score's 'choral' commentary (see below, p. 154).

The transdiegetic trick proliferated swiftly in Morricone's western scores. A strikingly similar instance occurs in Carlo Lizzani's *Un fiume di dollari*, released the following year: when Jerry returns to his homestead after five years in a military prison, expecting to reunite with his wife and son, he finds the house derelict, and evidence suggesting the gross betrayal of a friend and former comrade. Amidst the sorry scene, he accidentally triggers a music box, which he listens to for a moment, and this music, too, is then restated in the score. Inverse movement occurs in Leone's final 'Dollars' instalment, where soldiers strike up 'La storia di un soldato', the melody of which, as explained, recapitulates preceding nondiegetic material. And in *La resa dei conti*, the 'Run Man Run' theme is attached to the old-time arrangement of Felix Mendelssohn's wedding march played at the wedding reception. It is enticing to read the appearance of a celesta ostinato during the final standoff of *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* as an intertextual reference to the diegetic events of the prequel, as Brown (1994, 229) implies, but the motif is formally unrelated to the pocket-watch music. Even sequels proper like *Corri uomo corri* and *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?* do not feature recapitulation of specific thematic material.

The previously discussed piano stingers in the saloon shootout of *Da uomo a uomo* present a relevant case study. More than just constituting synchronous nondiegetic punctuation of onscreen movement – as do, say, the stab chords in *Dr No* (dir. Terence Young, 1962), sounding each time 007 strikes the tarantula – our stingers underscore actions that would and do trigger an explicitly musical effect in the diegesis, which, pitch errors aside, is thunderously exaggerated in the score. But what is happening narratologically? Is music once again straddling the diegetic–nondiegetic boundary? Does it convey subjective

amplification of the piano notes due to tension in the room? Or is the diegetic sound more simply emboldened by nondiegetic accompaniment? In all interpretations, the blatant comic-book emphasis not only enhances the perceptibility of music from the audience's point of view, but also fosters the sense of its presence within the diegesis through such close association of musical events either side of its border. The broader musicality of the Italian West's sound design and the sonorisation of its score also expedites transitions between levels and helps make any music we hear harder to separate from the fiction. Such transitions are consolidated as a facet of generic storytelling by their continued occurrence. In *Corri uomo corri*, Cuchillo sings the title song of his own film (Ex. 3.13) over the opening credits and indeed hums the tune, which litters the score, in the diegesis – with an awareness that recalls Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine* years before. In *Un esercito di 5 uomini*, the diegetic singing of 'Muerte donde vas?' is supported nondiegetically before that melody is also absorbed by the score to serve as a principal theme. And in *Il mio nome è Nessuno* the sound of a ticking clock is spatially detached from its diegetic source to function as a figurative signifier of the passage of time.

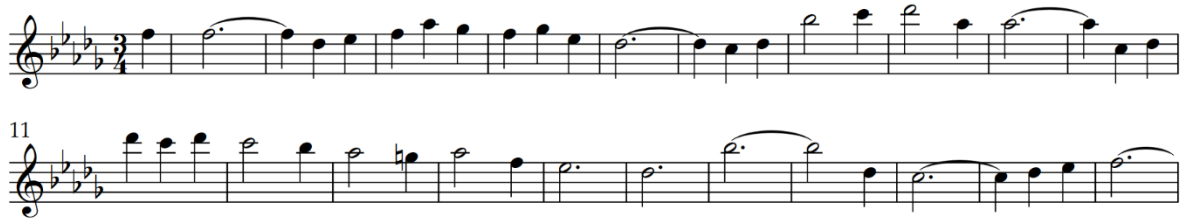
As with *Per qualche dollaro*, there is more discussion in the literature of the later westerns by Leone, in which music resumes peculiar operations after behaving with comparative normalcy in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo.* There is much focus on Charles Bronson's harmonica in *C'era una volta il west*. Morricone himself expresses that it is 'a character in its own right … which plays across the dramatic levels'; its theme and Frank's had to 'nourish one another', and were therefore overlaid in 'L'uomo dell'armonica' as the 'destinies of the two characters are bound' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 60–1). Symbolising again the memory of suffering wrought on one character by another and motivating their relentless quest for vengeance, the diegetic object and its musical offshoots oscillate between diegesis and score through the narrative and its fractured flashbacks, transcending time and space in both text and fiction. This, in conjunction with the mode of leitmotivic comment Morricone applies more generally in *C'era una volta*, causes the music to occupy a more nuanced intermediary level: the music 'is somehow close to the diegesis, but not in the way of … internal focalization'; themes are too rigid to evoke individual emotions. He goes on: 'the music seems to be part of the basic constitution of the characters, something that belongs to them like their bodies or, indeed, their character'; the fixity and characterising function of themes is one of several 'rules' imposed in the compositional schema that cause music to wrap itself so 'tightly around these figures, becom[ing] a second skin' (Heldt 2013, 204). Other rules Heldt identifies concern the idiomatic singularity of each of the four main themes relative to the other three, and the highly deliberate, theatrical audiovisual preparation leading up to their introduction; this last is the stylistic factor to which Heldt primarily ascribes the 'operatic' discourse that has sprung forth around Leone's film (2013, 201–2). This forms part of the extremely careful approach taken to the cultivation and amplification of the film's broader sound design, underlying the film's overall 'dispelling [of] audio-visual hierarchy' in cinematic narrative (Durrand 2017).

That Morricone's pre-recorded music was played onset during photography, and that actors' performances were shaped to music that they could quite literally hear – at least internally, if the music was not used during takes that were used – must be seen to further consolidate the immediacy of the score and its absorption into the characters' personalities. While this method is exceptional with respect to our filmography, as in filmmaking generally, likely having been executed elsewhere only for *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (and even then not for certain), this does not negate the impact made by the outcome on wider generic narration.

Morricone says of the leitmotivic themes in *Giù la testa*: they enter and exit 'as metacharacters … it is as though the characters can at times communicate through and are even able to hear the music' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 63). The proposition that characters hear the music relates to events at the mediated level. But it also suggests a degree of independence about the music we hear – not that it is a realisation of a conscious or emotional experience, but an entity possessing initiative and substance. In this way, Morricone's choice of the 'meta' prefix is not fully aligned with its historical usage in film-music studies, where, following Claudia Gorbman's lead (guided by the narratology of Gérard Genette (1980, 228–34; see Heldt 2013, 121), 'metadiegetic' came to refer to music that we interpret as narration internal to the diegesis, 'by a secondary narrator' (Gorbman 1987, 22), more or less corresponding to inner focalisation as well as Miceli's mediated level. However, Morricone articulates both the music's existence as a (meta)character among characters, and its autonomy as a free narrational agent that manifests within and without the diegesis; it is not bound to representation of a character's subjectivity. The key moment here is described by the composer and exemplified by Heldt (2013, 198) as the prominent metalepsis in the 'web of ambiguities woven around [Seán] and his music'. That character, like Cuchillo before him, knows and vocalises his own nondiegetic theme. This succeeds previous utterances of his whistled motif (Ex. 3.22) that, through additional reverberation, modification of stereo-field situation and adjustment of volume in relation to sometimes offscreen and consequently ambiguous diegetic events, foster a spatiality that sets the whistling 'slightly apart from the rest of the [nondiegetic] music and seems (as do the themes in [*C'era una volta il west*]) like an emanation of its character' (Heldt 2013, 207). Although it narrates in a fairly ordinary nondiegetic capacity in evoking Seán's nostalgic past, music in his flashbacks (Ex. 4.5 below) is stylistically unusual in our filmography, and encapsulates the thematic prevalence of memory, and its subjective residence and recollection, in Leone's films. And because music formed such a crucial outlet for that engagement, it must be understood as a principal dramatic and narrational concern of the Leone–Morricone collaborative relationship itself, which was, as Heldt argues, definitively explored in *C'era una volta in America* (2013, 210–7).

As the western-genre segment of their collaborative journey reached its conclusion, the comic impetus grew around it. Although this may have inspired less elaborate and integrated scoring strategies, Morricone's music continues to engage sporadically in ambiguous level-occupation, and the tendency to settle into a certain style of narration emerges. The most

readily identifiable example of the former maintains the tradition begun by Tessari years before: humorous deception through diegetic revelation, another textbook example of which can be found in *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?*, which habitually mocks narrative–diegesis distinction by repeatedly breaking the fourth wall. Soon after the title-sequence montage ends, Provvidenza pulls a 'playback' stop on a strange contraption, a music roll is shown spinning and the title music restarts (Fig. 4.6 below).



Example 4.5 First appearing in the title sequence, this melody later comes to signify Seán's complicated memories of Ireland.

Protracted punch-ups are a trope of purely comic motivation, and feature in *La vita è molto dura, vero Provvidenza?* and *Occhio alla penna*. Both roll out a common trick in the shape of synchronising musical events to each blow, much like a comic-book *thwack!!* A tubular-bell ensemble exaggerates Provvidenza's strikes with a pool cue in the former film, while Doc handles two implausibly tuneful frying pans in the latter. These are examples of indiscreet, straightforward mickey-mousing, but in Provvidenza's case, bells are a distinctive timbre in his musical theme, and both could be cited as instances, if unsophisticated ones, of 'emanation': projection of a character's personality, aura, or diegetic presence, often as perceived by other characters. Ben Winters categorises music like this as 'intra-diegetic', a term that, as part of the wider usurpation of 'nondiegetic' terminology, he would apply to any music in close accord with diegetic events, which 'exists in the film's everyday narrative space and time' – music that mickey-mouses, or classical narrative underscore (2010, 237). Challenging only the simplicity of the term 'nondiegetic', Heldt has fleshed out the idea of 'emanation', and for him this manner of musical operation is situated at one end of a continuum of 'varying "distances" to diegetic facts', somewhere along which nondiegetic music is obliged to establish itself (2013, 64).

Emanation, whether or not it involves synchronism, frequently contributes to a character's larger-than-life portrayal. The punch-up stingers are in this mould, as is the music in an earlier scene in *La vita è molto dura* in which Provvidenza conveys the divinity of his name and personage; the pseudo-sacred fragment of his theme is heard (featuring the bell), bestowing on him a kind of musical halo. The music is part of his self-conscious presentation, to characters and audience. The MacGregors' march is similar: it is formally self-sufficient

but it nonetheless emanates the avowedly Scottish obstinacy shown by the family as they defend their homestead.

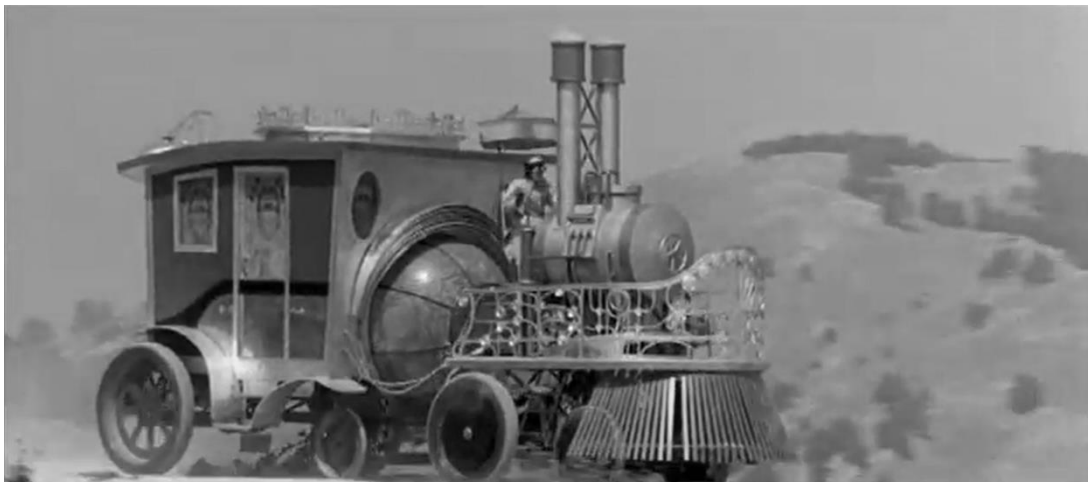


Figure 4.6 The electronic title music of *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?* incidentally constitutes the most pointedly anachronistic diegetic music in the filmography. But given the nature of some of the steampunk props used in the film, the audience is unlikely to be perturbed by this.

The effect does not have to be predominantly comedic, however; indeed, contrastingly earnest instances are more important for our enquiry. Heldt offers several such examples from Leone's films: the second-skin themes of *C'era una volta il west*; the tight sync points hit during Seán's introduction, a figure beheld with due wonder within the diegesis by Juan; and – not dissimilarly to Provvidenza's theatrics – Indio's 'parable' in *Per qualche dollaro* is delivered to plaintive organ music 'as playfully cynical as Indio himself', in another musical example of ironic piety anticipating Provvidenza's music as well as that of Sister Sara (Heldt 2013, 68). Indeed all previously discussed fragments are thus classifiable, as are a wide range of examples of synchronisation. This is how we can make sense of the potency of the 'Tepepa' cut, for example. Recall Miceli's advocation for a mediated inference of the quintuplet in *Per un pugno di dollari*, and the counterpart fragments of *Per qualche dollaro* and *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*; it may be more appropriate to comprehend moments giving epic resonance to extraordinary deeds and personalities in this context.

As discussed, the nonchalant, folksy swing of 'Addio a Cheyenne' provided Morricone with an idiomatic template, back to which he circled after *Lo chiamavano Trinità…* set a more flippant tone for 1970s westerns. But it also gave rise to a certain narrational tendency. The aimless weariness of its melody (Ex. 5.11ii), capturing the sense of a vanishing frontier and the obsolescence that confronted its characters – epitomised by the man to whom the cue bids 'farewell' – was maintained in scores that appear detached from and disenchanted with

the stories they accompanied, much as their composer might have been with a genre becoming increasingly passé. Pieces like 'Sonny' from *La banda J. & S.* and 'Rivoluzione??' of *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?* (Ex. 5.11i) present archetypal examples of asynchronism and formal autonomy founded on fashionable popular-music syntax; these are mood-cues that could be situated to reasonable effect in innumerable scenes. That mood is one of languor, stemming chiefly from slow tempo and swung rhythm, and it nourishes the bleak nihilism of *La banda* as it brings out the cynicism, bewilderment, and sheer folly of *Che c'entriamo.*

For their disaffection of content and form, it is difficult to pinpoint more obvious instances of 'extradiegetic' music: music that is positioned at a greater distance from diegetic fact, its 'logic … not dictated by events' within the fiction (Winters 2010, 237). As such, its scope for the conveyance of meaning tends to be enhanced. This music is located at the other end of the nondiegetic spectrum posited by Heldt (2013, 64), for whom it essentially functions 'as a commentary, [it] can speak about events'. This is also one aspect of the duality examined by Audissino, too, its opposite being 'accompaniment', which generally accords with 'intradiegetic' music. Audissino exemplifies Morricone's philosophy as paradigmatic of commentary, and if adherence to an internal dialectic usually translates to separation from diegetic fact, then much of what has been analysed to this point must be regarded as commentative.

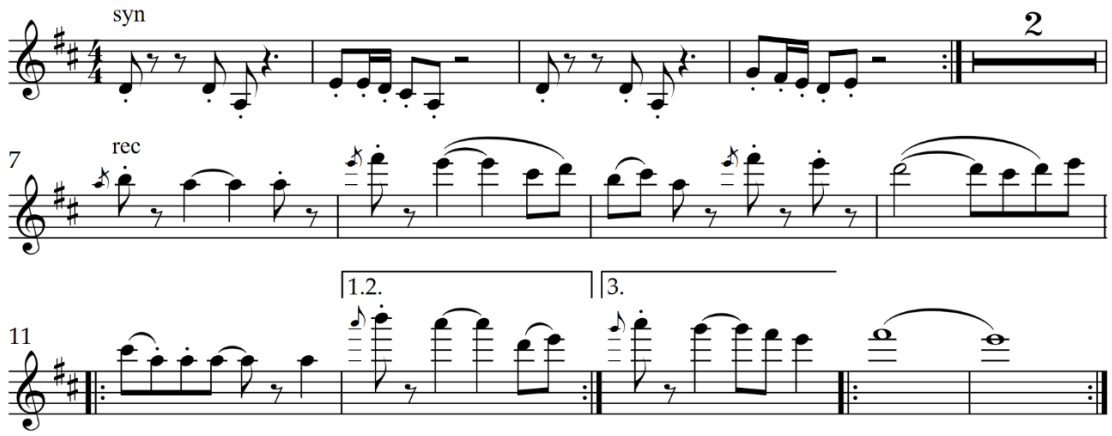
The music of the late westerns is not all indebted to the style and fatigue of Cheyenne's theme, but even the more buoyant principal cues of *Il mio nome è Nessuno* (Ex 4.6 below), *Un genio, due compari, un pollo,* and *Occhio alla penna* are still self-sufficient 'numbers' formally independent of visual narration. The more contemporary instrumentation in these examples disassociates the music further from the diegesis; this is not, to use Winters' (2010, 236–7) example, the Viennese zither rooted in 'the geographical space' of *The Third Man* (dir. Carol Reed, 1949), nor the sound of the frontier realised in 'Pastures of Plenty'. It is worth pointing out that Heldt's polarities of nondiegetic music are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for music that comments to also transmit something of a character's essence. This could be said of the asynchronous themes of *C'era una volta il west*, or some of the more carefully timed soundings of Nobody's theme in *Il mio nome è Nessuno*.

The final instance in our filmography in which the narrational placement of music is clearly brought into question is a singular case. It constitutes not a musical crossing of levels, but a speech of arresting self-awareness, mocking assumptions regarding the ontology of the score. In *Un genio, due compari, un pollo*, the character Joe Thanks taunts Klaus Kinski's Doc Foster, coaxing him into a duel. He says the following:

> Well, you know how these things work out here in the West. Two fellas come out of the saloon and stand opposite each other. One of them's usually got his legs spread apart. And the folks in the town get scared and edge backward to a safe

distance. And somebody starts playing a funeral march, on a bugle in the background…

He then 'mouth trumpets' a short tune (Fig. 4.7 below), beginning with the characteristic rising perfect fifth, and proceeding along a similar contour to that of 'Per un pugno di dollari'. Foster capitulates, and the pair step outside for the showdown. A Degüello march duly sounds, though it does not – a missed trick – take up the melody that Thanks originally hummed. The sequence begs the obvious question: just how did Thanks acquire knowledge of a cinematic trope that will, in a century's time, mythicise the world he is supposed to inhabit?



Example 4.6 The title music from *Il mio nome è Nessuno,* which doubles as the theme for the titular character, 'Nobody'.

Of course, this is a comedy, in which a character's standard breakage of the fourth wall happens to make reference to music, and even if he can be said to know about Morricone's bugling, it does not necessarily follow that all characters – in that film or any other – can. But this is an incisive breakage. Thanks does more than just address the audience or acknowledge his fictionality. He displays awareness of a genre and its attributes, and of his and the film's situation within that context. *Un genio* is a production that parodies the ageing spaghetti, and Thanks alludes to that real-world purpose within its diegesis. He speaks not simply with the knowledge of an omniscient narrator, but with that of the extraneous historical author(s), and blows the whistle on music as a mere tool of their narration. He does this looking back on a movement of hundreds of films in which music has, whether in the name of humour or poignance, consistently undermined its placement to cultivate ambiguity and agency.

Figure 4.7 In a metafictional twist late in the genre's life cycle, Terence Hill (Mario Girotti) as Joe Thanks mimics the Morriconian shootout theme in *Un genio, due compari, un pollo.*

The speech carries a simple warning: 'This is not real. Do not accept the reality of the world I appear to occupy'. Corollary to this is the notion that nondiegetic music can be understood as more diegetic than we might assume. The drama that is presented to us is one that music evidently plays an indispensable role in narrating; the relationship shared by music and the remainder of the text is – as Leone once said when comparing his creative partnership with his composer to a Catholic marriage – 'indissoluble' (Brown 1994, 228). As Morricone said in turn of *Giù la testa*, it is 'as though the characters are … *able hear to the music*'. This is not to argue that the films depict a fictional West where, it so happens, music is magically audible, but that this drama should be experienced as a certain kind of narrative art: a mythological construct, expressed in a more symbolic, performative, and theatrical form, wherein figures cannot be separated from the musical utterances narrating events. Even the real-world players of these figures performed in anticipation of the increasingly derivative application of music. At times they did so to music they could physically hear.

As Winters emphasises, in a cinematic medium preoccupied not with realism but with storytelling, coming to terms with a nondiegetic musical presence in the diegetic realm is a pursuit that 'concerns narrative space rather than narrative levels' (2010, 236); whether characters 'really hear' music is moot. What 'dictates whether the music is part of the fictional world [is] whether the music appears to exist in the time and narrative space of the diegesis, or whether it appears to "narrate" at a temporal distance from that space' (236–7). Of interest is his subsequent observation that the conventional segregation of the score and diegesis, rooted in the pervasive tendency to emphasise filmic realism (a perceived and frequently championed tenet of the Italian western's relationship to American precedent; see Stag and Williams 1975, 20), has inhibited an approach to music's narrative agency applied

more instinctively with recourse to stage genres ‘such as opera and musical theatre’ (Winters 2010, 243).

The principles expressed in this chapter contextualise an essay by the author (Maloney 2023), published close to the date of completion of the thesis, and to which the reader is referred. Representing the culmination of the present enquiry, the essay argues that Morricone’s western music, by means of commentative and transdiegetic narrational techniques explored above, exploits the epic-mythical characteristics of the western-genre storytelling framework (aided by operatic likenesses) to perform a function comparable to that of the theatrical Greek chorus. This particular analogy was chosen due to certain features of Morricone’s pivotal early score to *Il ritorno di Ringo*, which engage strikingly with that film’s synoptic source material, Homer’s *Odyssey*. By displaying dramaturgical attributes that resounded in the filmography as we have seen, this ‘choral’ score, the essay’s case study, demonstrates the aforementioned estrangement that undermines the ‘reality’ of the diegesis, persuading the audience to behold it not as a world of substance, but as more of a performative space. In this regard, the music invokes exhibitionist, theatrical cinema, and resonates with overarching aesthetics connecting various narrative-art traditions – particularly those prevalent in Italian culture – such as *commedia dell’arte* and melodrama (see also Landy 1996, 1998).

5. Compositional Techniques II

Elements, idioms, populism, and stylistic engagement

Morricone recognised that 'the singability of the melodic lines and their harmonies' in the western scores are compositional factors that facilitated widespread and enduring popularity; 'invariably in every piece there are very easy chord sequences' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 34). His unease with regard to emphasis on thematic scoring, and to his reputation as a *melodista*, indicates an aversion to melodic composition more generally. Yet it is an unquestionably prominent dimension of his film music, and of his westerns particularly – a genre that historically lends itself to tuneful scores. An expedient connecting a range of features examined in this chapter is accessibility. Morricone believes that memorability and simplicity of material facilitates emotional investment and narrative orientation, improving an audience's ability to engage with a film and fulfilling the fundamental commercial motive of profitability. This principle guides his focus on the establishment and repetition of themes, and partly inspired tonal reduction. It extends, too, to melodic writing, an area converging with both these compositional aspects.

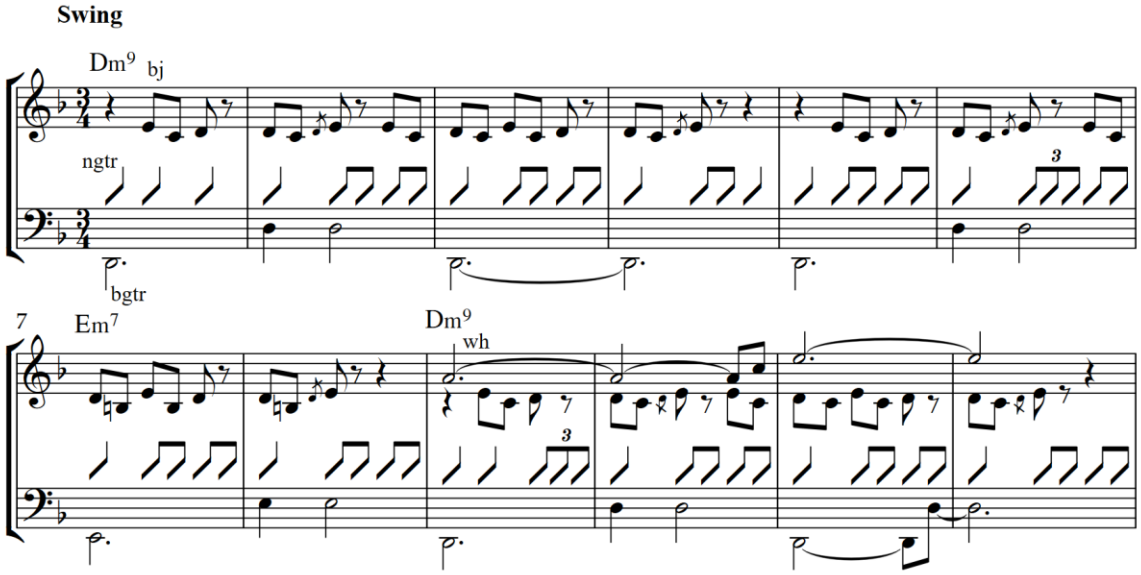
This junction is at the heart of Morricone's 'personal writing "system"', by which he attempted to adapt contemporary-music composition procedures 'to the comprehension necessities of the average cinemagoer'. In contrast with aforementioned sentiments, such thinking better approximates a middlebrow philosophy, despite the retainment of a paternalistic air. This system entailed manipulation of diatonic material in accordance with serialist techniques: balanced treatment of tones, ordering of parameters, and emphasis on gesture and colour. Themes entailed fewer pitches and were constructed of 'short and fine-profiled … cells', which are 'easier to remember' than long melodies (Morricone and De

Rosa 2019 [2016], 120). A retaliation to the poor receptions of *Un uomo a metà* and *Un tranquillo posto di campagna* (dir. Elio Petri, 1968) – and therefore postdating Morricone's formative film scores – this system more acutely characterises subsequent film music. Still, it represents evolution of his extant inclination towards tonal austerity, and its prescription resonates with his music for westerns. For example, regular and clearly delineated phrases of themes foreshadow this, a natural consequence of a combination of interactive factors like segmentation techniques, the need to breathe in aerophonic performance (or when whistling), and populist motives behind the composition of identifiable, memorable tunes.

The thematic material transcribed in this study is overwhelmingly diatonic, the most obvious indicator of accessibility at work and of 'reductive' practice. Most accidentals raise the sixth (Ex. 3.19iii) or seventh (Ex. 3.18), employing the Dorian mode or the harmonic or melodic minor, and so do not entail true chromaticism and are moreover consonant in their modal/harmonic contexts. Counterexamples include the main themes from *Corri uomo corri* (Ex. 3.13) and *Tepepa* (which feature the same 'Mexican' augmented-fourth passing note), the whistled 'mercenary' theme from *Il mercenario*, Harmonica's theme (Ex. 3.17ii), much thematic material from *The Hateful Eight*, and the chromatic counterpoint of the biphonic themes, usually juxtaposed with diatonic melodies. Unsurprisingly, dissonance more generally frequently marks athematic material, such as suspenseful pedals ('Clandestinamente' from *Faccia a faccia*), conversational *Klangfarbenmelodie* textures ('Musica sospesa' from *Per un pugno di dollari*), or action-sequence underscore ('Lo scontro' from *Una pistola per Ringo*). A recurring device is the 'hardship' cue, typically utilising chromaticism in dense textures and ostinati alongside scenes depicting adversity. 'Tortura' fulfils this function in *Per un pugno* and *Da uomo a uomo*, while 'Il deserto', a fantastical orchestral cue, denotes suffering in the desert heat in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (Fig. 5.8) – as did a previous richly chromatic cue in *Le pistole non discutono*; the cor anglais solo in 'Il deserto' employs eleven different pitch classes.

If reliance on diatonicism demonstrates a conservative approach to melody on Morricone's part, its frequently modal character makes his themes, according to Leinberger (2012, 139), at once easier to sing and also antithetical to Hollywood custom. Several techniques facilitate this modality. Most simply, the infrequent melodic sharpening of the subtonic spurns altered minor scales in favour of the natural Aeolian. Although Morricone's harmonic writing is typically also diatonic, it often disregards the 'tensions and attractions' of functional tonality, anticipating the later 'system' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 120). Tonal reduction necessitates the omission of pitches, which can engender tonal–modal ambiguity. Many melodies that could be classified as minor-key, Aeolian, or Dorian in effect utilise six-note scales that avert the determinant sixth scale degree, and pentatonicism sometimes compounds this polyvalence. Examples of themes demonstrating such ambiguity include: 'Titoli' (Ex. 3.11); the 'return' theme from *Il ritorno di Ringo* (Ex. 4.4); the 'Run Man Run' theme from *La resa dei conti* (Ex. 5.12 below); the eponymously titled cues from *Un fiume di dollari* (Ex. 3.15), *Faccia a faccia* (Ex. 3.27), and *Un esercito di 5 uomini* (Ex. 3.14). This ambivalence notwithstanding, when modality is unequivocally established in

thematic material, it is more commonly Dorian than Aeolian; take the later ‘Dollars’ title-music melodies, or ‘Sonny’ from *La banda J. & S.* (Ex. 5.1). Material focusing on more neutral intervals, such as the open fourths of ‘Il tramonto’ or distinctive second–fourth–fifth combinations – in the opening bassoon solo from *Two Mules for Sister Sara* and ‘La missione San Antonio’ (Ex. 3.1, b. 3) – achieve additional obscurity in their sparsity.



Example 5.1 ‘Sonny’ from *La banda J. & S.*, the melodic material of which exhibits tonal reduction and Dorian modality.

As Hausmann (2008, 95) points out, perfect fourths and fifths prevail in the western-genre melodies. Opening anacruses commonly span a fourth and Morricone frequently begins a tune with a drawn-out (usually rising, but occasionally falling) fifth, a gesture especially common in ‘Degüello’ compositions. The latter device, deriving from the founding *I drammi marini* lullaby, marks a range of examples, and is finally pastiched in Joe Thanks’ reflexive speech from *Un genio, due compari, un pollo*. Again principally in ‘Degüello’ compositions, such swift movement to the dominant allows that degree to function as a jumping-off point for semitonal ornamental inflections hinting at the Phrygian mode, a technique that contrarily emphasises the sixth scale degree.

This preponderance of purer intervals compounds the broader expression of the archaic, which Morricone recognises by alluding to the simple melodic character of music in primal societies (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 250). This resonates, furthermore, with the genre’s mythic, archetypal symbolism, arguably embodied above all by the landscape itself. In this regard, Morricone’s music shadows the Coplandian tendency towards large intervals to convey ‘wide open spaces’ (Lerner 2001). His thematic approach to *Il deserto dei Tartari* (dir. Valerio Zurlini, 1976), which follows the lives of imperial border soldiers in a fictional

Eurasian desert, suggests that vastness of setting may have been an influential factor as regards this aspect of his decision-making. The breadth, nobility, and steady evolution from a generative cell of that film's main theme captures the primordiality of the desert and the 'metaphysical endlessness' it represents (Hausmann 2008, 103; author's translation).

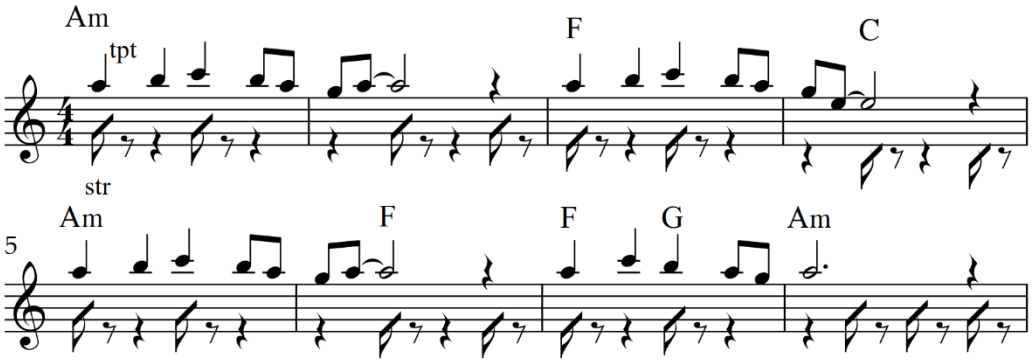
More than facilitating accessibility, and conveying the frontier's elemental symbolism, modality is also of significance in the context of Morricone's wider compositional journey. As Miceli observes, in the composer's formative years under Petrassi's mentorship, the application of chromatic modality acted as the cornerstone of a novel 'linguistic synthesis' (2021 [1994], 64; author's translation); here, modality – in the more conventional sense – assisted in the cultivation of another important vernacular for the composer. He would have justly said that the consolidation of his 'system' represents a more pivotal milestone in his modal practice, which involved layering and manipulating series of tones, or modes as he saw them, to construct 'ambiguous "suspensions" which evoked tonal music without being so' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 213). Morricone discusses these experiments with respect to later projects like *La migliore offerta*, but it is possible to identify precursory examples of this idiom in westerns: in the sung, synthesised pedals of 'Invenzione per John'; in the overlapping, ethereal voices of 'Più delle Walkirie' from *Il mio nome è Nessuno*; or in the orchestral interplay of the opening sequence of *Il grande silenzio* (pre-empting the 'static' start of *The Hateful Eight*; see below, pp. 222–3). He conceives of this idiom as 'atonal' insofar as 'tonal functions are bypassed' by dispensing with functional harmonic transitions, but much less consonant expressions of this model can also be found, such as the capricious 'Rag sospeso' cue from *Una pistola per Ringo*, which enmeshes sustained, dissonant string tones with a blaring trumpet.

Reliance on diatonicism exceeds the melodic sphere to bring about a consistently explicit and unwavering tonal grounding. A relevant statement by Morricone (quoted in Fagen 1989, 106) is well cited the literature: 'When I begin a theme in a key, say D minor, I never depart from this original key … This harmonic simplicity is accessible to everyone'. His example is pertinent; D minor permeates the 'Dollars' films and coheres much of the music in the remainder of the westerns, vying only with A minor for predominance (both of which keys lend themselves to the guitar's open strings in standard tuning). Smith and Leinberger offer insight on this, which, although specific to their shared case study, *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, can be extrapolated. Smith notes the conventional methods by which Morricone 'organized his score', doing so 'around certain keys, harmonic patterns, rhythmic figures, and motives to give it thematic and formal unity' (1998, 152–3). Leinberger similarly regards these as conservative features mitigating more radical elements. Formal unity, deriving from straightforward key relationships and a diatonic harmonic basis, 'helps to keep all of the other, less traditional elements in perspective and in a context that the audience can easily understand' (2004, 26).

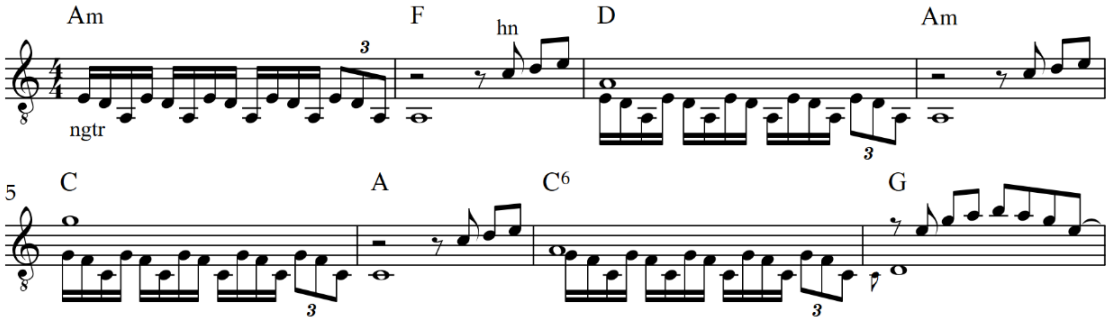
As the above quotation demonstrates, Morricone acknowledges the simplicity of his harmonic schemes, which in thematic cues usually utilise diatonic chords, and are

unambiguously articulated, most often by a guitar or a string section in homorhythm. Ordinarily progressions move from a minor tonic through mostly major triads, built on the mediant, submediant, dominant and subtonic, all of which feature in Ex. 5.2i from *Un fiume di dollari,* for instance. Minor tonalities permit more chromatic alterations to apply the harmonic-minor and melodic-minor scales; accordingly (in addition to the leading note entailed in the dominant major), the sixth is raised to realise the supertonic minor and subdominant major triads, supplementing Dorian modality (Ex. 5.2ii). Clarity in these basic harmonies is typically reinforced by their arrangement in eight-bar or sixteen-bar progressions marked by regular harmonic rhythm, with themes phrased to match the quadratic structures.

(i)



(ii)



Example 5.2 The secondary section of 'Un fiume di dollari' (i), which follows on from Ex. 3.15, and 'The Demise of Barbara, and the Return of Joe', from *Navajo Joe* (ii).

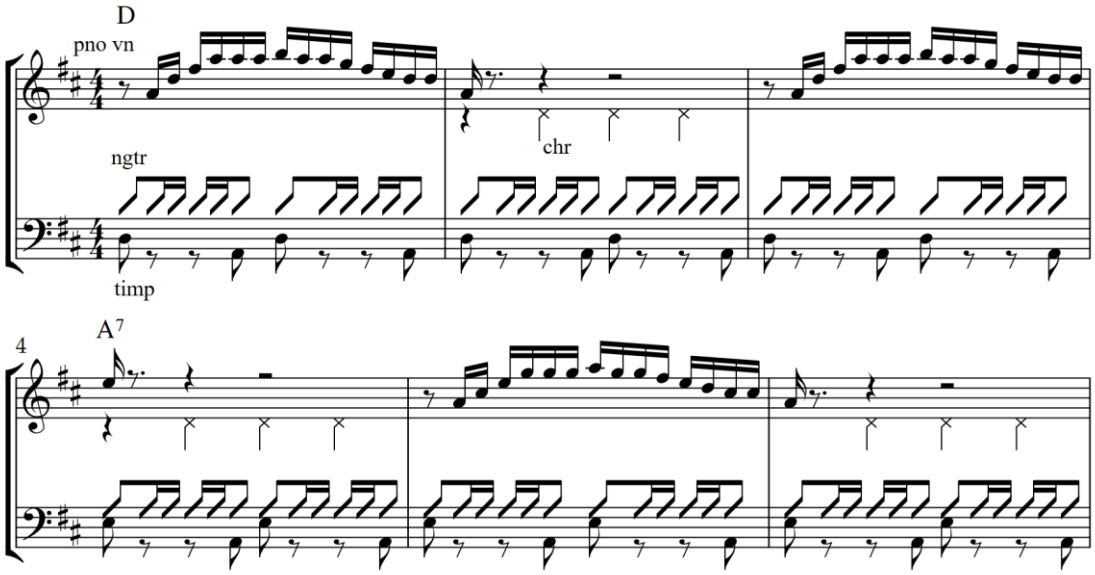
There are of course exceptions to this model. Chromatic harmonies creep in periodically: a passing G-sharp chord prepares the dominant in the *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* title music

(motion emulated in the derivative 'Un esercito di 5 uomini'). Added-note harmonies enrich schemes, too (Ex. 5.2ii, b. 7), which pre-empts the 'saccharine' language figuring in many subsequent film scores (see next paragraph). This is connected to the harmonic layering that can occur when Morricone juxtaposes static ostinati with a contrapuntal harmonic texture. Take, for example, the relationship between the string parts and the guitar oscillating between an upper voice and a lower pedal in the *La battaile de San Sebastian* overture. These attributes mostly characterise prevalent and idiosyncratic material, namely thematic cues and title music. Taken as a whole, the music in the corpus is assembled through a broad variety of musical techniques, and it is particularly difficult to generalise about athematic content.

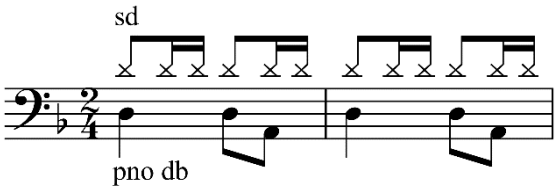
Morricone's scores remain impacted by this core formula throughout the *filone*, but contrasting stylistic variants also emerge. Stemming from 'Messico eroico' from *Una pistola per Ringo* (Ex. 5.3 below), his brand of mariachi, as it appears in later Zapatas, may exhibit melodic segmentation and clear harmonic movement, but major tonality is fully embraced – frequently switching between tonic and dominant seventh. Extended chords feature in later pictures as Morricone leans into a jazz-influenced idiom, a move presaged in *I crudeli* (see Ex. 5.19 below). An important offshoot is the 'saccharine' harmonies that Cooke (2008, 376) identifies as a hallmark of the composer's later scores, typified by 'secondary sevenths and unresolved major-ninth suspensions … habitually used to enliven a basic homophonic texture'. An early cue of significance for which Morricone exercises this brand of lyricism is 'Il forte', but a more pivotal example is the main theme of *C'era una volta il west*, associated with Jill. This manner continues to recur right up to the end of *Occhio alla penna*, when 'L'estasi del miracolo' plays as the townspeople are showered in gold dust. This perpetuates its end-of-an-era associations, deriving from *C'era una volta*, and resurfacing in *Un esercito di 5 uomini* when the Dutchman and Augustus lament the wilting romance of frontier life (revisited below), and in *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, when Nobody and Jack Beauregard discuss mortality in the cemetery.

Formal simplicity about the thematic material extends to temporal dimensions. A minority of cues sound in compound time or simple-triple time, leaving music mostly written in simple duple or simple quadruple. A clear sense of pulse usually prevails, not least in cues designed to inject an impression of rhythm to images (horseback pieces, for instance), which are bolstered by the frequent use of percussion. Accordingly, themes tend to be rhythmically uncomplicated and lack syncopation, never more so than in music for shootouts, which basically evokes marches. 'Sante Fé Express' is a contrasting example, featuring hoofbeats, pulsar woodwind, and – tied notes aside – metric rhythmic units in the melody, and syncopation is a device regularly called upon to emulate mariachi (Ex. 5.3, for instance). As part of this even rhythmic patterning, ubiquitous dactylic rhythms can appear simultaneously at various beat-division levels, like sonic fractals cohering the rhythmic strata (see Ex. 5.4). Metre can, however, be obscured by accenting weak beats through stress or phrasal initiation, even if pulse remains distinct; the segments of 'Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo' sound across the metre, for example. And as one might expect, the flexible tempi of lyrical material or the sustained tones in suspenseful cues generate weaker beats in contrast to this ordinary

rhythmic urgency. ‘La loro patria’ from *Vamos a matar compañeros* does this through its detached phrases and *rubato* shaping, but even here a reasonably consistent pulse remains. Late in the oeuvre, ‘Mucchio selvaggio’, an integral, clearly self-effacing theme from *Nessuno* notably exhibits syncopation in its original whistled form before it is recapitulated in irregular triplets (Ex. 5.10).



Example 5.3 Reduction of ‘Messico eroico’ from *Una pistola per Ringo*. Note the alternation between tonic and dominant-seventh harmonies. The distinctive arpeggiated violin runs are emulated closely in *Il mercenario.*



Example 5.4 Dactyls crossing beat-division levels in ‘Un esercito di 5 uomini’.

Morricone’s remarks demonstrate awareness that commercial expedients contributed to the determination of this overall aesthetic of accessibility, and to the pursuit of musical characteristics typical of contemporary popular music. He may have voiced to Lhassa and Lhassa his abhorrence for the ‘access of popular music to the screen’ and the creative strictures to which it led (1989, 31; author’s translation), but this access is something he

facilitated extensively, such that it is a hallmark of his practice and of his part in wider historical shifts in film-scoring. Morricone opined that the 'public cannot understand a new musical message in the cinema. Unfortunately it has to find confirmation in what it already knows' (quoted in Smith 1998, 134); once again, he demonstrates unease in mediating lowbrow and highbrow, experimental and commercial. In his authoritative manifesto he expresses the sentiment a little more diplomatically:

> Films are produced for a massive public that for the most part does not love complications, does not want obstacles that arise between the images and its understanding. The majority of the public wants – unconsciously, of course, but consciously on the part of the producers, who influence the product – a music that in slang is defined as 'catchy', therefore, on a tonal foundation and concentrated almost always on a leading theme and on other collateral themes.
>
> (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 250)

He perceived the popular-music vernacular as a refuge for prior audience knowledge, and accordingly came to lean on it. Its influence marks much of his work in 1960s cinema, especially in contemporary genres, but it is acutely audible in his dialogue with the western, which has always borne a close, definitive relationship with melodic writing, popular music, and song. This condition and attitude towards populism in film music may have fed into Morricone's enduringly uneasy disposition regarding the genre, and even his conception of the *applicata–assoluta* division; after all, the expedient Morricone describes in the passage quoted is the reason why he feels that in 'barely [five] per cent' his film scores did he 'succeed in applying the music of [his] aspirations' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 250). And yet, expanding audience engagement appears to be a critical concern which transcended that dualism, as demonstrated, for example, by deciding to realise *immobilità dinamica* through pseudo-tonal modality in an effort to attain 'accessible complexity' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 213). We see Morricone persistently grasping for a musical – and verbal – language that reconciles perceived aesthetic polarities.

The wider industrial scenario was an equally significant factor. Smith influentially asserted the need to situate Morricone's film music, and Italian scores of the era in general, in the context of growth in the record industry: the Italian 'disk industry produced soundtrack albums in a quantity that was second only to [that of] the United States' (1998, 134). The composer was aware of his role as a cog in this corporate machine, and of the conditional demands imposed on his film music. He sought to reconcile with this through double aesthetics, his attempt to integrate 'my stylistic features or those that I unconsciously filtered … into the commercial music that the cinema … forced me to make' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 250–1). He proclaims his commitment to composing music in accordance with the intention that it was to be 'save[d] on recordings'; although he writes here with regard to

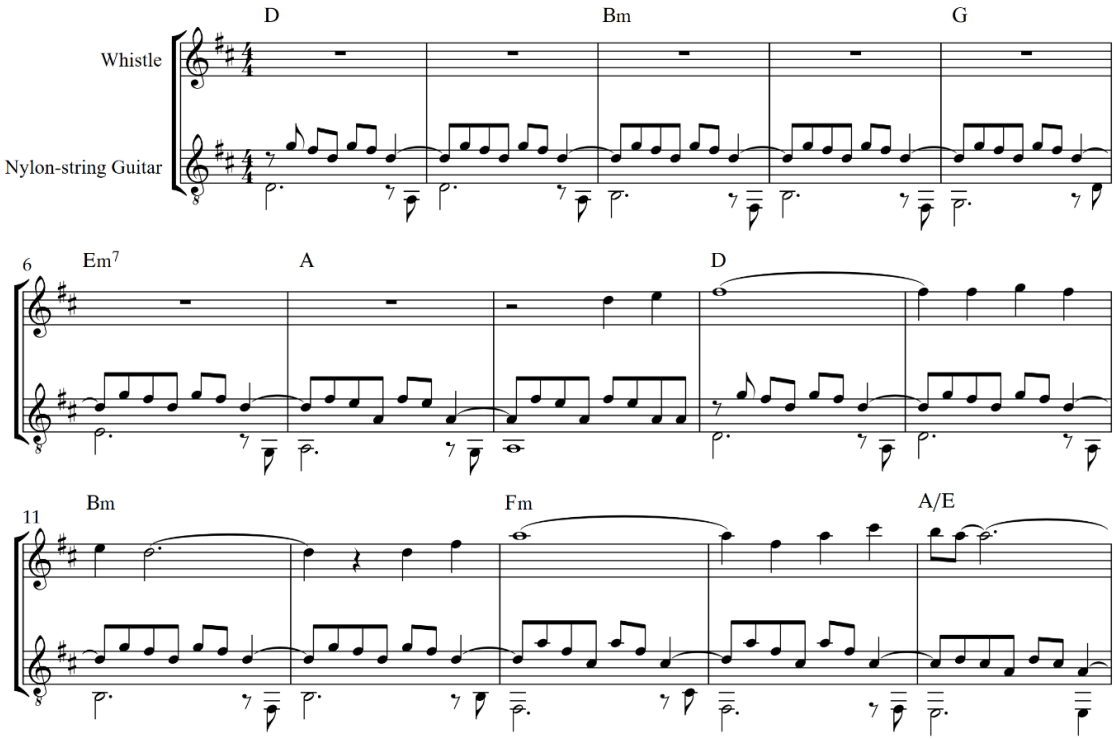
compositions ‘that [he] had published but that no recording industry would have published’ and which ‘could be executed in … contexts where music is the protagonist’ (presumably he refers to the *Dimensioni sonore* discs), the statement is indicative of his producer’s mentality, which would have also influenced the music that labels did publish (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 251). It also implies a willingness to make formal concessions to that eventual mode of presentation, though the composer evidently distinguishes the demands of the format itself from the aesthetic ‘character of marketability’ required by commercial releases (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 251).

Such declarations are expressions of the same outlook that underpins Morricone’s elevation of timbre as a compositional parameter and his diligence regarding the performative aspects of musical production (explored in the succeeding section). Emphasis on the studio and adroitness within it is to be expected from a composer whose prior professional experience substantially comprised popular-music arrangement, and all of this is in step with watershed innovations in popular music regarding the role of the studio. It is worth noting, however, Morricone’s claim to have pursued writing ‘acoustically balanced’ music, which ‘would work well in a live concert’; cases where he exploited ‘the creative potential of multitrack recording and mixing’ afforded by the studio are fewer (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 101). This ideological orientation, lending itself to the production of music to be extracted from its filmic setting – whether on disc or in concert – complements his core belief that internal logic must be maintained so that music is empowered to function with autonomy.

Morricone perceived a degree of responsibility to ‘sell’ a score, which is why, as Smith argues, he – like many of his contemporaries – would end up adapting traditional scoring devices ‘to the specific design of the commercial soundtrack album’ (1998, 132). Smith’s research outlines how individual cues from *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* were arranged with the aim of assembling a ‘satisfying album’, a motive with structural predispositions not dissimilar to those of traditional ‘numbers’ form (1998, 140). Properties inherited from popular music are complementary to this extant framework ingrained not only in Italian film-scoring procedures but also in the western, the early (American) musical customs of which being somewhat akin. Much as the Italian western succeeded in modernising the classical genre’s defunct grammar, so interaction with contemporary popular-music gave a traditional approach to organising the score – from large-scale cue placement to small-scale creation of memorable material – a stylistic overhaul.

The lyrical title music of *…e per tetto un cielo di stelle* (Ex. 5.5), reappearing in several of the most poignant scenes in the film, provides a prime example of a populist configuration of accessible musical components within this system. This is despite the fact that music from the film went unreleased for ten years (Morricone 1978b), signifying the natural caveat that the notion of ‘selling’ a score relates not merely to the appeal of a soundtrack release on which it appears, but also to its cinematic efficacy. The pairing of nylon-string guitar and whistle (strings, banjo, trumpet, and other instruments join subsequently) could be considered

accessible, but is unremarkable for Morricone. Furthermore, the triadic progression, evenly sized formal sections (the cue features a contrasting 'middle eight' preceding a climactic, impassioned re-statement of the melody), and consistent hypermetre are features in common with numerous other examples considered in this study. Yet the accompaniment figures and harmonic structure are especially pop-influenced and strikingly prescient in their anticipation of later tropes. The guitar's micro-cell, moving from the subdominant scale degree to mediant and then tonic, is a widespread melodic device in pop music, effective when it is repeated, unchanging, as harmonic context shifts around it – as in Bruce Springsteen's 'Racing in the Street' (1978), for example, which utilises a similar chord progression.



Example 5.5 Transcription of the title music from *...e per tetto un cielo di stelle*, released as 'Un tetto di stelle' (Morricone 1978b), and later as 'Harry's Ranch – Main Theme' (Morricone 2002).

Because *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* is Smith's case study, he is unable to explore the more crystallised manifestation of Morricone's service to industrial exigencies: the writing of songs proper. The western title song was a convenient conceit paving the way for these compositions, which at once proliferated outside the 'Dollars' films, honoured western-genre tradition, and afforded record labels an opportunity to press a single as well as – or instead of – an album. Despite the productivity of the Italian record industry, and Morricone's personal draw, scores for *Una pistola per Ringo, Un fiume di dollari, Navajo Joe, Da uomo a uomo,*

and *Vamos a matar compañeros* were not immediately released on soundtrack albums, but their songs – 'Angel Face' (Morricone 1965a), 'Quel giorno verrà' (Morricone 1966d), and the remaining eponymously titled songs (Morricone 1966e; Raoul and Morricone 1967; Morricone 1971) – were nevertheless released as singles. The lack of singing did not inhibit the emphatic success of the 'Dollars' themes, which, the exclusion of vocals aside, leaned on song in other respects. Miceli's statement of the obvious – that the *Per qualche dollaro* title music so closely resembles that of its predecessor, but for its richer, more polished orchestrations ('a concession to the international market'; 2016, 275) – offers an indication of the exploitative motives that Leone, one presumes, would have done nothing to discourage.

As a consequence of the commercial interests outlined, the preponderance of contemporary popular music in Italian popular cinema, and the generally less sacrosanct treatment of the western, even the earliest of his title songs ('A Gringo Like Me') dragged the medium out of a stale folksy mould. This opportunity for drastic renewal is partly due to the fact that popular early 1960s westerns such as *The Comancheros* (dir. Michael Curtiz, 1961) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (dir. Ford, 1962) sported fashionable orchestral themes following the exemplars of Moross and Bernstein. But songs still appeared: *How the West Was Won* (dir. Henry Hathaway et al., 1962) provided a glimpse of an idiom indebted to the contemporary Folk Revival, but *Major Dundee* (dir. Peckinpah, 1965), premiering half a year after *Per un pugno*, remained distinctly conservative with its militaristic 'Major Dundee March' – with yet more lyrics by Ned Washington (Amfitheatrof 1965). It is a curious convergence that the film was directed by Peckinpah, who in tandem with Leone 'would radically change the Western, in effect reinventing it' (Kitses 2004 [1970], 202), and scored by Daniele Amfitheatrof, Morricone's naturalised compatriot and fellow Santa Cecilia alumnus.

The assortment of stylistic influences assimilated into the western scores upholds Morricone's reputation for eclecticism (Leinberger 2004, 112), and echoes of popular genres account for a substantial portion of these. The resonance of the 'Dollars' idiom with attributes of country–western have been addressed, and elements of surf rock are equally prominent, one of many genres under the rock umbrella with which the composer engaged during this period of intense, multifaceted development for that genre – between the pop-rock style with which Morricone the arranger was well versed ('Quel giorno verrà') to the emergent harder variety ('Navajo Joe'). Focusing on the composer's 'pseudo-rock' handling of electric guitar for Leone's films, Miceli overlays a duality on to this section, contrasting the cleaner, domesticated tones of the 'Dollars' films with the abrasive, bullish sound realised in *C'era una volta il west* (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 169–71).

The dissonant biphony of the *neri* forced the dial towards the latter part of Miceli's binary, and there is little that is 'pseudo' about the unashamed backbeat heard in 'Mystic and Severe' (*Da uomo a uomo*) or 'Non fare l'indiano' (*Occhio alla penna*). In the interim, the onset of easy-listening cues, heralded by the velvety strings easing into 'Il Pinguino' (*Vamos a matar compañeros*), normalise a markedly 'domesticated', 'typical mainstream popular-

music sound', which Miceli (2016, 275) identifies in an earlier, more discreet guise in *Per qualche dollaro* and *C'era una volta.* The harmonic language of this music carries the strains of jazz one would expect, a genre touched in *Una pistola per Ringo* and *I crudeli*, in diegetic saloon ragtime heard throughout the filmography, in the rendition of 'Black Bottom' in *Il mercenario*, and in the New Orleans polyphony of *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?* Much of the music of the late period, in *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, the 'Provvidenza' films, *Un genio, due compari, un pollo*, and *Occhio alla penna*, adopts less jazz-influenced and altogether more boisterous adult-contemporary idioms.

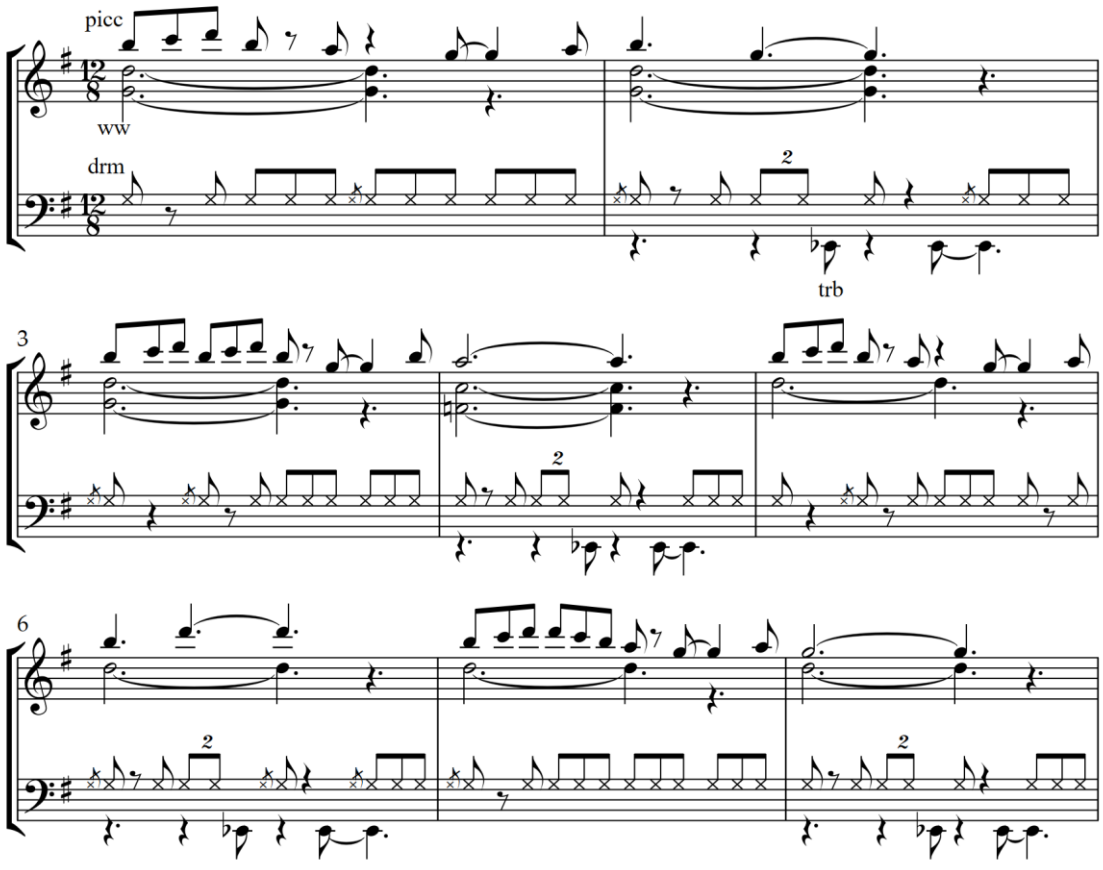
Numerous aspects discussed in this section resonate with traditional music. Musical features such as melodic bias, modality, clear phrasing, and harmonic simplicity, are hardly less characteristic of folk music than popular, and the manner of country–western balladry in which the title song is so deeply rooted establishes a complex relationship with American folk music. It is, however, possible to identify trends and instances constituting more targeted engagement with folk traditions, genres, and idioms. What one could broadly classify as old-time music, as derived from European and particularly British-Irish traditions, is a frequent point of reference, spanning the 'Square Dance' of *Per un pugno di dollari* (Miceli notes the idiom's Britishness; 2021 [1994], 142) through *Occhio alla penna*, and several cues receive a 'square dance' title on soundtrack recordings, as on *La resa dei conti* and *Faccia a faccia.* Although the original incarnation of the dance, traceable to *Piccolo Concerto*, inhabits an ambiguous narrational level, music of this kind is implicitly diegetic for the most part, a product of the period setting.

An exception to this, which may represent Morricone's most direct but idiosyncratic take on traditional music, is the 'Marcia dei Mac Gregor' [*sic*] (Ex. 5.6 below), the leading cue in Giraldi's duology. The eccentric piece, featuring an imaginative interpretation of *ceòl mòr* by imitation of the Great Highland bagpipe, represents a conjunction of distinctive compositional traits: closed structure, melodic segmentation, and bold instrumentation. The peculiarity of the march indicates the anomalousness of these progenitorial comic films, which are brazenly 'Scottish' and fit distinctly more comfortably in the broader Eurowestern category than in the Italian-western one.

Rather more nebulous are the overtones of Italian folk music, to which commentators have alluded. Miceli remarks upon the links between the Jew's harp in *Per qualche dollaro* and Sicilian herdsmen and bandits (2021 [1994], 150), for instance, and Italian associations can be extended to the ocarina (in parallel to its Native American connotations; see below, pp. 182–3), the modern version of which was invented by Bolognese ceramicist Giuseppe Donati (Facchin 2000, 725). Before we consider the substance and impact of these overtones, it is opportune to explore in greater detail the metaphorical alignment between American West and Italy's own southern 'frontier': the *Mezzogiorno*.

Concordance between the two spheres can be extensively traced through history. Fisher makes reference to a letter written in 1575 by a Spanish missionary who asserted the likeness between life in the *Mezzogiorno* and the New World, and writes that from the seventeenth

century, northern perceptions of the former (when under direct Spanish rule) were riddled with a familiar ambivalence. The South was regarded as both a 'savage wilderness' and, as a window to a romanticised past, a 'bounteous idyll' (2011, 49–50), just as the West was constructed amidst Kitses' syntactic tensions. Marcia Landy positions the nineteenth-century *Risorgimento* as a transcultural milestone that consolidated regional links. Exposing the sobering reality of North–South inequality, unification provoked a wave of emigration to the New World, mostly from the South; crime and disorder soared after the collapse of civil infrastructure organised around the aristocracy, and the lack of much-needed agrarian reform did nothing to help the enduring disparity, which only perpetuated stubborn conceptions of the backward and perilous South (2000, 183–4; see also Fisher 2011, 45–53). The West–South connection fundamentally rests on these shared associations; the 'barbarous, the primitive, the violent' (Dickie 1999, 3) perennially reign supreme in the imagination of the *Mezzogiorno*.



Example 5.6 Transcription of 'Marcia dei Mac Gregor' [*sic*]. Suddenly departing from the prior metre (4/4) and key (D major) of the march, the ensemble pays homage to *ceòl mòr* by mimicking a bagpipe's chanter–drone biphony.

That connection was first expressed in the cinema in the mafia film *In nome della legge* (dir. Pietro Germi, 1949); Fulvio Orsitto outlines its exposure of the ties between the frontier and Sicily in particular, its narrative built on themes reminiscent of Kitses' dichotomies (see also Iannone 2016):

> [Germi] sought to identify in this marginalized part of the Italian South the cultural (even more than geographical) threshold separating civilization and wilderness, law and crime, good and evil – electing to portray these archetypical binary oppositions according to the stylistic features of the Western genre.
>
> (Orsitto 2017, 455)

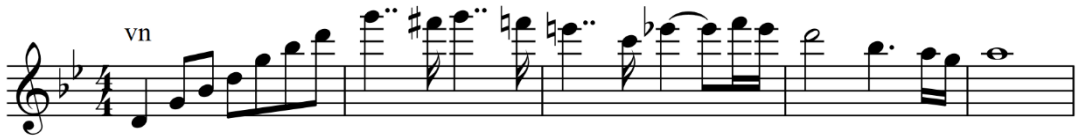
The later Italian westerns were set in a world far from the peninsula, but certain aspects of the presentation resonated with traditional depictions of the South:

> it is not at all unusual or surprising that the Italian westerns have assimilated and appropriated Americanism to their own ends. In the Italian films, there is a congenial union between the themes and styles attributed to the North American western, involving the American continent, both north and south of the border, and portrayals of Italian life – in representations of the Mezzogiorno in particular.
>
> (Landy 2000, 183–4)

The consummation of this 'congenial union' in the Italian western, finally entwining these kindred cultural arenas, can be tangibly identified in the enthusiastic southern consumption of westerns, the anticipation of which galvanised the *filone* itself: Frayling writes that producers were 'opportunistic about relating their films to the known audience expectations of the Southern Italians' (2006 [1981], 60), and Fisher concludes that 'the success of Westerns in the *terza visione* sector indicates that the thematic parallels … were not lost on these audiences' (2011, 55).

Does Morricone provide a musical complement to this? Allusions to southern Italy are fortified by the use of instruments like trumpet and nylon-string guitar, but neither is exclusively associated with the region. That which comes closest, the Jew's harp, is hardly utilised by Morricone beyond *Per qualche dollaro*. The configuration at best contributes to an impression of musical Mediterraneanism (see Campbell 2010), an appropriate reading given the critical role of Spain's landscape and onscreen nationals as an abutment to the links between the *Mezzogiorno* to that country's east and the New World to its west. Morricone's musical conception of the South would be explicitly articulated in 'Sicilia' (Ex. 5.7), a cue

from the film *Il pentito* (dir. Pasquale Squitieri, 1985). Perpetuating something of the melodic character associated with the island (or rather its Mafia connections) courtesy of Nino Rota's music for *The Godfather* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), the soundworld is entirely detached from that of the westerns – as one would expect from a contemporary crime drama. All this said, perhaps the most characteristic southern-Italian musical form, the tarantella, *does* feature in the filmography: in *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?*, to accompany the appearance of a coterie of revolutionaries donning ghoulish skull masks. Naturally, the cue comes complete with a Jew's harp, beating the dance's compound rhythm. This last example demonstrates that Morricone's music could strengthen the transcultural connections just outlined, but this process only achieves real potency with the shift of focus to the Mexican-revolutionary setting in the political westerns. With their subtextual substitution of Mexico for Italy, the strengthening of ideological import, and the development of new scoring devices to match, the films graduate from 'surrogate fantasy narratives for southern Italians' (Fisher 2011, 58) to radical allegories for Italians generally. The impact of Mexican and indigenous-American traditional music on Morricone's scores is revisited in the following section.



Example 5.7 Transcription of the 'Sicilia' theme from *Il pentito.*

Finally, shall consider engagement with idioms related to classical music. Emulation of traditional western-genre musical traits in the Jolly films and beyond can be situated here – as could the general, string-led orchestral infrastructure containing the bulk of his music – but far more noteworthy are cases involving devices and styles with more specific art-music associations, somewhat less conventionally applied in a film-scoring context, particularly in westerns. Techniques characteristic of contemporary classical practice are often utilised: Miceli notes timpani glissandi and string clusters (frequently produced by scratchy high-register violins, reminiscent of *Musica per undici violini*) in the 'Dollars' scores (2016, 275), and *Klangfarbenmelodie* textures and experiments with synthesised music are also prevalent. As discussed, the last of these represents a key junction of various strands of his practice, 'Invenzione per John' being an effective example that is a noteworthy exercise in extended form. So, too, is 'Tortura', which is permitted to express much of that form in both its appearances, in *Per un pugno di dollari* and *Da uomo a uomo*. This is a more roundly avant-garde work, with a soundscape employing strident, colouristic clusters, extended techniques, and effects achieved through manipulation of recording techniques or generated

electronically. Although the scenes in question involve profound suffering, each is vital with respect to narrative, which helps to elevate atonal material above its typical station as an agent of suspense or terror. This process is magnified in instances where dissonant content is more intrinsic to a score's fundamental language, or even its thematic material, as in *Faccia a faccia*, *Da uomo a uomo,* and *Il grande silenzio.* Even so, it must be acknowledged that these subversive examples are in the minority. The western did not provide the generic outlet for Morricone's innate *assoluta* sensibilities that the *giallo* did, for example, which genre he cites as a useful platform for avant-garde experimentation in film (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 169).

The composer also targets more specific historical styles and makes references to pre-existing compositions in several scores. Viennese waltzes are pastiched in *La banda J. & S.*, for instance, and in the medley-like score to *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?* (in the scene where the protagonist fences with his love rival), the accessible, Respighian Neoclassicism that Morricone first fashioned for *Le monachine* is revived. Sharper reflexivity is achieved through incorporating canonical classical compositions, the way to which was paved by the genre's postmodernism; the series of these citations begins with the diminutive but overt – and now renowned – incipit of Bach's D-minor toccata, introduced on church organ in *Per qualche dollaro.* In *Giù la testa*, *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* – used to symbolise an epitome of refinement – is quoted and juxtaposed with the garish timbres and puerile stomp of 'Marcia degli accattoni', while the melody of Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries', handled with mocking bitonality to ridicule the 'Wild Horde', is an important recurring theme in *Il mio nome è Nessuno.* Morricone's music shares the nondiegetic soundtrack with Rossini's overture to *Guillaume Tell* and Von Suppè's to *Leichte Kavallerie* in *La vita è molto dura, vero Provvidenza?.* Fragments of the latter are peculiarly spliced into Morricone's score to create a patchwork accompaniment to the film's *Stagecoach*-inspired final chase, surely in gross contravention of internal logic.

In a tongue-in-cheek interview with the composer, Donald Fagen alludes to the 'dumpster eclecticism' of the western scores (1989, 106): their conglomeration of musical miscellany to achieve a cohesive and idiosyncratic stylistic synthesis that proved influential not only within the confines of the Italian-western *filone* but also for the bohemians of Lower Manhattan – he likely had John Zorn's album *The Big Gundown* (1986) in mind – and beyond. Combined with the music's narrational irony, its debts to art forms other than cinema, and its dual function simultaneously '"inside" the film as a narrative voice and "outside" [it] as the commentary of a winking jester' (1989, 106), the overall package amounts to postmodernism. Echoing this assertion, but concentrating on stylistic bricolage, Smith (1998, 132–8) believes that the synthetic approach in particular aligns Morricone with contemporaneous ventures experiments in 1960s popular music.

Miceli, on the other hand, reminds us that the 'stylistic osmosis' encapsulated by the landmark music for *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, which would make the largest impression in the popular-music arena, is 'an important sign of the composer's … career trajectory', a

microcosm of the eclecticism marking his fuller practice (2016, 279). This is a somewhat distilled version of the overall stylistic tripartition (Fig. 5.1) that Miceli identifies in the 'Dollars' music, and which can be applied to other western scores as well. It is a helpful method of conceptualising and coordinating the idiomatic components that have been explored in the present section, and of explaining the intelligibility and appeal of Morricone's music. Each of the 'Dollars' title themes is based on this organisation, he argues, which conveys connotations of the archaic, of popular music, and of the classical tradition conveyed. Miceli adds:

> each of the three segments can appear isolated from the others in the film […] However, the more interesting aspect of the segmentation lies in the founding concept, which affects the progressions … and even the coexistence of the stylistic elements […] Composing in this way, you address three types of public that are profoundly different from one another, not only from the cultural but also from the generational point of view.
>
> […] In this way one can explain, at least partly, the reasons for an extremely rare kind of intergenerational and intracultural success that has lasted for some thirty years.
>
> (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 169–71)

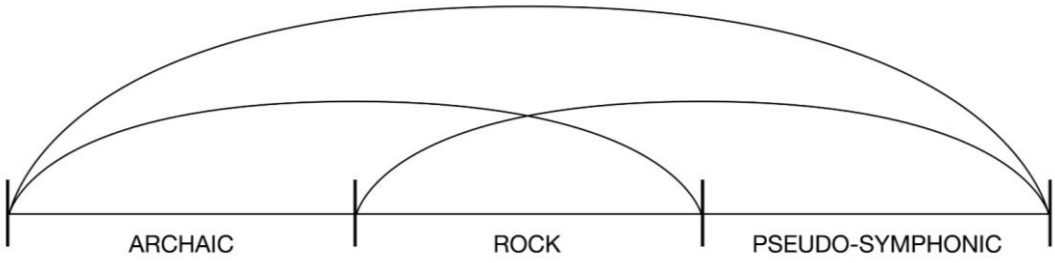


Figure 5.1 Sergio Miceli's tripartite model of idiomatic – as opposed to melodic or motivic – segmentation, outlining the primary stylistic elements of the 'Dollars' language (2013, 170; see also 2016, 272).

Furthermore, this polarity of the savage archaic and the cultured symphonic can be mapped with ease on to Kitses' wilderness–civilisation binary, so vital to western syntax. This may go some way towards defining the evident but indescribable 'appropriateness' of this vernacular (whose success is certainly not hindered by the accessible intermediary segment, drawing on such an enduringly popular music genre).

Instrumentation and orchestration, timbre and sound design

Few aspects of Morricone's film music have caught the ear more than those concerning instruments and timbre. 'Eclectic orchestration' (Kennedy 1991, 40), 'dazzling variety of sounds' (Brown 1994, 226), and 'unusual approach to tone colour' (Smith 1998, 137) offer a glimpse at the wealth of responses along these lines to the composers scores. As with other assessments, one finds when one narrows the scope to the westerns that such remarks are concentrated in that sphere. Reuters' obituary for Morricone commented specifically on his work in the genre. He 'used unconventional instruments such as the Jew's harp, amplified harmonica, mariachi trumpets, cor anglais and the ocarina' (Pullella 2020). Julie Hubbert opines, '[t]o match Leone's unique visual and narrative style, Morricone experimented with musical instrumentation especially' (2011, 302–3). And Cumbow writes that '[m]uch of what is astounding about Morricone's scores for Leone derives from the composer's eccentric approach to the orchestration' (2008 [1987], 197).

Cumbow's adjective hints at the overriding impression of this unorthodoxy: eccentricity, the quality positioned by Cooke as a defining characteristic of the composer's contribution. When Thomas C. Foster refers to a scene from *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (dir. Gore Verbinski, 2007) in which a stand-off is parodied to a pastiche of 'L'uomo dell'armonica' (Fig. 5.2 below), he summarises: 'It's all weird instrumentation and over-the-top effects' (2009, 217). Hans Zimmer's music track borrows more than instrumentation alone, but that brand of weirdness is one of the most pronounced aspects of the adaptation. This overall effect shall be kept in mind during this appraisal of the instrumental forces that Morricone deployed in his western scores, of the way he wrote for them, and of their sonic properties and connotations.

The composer cherished this facet of the composition process, as shown by his stance on the industry custom of employing orchestrators to arrange a principal composer's thematic material. He was perhaps never more vociferous in his long-running advocation of the essential practice of orchestration than when he said: 'A composer who does not do his own orchestrations[;] it's a serious defect to consider him a composer 100%. Either he's not capable, or he's lazy, or he's capable but he doesn't love his own profession (Morricone, quoted in Willman 1994). Despite the strong wording, the matter for Morricone really had less to do with condemnation of want of skill or effort, or with bemoaning the surrender of authorship, than with his inability to fathom relinquishing control over what he saw as an imperative aspect of the composition process. 'It would seem that entrusting the orchestration of a soundtrack to third parties is a totally usual praxis [in the US] … I come from a background in which orchestration is an integral part of musical thinking, as much as melody, harmony, and every other musical parameter' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 112). When Morricone addressed the question of a score's 'organisation' in the *Comporre per il cinema* seminars, he spoke not of spotting, or of thematic distribution, as occupying the opening stage of planning. He turned instead to the determination and assembly of forces, which in numerous cases involved rendering the services of specific individuals to play the

instruments chosen – whose participation would influence the determination of musical content itself (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 61).

Figure 5.2 The somewhat discrepant audiovisual homage to the Italian-western shootout in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* – far from the first of its kind. Released just three years after the impactful US release of *Per un pugno di dollari*, *Kelly's Heroes* (dir. Brian G. Hutton, 1970) offered an early spoof of the trope, featuring Eastwood himself. Instrumentation substantially engineers the reference in both sequences.

A terminological clarification should be offered at the risk of confusing instrumentation and orchestration. While a distinction is made between the concepts here, they both relate to the instrumental assignment and handling of musical material. Their disparity is mitigated in the context of the western scores, which feature many non-orchestral instruments, typically employed in non-orchestral, frequently small-scale combinations; moreover, the symphonic orchestra proper is rarely called upon in this context, more rarely still with exclusivity. We shall approach the two ideas in close relation, without using their descriptors interchangeably. They are additionally linked by their causal relationship to timbre, the phenomenal aspect

chiefly affected by decisions regarding instrumentation and orchestration. This connection notwithstanding, there is a clear distinction between instrumentation, orchestration, and their timbral consequences, most simply because it is possible to generate a range of tone qualities using the same instrument, let alone the same assortment of instruments.

It is opportune to quote Morricone yet again in order to understand the extent of his regard for the compositional element of timbre:

> Were I to think about what characterizes a composer, what distinguishes one from another, I would speak ...precisely of timbre […] I have always maintained timbral research to be fundamental throughout the entirety of my career. At times I have exacerbated this research in my pop arrangements and in cinema, seeking firstly what was an expressive necessity for me and secondly, what could in my view be a [trump] card for the audience.
>
> (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 253)

Although this response is given in the midst of reflecting on a lifetime of creative pursuit in the art-music realm – marked by the search for 'timbral cohesion', in De Rosa's words (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 253) – it is apparent that such experimentation was no less characteristic of Morricone's film music and pop arrangements; 'a good arrangement is defined by the entrance of the instruments and the resulting orchestral treatment, the choice of timbres, etc.' (p. 14). This dimension was a fundamental compositional concern – derived in no small part from the deep-seated emphasis on *Klangfarbe* in 'post-Webernian' music, as Morricone often referred to it – which had little trouble traversing the divide that separated *assoluta* from *applicata*, and evidently posed fewer obstacles to the practice of the double aesthetic.

The following exchange encapsulates the esteem in which this nexus of parameters was held. It explains their integration, their collective significance in the compositional process, and the pivotal role of the westerns, and therefore functions as the theoretical linchpin of this section. De Rosa puts to the composer: 'Your music for *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* develops a kind of research that seems to have been fundamental to you ever since you began: the indissoluble union between the instrumentation, timbre, and melodic ideas'; Morricone's answer:

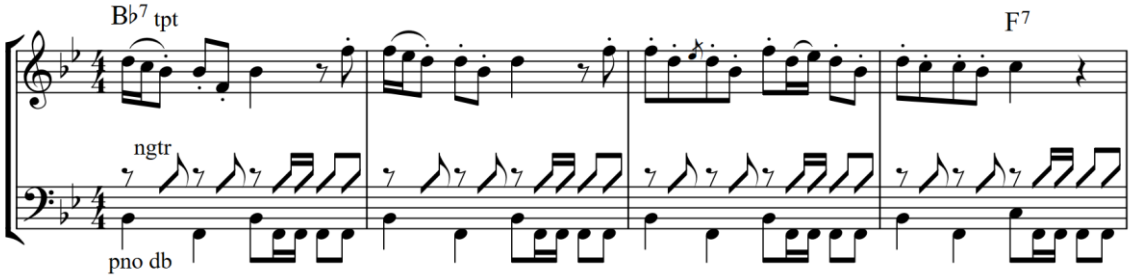
> From the outset, my musical thinking often envisions the timbres through which a melodic phrase would be devised. Sometimes I even plan out which musician should play each specific part. Had I not had those valuable musicians at my

> disposal, several of the musical solutions I came up with would have never been thinkable.
>
> Leone always demanded catchy themes which people where expected to be able to remember […] He would pick the themes while listening to me playing simplified versions of them at the piano. However, those notes were one thing with the instruments that produced them, but when I orchestrated I gradually introduced more and more unusual instruments, each and ever time seeking a sort of celebration of timbres.
>
> (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 32)

Morricone was sensitive to the capacity of orchestration to inherently alter expression. Still, references to his work in popular music and to Leone's directions, which would have aligned with wider industrial interests, indicate that many of the decisions examined below (and those to do with instrumentation in particular) are indicative of a wider array of factors than Morricone's habits and sensibilities alone. He was honing his craft in an entertainment-cinema environment in the throes of cultural, socio-economic, and technological upheaval. In a process driven by fast-shifting popular tastes, the orchestra was becoming less of a musical ubiquity, especially relative to the American industry from which the western was being transplanted. Many of those who had previously met the challenge of scoring westerns were ensconced in the Hollywood machine, and not necessarily awarded the 'blank page' that he appears to take for granted, nor the same familiarity with, or pick of, soloists – orchestral or otherwise. In such a climate entailing a reduced scope for instrumentational–timbral experimentation, it is not only logical but also, one would think, less of a transgression that orchestrators were so widely employed.

It is moreover reasonable that the imitative expedient of Cinecittà, and the entrenched musical signatures and indispensable period setting of the western amounted to a paradigm that prohibited the transfer to the genre of the pop vernacular or novel instrumentation that Morricone regularly called upon in his earliest film scores. There is little of this individual stamp in the early Jolly westerns, in which orchestral instruments make up the core of the performing forces – joined by the non-orchestral but still on-brand additions of 'folksy' harmonica and 'Mexican' nylon-string guitar. These inclusions are far more noteworthy for their handling, though. Standalone nondiegetic cues for both instruments feature in *Duello nel Texas* and for the latter in *Le pistole non discutono*, anticipating later solo cues notable for their brevity and accentuation of visual content. As previously discussed, early instances of idiosyncratic Morriconian orchestration mark both films: the agitated low-register piano–snare drum combination; the trumpet-and-strings 'proto-Degüello' in the earlier film; and the *Klangfarbenmelodie* cue composed for its successor. Morricone also assembles a music-hall dance band for a saloon scene in *Duello*, comprising trumpet, tack piano, guitar, percussion,

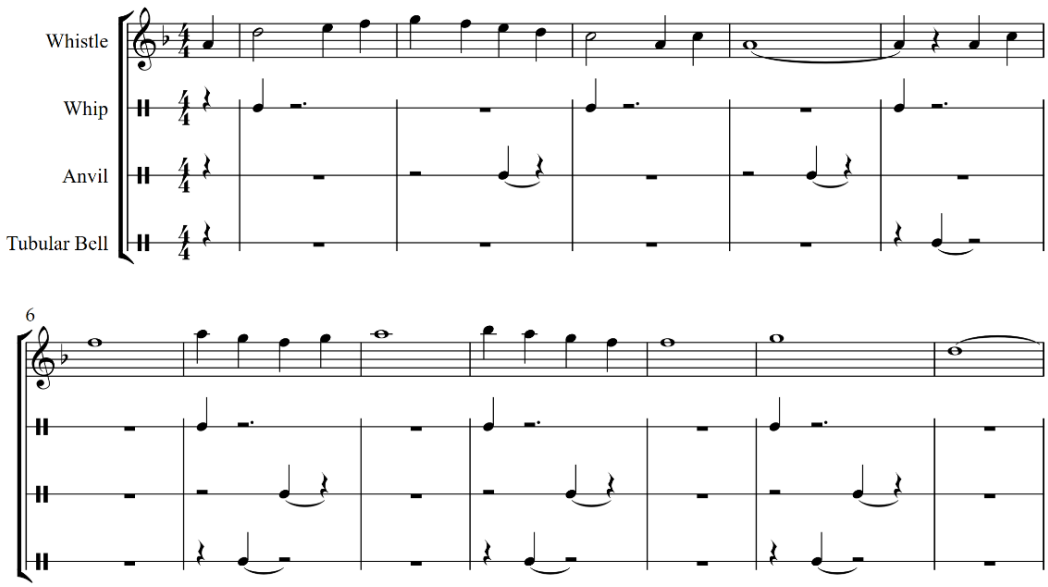
and double bass accompanying a can-can performance (Ex. 5.8), variations on which format recurred frequently in later westerns.



Example 5.8 Can-can music from *Duello nel Texas*, complete with the obligatory off-beat rhythmic emphasis.

It is fitting that the opportunity for instrumentational revolution carved out by Leone's vision was effectively seized by a Morricone pop arrangement, a medium in which he was thus free and encouraged to experiment. An array of instrumental possibilities were presented as part of the wider stylistic template demonstrated by the 'Pastures of Plenty' revamp, and one might argue that the influential implementation of that song was a move principally stimulated by timbral concerns. Morricone and Leone's views on the incongruence of the orchestra offers an early indication of 'sonic' thinking; it is not necessarily the Romantic idiom they took issue with, but its timbre, which was, in their opinion, at variance with the wild, rural, historical scenario. The orchestral sound constitutes long-established sensory furniture in the filmic experience, softened, homogenised, and more easily assimilated as a collective of instruments generating an amorphous timbral field as one – an effect alleviated when colouristic differences are emphasised in orchestration (Fischer et al. 2021). The ensemble was dramaturgically unobtrusive, but the discrepancy between the sound and setting – which would have been exacerbated by Leone's directorial style – jarred and demanded correction, or so Morricone felt.

The instrumental changes effected in *Per un pugno di dollari* are telling. Percussion selections represent the most explicit attempt to evoke the geographical–cultural space: whips, anvils, and bells furnish the aural landscape, sounding in alternation in 'Titoli' to build Miceli's contrapuntal texture (Ex. 5.9) and engender the palpable sense of a live, bustling frontier. The wind (recorder, ocarina) and to a lesser extent vocal (whistle, chorus) timbres are less 'environmental', but 'primitive' associations discussed below are nonetheless connotative of that elemental wilderness. Although such individual inclusions were not all wholly original, their use not as embellishments but as principal members of an ensemble substitute for the orchestra furnishes an unconventional timbral fabric even before one takes the material played into account.



Example 5.9 Rhythmic counterpoint in ‘Titoli’.

A substantial orchestral presence does endure in *Per un pugno*, as it does to a greater or lesser extent in virtually every western score by Morricone that followed. What should be emphasised with regard to this orchestral question is its frequent slimline assembly, and its diminished role and perceptibility relative to instruments that stand out for their soloistic treatment, aural prominence in the sound mix, brusque timbral attack, concise or repeated material, or unfamiliarity in the generic setting. These instrumental ‘soloists’, alone (recorder quintuplet), in tighter chamber groupings (‘Musica sospesa’), or at the head of larger but subdued accompaniment (both versions of ‘Per un pugno di dollari’), help to sharpen the nebulous orchestral timbre, drawing awareness to a singular voice, and facilitating musical conspicuity through another compositional parameter. The effect remains when traditional orchestral instruments assume this role: double-stopped solo violin, thickly ornamented trumpet, and *cantabile* cor anglais sounding through the dialogue-free hostage exchange, are hardly less perceptible than, say, the rendition of the ‘Titoli’ melody on ocarina in ‘Doppi giochi’.

Before we trace the repercussions of this instrumentation–orchestration formula, it is worth addressing a recurrent theme in literature and, by doing so, consider the possibility that an additional role was played by practical circumstances. A lack of funds is often cited as a reason for the film’s austere textures and instrumental novelties (see Lamphier and Welch 2020, 35, for example). ~$200,000 was an unequivocally paltry budget and the orchestral instrumentation is notably reduced; flute, cor anglais, and trumpet soloists aside, there is neither a woodwind nor a brass ‘section’ to speak of (though trombones feature sporadically), but this cannot be put forward as the sole explanation. Fuller forces appear in *Duello nel*

Texas and *Le pistole*, which were both Jolly productions, though the company threw more money at the latter, and it has been shown that Morricone's instrumentational decisions were at least partially motivated by aesthetic concerns as well as conventions and expedients of a personal and industrial nature. Furthermore, the composer's recycling of several older compositions indicates that he may not have been inclined to do more than was necessary. The score's idiomatic derivation from the sparsity of 'Pastures' also contributed. This curation on Leone's part was doubtless guided by his infatuation with *Yojimbo*, Masaru Satō's music for which is positively spartan in its percussive pointillism and incessant staccato articulation (De Lannoy 2012).

However, both orchestral and non-orchestral forces are audibly reinforced in *Per qualche dollaro in più*. Sciannameo writes, 'thanks to a more generous production budget and, consequently, higher expectations, Morricone used an orchestra engorged with lush string sound and a full chorus' (2020, 52). Frayling also recounts the budgetary supplement (and that of its successor, *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*) as the leading reason why Morricone was in a position to write and record in advance of filming (2000, 234–5). Neither refers to the impact of the *Per un pugno* budget on his orchestrations, which must be considered at most as one of several causal factors. What can be said with confidence is that in spite of continuity of instrumentation and orchestration, immediate bolstering of orchestral forces did occur in the wake of box-office success for *Per un pugno* and personal acclaim for Morricone. This is already observable in both of Tessari's 'Ringo' films, before the 'Dollars' sequels were released thereafter.

As an instrumentally enterprising composer compelled to usurp orchestral hegemony, it is not surprising that we see bold choices made for *Per un pugno*. 'Titoli' implemented timbres that superficially mismatched a genre where audiences had long grown accustomed to the orchestra. And yet the sounds simultaneously anchored themselves to that setting via subtler connections with musical precedent and semantic and syntactical elements of the western. This, in addition to the accessibility of both sound and idiom, explain why the eccentricity worked – if commercial success serves as the measure by which to go. With the tension generated by the economic incentive to emulate the success of this formula again in mind, it is timely to discuss how decisions pertaining to instrumentation and orchestration as well as timbre diffused through our filmography.

For Leinberger, the most distinctive instrumental staple of Morricone's 'Dollars' scores is the 'fistful of aerophones' he amasses (2012, 137), from the humble human whistle through blistering trumpet. He is right to recognise the central roles assumed by this class in those scores and beyond, but for our present purposes and the differing attributes and application of these instruments, it is more helpful to divide it. Woodwind are addressed first, and despite its technical extraneousness, whistling is included in this category for its likeness of treatment and timbre, and its basic affinity as a sound produced by a vibrating body of air (Koch and Kopal 2014). Recorder, flute, ocarina, and cor anglais are characteristic of the 'Dollars' forces, featuring prominently in the title compositions and their fragments, the set-piece cues,

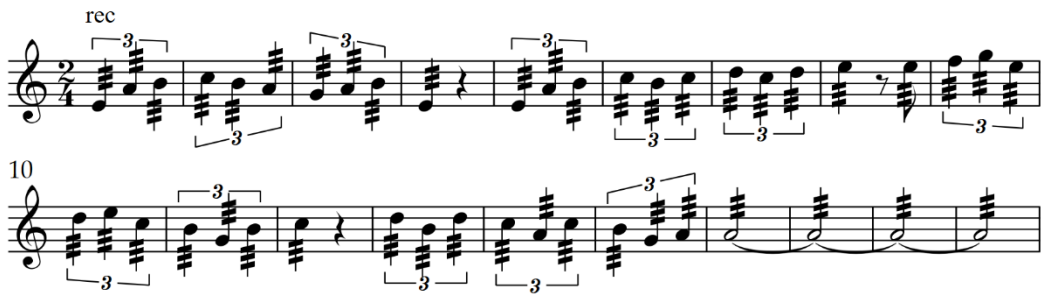
and athematic underscore. Some subvert their important if more inconspicuous historical role in the orchestra, coming forward as individual voices. They acquire new character in this different context of orchestration, sometimes as the lone instrument sounding a closed theme at the helm of reduced forces ('Doppi giochi'), at others as the only instrument heard at all (the cor anglais outburst in *Per qualche dollaro*; see Ex. 5.13 below), and in the aforementioned 'holstering' counterpoint in the latter film (Fig. 3.3), recorder, cor anglais, and flute combine to exchange terse statements following a sync point.

These mechanics partly endure in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, with the perseverance of the call–answer fragments consolidating the effect as part of the soundworld. Woodwinds retain their melodic and soloistic prominence, as in 'La missione San Antonio' (Ex. 3.1), but in the alternation between the wind phrases (now featuring oboe) and string chords, the cue demonstrates an increasingly 'sectional' mentality. The handling of flute ostinati in the orchestral fantasy 'Il deserto' pre-empts a more traditional orchestral approach demonstrated in *C'era una volta il west*, with woodwind conventionally incorporated into the ensemble texture in Jill's lush theme. Woodwind participate in a similarly egalitarian manner at times in Leone's final western, *Giù la testa*, but the film also witnesses the return of more obscure, non-orchestral winds, producing gaudy colours in reduced chamber combinations.

Elsewhere in the filmography, Morricone continued to favour using certain members in the melodic foreground, but they rarely perform as independently or form the heart of a soundworld as characteristically as they do in the 'Dollars' films. The broader re-establishment of orchestral forces in the 'Ringo' films (including a rare outing in *Il ritorno di Ringo* for the clarinet) offers a sharp and, in instrumentational terms, conservative contrast to the course pursued in *Per qualche dollaro in più.* The later *Un fiume di dollari* and 'MacGregors' films maintained this parallel approach to Leonian precedent, despite some extraordinary wind writing in the latter (Ex. 5.6). Sollima's *La resa dei conti* makes good use of the ocarina, which lends its distinctive colour to the title song 'Run Man Run' and its reprises, but subgeneric divisions in the filmography in the following years inspired idiomatic and instrumentational choices of different kinds along the *nero*–Zapata axis, provoking the replacement of the aerophonic 'Dollars' palette. As perhaps the most unusual and thus distinct of these instruments, the recorder is the main casualty, going from a extremely prominent thematic voice to a retrospective novelty.

These developments are symptomatic of the 'push' factors active in the post-'Dollars' period, those that encourage experimentation as opposed to the imitation of Leone's genre-defining cinema: Morricone endeavours to expand his vernacular as *sottofiloni* demand original scoring formulae, and there are fewer opportunities for the kind of commentary at work in Leone's films. In the US-backed productions that materialised in the wake of the director's success there, however, the resurgence of 'pull' factors is evidenced in instrumental choices, among others. Aerophones once again fill out dynamic and contrapuntal textures to channel the 'Dollars' spirit in *Un esercito di 5 uomini* and *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, which also stage a renaissance for recorder, flute, and ocarina, feature parts for piccolo, and herald

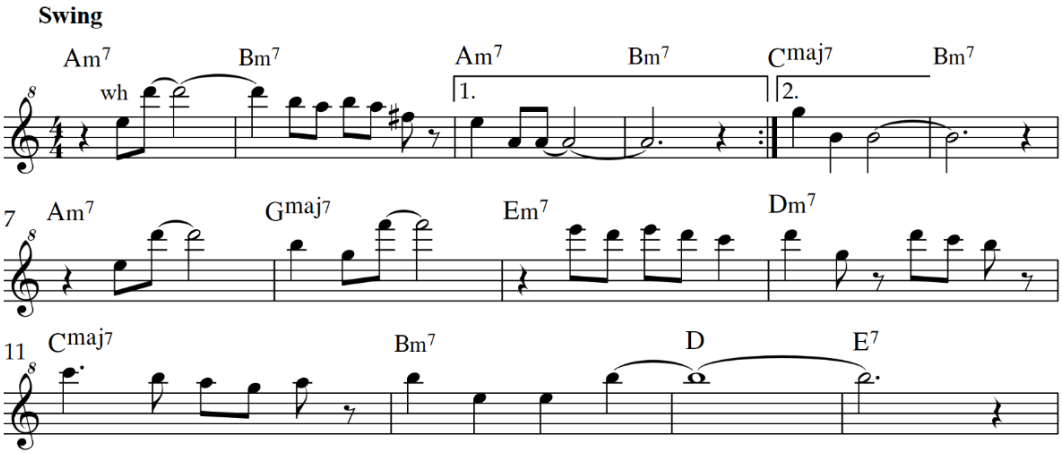
the late rise of the bassoon (Ex. 3.14i). Bassoon melodies tend to navigate the lyric-tenor register, supplying another distinctive, not overtly ‘classical’ colour, while revelling in the lower, muddier register for more eccentric pieces, such as the timbral patchwork of ‘Marcia degli accattoni’ in *Giù la testa* (it notably descends to the bottom of its range on melodic duty in *The Hateful Eight*). In *Giù la testa* and *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, the burgeoning sense of a composer lampooning his own work manifests partly through such use of pointedly ridiculous timbres. Absurdity is often achieved by extended techniques exercised on wind instruments. In the cue ‘Amore’ from the former picture, a recorder mimics a slide whistle with chromatic pitch bends, and in the latter, the same instrument gives a flutter-tongued rendition of the ‘Mucchio selvaggio’ theme (Ex. 5.10), allusive of ‘Titoli’.



Example 5.10 The recorder takes on the theme in ‘Mucchio selvaggio’, its shrill flutter-tonguing giving Morricone’s western-genre style the parodic treatment.

Throughout these fluctuations, the mainstay ‘aerophone’ was whistling. Established by the crisp ‘Dollars’ title tunes, the composer turned to it repeatedly to render important themes in *C’era una volta il west*, *Giù la testa*, *Il mercenario* and *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, and when the easy-listening forces that became a staple of the later comedies usurped other stalwarts like the electric guitar, the innately carefree sound adapted naturally to this lighter-hearted context, as in ‘Sonny’ from *La banda J. & S.* and ‘Rivoluzione??’ from *Che c’entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?*. Alessandroni was recruited to whistle the swung tune of ‘Addio a Cheyenne’ in *C’era una volta il west*, infused with the wistful melancholy of a fading West, definitive of Cheyenne’s character arc as well as the wider film and the emergent revisionist subgenre (Ex. 5.11). He was expressly called upon to articulate the ‘sense of softness and weariness’ Morricone pursued in the score: ‘there are neither trumpets, nor anvils, nor animal sounds. Instead … distended strings to dilate time, and … Alessandroni’s whistle, which can still be heard in this soundtrack, is more relaxed, wearier in a certain sense’ (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 61).

(i)



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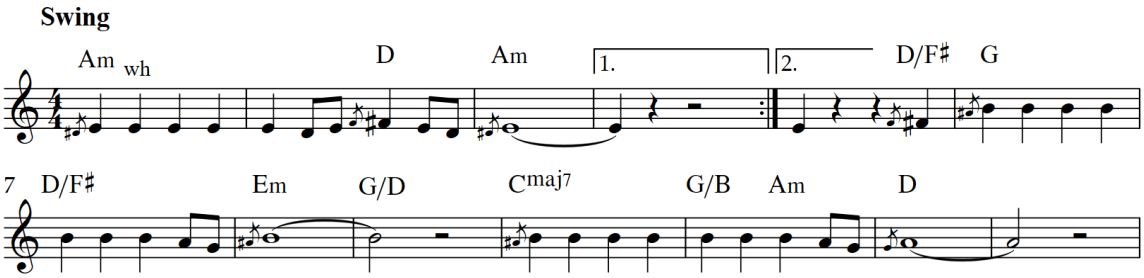


Example 5.11 'Rivoluzione??' from *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?* (i) and 'Farewell Cheyenne' from *C'era una volta il west* (ii). Note the swung rhythms and, more adventurous harmonic language, and 'weary' chromatic appoggiature.

The connotations of whistling raise the important, related concern of primordial associations, a notion on which many commentators have remarked, and which poses stylistic, narratological, and ethnomusicological questions. Miceli reads into this most deeply, identifying an archaic aesthetic in the 'Dollars' soundworld as we have seen, which takes life from 'from "primitive" elements of extreme simplicity [and] archaic purity' to fluctuate 'between the epic and playful' (Miceli 2016, 270). These elements, including formal components such as propulsive dactylic rhythms, as reminiscent of 'tribal' codes as they are of galloping horses, involve instruments he describes as 'humble': Jew's harp, harmonica, recorder, anvil, and deep, reverberant drums (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 169). This resonates with thematic tropes inherent in western-genre storytelling: 'The human whistling, the sounds of simple instruments, often derived from animals, refer to a remote civilization

that lives close to nature, which is characterized by a diverse but coherent set of values, the prevailing one being individualism'; as per his tripartition, these fuse with 'rock' and 'pseudo-symphonic' elements to 'slyly suggest … a tripartite model of social development corresponding to the ideological goal of bourgeois integration' (Miceli 2016, 272), and moreover to the nature–culture and wilderness–civilisation polarities that Kitses perceives to be fundamental to the western's syntax (2004 [1970], 12).

Miceli regards the archaic segment as 'the most original and characteristic, especially from the point of view of the inventive use of tone colours' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 170). Much of this is channelled by the predominant aerophonic instrumentation, the rudimental whistle in particular. De Rosa classifies the whistle as the most 'primitive' of the sounds presented in *Per un pugno di dollari* (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 26), and Leonardo Di Nino contemplates the epic quality aroused by the timbral 'programme' of 'Titoli', above all its 'primitive, distant, almost mythological' whistle (2021, 63; author's translation). Leinberger hints at the notion in his reflections on modality in Morricone's aerophonic writing, another trait signifying the elemental in its purity and reductionism (2012, 138–9).

Morricone's most distinctive aerophones (flute, whistle, ocarina) would seem to complement the instrumental palette of pre-Columbian Mexico and Mesoamerica (Hepp et al., 2014), a cultural sphere drawn closer to the western mythos by the Italian western's southward reorientation and increased interaction with Mexican culture – functioning as a conduit for more ancient, native associations. While the Italian western did not facilitate such cultural engagement for the first time, the *filone* imposed a large-scale representational shift, as Brizio-Skov (2011, 197–8) explains, substituting the Mexican community for the Indian as the beleaguered people subject to the violent regenerative conquest of the 'savage' West. Standing in for this indigenousness, Mexican culture serves as the filter through which Kitses' 'nature' ideal manifests, a process facilitated by Morricone's timbral phenomena. However, the affiliation with Mexico is narrow. These sounds vitalise the sonic legacy of a much larger continent, whose 'descendants developed … the largest number and greatest diversity of aerophones' (Olsen 2004, 262). Recourse to Mexico is strengthened by other choices pertaining to orchestration and idiom, enabling the associations to transcend the purely archaic segment of Miceli's tripartition.

The other important natural dimension which finds an expressive outlet through timbre is the sense of the 'Wild' West itself, its landscape the apogee of savagery. Music channelling 'environment', first composed deliberately in 'Pastures of Plenty', vitalises the sound of the frontier in Morricone's scores, and while this can carry artificial, 'civilised' connotations – tolling church (tubular) bells, for example – other instances are distinctly wild. Animalistic gestures make up the most distinctive examples of the latter, which are usually produced by reedless winds with the occasional input of voices. Morricone does not characterise overtly with this instrumental dimension along ethnocultural lines, opting on the whole to assimilate timbres of this kind more evenly into the commentary vernacular, rather than to use them as

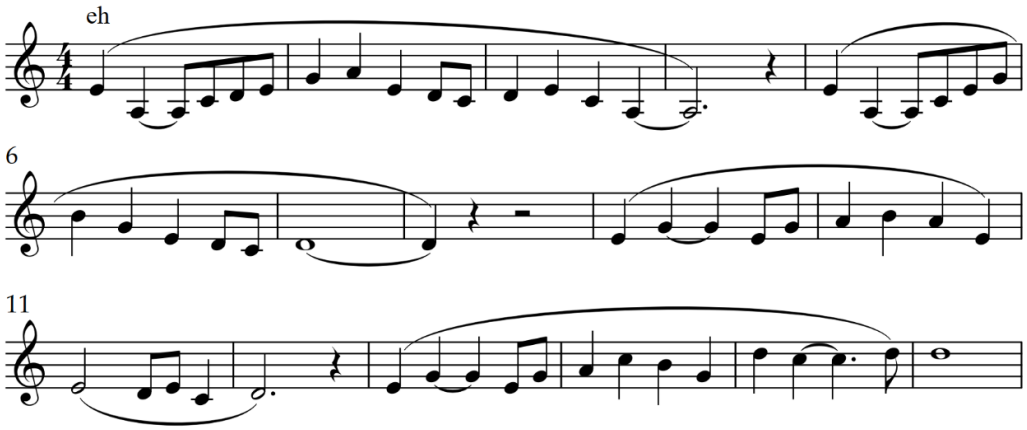
an unambiguous signifier of individuals. This is reflective of the fact that Mexicans and their culture are not alienated to the same extent as indigenous Americans in classical westerns.

Most such examples of musical stereotyping occur when indigenous Americans are depicted. In *La battaile de San Sebastian*, a film closer to that classical mould, set during a period (1740s) when clashes with Native communities were a more relevant subject than in, say, the politically tumultuous 1910s and '20s of the Zapatas, an ocarina characterises the belligerent Yaqui group led by the 'half-breed' Charles Bronson. In *Navajo Joe*, another picture in which multiracialism is foregrounded, the same instrument contributes to the title character's theme, alongside drumming voices (Ex. 3.17iv) and piercing, crazed war cries. Several indigenous-American characters in the corpus are not subject to such treatment; he that appears in *Il ritorno di Ringo* is not accompanied musically, for example. However, more substantial and derogatory stereotyping is observable in late comedies *Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?* and *Occhio alla penna* as they bid to win laughs. Notably, some of the most marked instances where Morricone perpetuates the western's habitual musical stereotyping of Indians can be found in *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, an American co-production.

Usually, when Spanish-Mexican characters are musically distinguished from white American characters (and even when this distinction is an important aspect of the narrative, as in the 'Ringo' films or *La resa dei conti*), their identity is proclaimed by less superficial means. A nylon-string guitar or a trumpet may supply a theme, but a sense of semantic tokenism is curbed by the wider utility of such instruments and their integration into larger ensemble combinations. By dislodging the entrenched orchestra and establishing an alternative timbral fundament, Morricone began to loosen the stranglehold that a refined 'European' soundworld and its 'civilised' cultural connotations had exerted on the western, incorporating associative strains signposting what lay on the far side of the frontier – both Mexico and the enveloping, untamed continent. Yet, while such methods can nuance identification and demonstrate greater awareness of alternative musical traditions, they still amount to a compositional toolkit and fall short of authentic engagement. The latter would not have been easy to accomplish in the composer's shoes, but nevertheless it cannot be said of Morricone's western scores that they abolished the genre's time-honoured practice of musical exoticism. Most importantly, the kind of idiomatic evocation of Mexican traditional music we hear in Spanish-language songs and mariachi cues added a musical dimension to depictions of the Mexican nation and its radical cause, making the conflict's analogous implications for the Italian political situation more intelligible for domestic audiences – even if critics questioned the mettle of such commentary.

The prominent role of the cor anglais has been curiously neglected in the scholarship. As the presence of other instruments waxed and waned through the filmography, Morricone's choice reeded wind remained intrinsic to the soundworld, featuring as consistently and prominently as any other. In addition to the trumpet, it is the only orchestral instrument that adopts a leading soloistic role in a wide range of western film scores, and as such it carries distinctly classical, symphonic connotations to counter those of a primordial nature – which,

however, are somewhat curbed by the novelty of the cor anglais' presence in the typical orchestra, and the manner in which it has long been used in the Western art-music repertory. The cor anglais first emerged as a characteristic instrument in late seventeenth-century Italian opera of the late seventeenth century, with the most reputable composers of the Neapolitan School establishing its standing as a lyrical instrument; 'the singing style [was] soon accepted as the most effective' (Page et al., 2001). This consensus continued to influence the instrument's handling. In his milestone orchestration treatise of 1844, Berlioz writes of its 'melancholy, dreamy voice, dignified too, with a retiring, remote quality', suited to 'arousing images and feelings of the past' (Macdonald 2004 [1844], 109). Italian opera remained a critical source of nourishment for this timbral interpretation, as the titans of this generation, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, all exploited the cor anglais' expressive melodic potential.



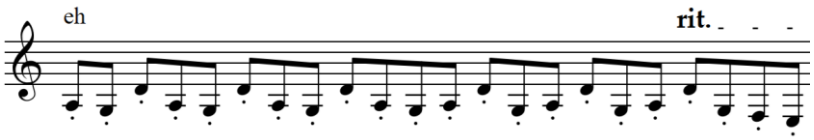
Example 5.12 The cor anglais recapitulates the 'Run Man Run' theme at the end of *La resa dei conti*. Note the persistent avoidance of the submediant and emphasised leaps, as well as several likenesses to 'L'estasi dell'oro' (Ex. 3.26i): both contemporary melodies are in A minor, played by cor anglais, open with a perfect fifth between A and E (falling in this case), and feature a distinctive E–(g–)B–G melodic contour over an Am–G harmonic change (bb. 5–6).

Morricone for the most part perpetuates this manner of writing for the instrument, which sounds sweeping melodic themes in a range of films, including: *Duello nel Texas*; *Per un pugno di dollari*; *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*; *La resa dei conti* (Ex. 5.12 above) *Faccia a faccia*; *Corri uomo corri*; *C'era una volta il west*; *Un esercito di 5 uomini*; *Giù la testa*; and *Il mio nome è Nessuno*. Many of these examples constitute softer, more lyrical variants of important themes with quite contrasting original connotations. In *Un esercito* and *Nessuno*, themes are directly associated with revisionist textual content pertaining to the passing of the frontier era; in the former, the ageing character Augustus laments 'it's not like it used to be […] it's not… *romantic* anymore'. Especially evident in these moments of heightened

melancholy, sorrow, and nostalgia, Morricone's conservation of the cor anglais' traditional lyricism opposes the primordial qualities fostered by other aerophones.

Morricone only occasionally resorts to the idiosyncratic, alternative style of writing that has been touched on: punctuative, staccato utterances performing a synchronous functions in their usual isolation, while the fuller melodies tend to exist in closed cue structures. Cases in point are in *Per qualche dollaro* (Fig. 3.24 and Ex. 5.13i), *Una pistola per Ringo* (Ex. 3.10), and *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (Ex. 3.26i). These films, all released in 1965–6, demonstrate a more idiosyncratic approach to cor-anglais composition in a film-scoring context, which threatened but ultimately failed to supplant the time-honoured method.

(i)



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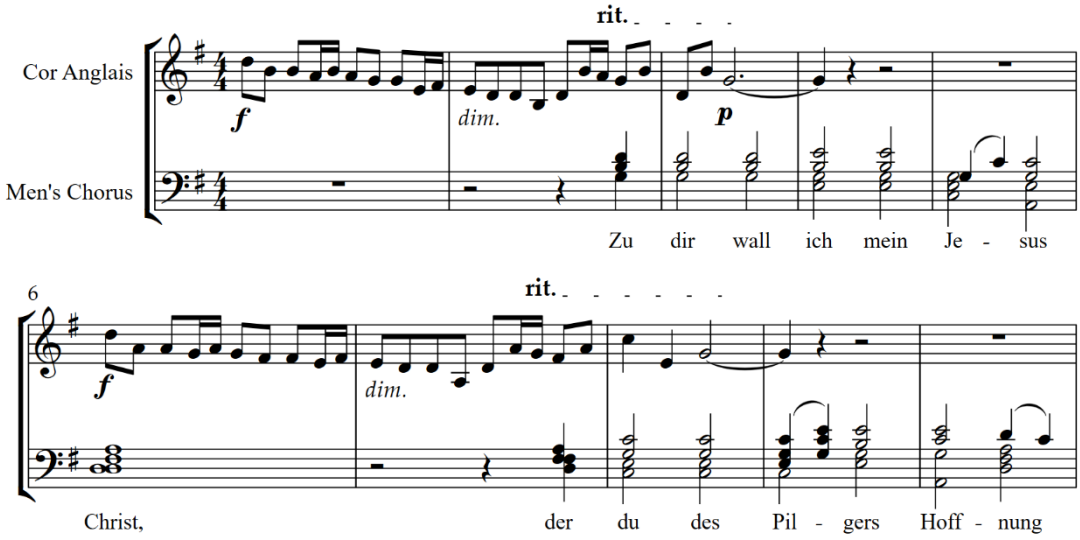


Example 5.13 In *Per qualche dollaro in più*, a lone cor anglais briskly sounds a series of tones (i) when Mortimer scans a 'wanted' poster. Tonal ambiguity is fostered by focus on G, A, and D (similar to that exhibited in Fig. 3.3). Below (ii) is a passage from the shepherd's ode from *Tannhäuser*, Act I, Scene 3. The crisp articulation is akin to that in the examples just cited and, coincidentally, both extracts in this figure employ ritardandi.

This innate capacity for nostalgic lyricism facilitated the evolution of another associative dimension: the pastoral. Berlioz did his utmost to capitalise on its wistfulness remoteness to

invoke the nobility of country life in *Symphonie fantastique* (1830); soon after, *Harold en Italie* (1834) called on the instrument to furnish the Italian bucolic setting. All this came after the instrument famously conveyed the quintessence of Swiss alpine pasture in the overture to *Guillaume Tell* (1829). Following suit in *Tannhäuser* (1845) and *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), in which onstage shepherd piping is ventriloquised by a cor anglais in the pit, Wagner consolidated these connections. His material for the instrument is somewhat less sweeping, with the relevant passage in *Tannhäuser* (Ex. 5.13) approximating the spikier Morriconian writing.

Figure 5.3 A cor anglais performs the dirgeful 'Per un pugno di dollari' (Ex. 2.2) during the highly choreographed hostage exchange (above). And in *La resa dei conti*, the cor anglais recapitulates the title theme (Ex. 5.12) as the film ends and the characters shrink into insignificance (below).

The most relevant antecedents with regard to Morricone's later usage of the cor anglais, however, came later, in the slow movements of Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 'From the New World' (1893) and Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* (1939). Both pieces have long

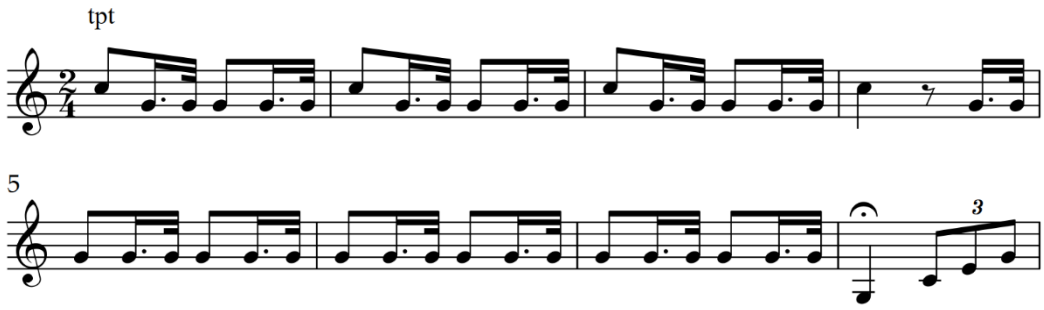
been popular entries in the canon, their solos for cor anglais ranking among not only their best-known passages but also the most memorable material written for the instrument. Furthermore, these works, both to some extent propagating geo-cultural symbolism (at least in retrospect; see Kamhi 1992, 109), have endowed an instrument already adept in conveying the pastoral with more specific associations: Dvořák's largo portrays the vastness of the American continent, and the concerto sports its distinctly Spanish (that is to say, Phrygian) quality.

Continental American and Hispanic cultural elements intersect in the Italian western, as they do at some level in the horn that Morricone perhaps uncoincidentally utilises as a lead melodic voice to express them. As in Rodrigo's adagio, the instrument often emphasises semitone intervals in Spanish-sounding manner by embarking from non-tonic scale degrees (the fifth in Aeolian melodies (e.g. Ex. 2.1) and third in Ionian ones (Ex. 2.4)). Moreover, it recurrently occupies the foreground in set-piece scenes assuming 'epic' proportions, or those in which a more distanced, overarching narrational stance is adopted, serving to frame the contained human drama as archetypal narrative (Fig. 5.3 above). In this regard the cor anglais, among the least environmental and eccentric, and most distinctive and poetic agents in Morricone's instrumental arsenal, conveys a sense of mythic timelessness. It is worth noting how the instrument's rustic associations counter the ostensible refinement it acquires in contrast with more primordial aerophones. It blends the archaic and civilised, and functions as another compositional element facilitating the integration of the outer segments of Miceli's tripartition.

Morricone's own instrument, the trumpet, is another prominent voice in the soundworld, and the versatile role it performs reflects the instrument's inherent capabilities as well as the composer's personal experiences. He professed his 'strange relationship' with an instrument that, while 'extraordinary', became a source of frustration to a young professional forced by financial necessity to play popular music that in his view demeaned the instrument and offered little aesthetic reward (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 104–5; author's translations). Although turning to composition (and his performative involvement in Il Gruppo) resolved this tension, the formulaic demands of the Italian western probably aroused familiar resentment:

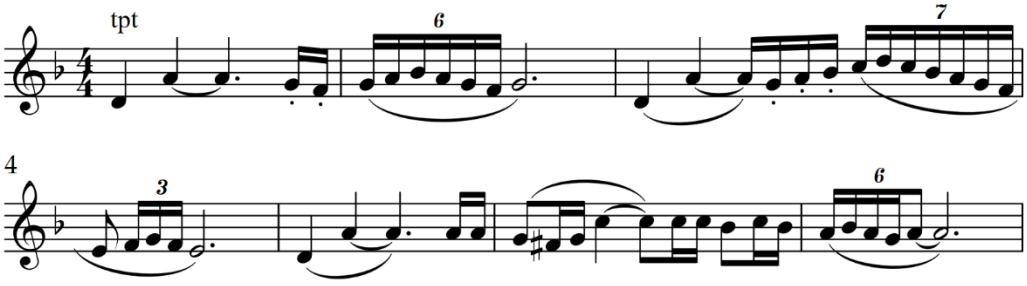
> [the trumpet] really is a wonderful instrument. The brass – I want it to make it scream, do crazy things, as in the piece *Vuoto d'anima piena* [2008], where each of the three parts has an initial burst at the beginning […] the passages from *Per un pugno di dollari* and *Per qualche dollaro in più* shouldn't be taken as examples. There it was a bit of what Dimitri Tiomkin had sown in *Rio Bravo*; he used the trumpet before the duel. But it's a popular usage, too easy. I love the trumpet of dignity.
>
> (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 109; author's translation)

Violating Morricone's instructions, we shall take those 'Dollars' pieces as our first examples; the emulation of the Mexican bugle call 'El Degüello' (Ex. 5.14), definitively presented in 'Per un pugno di dollari', is the trumpet's most characteristic offering in Morricone's westerns, especially the early scores. Aside from the use of the trumpet itself, the most important change to the austere original melody from *I drammi marini* that rendered it fit for purpose (to imitate Tiomkin's Degüello) in its new setting (the border town of San Miguel) was the generous application of melisma. 'What brought out the resemblance was its performance in a semi-gypsy style on the trumpet with all the melismas … characteristic of that style'; the music recaptured the 'the Mexican ambience [of *Rio Bravo*] through the interpretation and performance of the piece on the trumpet' (Morricone, quoted in Frayling 2000, 154). Elsewhere Morricone stressed the Mexican quality, describing melismata as 'typical of Mexican music' (Morricone and Miceli 2013 [2001], 188), and summarising Leone's brief as a 'death dance fitting a southern Texas atmosphere, where, according to Sergio, the tradition of Mexico and the United States blended' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 24).



Example 5.14 For its mythicised sounding at the Alamo, the bugle call 'El Degüello' is closely associated with the Mexican Army. The ordinarily major-key, triadic call bears no meaningful resemblance to Tiomkin's Degüello and its descendants.

Morricone crucially emphasises interpretation. Although ornamentation was added to the notated part, its realisation rested on verbal instructions communicated by composer to performer (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 25). Performative licence was awarded, enabling the player's own musicality to sculpt the end product. This is of especial importance because the performer was Michele Lacerenza, another alumnus of Santa Cecilia for whose enlistment Morricone fought a typically intransigent Leone, himself adamant on Nini Rosso, a popular player of the day. Given that Morricone elaborated the original melody with Lacerenza's technique in mind, and that the reincarnated composition (Ex. 5.15) became a touchstone for the composer himself and a defining Italian-western trope, Lacerenza must be regarded as one of many pivotal interpreters of the music in our filmography.



Example 5.15 Transcription of 'Per un pugno di dollari', based on Leinberger's (2012, 141).

Lacerenza performed in the 'Ringo' duology that followed *Per un pugno*, and in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*; he is credited as the soloist on the relevant commercial releases (Morricone 1980; 1966f), each of which features a Degüello-derived cue showcasing a trumpet solo. Some sources suggest that he can also be heard in *Per qualche dollaro in più*, but Giovanni Culasso is the player credited on that film's soundtrack recording (Morricone 1966a; see Leinberger 2015, 22). His involvement in the 'Dollars' pictures and the sudden abeyance in his film work in the ensuing years suggest a causal relationship between his withdrawal from the industry and the decline of trumpeted shootout themes in subsequent scores. Only *Il mercenario* and *Un genio, due compari, un pollo* feature a ritualised gunfight announced with a Degüello-like melody on solo trumpet. But this correlation may be coincidental. A simpler explanation is that Morricone was reluctant to overuse this contrived, stylised device. The duel theme he wrote for *La resa dei conti* (Ex. 3.19iii), for instance, is a departure, renouncing step-wise motion, legato articulation, and the trumpet itself in a significant departure from 'Dollars' precedent (Fig. 5.4 below).

Morricone's Degüello themes almost exclusively occur in advance of fatal action, following Tiomkinian usage, in both of which instances (*Rio Bravo* and *The Alamo*) the call intimidatingly declares an imminent assault. In the Italian western, following *Per un pugno*'s example, the music prepares the duels, the inevitable and morbid ceremonies depicted through meticulously choreographed *mise-en-scène*. Reinforced by the absence of dialogue and a contraction of dramatic motion, the ritualistic function evident in *Rio Bravo* and *The Alamo* becomes vastly inflated. Developments in orchestration enacted by Morricone beyond the 'Dollars' films – substitution for trombone in in *La resa dei conti*, intertwining of guitar and harmonica in *C'era una volta il west*, or the ensemble unison performance of the major-key, ostinato-based tune in *Il mercenario* – are variations that assert the underlying theme; while the origins of the shootout music lie in the Degüello, the solo trumpet dirge is finally transcended as it becomes apparent that the dramaturgical aspect is more important. Although Morricone's melodies, trumpet or otherwise, may not preserve the diegetic placement exercised in *Rio Bravo*, and *The Alamo* (Leinberger 2015, 22), that characteristic of the

tradition still lent its histrionics to these ‘nondiegetic’ solos, and provided justification for dramatic concessions made to it.

Figure 5.4 The first of two duels in *La resa dei conti*, which sounds to ‘La resa’ (Ex. 3.19iii) and accompanies elaborate visual composition. Trombone is the lead instrument here.

Morricone instructed Lacerenza: ‘play this theme for me with a kind of military timbre, a little Mexican flavour’ (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 25). As this device had posed as a bugle call since *Rio Bravo*, certain militaristic overtones are tied up with the Mexican national character, and more overt associations of that nature mark Morricone’s trumpet writing, incidentally aligning with early experiences of his with the instrument, performing for German and US occupiers, and performing and arranging during his own service (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 110–1). Militaristic elements feature more widely in his western scores, an influence representing another dimension of the idiomatic eclecticism that has been addressed. While pertinent as regards the composer’s Degüello melodies, these elements are substantially absorbed into the nondiegetic score for the first time in *Il ritorno di Ringo*, in which the military is a key theme: returning home after fighting for the Union in the Civil War, Ringo, a captain, finds his hometown overrun by Mexican bandits. Following in the footsteps of Odysseus, on whose namesake epic the film is based, Ringo disguises himself as a peon to infiltrate them. The villain in the piece, intent on wedding Ringo’s wife, fakes the hero’s death and stages a funeral at which the ‘deceased’ watches the committal of his own coffin, draped in stars and stripes as prescribed by pageantry. Morricone composed ‘Il funerale’ for the sequence (Ex. 5.16 below), played by Lacerenza.

Asked about the repurposing of this cue in the 2014 film *American Sniper* (dir. Clint Eastwood), Morricone stated that the piece was an arrangement of ‘Il silenzio’, a military bugle call (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 106). This raises questions in light of the call’s history. ‘Il silenzio’ was composed in 1911 by Giovanni Maggiotto of the Bersaglieri,

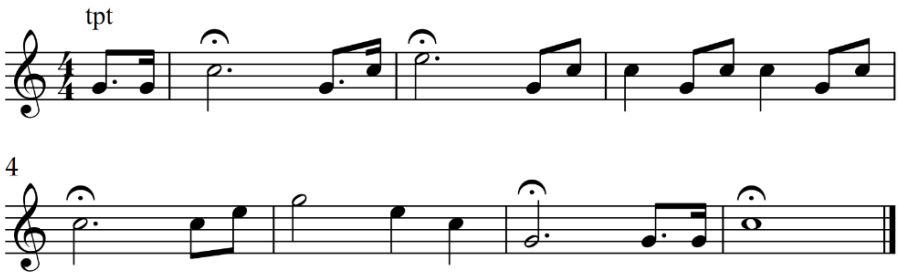
and subsequently entered the Italian bugling repertory (Bovi 2019, 234). It may have been an intentional adaptation of ‘Taps’, an American call of 1862 by Daniel Butterfield (itself based on the older ‘Scott Tattoo’ bugle call; Reed 2011, 192). ‘Taps’ signals end-of-day, but is well known for sounding at memorial services and funerals for US armed-forces personnel. Ex. 5.17 (below) illustrates that there is unequivocal similarity about the compositions, such that when Maggiotto’s daughters sued for copyright infringement in response to a popular 1960s cover version, the presiding magistrate ruled that ‘Il silenzio’ could not be plagiarised as an unoriginal piece based on Butterfield’s work (Bovi 2019, 235).

Example 5.16 The literally funereal melody is sounded seemingly nondiegetically during the ‘burial’ of Ringo as part of the cue ‘Il funerale’.

Selling some 750,000 copies in Italy (Murrells 1978, 195–6) and topping the chart there and in several other European countries after its release, this version (Rosso 1964) garnered unprecedented fame for Maggiotto’s call, and was recorded by none other than Nini Rosso, the player whom Morricone had earlier rejected in favour of Lacerenza. That Morricone, in

scoring this sequence, elected to appropriate ‘Il silenzio’ is unlikely to be coincidental; while as a former trumpeter in a military band there is every chance he had prior awareness of the call, it is probable that the sudden concurrent popularity of the Rosso version either steered Morricone’s decision unwittingly, or presented an opportunity taken to boost the appeal of the film and soundtrack (Morricone 1965b).

(i)



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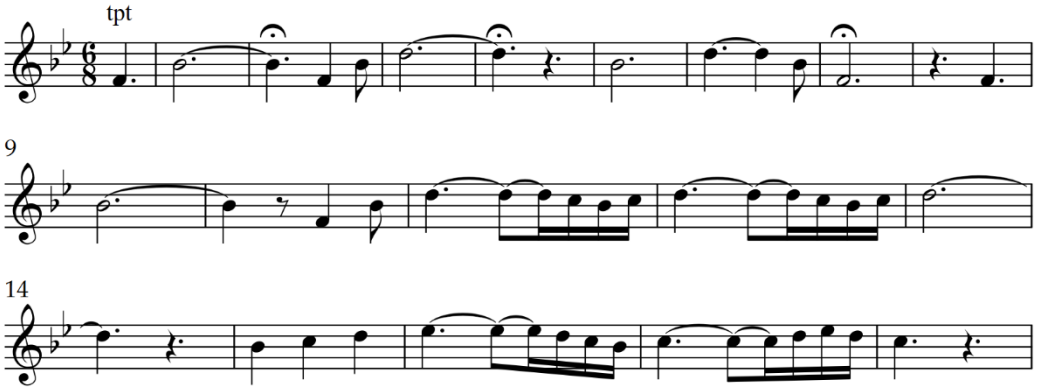


Example 5.17 ‘Taps’ (i) and Rosso’s version of ‘Il silenzio’ (ii). The opening bars of ‘Il funerale’ and ‘Il silenzio’, to which it is essentially akin, emulate the opening gestures of ‘Taps’ closely. These are idiomatic in their steady phrasing of arpeggiated triads, before giving way to a fuller diatonic melody with a stronger, more consistent pulse in both versions.

It is tempting to read into it further and interpret the choice as commentative. There is incongruence about the ‘Il silenzio’ selection: it is an Italian call and not an American one, and while it is mostly triadic (i.e. possible to bugle), the melody, supported by a sentimental swell in Rosso’s version that is emulated in ‘Il funerale’, conspicuously breaks out of the overtone series to which bugles are restricted. And given that it had moreover just earned

affection as an easy-listening anthem, 'Il funerale' may have been Morricone's way of lending a 'fake' call to a phony ceremony. That said, in spite of the contested heritage and diatonicism of 'Il silenzio', it remains an official military call that can be legitimately sounded on trumpet, and it is improbable that Morricone had full knowledge of the cue's provenance. At any rate, given the fraudulent, emotionally vacuous funeral, as well as the likelihood that Italian audience members would associate the melody with Rosso, that Morricone seized a chance to have a sly crack at Leone's man and his maudlin interpretation of a military bugle call is a enticing prospect (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 25).

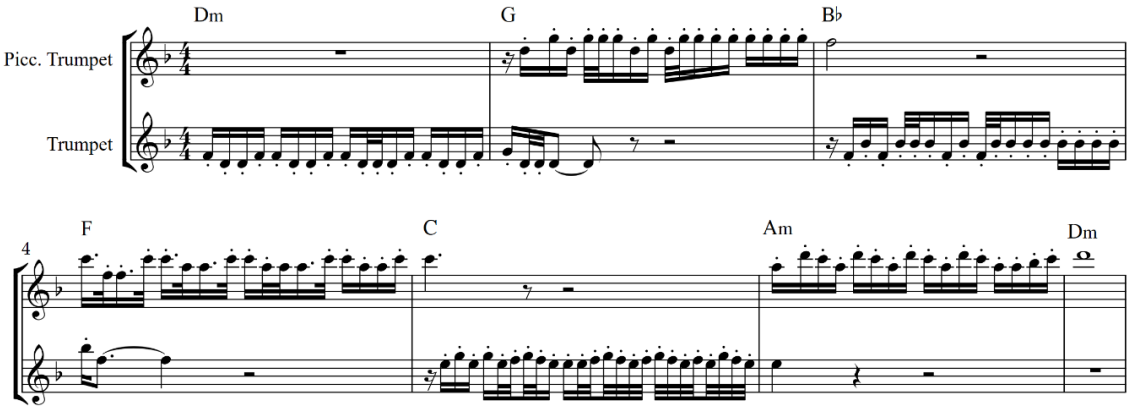
Soon after *Il ritorno*, Morricone furthered his engagement with bugling to greater impact. The title music to *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* incorporates a rapid exchange of pseudo-calls (and answers) from two solo trumpets, one a piccolo, panned in antiphonal opposition (Ex. 5.18i below). These are combined with ricochet effects in a sonic collage acoustically and formally independent of the choral–orchestral accompaniment, creating a peculiar harmonic and metric juxtaposition; the overall effect is an aural whirlwind, as if one were hearing the statements from all sides in midst of battle. As in *Il ritorno*, this inclusion is reflective of the film's narrative occupation with the American Civil War, the backdrop to the three main characters' exploits, much as the bugle calls envelop their leitmotifs in the title sequence.

We hear the same technique in two later cues: 'Il forte' and 'La carozza dei fantasmi'. During a scene in which Angel Eyes encounters scores of wounded soldiers at a stronghold, 'Il forte' introduces a dignified adagio theme for trumpet soloist. It is steeped in melancholy, imbued above all by tragic imagery but also by pentatonic ambivalence between G minor and B-flat major, lush added-note harmonic support from voices and strings, and the presence of bugling trumpets, again variedly panned and phrasing with greater rhythmic liberty (Ex. 5.18ii). A spatial dimension is fostered by this mosaic assembly, creating the sense that the buglers are almost present, or that some mediated-level recollection of the chaos of combat is being evoked; even the primary melody begins to sound as if it is being played from the ramparts. As Leinberger notes, the theme and its bugling support becomes associated with fallen soldiers (2004, 83). So, when a stagecoach is seen approaching from the distance later in the film, the occurrence of 'La carozza dei fantasmi' offers a clue that it carries military servicemen, and that they, too, are casualties.

Despite shades of true calls in 'Il forte' (e.g. the recognisable 'reveille', Ex. 5.18ii, b. 3), others are rendered with greater deference to aesthetic form than authenticity. This is not always the case; diegetic bugle calls are heard later in the film, in the scene in the prisoner-of-war camp and ahead of the armies' final charge to the bridge, and Leinberger points out that these are accurate reproductions of bugle calls, which communicate the commands 'drill', 'assembly', 'attention', and 'commence firing' (2004, 89–97). It is again improbable that these calls were recorded onset, rather in the studio with the composer's involvement. The major tonality of this music and of other cues heard in scenes featuring military characters and locations, such as the 'Marcetta' and the war ballad 'La storia di un soldato', sharply contrasts the score's overarching D-minor tonality. This demonstrates a commitment to

truthfulness rivalling even that of John Ford, who, despite what one can criticise regarding his idealised depictions of life in the West, went to great lengths to guarantee period accuracy – his insistence on implementing the correct bugle calls serving as a case in point (Kalinak 2007, 126–8). The casual approach to such details evident in earlier Morricone scores (the 'cavalry-charge' call heard in *Le pistole non discutono*, for example, could not have been played by the diegetic bugler) evidences that this initiative was Leone's. There is every chance the composer was indifferent to such fastidious pursuit of realism.

(i)



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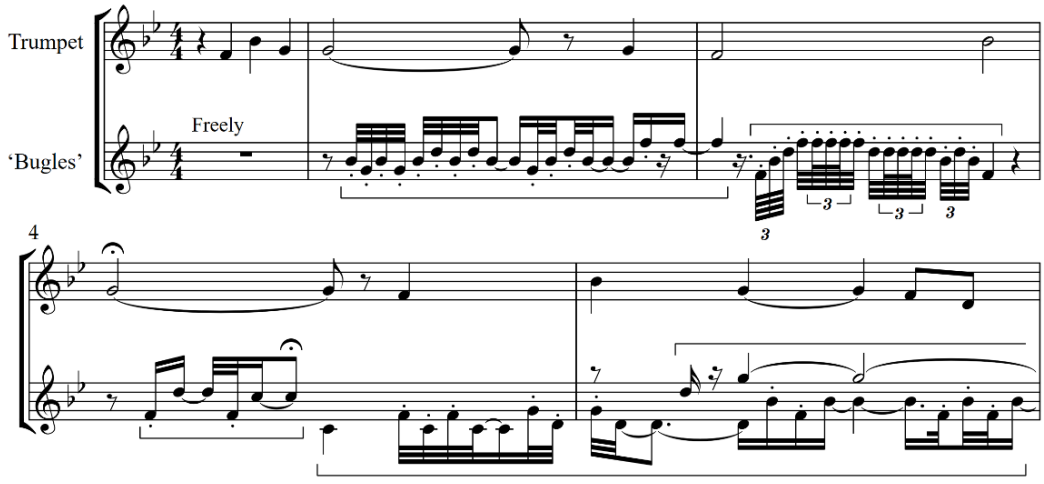
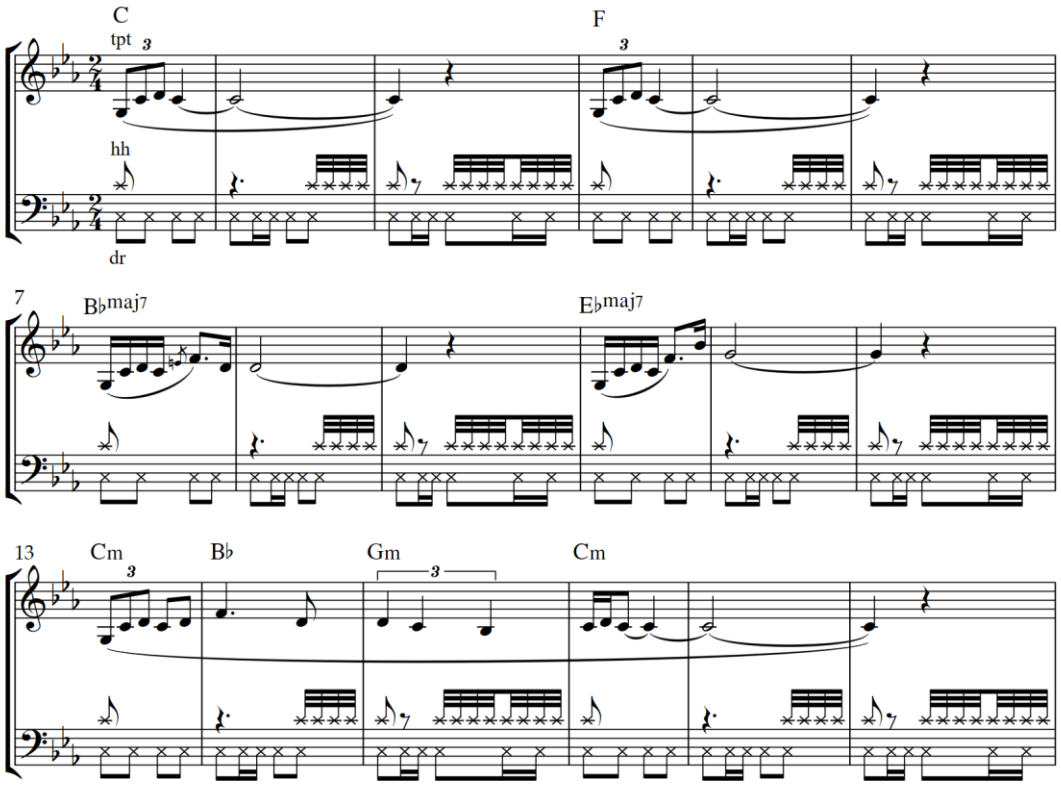


Example 5.18 Bugle-call imitations in 'Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo' (i) and 'Il forte' (ii). Their rhythmic independence, combined with changes in stereo imaging – especially in 'Il forte' – fosters a sense of spatial detachment which suggests that the music is being generated from multiple sources, reinforcing the dramaturgical effects described.

Morricone achieved a more integral stylistic synthesis involving militaristic music in Corbucci's *I crudeli*, which adopts Confederate fanaticism as its principal theme and is unique among westerns outside the Zapata sphere in its direct narrative engagement with war. Accordingly, militaristic qualities manifest throughout the score, mainly through melodic focus on solo trumpet and an insistence on marching rhythms that outstrips even Morricone's ordinarily exaggerated sense of pulse. In fact, *I crudeli* is the only film in which a non-vocal performer 'officially' takes on the role of a soloist: Nunzio Rotondo (who, like Rosso, came from a jazz background; Mazzoletti 2003) is credited as such alongside the composer, who opted to dust off the Leo Nichols alias for this film.

Each recycled and varied several times, 'I crudeli' and 'Un monumento' are the two cues that warrant such prominent billing for Rotondo (Ex. 5.19). In both the trumpet occupies its lower register, where Rotondo produces a warm, precise tone, almost entirely free of vibrato – contrasting the frequent brighter timbres that resemble mariachi techniques. The influence of jazz, particularly in 'I crudeli', is more striking than that of music denoting militarism, and represents another idiomatic strain in the synthesis. Use of seventh-chords, the appoggiatura invoking the Dorian mode, and sustained legato articulation in the trumpet part are elements that are suggestive of jazz. More can be heard later in the cue and elsewhere in the score: in Rotondo's increasingly elaborate ornamentation in 'I crudeli'; in the dense vocal parts which

(i)



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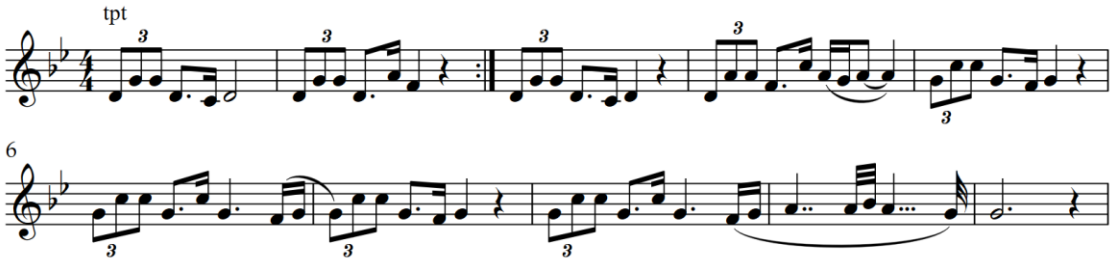


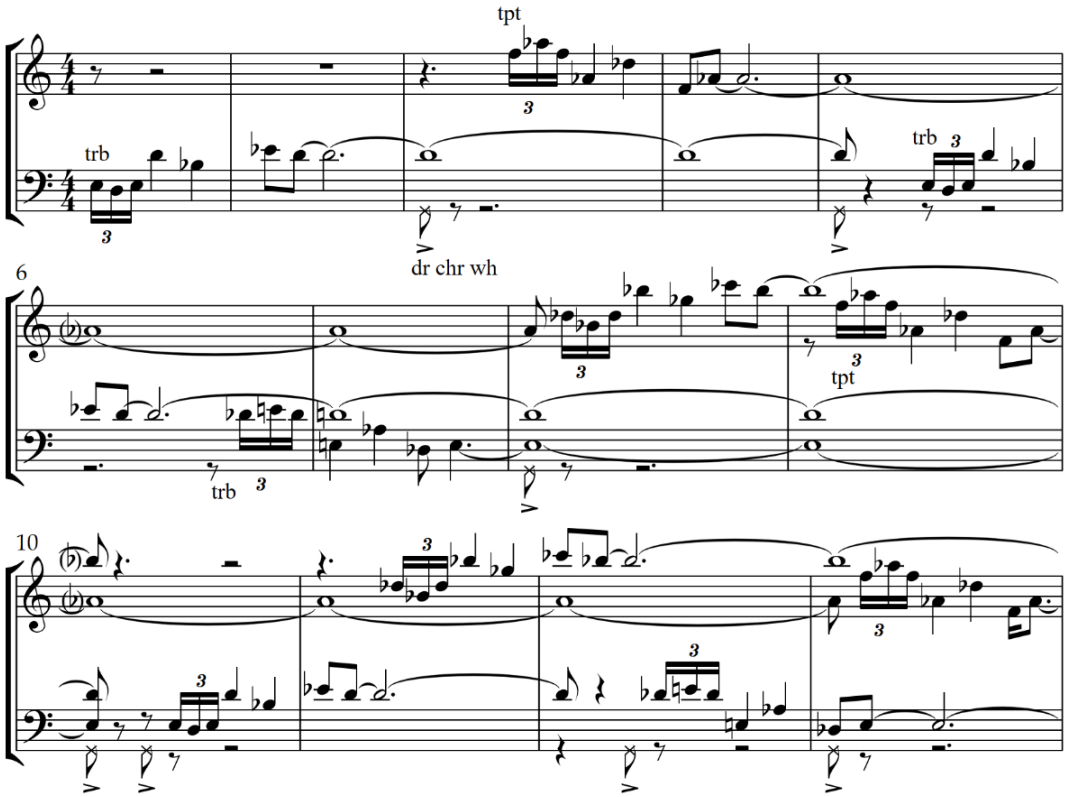
Example 5.19 Reduction of 'I crudeli' (i) and the supplementary theme from 'Un monumento' (ii).

harmonise the secondary theme of 'Un monumento' (Ex. 5.19ii); and in the pointillistic cue 'Minacciosamente lontano' featuring drum brushes, double-bass pizzicato, and Harmon-muted trumpets. It is acutely ironic that this film grappling with Southern zealotry features the most jazz-influenced of Morricone's western scores.

Well exemplified in this composition, orchestration is especially meagre overall, a trait that accentuates the biting timbral attack (epitomised by the incessantly rattling hi-hat) of the diverse and lively percussion forces. The trumpet parts also illustrate that, in scoring westerns, Morricone was not bereft of opportunities to honour his instrument's 'dignità'. Its recurring employment in atonal *Klangfarbenmelodie* textures, here and in other scores allows trumpet as well as cor anglais to waive its usual lyricism. Such playing is reminiscent of that in which the composer himself indulged on Il Gruppo recordings. The ensemble provided the musical forum in which he was able to redeem the rapport troubled by the 'too easy' soloistic material the early westerns coaxed him into writing (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 111–4). The brash counterpoint for multiple trumpets in *Vuoto d'anima piena* is partly anticipated in 'Lo scontro' from *Una pistola* and the title sequence of *Faccia a faccia*, where trumpets shadow the chromatic biphony of the twelve-string guitar.

The outstanding example of this is the opening section of 'Bamba vivace', something of a micro-overture to *Il mercenario* (Ex 5.20). Sounding over the opening credits to a montage of sepia photographs portraying brutal scenes from the revolutionary war (a Zapata trope), the composition takes the form of a fanfare for trombones and trumpets, joined by percussion and voices. Fanfares constitute a time-honoured method of announcing a film's onset, but the custom is subverted here, with an arresting 'tetra-tonal' counterpoint for the brass, which assumes another call–response pattern and elicits the appropriate terror from the harrowing imagery. The polyphonic texture is divided into four voices sounding consecutive ostinati, the final tone of which is held as the other instruments take their turn. These sustained tones can be grouped in pairs, each separated by a tritone: D and A-flat, E and B-flat. The statements, each a inexact inversion of its partner, increasingly overlap in the manner of a *stretto*, and

morph their rhythm, until all sound simultaneously as the music segues into the film's revolutionary music, reprised on the soundtrack (Morricone 1978a) as 'Paco'.



Example 5.20 Reduction of the opening bars of 'Bamba vivace' from *Il mercenario*. Its singularity, much like the maturation of the mariachi-influenced revolutionary idiom and the heightened imaginativeness of the score in general, may owe something to the fact that this was a Morricone–Nicolai collaborative effort.

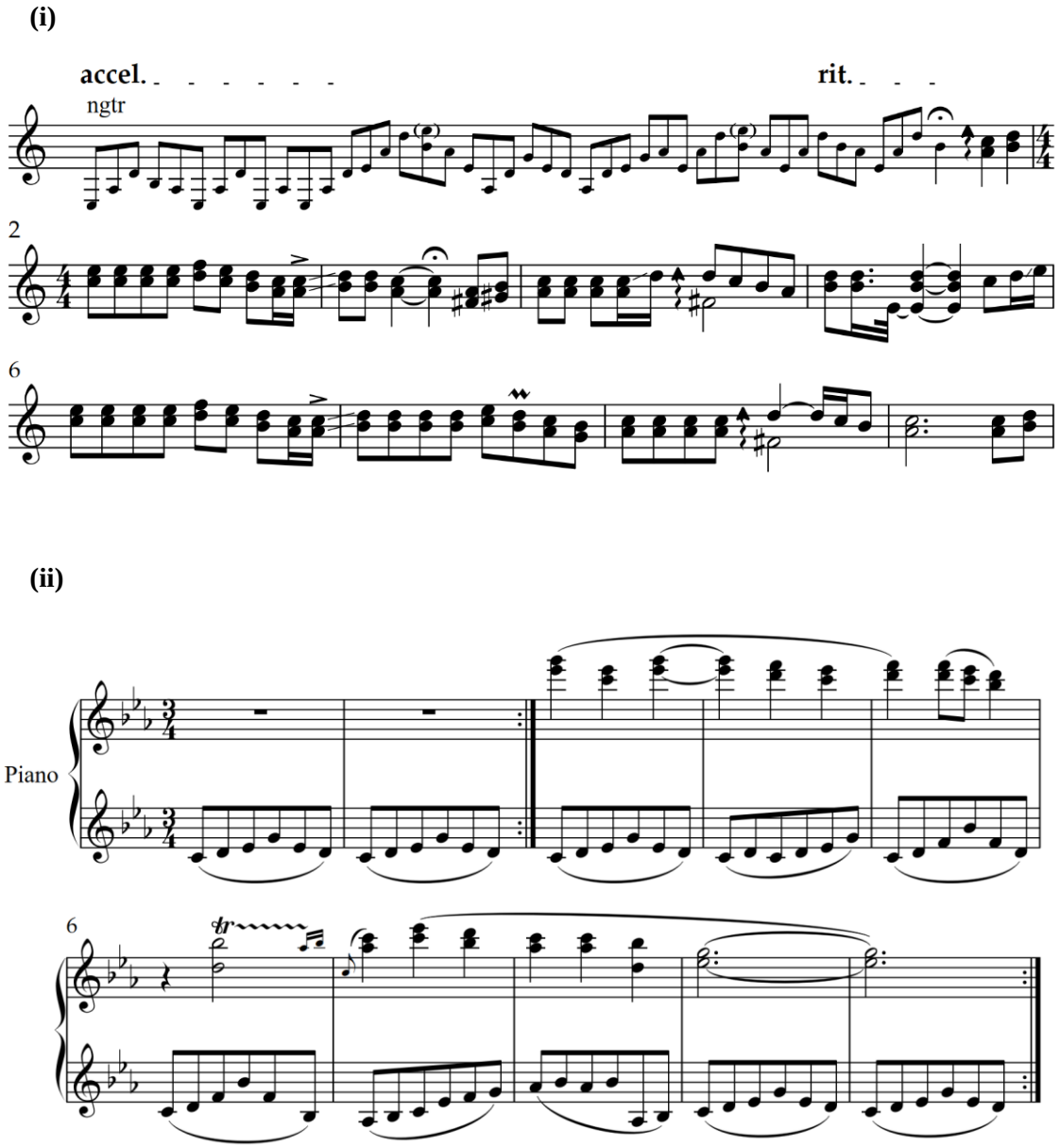
Such dissonant writing is often heard in the westerns but rarely is it paraded as here, to quite literally trumpet the entire score. Its status as an important avant-garde crossover is further assured by the instantaneous transition to the far more accessible Mexican-revolution soundworld, fusing the coin's two sides. This music, deliberately modelled on mariachi orchestration, texture, and melodic character (an intent revealed by the use of 'mariachi' in cue titles), conveys the significant new role taken on by the trumpet towards the end of the 1960s, as the ascent of the Zapata prompted the purpose-developed Mexican idiom, to the emergence of which Luis Bacalov and Bruno Nicolai also contributed, perhaps more importantly. This title music exemplifies that the Italian western provoked Morricone to write more enterprisingly for the trumpet than the hallmark status of the Degüello-derived shootout theme would have listeners, and had himself, believe. This is not to gloss over the

stubbornness of that trope, however, the form and application of which Morricone perpetuated until its last iteration: 'L'ultima tromba' from *Occhio alla penna.*

Invited to reflect on the emulation of his precedent by other Italian-western composers, Morricone made two key points, stating that they would consistently write in D minor – the 'dusty' (Sciannameo 2020, 59) tonality saturating the 'Dollars' films – and acknowledging that instrumentation was an important reference point. He elaborates that 'the ride [rhythm] made by the guitar or strings' was a frequent borrowing, though he quickly denounces it: 'copying like this means copying nothing' (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 150). There can be little doubt that the guitar is a vital hue in Morricone's sonic palette.

The striking addition of electric guitar to *Per un pugno di dollari* has been discussed for its pop connotations and ear-catching novelty in the period setting. It became a quintessential timbral facet of the Morriconian western score, but this usage did not represent the first time the composer used it for cinematic purposes. Nor was it the first time it had graced an Italian-western soundtrack – it can be heard, for instance, in Gianni Ferrio's music for Corbucci's earlier *Massacro al Grande Canyon.* But of course an instrument's presence alone is much less noteworthy than the way it is manipulated. What was memorable, and innovative was the material Morricone assigned to Alessandroni. In Morricone's early westerns, however, the nylon-string guitar is of greater importance than the electric. It plays through whole cues unaccompanied in the Jolly westerns, and in *Per un pugno* rivals the entire string section with respect to the assumption of harmonic–rhythmic responsibilities. He exploits the instrument idiomatically, going beyond strummed chords or monody to achieve guitaristic contrapuntal textures divided between melody and supportive arpeggio, articulated using classical right-hand finger technique (Ex. 3.4). It is difficult to overlook the indelible link between material of this substance and style for solo nylon-string guitar, and Hispanic classical and folk-music traditions. The correspondence of such music to Mexican imagery evidences that Morricone identified and strengthened these connections, and he would continue to depend on nylon-string guitar to reflect the Latin-American cultural sphere in which Italian-western narratives were typically situated. This is most apparent in 'Mexican numbers' featuring the instrument: diegetic set pieces emulating *huapango* and *ranchera* music, as well as more discreet, diegetised ambient compositions. 'Bamba bambina' from *Una pistola per Ringo*, 'La bamba di Barnaba' and the Spanish-language songs in *Il ritorno di Ringo,* and a selection of cues in *La resa dei conti* and *Il mercenario* all set an early trend maintained as late as *Two Mules for Sister Sara*, where we still hear the trope of the atmospheric cantina guitar. As the Zapata consolidated the Mexican-cultural setting, the novelty of guitar (or trumpet) soloists gave way to a more concerted idiomatic response to the challenge of finding an appropriate language, in the context of which numbers like these are less outstanding.

Still, Morricone developed more specific compositional and performative tricks to consolidate such associations. Parallel-third harmony is a device suggestive of Spanish folk-



Example 5.21 The opening bars of 'Padre Ramirez' from *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (i), heard when Tuco encounters his estranged brother at a Catholic mission, and those of the second dance, 'Oriental', from Enrique Granados' *12 danzas españolas* (1890; ii). The latter exemplifies the association of parallel-third harmony with Spanish music, which assists Morricone's cue in furnishing the cultural setting.

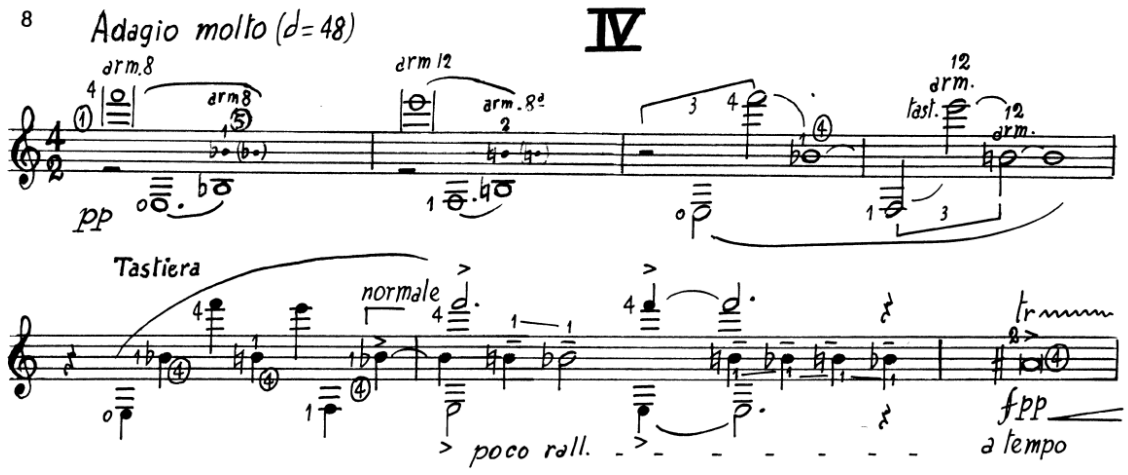
music customs that marks wider Latin-American music (Nettl and Rommen 2017, 500; Koegel 2002, 100), used in cues such as 'Padre Ramirez' (*Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*), 'Notte di nozze' (*Il mercenario*), and 'Viva la revolucion' (*Tepepa*) – see Ex. 5.21 above. Rapid finger-strumming reminiscent of flamenco's *rasgueado* technique is another, occurring in various cues designated as 'mariachi' compositions on soundtrack recordings. However,

compositional strategies can be identified that have little bearing on this Hispanic character. Epitomising the soloistic mentality is the frequent juxtaposition of a lone guitar, performing arpeggiated ostinati or lyrical monody, against well-spaced strings sounding slow, sustained, *piano* harmonies. One hears this in 'Padre Ramirez' and 'Il tramonto', also from *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, 'Arriva Cucillo' from *La resa dei conti*, and 'The Demise of Barbara, and the Return of Joe' from *Navajo Joe* (Ex. 5.2ii). Acoustic guitar is a key voice in shootout orchestration, too, often preparing the entrance of the primary theme. Consider the tremolos in the church duel of *Per qualche dollaro*, the rising ostinati of 'Il triello' (Ex. 3.24), or the elaborate melodic flourishes in 'La condanna', which have something in common with trumpet melismata. All these are eventually lampooned in the ludicrous cascades in the gunfight music from *Il mio nome è Nessuno.*

Such proficiency in composing idiomatically for the guitar is partially attributable to earlier experiences in the popular-music industry, but also to the 1957 *Quattro pezzi per chitarra* (Ex. 5.22 below), Morricone's only solo work for any non-keyboard instrument until the 1989 study for double bass. Its composition necessitated reasonable acquaintance with the instrument's technicalities. The piece's relevance exceeds its instructional value regarding guitar composition: though dedicated to Mario Gangi, who premiered the work (Miceli 2021 [1994], 480), the four pieces were first recorded in 1985 by Bruno Battisti D'Amario, long-time friend and colleague of Morricone's, fellow member of Il Gruppo, and another alumnus of Santa Cecilia (Morricone 1985). D'Amario, not Alessandroni, is the most significant interpreter, and contributor, to Morricone's career output for guitar, and is one of the most influential performers of the composer's music per se in terms of determining the form of end-product, especially where the westerns are concerned.

It would be speculative to compile with certainty a list of soundtracks featuring D'Amario's playing. As Leinberger explains, the 'crediting of musicians who performed on soundtrack recordings of this period is a confused state of affairs in Italy' (Leinberger 2015, 25). However, it would be extensive; discussing his relationships with performers, Morricone ranked D'Amario alongside violist Dino Asciolla, pianist Arnaldo Graziosi, and violinist Franco Tamponi (employed 'almost every time' Morricone recorded) as the instrumentalists with whom he worked and for whom he wrote most often (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 27, 191). Sciannameo summarises the significance of this: 'the artistry of these individuals became an irreplaceable component of Morricone's scoring trademark' (2020, 80). In our filmography, in which the presence of electric and/or acoustic guitar was all but guaranteed, D'Amario's regular overseeing of part(s) makes him a figure especially integral to Morricone's soundworld. Further to influencing the conception of material on the composer's part, as did all his preferred soloists to some extent, D'Amario exerts important influence in the remit of performative licence. This is especially acute in the case of electric guitar, where any player can capitalise on a broadened scope for timbral interpretation afforded by amplification and tonal distortion. Such experimentation accordingly occurred in the soundtracks that succeeded *Per un pugno,* if to a degree that one should expect from any electric guitarist. In the 'Angel Face' reprise (Ex. 3.12, b. 5) from *Una pistola per Ringo,* the

modestly fuzzy but level tone realised in ‘Titoli’ and in *Per qualche dollaro* gives way to one of high treble-frequency, with additional vibrato and reverb effects, and a twang suggesting plectrum strikes close to the bridge of the instrument. This pre-empts the sharper tone heard in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, the title song for which was the first in the ‘Dollars’ trilogy to see an electric guitar part accredited to D’Amario. (See Tribunale di Roma 2019; although the attribution of these parts was contested in a 2013 civil case brought against Morricone, D’Amario, Alessandroni, and guitarist Enrico Ciacci, it was upheld).



Example 5.22 The beginning of *Adagio molto* from *Quattro pezzi per chitarra* (S. 9826 Z.). Note the ‘tastiera’ instruction, indicating that strings should be plucked above the fretboard, as well as the complex integration of harmonics. The extract and permission to reproduce it are generously provided by Edizioni Suvini Zerboni–Sugarmusic S.p.A.

Elsewhere in the *Una pistola* score, a cleaner, drier sound is rendered, the kind more typical of jazz guitar, and the use of a similar timbre in *I crudeli* strengthens the connotations of that genre in Corbucci’s film. The other end of the timbral spectrum was probed in these years, too. In the gritty prelude to *Navajo Joe* (Ex. 3.17iii) severe distortion is heard, which intensified to an extremity in the caustic tone D’Amario realised for Frank’s theme in *C’era una volta* (Ex. 3.26ii). He applied a pedal effect in this instance, among others, at a time when stompbox technology was beginning to proliferate in the world of popular music. The possibilities afforded by the electric guitar suited Morricone’s timbral mentality. In the case of Frank’s theme he instructed D’Amario to find a tone that would penetrate the opening 25 minutes bereft of music in that film ‘like a stab’; more saliently, Morricone simply said, ‘do as you wish, Bruno’ (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 59).

In the late 1960s, the steel-string acoustic guitar began to feature prominently, a development bringing a rougher timbre and curtailing the classical and Hispanic qualities of

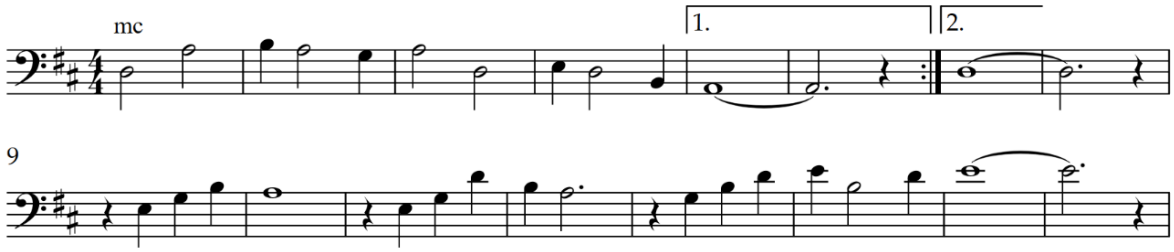
the soundworld. It is prevalent in the scores for *Tepepa* and *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, while the twelve-string variety lent its potential for denser textures to several films, particularly those featuring chromatic biphony. First appearing in *Una pistola*, its cousin, the banjo, was also used in *…e per tetto un cielo di stelle* and made landmark impact in 'Addio a Cheyenne', becoming a mainstay of the lazy swung numbers of later films like *La banda J. & S.* and *Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?* The electric guitar fell swiftly from an eminent position as a lead instrument, occupying the spotlight infrequently after its last great outing in *C'era una volta*.

Many of the most outstanding timbral effects in Morricone's westerns are achieved through extended techniques; consider, say, the tremolos and tongue-pizzicato played in the improvisatory flute parts in *Da uomo a uomo* and *Occhio alla penna*. Guitar remains an optimal case in point for witnessing convergence of timbre, technique, performative agency, and generic traits. Reminiscent of earlier concert works in which close attention is paid to where strings should be struck and bowed, such as the *Quattro pezzi* and *Sestetto*, the percussive plucking of nylon strings close to the bridge of the guitar is a recurrent trait, used in *Duello nel Texas* and numerous times thereafter, perhaps most notably 'Il tramonto' (in both cases open strings renders the distinctive quartal intervals of standard tuning with an especially resonant timbre). A related technique, entailing the beating of electric-guitar strings above the pickups, was first employed by Morricone and D'Amario in *La battaglia di Algeri.* The former would liken the technique to a machine gun, a musical correlate – like the bellicose piano–snare drum sequences – to the film's militaristic subject matter. Heard in the contemporaneous *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* and later in *I crudeli*, *Il mercenario* and other films, this technique sharpens the sense of timbral attack characteristic of Morricone's music for westerns, and the 'gunshot' quality contributes to the melding of score and sound design discussed below.

One would expect a composer preoccupied with timbre, who considers orchestration to be an indissoluble part of the compositional process, to pay close attention to matters of interpretation and personnel. In De Rosa's words, the 'fusion between an idea and a specific performer … [results] in a peculiar sound, a Morriconian sonic cipher' – to which the composer answers, the 'contributions that certain musicians gave to the discovery of a timbre were crucial' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 190). In this regard, and in the context of the westerns, D'Amario's participation is exemplary, and connects with the genre's rich tradition of vocal and instrumental, diegetic and nondiegetic musical soloism, of which the singing cowboy is emblematic. Precisely this emphasis underpins the aforementioned mechanism identified by Chion, whereby the distinct fusion of a soloist's singular timbre with a reiterated theme creates a potent signature especially suited to characterisation. The implementation of especially outlandish became increasingly commonplace as Morricone responded to the prolongation of the *filone* by tending towards parody. Use of the Synket, a synthesiser designed in 1964 by Paolo Ketoff (Jenkins, 97) best represents this sensibility, while also demonstrating how Morricone's forays into electronics influenced the westerns.

Giù la testa features the device perhaps most memorably; grating sawtooth waves convey the vulgarity of Juan urinating on an ant colony at the film's outset.

From its entrance in *Per un pugno di dollari* onwards, the chorus is a stalwart of Morricone's forces, and all but invariably comprises Alessandroni's Cantori Moderni. At first, and particularly in the 'Dollars' trilogy and 'Ringo' pictures, low voices prevail, but a mixed ensemble soon became the norm. Typical choral-composition techniques in those early films include punctuating grunts and hoots occasionally marked by obscure verbalisations, as well as harmonic support in horseback and shootout cues and Tessari's title songs. Choruses take on more showcased roles in 1966, singing the entire melody of 'Santa Fè Express' from the 'MacGregors' films (Ex. 5.23) and bringing a contrapuntal, soulful style to *Navajo Joe*'s title music. *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* features famous vocal parts in its title sequence (Ex. 3.19i), as well as an onscreen chorus performing 'La storia di un soldato' (Ex. 4.2). Revolutionary songs are sung in Zapatas, while in 1970s westerns such as *La banda J. & S.* and the 'Provvidenza' films, a habit is made of singing characters' names. Accented staccato yelps – another device carrying primitive connotations – are the hallmark, though, enduring right up to *The Hateful Eight*, in which they are heard during the credits as the final curtain falls on the corpus. There is also the Greek-tragic element of collective characterisation about the use of choir, supplementing the 'choral' qualities addressed at the end of the previous chapter.

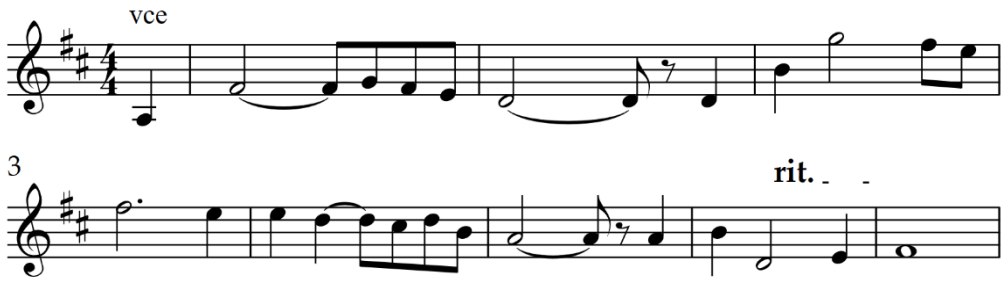


Example 5.23 The 'Santa Fè Express' theme, sung by Alessandroni's Cantori Moderni in *Sette pistole per i MacGregor* and *Sette donne per i MacGregor*.

The solo voice is a mainstay of western-genre music and Morricone's work in film. The derivative title songs of 1963–5 honoured tradition, but the composer came to handle the ingredient more idiosyncratically. In 1966 a female soloist emerged at the helm of the choral ensemble in *Navajo Joe*, and Maria Cristina Brancucci ('Christy') opened *La resa dei conti* singing 'Run Man Run'. But that year a sound emerged in the western arena that would be one of Morricone's most characteristic timbral attributes, within and beyond the genre: the *wordless* female voice. A vocalist from the ensemble I 4+4 di Nora Orlandi first assumed this role in a Morricone song ('Sospesi nel cielo' from *I malamondo*), while *Un fiume di dollari* was the first western to employ the device in an eminent melodic role. *Il buono, il brutto, il*

cattivo, however, featured the most impactful application, the significance of which derives from the film's popularity, from the prominence of the set-piece cue ('L'estasi dell'oro') that brandished it, and finally from the fact that the sequence saw the western-genre debut of Edda Dell'Orso, with whom Morricone worked repeatedly in his career until *La migliore offerta* in 2013. As a consequence of this frequency and the inherent timbral and expressive individuality of the human voice, hers became his most recognisable 'sonic cipher'.

Months later, for *La resa dei conti*, Dell'Orso performs again, and in a similar handling. In 'La caccia', after producing alveolar trills alongside an enigmatic, animalistic noise, she expands into a segment of the soaring 'Run Man Run' theme (Ex. 5.12), over strings and pounding drums. Again she roams a soprano register, notably higher than the warm alto of the prototypical *Un fiume di dollari*. This is the space navigated thereafter in the filmography by her interpretations of key themes: the solemn titular theme of Sollima's next western (Ex. 3.27), Jill's sweeping, archetypal melody from *C'era una volta il west* (Ex. 5.24), and the lilting 'flashback' tune from *Giù la testa* (Ex. 4.10). Opposing the lyricism observable in these examples, Morricone also relied on soloists to provide the strange utterances that, while not necessarily unique to his music for westerns, recur in his other work, and relate to his general penchant for timbral oddity. Leading examples in our filmography can be heard in the 'Marcia degli accattoni' from *Giù la testa*, 'Mucchio selvaggio' from *Il mio nome è Nessuno*, and the title music of *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, in which two male voices – one singing 'aah', the other 'eeh' – are superimposed to imitate the coyote's call (Lhassa and Lhassa 1989, 237).



Example 5.24 Transcription of the main theme from *C'era una volta il west*, associated with Jill.

We have bordered on the situation of Morricone's music relative to the overall sound design, understood here as the creative integration of the soundtrack's three primary constituent elements: music, (diegetic and nondiegetic) sound, and speech. But it remains to explore this relationship with direct recourse to timbral concerns. As previously stated, Morricone only once performed a sound designer's role. He would have been conventionally party to discussions pertaining to a film's aural aesthetic, and corresponded with designers

regarding issues like cue placement and mixing, but participation in either the production of non-musical sound or soundtrack assembly did not assume an empirical dimension.

> Of the hundreds of films I've worked on, there is only one in which I was responsible for the entire soundtrack – music, noises, everything but the dialogue – and that was *L'ultimo uomo di Sara* […] The idea – at the time the expression was *musique concrète* – was that every sound had to be considered as music. So I used a orchestra as well as non-musical sounds such as footsteps, the phone ringing, dripping water, all treated by me as an integral part of the soundtrack.
>
> (Morricone, quoted in Bonsaver 2006, 31)

This is worth bearing in mind in any reflection on the touchstone opening of *C'era una volta il west*, a protracted scene during which a trio of outlaws await Harmonica at a railway station. As they do, and in the ten-minute absence of dialogue or anything resembling 'action', various conspicuous and bothersome sonic ostinati (a buzzing fly, creaking windmill sails, water droplets) penetrate the ambient quiet in a stark sound-design miscellany. Morricone is sometimes awarded credit for this construction (see Hannan 2019, 267), but his contribution in reality was not practical, though he is supposed to have inspired the sequence, telling Leone about a concert at which a man took to the stage with a noisy stepladder as the audience waited for music to begin; only gradually did it become clear that the sound of the ladder *was* the music – a sound 'isolated from its context and isolated by silence, becomes something different … [Sergio] made those extraordinary first ten minutes from that idea' (Morricone, quoted in Frayling 2000, 283). Creative concern with sound and colour does represent a convergence in the compositional ideologies espoused by the likes of Schaeffer, Cage, and Webern, the last two of whom influenced Morricone. And although he is not the author of this work, or of any such instance of appealing sound design, his philosophy will have steered Leone – and likely other filmmakers – in this example of the impact of his sensibilities on the Italian-western sonic character.

A recurring theme in this chapter is the eschewal of a conventional orchestral basis in favour of soloistic instrumentation that is timbrally distinct and in some way appropriate to the diegetic setting. Morricone's opinion – which he shared with Leone, and which was the guiding principle of the *Per un pugno di dollari* score – that music in westerns should transmit the *sound* of the frontier, has been contemplated repeatedly, and it is evident that this principle guided definitive compositional choices concerning a range of parameters from instrumental forces to modality. Moreover, these parameters begin to erode easy distinctions between score and sound design, leaving music as an element that can be effectively interpreted as an exercise in the latter. Several observers comment on this phenomenon, mostly concentrating on the emancipation of sound effects – whip cracks, ricochets, etc. – from their 'mimetic' origin by absorption into the score, and the treatment of sounds as raw

musical material (usually in *C'era una volta*). Stilwell writes that the arrangement of sounds to 'score' the film's opening represents the 'apotheosis' of the 'crossover between sound effect and music' typifying the Italian western, adding that 'the blend of sound effect, sparse musical utterances, expectant silences and static staging' are emblematic of the genre (2016, 227). Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, meanwhile, exemplifies Leone's film within a wider aesthetic tradition of score–sound design integration, similarly focusing on musicalisation of sound, the 'treatment of sound effects and soundtrack in its totality', and connections between these small-scale events and the larger – 'operatic' – structure of *C'era una volta* (2020, 50).

The musicalisation of sound effects in cinema was an arena into which Italian composers had been venturing for some time. As D'Onofrio explains, the 1950s witnessed a generation of Italian conservatory-trained composers emerge – Nascimbene and Lavagnino foremost among them – who attempted to 'sonorise' reality by incorporating the sounds of typewriter keys, bicycle bells, and other everyday sounds into their film scores, conveying 'life in all the dimensions [in which] it could be represented on the big screen' (2017, 384). The ticking sound heard in Nascimbene's music for *Roma ore 11* (dir. Giuseppe De Santis, 1952) is contemporaneous to that which keeps Tiomkin's music in time in *High Noon.* Both pre-empt the clock that in *Il mio nome è Nessuno* bleeds from the diegesis into Morricone's score, coming to symbolise the dwindling remaining years of ageing gunfighter Beauregard, and of the frontier era itself. Morricone had long indulged this sensibility even beyond the cinema, and the inclusion of such objects in a number of celebrated early song arrangements (a tin can, for instance, in Gianni Meccia's song about the object, 'Il Barattolo') became something of a trademark.

Evocation of the environment through musicalised effects resonates with Morricone's ambition to denote the aural experience of the frontier, also fulfilled through other methods. From tubular bells connoting those of the churches dotted throughout the landscape, to motifs mimicking its various beasts, many nondiegetic instruments offer a correlate to diegetic sounds, or utilise timbres that are appropriate to the temporal–spatial setting and reinforce its tangibility. The sensibility even extends to instruments carrying cultural connotations or landscape symbolism. These choices complement the overarching attention that the composer pays to timbral composition more generally, and the pointedly 'sonic' qualities of many voices are accented when they are used to express reductive compositional material – a confluence that Drees captured with the term *Klangobjekte* ('sound objects'; 2014, 23–9).

Conversely, diegetic sound events can be imbued with a musicality that causes music and sound to be reciprocally drawn into closer proximity. Diegetic music, especially when tied to objects, offers unremarkable such examples, though instances of 'chimed' music (the pocket watch in *Per qualche dollaro in più,* music boxes in *Il ritorno di Ringo* and *Un fiume di dollari,* and alarm clock in *Un genio, due compari, un pollo*) all approach the score by either transdiegetic movement or ambiguous placement. Examples of diegetic events producing improbably musical sounds are more noteworthy for nurturing the impression that Italian westerns inhabit an exceptionally 'musical' West. An example occurs in *Da uomo a uomo,*

where Bill strikes three bells during target practice. This elicits a C-major arpeggio, sounding in strident contrast to the chromatically plodding parallel octaves of the nondiegetic piano (a figure developed from the muddy bass gesture of the preceding 'Tortura' cue). Such examples of likeness and exchange between nondiegetic score and diegetic unmusical sounds forge timbral bridges between constituent levels of sound design. Crossings that effectively assert that larger integrated composite and discourage the segregation of its constituent parts, complementing the method by which the entirely studio-produced soundtrack is compiled and structured; that is to say, although, as argued, its elements can be disassociated to prevent competition, this strategy of careful distribution is itself indicative of an coherent sound-design approach. Such an attitude anticipates the 'soundscape' mentality characteristic of contemporary audiovisual media, which, as Kulezic-Wilson (2017, 128–9) explains, renders the traditional musical score – and therefore the 'shortcut' concept of a 'blurred line' separating it from sound design – progressively obsolete.

General proximity and recurring crossover between score and sound, as well as the structural integration of music within a broader sound design have consequences for how Morricone's music operates as a tool of narration. Syntheses of music and diegetic sounds in particular have the effect of drawing the former towards the diegesis, within which it is given something of an ontological presence, such that it becomes an extension or elaboration of the diegetic soundworld. Furthermore, the alignment of music through pointed synchronism (like fragments) with motions and events binds it more closely to diegetic 'fact' to realise the 'audiovisual narration' (Drees 2014) that *Klangobjekte* are manipulated to achieve. Musical mimicry of diegetic sound, in place of foley with reasonable fidelity to the expected sound (strings imitating a creaking saloon door in *Il ritorno di Ringo*, or *musique concrète* approximating a time bomb in *Il mio nome è Nessuno*), is another deceit that sees the score exploit the integrated soundworld so that it can smoothly overstep its nondiegetic remit. Such trickery sustains the sonic deception to which spectators were cued in the 'Dollars' themes (Stilwell 2016, 227). These mechanics culminate in wholesale transdiegetic movement, situating Morricone's score more firmly within the diegetic space and further enabling the 'choral' effect addressed in the previous chapter.

Pursuit of an integrated soundtrack could be seen to be at odds with the formal autonomy for which Morricone strives. Attributes of his music reflecting the former *modus operandi* appeal to Buhler's holistic model of the soundtrack as opposed to Chion's divisive approach. The composer offered this insight in interview:

> [De Rosa:] Why, in your opinion, did the pieces you wrote for Leone have such a vast global impact, reaching audiences from all generations and social strata?
>
> [Morricone:] I think it is due to their sound, which is not by chance the same sort of aspect rock bands research: an identifiable sonorous timbre, a *sound*.
>
> (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 34)

Morricone adds, ‘I am certain that Sergio’s films spoke to many generations precisely because he was an innovative filmmaker who intentionally left space for the music to be listened to’ (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 34). This is doubtless true of Leone’s films as it is of other westerns, but despite this space, other factors such as shared timbral quality and music–effect crossover foster alignment between score and other soundtrack elements, while permitting the music to express its formal independence and internal logic. Morricone rationalises his film music and his music for westerns especially as a soundworld unto itself, but he is naturally cognisant of the fact that it contributes to a wider cinematic aural design, with the other elements of which it must (usually) harmoniously coexist.

6. *The Hateful Eight*

> It seemed to me that I was taking my revenge on the western films of the past that were so simple, made solely for the audience.
>
> (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 254; author's translation)

In spite, indeed because of, the acclaim lastingly directed at his western music, which proved so pivotal to his career fortunes, Morricone's attitude towards it increasingly betrayed a sense of exasperation. Such was the swiftness of the deluge of scoring commissions following *Per un pugno*, his work was dogged almost from its outset by typecasting. The rejection of many proposals and the eventual decline of the *filone* may have curbed professional frustrations, but the cultural ramifications of this bias endured as popular, critical, and academic commentary remained drawn to the influential films of Leone and the composer with whom he was indelibly associated. The prevalence of this reputation never weakened: interviewers habitually made principal recourse to this work (Fagen 1989), and even when the composer died, he was hailed in obituaries as the spaghetti-western guy (Friedman 2020).

After a lifetime of receiving plaudits for music that has diverted such attention from such a substantive remainder, it is reasonable that an individual who worked and identified as a composer in a broader sense would be fatigued by that confinement. In later years, Morricone (quoted in Aloisi 2007) made plain his resentment: 'It's a strait-jacket. I just don't understand how after all the films I have done people keep thinking about *A Fistful of Dollars*', reiterating that by his own calculations, westerns accounted for just eight per cent of his film music. Frustrated as much by the pointed commercialism of the genre with which he was

associated as by the myopia itself, he responded by condensing his generic canon to Leone's films (nearer one per cent). Everything surplus, representative of that commercialism, was virtually disregarded. Morricone would share little insight into his collaborations with Tessari, Sollima, or Petroni, and had almost exclusively negative things to say of Corbucci – he effectively refused to recognise the full scope of his relationship with the western. Leone, meanwhile, became the redeemer, and although Morricone could hardly have overlooked these films, he was evidently proud of them. Sampling again became the practical response to issues posed by quantity and formula; here it occurred along lines drawn by auteurism as much as personal affection. Morricone went as far as to distance Leone from the genre: 'The real importance of Sergio's films … is that the films might well not be Westerns … They are about humanity' (quoted in Frayling 2005, 98).

These circumstances precipitated a perception for Morricone that he had suffered an injustice, revenge for which was unexpectedly there for the taking when Quentin Tarantino invited him in 2015 to score *The Hateful Eight.* With this, he shadowed the begrudging antiheroes he had often scored, and embraced the spirit of rancour suffusing Tarantino's typically barbaric picture. The composer took his vengeance, as he saw it, by shunning the characteristic western score one might have expected, despite the film's grammatical debt to spaghettis – which all the director's previous films had demonstrated. This composer so revered by Tarantino likely avoided pursuing this more foreseeable course not solely to enact revenge, nor even to exercise the compositional liberty he always coveted, but because he saw the film to be no ordinary western. 'Tarantino considers this film a Western; for me, this is not a Western. I wanted to do something that was totally different from any Western music I had composed in the past' (Morricone, quoted in Grow 2016). *Hateful* is widely regarded as a western, but its composer is not alone in recognising broader resonances. For David Roche (2018, 222), the film is as much Gothic horror, and various critics greeted the film's western-genre semblance with scepticism (see Duralde 2015). After all, this is a Tarantino film, and any genre to which he pays tribute must still bend to his idiosyncratic directorial stamp.

Intersections between Morricone's music and Quentin Tarantino's cinema

Our case study is the directorial work of a self-styled cinephile (Peary 2013 [1998], 21), a 'postmodern[ist] par excellence' (Wucher 2015, 1287) whose output consistently makes its debt to and dialogue with film history explicit. The relationship that Tarantino establishes with the cinematic tradition in which he participates may be the most characteristic and (second only to its notorious bloodshed) oft-discussed aspect of his work. But the networks of citation, allusion, pastiche, and homage that he constructs exceed autotelic indulgence or mere tests of cine-literacy. Many commentators acknowledge that such processes are part of a critical, reflexive, postmodernist sensibility, facilitating a meaningful exchange between subject and object ramifying beyond the world of cinema. They argue that these associations inform a cultural, historical, and political commentary – a metafictional discourse fundamental to the director's entire artistic expression. Tarantino makes recourse to literature,

figures, and events in addition to films, but a considerable branch of this operation involves music. In each of his films (with the partial exception of *Hateful*) mostly popular songs and film cues make up a compilation soundtrack, curated by Tarantino himself from the early stages of writing to the last knockings of post-production. Irrespective of its precedence, music typically impresses upon the film's construction somehow, influencing the screenplay as it coalesces, regulating the editing of the end-product, and guiding the actor's motions on set (Peary 2013 [1998], 187).

The manifestation of a pre-existing item, motif, or characteristic in a film establishes reference to the object itself as it originally appeared, and to any artworks, individuals, styles, periods, or settings already associated with it. Connections are forged between the pre-existing associations of the object of reference and the filmic subject's fresh context, which proceed to yield intertextual meaning. This occurs every time any reference is made, and where film music is concerned, the practice is as old as the cinematic medium itself (Powrie and Stilwell 2017). However, with Tarantino, that filmic subject is not merely a film, but an overarching metafictional discourse integrating his whole oeuvre, and to which each instance of intertextuality contributes. As this discourse has become a vaster, more interconnected, and more self-conscious concern, so it has preoccupied an increasing assortment of scholars. A pair of publications catalysed this trend in the early 2010s (Dassanowsky 2012; Speck 2014), tackling head on the 'metacinematic' workings in Tarantino's two then-most-recent films, *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) and *Django Unchained*, and later Roche (2018) wrote a monograph that is to date the most systematic survey of Tarantino's metafiction. Roche, Lisa Coulthard (2012), Jan Švábenický (2016), Michael Rennett (2012), and others have applied this lens in scrutiny of the director's music. Whether or not music preoccupies their enquiry, these commentators shun solipsistic readings of his films, advocating for a cohesive political metanarrative, the real-world repercussions of which it is the analyst's prerogative to interpret. Roche writes: 'intertextuality in the films of Tarantino is the basis not just of artistic creation, but of the creation of meaning … our participation as meaning-makers is solicited in this process' (2018, 6).

It is helpful to both demonstrate this process and introduce *The Hateful Eight* by exploring the film's relationship with its own cinematic touchstone: John Carpenter's 1982 cult horror *The Thing*, which was scored by Morricone. Its characteristic sense of entrapment inspired Tarantino's 1992 debut, *Reservoir Dogs* (Peary 2013 [1998], 10), and that spirit resurfaced in a more concentrated form in *Hateful*, which exhibits a similar stage-like setting pervaded by suspense and concealed evil, additionally featuring a snowbound locale, lead actor Kurt Russell, and music by Morricone (including material that was composed for *The Thing*). Tarantino openly declared that *The Thing* was *Hateful*'s principal point of reference, screening it for his cast before principal photography (Tapley 2015) and identifying unremitting paranoia as his film's primary inheritance from Carpenter's picture (Directors Guild of America 2015).

More direct references are also made to *The Thing*. The red herring of Russell's character is a prime example. Roche (2018, 235–6) points out that *Hateful* also depicts 'humans trapped indoors in the presence of an unseen evil while a snowstorm rages outside', but John Ruth, played by Russell, hero of Carpenter's film, here fails 'to unmask the villains and [is] one of the first to fall'. Samuel L. Jackson's Major Warren, not Ruth, channels *The Thing*'s protagonist, and the racist white characters of *Hateful* correspond to its impenetrable tundra. Morricone's music also facilitates these references. The cue 'Bestiality', for instance, written for *The Thing*, appears twice in *Hateful*: when the character Daisy Domergue waits for her victims, one of whom is Ruth, to succumb to poisoning; and at the film's conclusion, when she is 'sentenced' to hang by Warren and Sheriff Mannix. The twin usage 'frames the second act as the retribution of the crime, but by drawing attention to the "bestiality" inherent in both situations it emphasizes that the hateful quality is shared by all those who derive pleasure from the violence' (Roche 2018, 229). (It is noteworthy that cues written for *The Thing* and repurposed by Tarantino were excluded by Carpenter from his final cut, mitigating their intertextual potential.) These references exemplify the kind of citational mechanisms that are definitive of Tarantino's filmmaking.

Like other objects of reference, such musical borrowings come with a diversity of associations, which frequently pertain to pre-existing films. Such music can possess stylistic connotations of a whole genre, or it might originate outside the world of cinema, but echo the texts of films or television series in which it has previously appeared. Tarantino has increasingly turned to orchestral film music (mainly from Italian westerns and exploitation films) for repurposing, principally in a nondiegetic capacity (Roche 2018, 225). This evolution was all but inevitable as a method representing not only a way for him to indulge his cinephilia but also a device by which he could enhance the scope of intertextual exchange and thereby further nuance metafictional discourse. Moreover, since *Death Proof* (2007), and with the exception of *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2019), films have eschewed contemporary urban contexts for historical settings, for which modern popular-music idioms broadly provide a less fitting accompaniment.

With the exception of Tarantino's ultimate curatorial agency, Morricone's has been without a doubt the single most significant voice in this immense recycling operation (see Tab. 6.1). Even if one were to remove *Hateful* from the equation (with the only score proper in Tarantino's oeuvre), the number of compositions by Morricone, all of which are cues taken from other film soundtracks, substantially eclipses those of all other artists whose music is included in the director's output. 29 such items feature in Tarantino's films to date, excluding the *Hateful* material as well as 'Ancora qui', the song that Morricone produced for *Django Unchained*. Second in the rankings is Luis Enríquez Bacalov, also an indisputable second to Morricone in the list of the most significant composers of Italian-western music. The work of Bacalov, composer of the score to *Django*, logically features heavily in *Django Unchained*, and his tally of entries in Tarantino's musicography reaches eight. Meiko Kaji and Isaac Hayes are then tied for third, each lending four songs, and too many artists to cite contribute

Tarantino film	Cue	Original film
Kill Bill: Volume 1 (2003)	‘Death Rides a Horse’	*Da uomo a uomo*
Kill Bill: Volume 2 (2004)	‘A Silhouette of Doom’	*Navajo Joe*
	‘Navajo Joe’	
	‘The Demise of Barbara, and the Return of Joe’	
	‘Il tramonto’	*Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*
	‘Per un pugno di dollari’	*Per un pugno di dollari*
	‘L’arena’	*Il mercenario*
Death Proof (2007)	‘Paranoia Prima’	*Il gatto a nove code* (dir. Dario Argento, 1971)*
	‘Violenza inattesa’	*L’uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (dir. Argento, 1970)*
Inglourious Basterds (2009)	‘La condanna’	*La resa dei conti*
	‘La resa’	
	‘L’incontro con la figlia’	*Il ritorno di Ringo*
	‘Il mercenario (Ripresa)’	*Il mercenario*
	‘Algiers, November 1, 1954’	*La battaglia di Algeri**
	‘Mystic and Severe’	*Da uomo a uomo*
	‘Un amico’	*Revolver* (dir. Sergio Sollima, 1973)*
	‘Rabbia e Tarantella’	*Allonsanfàn* (dir. Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, 1974)*
Django Unchained (2012)	‘The Braying Mule’	*Two Mules for Sister Sara*
	‘Sister Sara’s Theme’	
	‘Un monumento’	*I crudeli*
	‘Minacciosamente lontano’	
	‘Dopo la congiura’	
	‘Rito finale’	*Città violenta* (dir. Sollima, 1970)*
	‘Norme con ironie’	
	‘The Big Risk’	*Hornets’ Nest* (dir. Phil Karlson and Franco Cirino, 1970)*

The Hateful Eight (2015)	‘Regan’s Theme (Floating Sound)’	*Exorcist II: The Heretic**
	‘Eternity’	
	‘Bestiality’	*The Thing**
	‘Despair’	

Table 6.1 Pre-existing pieces of film music composed by Morricone appearing in Tarantino’s films. Cues are named in accordance with the original film’s official soundtrack recording. Films marked with an asterisk are not westerns.

three or two items (noteworthy among them are Riz Ortolani and Armando Trovajoli, two more prominent Italian-western composers). Italian-western film music accounts for the majority of reused works by Morricone, Bacalov, Ortolani, and Trovajoli (~67 per cent), and a sizable minority (~13 per cent) of well over 200 citations of original music in Tarantino’s films. A considerable proportion of the music in his films, therefore, was either written by Morricone or owes a stylistic debt to his film music.

The following paragraphs examine how Tarantino has manipulated Morricone’s music for *La resa dei conti* in his metafiction, exemplifying intersection of their artistry while providing an important demonstration of the influence of the composer’s western music in contemporary popular culture. In the opening scene of *Inglourious Basterds*, SS-officer Hans Landa arrives at a French farmstead searching for a fugitive Jewish family. Against an expansive, sun-drenched pastoral backdrop, a farmer chops wood and his daughter hangs laundry. The latter glimpses Landa’s motorcade in the distance, nearing the farm, and ‘La condanna’ from Sollima’s film sounds the instant that the camera frames it. The farmer, who is sheltering the family, ushers his daughters inside and readies himself for interrogation, washing his face ritualistically. Meanwhile, ‘La condanna’ continues to unfurl, foregrounded among a dearth of dialogue and diegetic sound, magnifying tension, stretching time, and, in Coulthard’s (2012) words, ‘expanding the cine-musical moment’.

Following ‘The Green Leaves of Summer’, ‘La condanna’ activates the film’s metafictional subtext by conspicuously quoting the opening motif of Beethoven’s ‘Für Elise’. It sounds at pitch on piano – a rare, glaring instrumental decision in our filmography – and reiterates its preparatory function as an elongated (more so than in the original composition) dominant anacrusis. Come the resolution on A, Morricone’s music assumes its more familiar form: strings play sustained and diatonic harmonies which shift homorhythmically around A minor, a guitar sounds a brisk ornamental melody, and the changes are loosely punctuated with percussion. The E–D sharp motif is restated and answered by such material twice more, before the fourth and final quotation elicits a brief, conclusive tonic chord.

Practicing intertextuality of his own, Morricone thus makes a meaningful if wholly logical decision to incorporate 'Für Elise', a move ultimately stemming from an earlier scene in *La resa* where a character plays Beethoven's bagatelle (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 93). This is Baron von Schulenberg, an Austrian duellist introduced gratifyingly by the antagonist, Brokston, as Europe's deadliest pistol. The mechanical, militaristic aristocrat is fascistic, connotations unlikely to be coincidental the hands of Sollima, a former *partigiano* ranking among the more radical Italian-western directors. The baron proudly brandishes his cold-blooded and gamesome approach to gunmanship and mortality, complemented by his elaborately customised holster and a methodical duelling procedure. Before he presents the equipment, he gives his performance of 'Für Elise', calmly outlining his ruthless technique as he plays for protagonist Jonathan Corbett, thus actively binding himself and his value system to music emblematic of sophistication and precision (though he erroneously plays the exaggerated anacrusis). This connection is consolidated leitmotivically through the later cue 'La condanna', which restates diegetic material in the nondiegetic underscore during the final duel between the baron and Corbett. Finally displayed in ceremony, the former's chauvinism is signified by the refined 'European' ingredient, in contrast to Morricone's more idiosyncratic 'western' elements, used to conversely represent Corbett's frontier guile, heroism, and righteousness (for further analysis, see Mera 2013).

Roche argues that the character's ruthless and Teutonic persona, and his fetishisation of lethal technology – all of which are invested in and connoted by the handling of 'Für Elise' in 'La condanna' – allude to Nazism and its genocidal atrocities, and interprets the cue's repurposing in the expositional scene from *Basterds* as a means of evoking the regime's evils (2018, 238). 'La condanna' is a work into which wickedness has been woven, which, while fictional, was initially represented by Sollima as precursory to the very real horrors of the twentieth century. In Tarantino's film, not simply Nazis, but Nazism itself suffers cinematic vengeance as part of a cultural conflict encapsulated by this reinforced sounding. The heroic resolve of the French farmer, protecting the Jewish victims, is aligned with Corbett's virtue. The baron's choice of repertoire is also poignant: the bagatelle is the most recognisable piano work by a composer held aloft as a high-water mark of Germanic cultural capital, who moreover symbolises an intersection of German and Austrian musical legacies. This is ironic given Beethoven's renowned egalitarianism, conveniently overlooked by the Nazis as they extolled his embodiment of Aryanist ideology. Presumably this was not lost on Morricone.

The use of 'La condanna' constitutes the opening statement of the metafictional discourse Tarantino establishes in *Basterds* using Morricone's western music – one intrinsically bound, as Coulthard points out, to the film's fundamental preoccupation with revenge. Sollima's film is also a film about revenge, for murder, rape, and racial discrimination. Brokston hires Corbett to hunt down 'Cuchillo' Sanchez, a peon falsely accused of the first two of these crimes. Before Corbett duels the baron, Cuchillo participates in his own standoff, victory in which vindicates his innocence and delivers just retribution to his opponent, the true perpetrator of the transgressions who exploited racial prejudice to frame Cuchillo. 'La resa' accompanies this scene, and in *Basterds* is used to soundtrack the ritual execution of a

Wehrmacht officer by Sergeant Donowitz: the first act of reckoning in film's tale of 'self-reflexive cinematic vengeance' (Coulthard 2012, 58) against the Third Reich, at once for the fictional killings at the farm, and for the innumerable others in reality.

'Für Elise' and *La resa dei conti* also function as textual pivots in Tarantino's next feature, *Django Unchained*, elaborating on the metafictional discourse activated in *Basterds.* This bona fide eulogy to the Italian western tells the story of Django, an African American in the pre-Civil War South who with the assistance of bounty hunter King Schultz (who for many conjures the white-saviour trope; Dunham 2016, 408), wins his freedom from enslavement and rescues his wife from the same fate by slaughtering the owners and staff of the plantation where she is bound. It is difficult to interpret the film's (not unproblematic) racial politics – a redemptive allohistorical interrogation of prejudice and subjugation in American history and culture – as anything other than the film's fundamental concern.

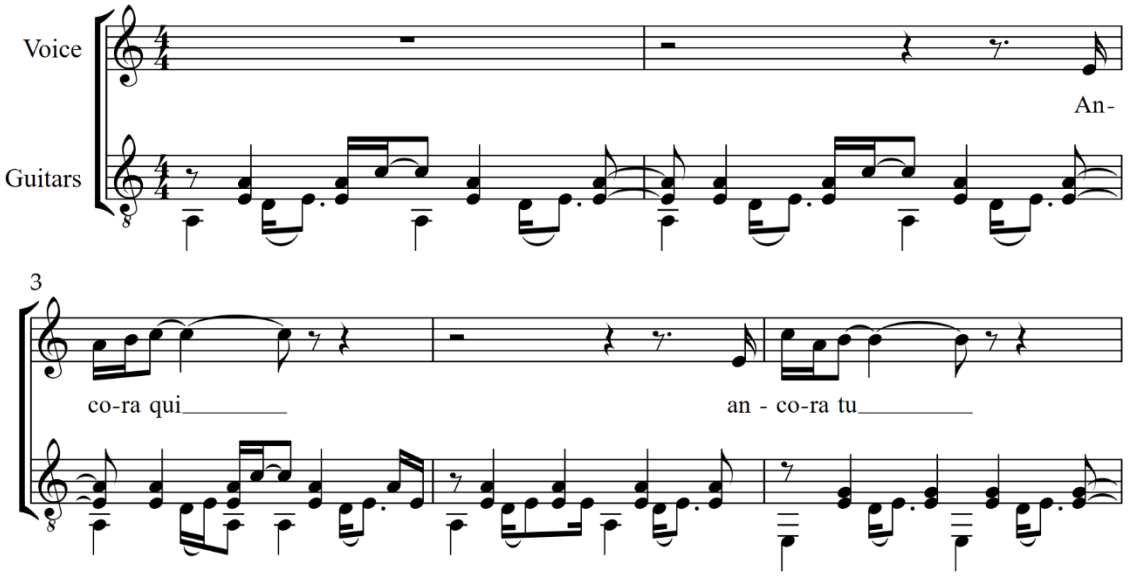
Again, music contributes to this, not least through the inclusion of three sharply anachronistic hip-hop tracks originally produced for the film. Italian-western music prevails in quantitative terms, however, and although the presence of Bacalov's music from *Django* is significant courtesy of that film's hypotextual role, Morricone's music for *I crudeli* is well represented. Another Corbucci western, lighter on violence but scarcely less bleak, *I crudeli* – as we know – follows a band of Southern renegades attempting to reignite the Civil War and salvage victory for the rebel states. Fisher highlights it among several westerns grappling with the Lost Cause as that which addresses the topic most sincerely, through its portrayal of fanatical individuals 'faced with the death of their way of life [and] bewildered by the rapidity of change' (2011, 60). In *Django Unchained*, change is sparked by Black revolt, overthrowing precisely that way of life, the values and existence of which depended on slavery and racism. Morricone's music, idiomatically influenced by jazz and ambivalently evoking patriotism warped by obsession in Corbucci's film, comes to the fore in *Django Unchained* when this insurrection, the film's leading motif (Nama 2015, 104–20), is underway.

Tarantino commissioned one composition from Morricone for *Django Unchained*: 'Ancora qui', the composer's first piece of original music for a western written in three decades (though its melody had already been composed specifically for the vocalist Elisa Toffoli, and not with the film in mind; La stampa 2013). Toffoli added words to the tune, and the skeletal demo she returned to Morricone for his approval – supplemented with guitars and organ – was eventually implemented by Tarantino, who was more impressed by this simpler arrangement than by subsequent, more heavily orchestrated versions (Rockol 2012). The song is placed prominently in a transitional montage, as a pivotal dinner is prepared at the mansion of the slave-owner Calvin Candie. Toffoli's plaintive lyrics, inspired by Morricone's own suggestion that they should have minimal textual concern for the film's synopsis, relate nevertheless meaningfully to the love between Django and his wife Broomhilda.

Little about the polished, heartfelt song immediately strikes the ear as characteristic of Morricone's music for westerns. And yet, disguised at a much slower tempo, the gently

oscillating, lullaby-like guitar motif (Ex. 6.1 below) is almost a note-for-note replica of that which initiates the title music for *Per un pugno di dollari*; the most significant changes are the transposition from D minor to A minor, and, in the guitar's lower voice, the reversal of the slurred subdominant–dominant gesture slur and the tonic pedal, the latter now on the downbeat. This is the theme that effectively opened Morricone's western account almost half a century prior, and it is improbable that he would have been unaware of the kinship. One is tempted to interpret this as compositional recycling, an instance of personal intertextuality, and a homage to his contribution to the genre, of which he likely expected this song at the time to be the closing statement.

There are also subtle allusions to 'Für Elise': the repeated rising four-note gesture, the shift to the supertonic in the second phrase, the A-minor key, even the lyrical content. Unspecific in isolation, these similarities become apparent when one considers that Beethoven's piece is played diegetically on harp in Candie's mansion later that evening, and moreover that the coincidentally named Elisa superimposed quotations of the piece's opening motif in the version she released on her studio album, *L'anima vola* (2013). Bonds between the bagatelle, Morricone's film music, and Tarantino's cinema were fostered via *La resa dei conti* and *Basterds*. Its subsequent inclusion in *Django Unchained* enriches this exchange further with a citation referring to the composer's music and to its usage in a separate entry in the director's filmography.



Example 6.1 Transcription of the opening bars of 'Ancora qui', featuring Elisa's vocal part and reduced guitar parts.

This network is augmented by overarching thematic connections. The harp performance in *Django Unchained* triggers flashbacks for Schultz to the harrowing murder of an enslaved man on Candie's orders, which he witnessed earlier that day (and to which he had to feign indifference in order to maintain the ruse that he is visiting Candie in order to purchase slaves, and not to rescue Broomhilda). He is so disturbed by the memory that he agitatedly interrupts the harpist's incessant, hurried repetitions of the A-section of the rondo. Schultz is played by Christoph Waltz, who in *Basterds* performed the role of Landa, another perpetrator of racially motivated killings that also occurred to the accompaniment of Beethoven's piece – as assimilated into a cue taken from yet another film preoccupied with racial prejudice. Ultimately 'Für Elise' is emblematic of the scourges with which all three films contend. Confronted with the ghastly reality of what the music signifies, Schultz can no longer bear to listen. Indeed, he can no longer bear to live, needlessly killing Candie after this incident, knowing the slave-owner's henchman will deliver punishment in kind, and that their scheme to rescue Broomhilda will be exposed. All this said, the incongruence between intent and interpretation permanently threatening such hermeneutic speculation materialises in this instance: although associations with 'Für Elise' have been cultivated in Morricone's music, the piece's final incarnation in 'Ancora qui' had, from the composer's standpoint, nothing to do with that metafictional baggage. The quotation of Beethoven's melody was here inspired solely by his writing of a piece – literally – for Elisa. Tarantino's positioning of the cue is the deed activating the metafictional mechanism.

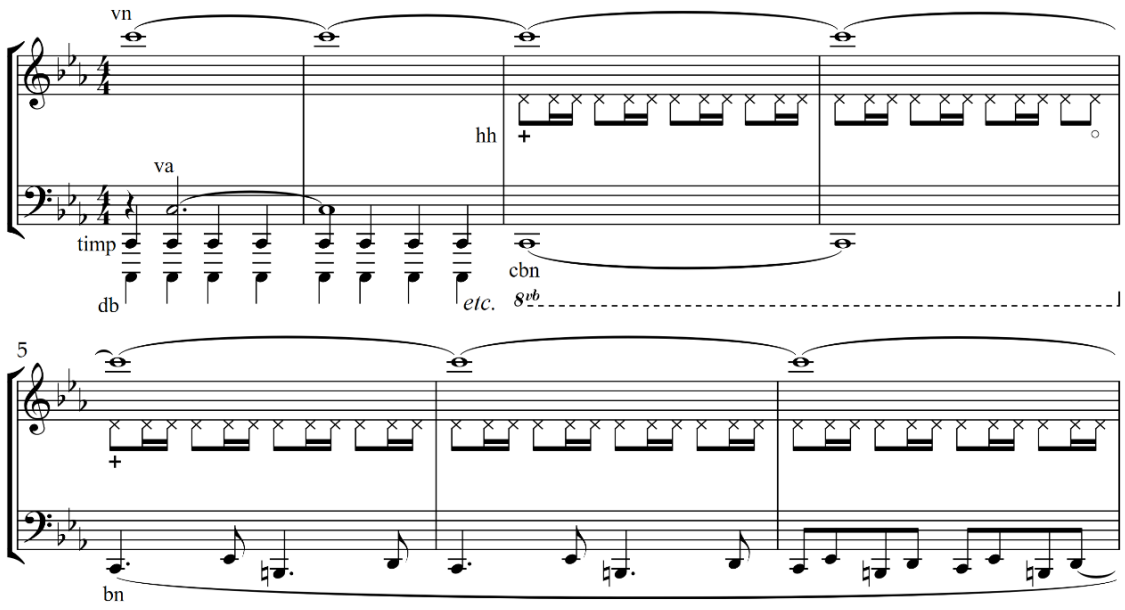
Music and metafiction in The Hateful Eight

In a 2013 speech delivered to students at Rome's LUISS University, after the release of *Django Unchained*, Morricone criticised Tarantino for 'placing music in his films without coherence', vowing never to work with him again (La stampa 2013). He lamented the director's casual historical handling of his music and took issue with the *Django Unchained* collaboration, implying that an alternative version of 'Ancora qui' existed that Tarantino overlooked, and that the one that which was used may not have been arranged by him – a prospect that, if true, would invalidate the 'closing statement' speculation. The composer clearly softened his stance, later claiming his comments were misconstrued, and more significantly agreeing to score Tarantino's next feature, persuaded by the allure of the project and the quality of the screenplay, not to mention the director's entreaties (Savage 2015; Wiseman 2019; Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 93–4).

Tarantino had exclusively assembled compilation scores before, and though he did not abandon the method entirely for *Hateful*, the film nonetheless entailed his first and only concession to the conventional score. He later said he had felt that 'this material deserved an original score', but given both Tarantino's extreme admiration for Morricone and his several unsuccessful attempts to recruit the composer for earlier films, the mere chance to work with him was likely a factor of no less significance (Directors Guild of America 2015). For his part, Morricone has spoken of prior reluctance to write original music for Tarantino, deriving

from the director's tendency to 'dislocate [his] music in a completely different context from the one it was meant for … he might be too conditioned by his own musical habits' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 92).

Morricone allegedly produced his score without having seen the film, already deep in postproduction (Tapley 2016). He did read the screenplay, however, and was principally inspired by the tense anticipation of brutal violence – an inevitability in Tarantino's cinema and another parallel to *The Thing* – and the advance of a stagecoach in snowy, mountainous terrain, to compose the cue (Ex. 6.2) functioning as the score's thematic cornerstone (Welk 2020). The quantity of music Morricone provided was relatively modest, and the amount of pre-existing music in the film totals approximately 52 per cent (~25 minutes) of the diegetic and nondiegetic material. That which belongs to Morricone (excluding diegetic songs and those by the White Stripes, Roy Orbison, and David Hess) comprises four cues, three written for *The Thing* but unused, one taken from *Exorcist II: The Heretic*; all feature prominently. It might appear this was done because Morricone was involved at the eleventh hour and was scheduled to score *La corrispondenza* (dir. Tornatore, 2016; Jagernauth 2015). But, of course, Tarantino prefers the compilation score, cites Morricone more than any other artist, and regarded *The Thing* as a key hypotext for the film. In response to the scheduling predicament, Tarantino tabled his presumably extant wish to utilise music from Carpenter's film, and Morricone revealed, fortuitously, that a wealth of unused material existed to which



Example 6.2 Reduction of the opening bars of the cue 'L'ultima diligenza di Red Rock', heard during the opening credits.

the director was welcome (Jagernauth 2015). At any rate, it appears an agreement to include the older cues was reached during these initial discussions, so the need to adhere stylistically to this precedent would have steered the ensuing creative process as much as any notional thirst for revenge.

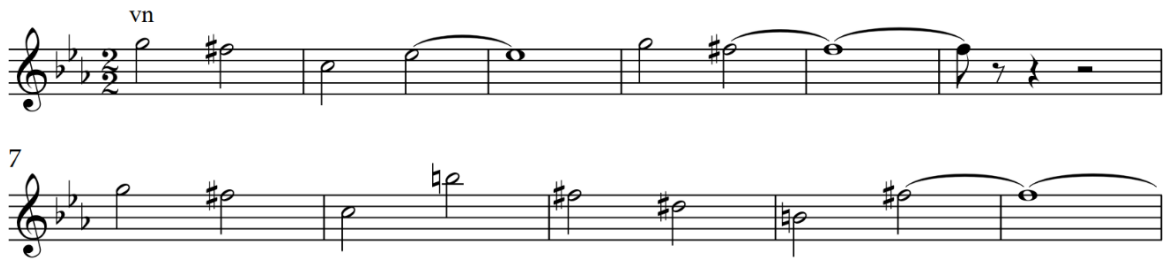
Of whatever quantity of music Morricone produced for *Hateful* under the temporal constraints, approximately 23.5 minutes' worth of it appears on the film soundtrack. The commercial soundtrack recording includes much more: over 51 minutes of music, much of which (entire tracks included) is unused. Repetition of specific audio excerpts occurs in the film, as well as widespread recycling of compositional material, and there is moreover the considerable quantity of nondiegetic music by Morricone and other artists, and finally diegetic performances. It is ironic that a film containing barely 20 minutes (out of 168) of original material would earn the composer his first competitive Oscar – especially given the Academy's nominally strict submission guidelines, which at the time rendered scores 'diluted by the use of pre-existing music' ineligible (Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, n.d.). Then again, Morricone would long begrudgingly point out that the score that denied him a seemingly shoo-in victory for *The Mission* (Herbie Hancock's for *Round Midnight*; dir. Bertrand Tavernier, 1986) was mostly based on existing jazz standards (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 111; Roche 2018, 242).

The pairing seems a good match on the surface: Morricone's wish for inherent logic is honoured as musical form is not subordinated to visual demands, while Tarantino is able to maintain his preferred bricolage approach, truncating, siphoning, splicing raw materials at will. But at another level, the approach threatens to undermine that logic. Music is arguably not free to pursue its innate, recorded course. Nonetheless, certain attributes of Morricone's design could be said to appeal to Tarantino's approach; it is entirely possible that the composer, cognisant of the director's typical treatment of music, tailored his material accordingly.

'L'ultima diligenza' and 'Neve' assume the 'symphonic' proportions of which the composer has spoken, in terms of scale, thematic handling, and style (Morricone and Tornatore 2018, 254). 'Neve' is something of a symphony in one movement, demonstrating motivic cohesion and structural contrast. Its opening, accompanying the film's 'prelude' (over a minute of location shots in advance of the title sequence), presents a hushed, creeping melodic theme (Ex. 6.3 below) against sighing chromatic gestures and sustained, overlapping pedal tones, the last two of these being hallmarks of the wider score. That melody is one of several complementary themes that feature prominently in 'Neve' and elsewhere.

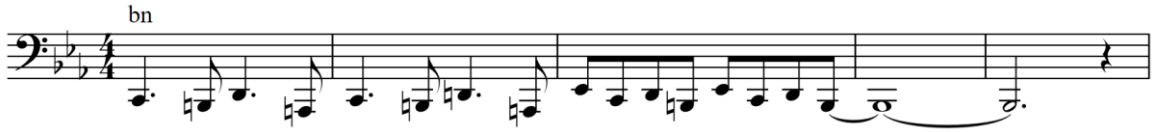
In the first instance of Tarantino's splicing, this 'Neve' fragment quickly fades seamlessly into the long version of 'L'ultima diligenza'. This cue sounds alongside the title card and opening credits, playing out as the camera slowly circles a weathered, snow-clad crucifix (see Audissino 2017, 178–80), before zooming out to reveal a stagecoach approaching from distance. Its ostinato, introduced on bassoons (Ex. 6.2, b. 5), integrates the cue, repeated in various orchestrational permutations and juxtaposed with accompaniment

variations until the music ends abruptly, synchronised with a cut to black. As indicated, this is another key theme, prevalent for its emphatic association with the title sequence, as well as later recapitulations of ‘L’ultima diligenza’.



Example 6.3 The inaugural theme of the score, and of the *versione integrale* of ‘Neve’.

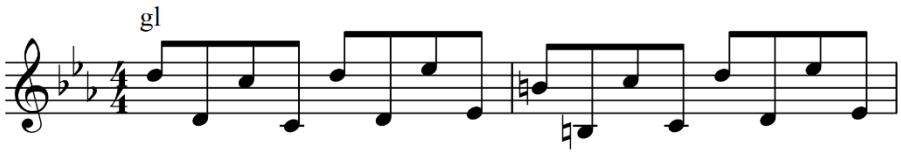
This ‘stagecoach’ motif, concise and firmly in the reductive mould, is subjected to a range of developmental devices. Visible in Ex. 6.2, the ostinato is compressed at its third statement in a segmentary manner, where its durational value is halved; there are two soundings at this heightened pace before a temporary resolution on D. The whole melody is then repeated, only now loosely inverted (Ex. 6.4). The theme is iterated again, transposed to the third scale degree, E flat, the minor-third relation above which introduces the tritone F sharp and heightens the sense of menace engendered by the extensive chromaticism. The fundamental tonal relationship is established in the oscillation between C and B natural, a manifestation of the downward-semitone gesture prevalent in the score (sometimes apposed to a C–A natural swing that discreetly invokes the ‘Dies irae’).



Example 6.4 The quasi-inverted portion of the ‘L’ultima diligenza’ theme, as introduced on unison bassoons (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 94); only with the use of a special extension is it possible for a bassoon to sound A_1). The C–B natural relationship endures, and a tritone is formed between A natural and E flat.

A third significant motif stems from ‘Neve’ (Ex. 6.5) and features in a range of other cues and album tracks. It is therefore related in form to the previously discussed theme from that cue, and it is tonally akin to the stagecoach motif (aided by the supremacy of C-minor tonality). Despite its apparent origin in ‘Neve’, this third example is recurrent and quite

autonomous, sounding prominently as a result of its instrumentation and hypnotic repetition. It first appears on glockenspiel, alongside the third of the eight chapters demarcating the narrative, subtitled ‘Minnie’s Haberdashery’. It recurs later, when Tarantino, suddenly stepping into the role of narrator, speaks on the soundtrack; he reveals that a pivotal event has occurred offscreen, and prompts a flashback depicting the act. Later the motif is heard again, during another flashback disclosing that a trap has been set at the haberdashery, and that some characters are not who they claim to be. These are plot-thickening, audience-estranging moments of intrigue offering insight into the conspiracies that trigger the inexorable violence.



Example 6.5 The ‘glockenspiel’ motif, as it accompanies the card that demarcates the narrative’s third chapter.

The pitch sequence of the motif is played by the instruments that either double the glockenspiel or take on the motif in that instrument’s absence, with the latter instance demonstrating Morricone’s tendency to development material simply by modifying parameters of instrumentation and orchestration, ‘L’ultima diligenza’ being a superlative example of this. Both these motivic objects are characteristically reductive in terms of tonal material and brevity. As stated, the ‘glockenspiel’ motif is constructed from tones similar to those of the stagecoach motif, and also involves an essential semitone swing between C and B. This same swing, a recurring alternation between the two pitches, marks the orchestral accompaniment to the motif at lower octaves. Both figures are also punctuated by tutti stabs from bowed or *pizzicato* strings, a device Morricone frequently deploys in the score.

The *Hateful* music is more simply ‘symphonic’ in that it is more resolutely orchestral, especially in comparison to Morricone’s characteristic western-genre style. With the exception of the dactylic hi-hat part in ‘L’ultima diligenza’ and the grunting choir heard in the same cue (during the credits when it is recapitulated), the original score is exclusively performed by orchestral instruments. Orchestration techniques adopted in ‘Neve’ are especially novel: instrumental doubling; densely interlaced textures; sustained, overlapping pedal tones; seamless shifting between small-scale ideas and broader sections; reduced pace; clouded metre; repetition and reshuffling of material – all these attributes conspire to generate the impression of a tide of sound, a nebulous, unnavigable, ominous entity.

This of course befits the film’s setting: the enveloping, threatening whiteness of the landscape to which the cue’s name refers. Morricone’s production of an extended piece with this title, from which Tarantino took material that makes up many of the film’s cues,

indicates that the landscape element is a notional presence of equal significance in the score to that of impending violence. Audissino drives at this, too, noting affiliation between the 'static' character of the music and the impervious surrounding wilderness. He also explains how the 'cold' sound of the high-register pedals (mostly on strings) lacking in harmonics conveys the wintry conditions: 'a bright [white] light is the effect of high frequencies in the visual dominion and a high-pitched sound is the effect of high frequencies in the auditory one'; we '*feel* the bitter cold' (2017, 175; Audissino's italics). This coordination is foreshadowed in another film that deeply influenced *Hateful*: *Il grande silenzio*, cues from which are also punctuated with high-pitched, spiky gestures, a device uncharacteristic of the westerns and pre-emptive of Morricone's music for *gialli*. Corbucci's anti-western is itself distinguished by profound subversiveness, being set in the snowy Rockies and climaxing with the excruciating death of the protagonist Silence and the innocents he defended in vain. It also features a bleak, snowy prelude before the credits, and there is more than a passing resemblance between the lyricism of its title music and that of 'Regan's Theme' from *Exorcist II*, which in Hateful, as in *Il grande silenzio*, accompanies horses battling through deep snow.

Accordingly, with the exception of the title sequence, which features 'L'ultima diligenza', material from 'Neve' typically manifests in external sequences. The cue's first part is implemented in the scene-setting prelude, the glockenspiel-motif passage introducing the third chapter is also taken from 'Neve' and continues as the blizzard is shown gaining on the stagecoach, and two disparate segments of 'Neve' are fused together during Major Warren's focalised flashback. In this part, the major, who is black, baits the Confederate General Smithers into drawing his pistol so he can shoot down the old man – perpetrator of a grave war crime against black Union soldiers – in 'self-defence' (a familiar gimmick in the genre that happens to be Silence's trademark). Warren coerces Smithers by telling him he killed his son after forcing him to march naked through the mountain snow and perform fellatio. The sequence inaugurating the slaughter is pivotal; Hollis Robbins suggests the entire 'spectacle is a scheme to present … the widescreen torture and humiliation of the rugged white hero of pre-Vietnam-era American Westerns' (2016, 369). Warren assumes narratorial agency in recounting the sadistic tale, and what we see and hear is ambiguously mediated. It might be a pure flashback to real events conveyed to his narration, but it may also represent Warren's focalised imagery, that of Smithers (a solution hinted by Warren's taunt, 'Startin' to see pictures, ain't ya?') – or both. Blurring the placement further is the possibility that Warren's narration is unreliable and that the story is fabricated, as the film's other Southerner, Mannix, reminds us.

The music could thus be categorised as mediated, but its idiomatic and acoustic congruence with the rest of the otherwise conventional nondiegetic score does not make this reading particularly inviting. Still, features of the cue in this scene, and of the manner in which it corresponds to other filmic elements, remain noteworthy. Suddenly visible for the first time is an unblemished blue sky, a semantic mainstay of western settings precluded here by the wintry scenario and hostile conditions necessary to entrap the characters, and the clear

weather intensifies the brilliance of the whiteness. Material from ‘Neve’ returns for the first time since the characters first congregated within the confines of the haberdashery, indeed since the chapter heading introduced that location almost an hour earlier. Furthermore, at this point the cor anglais, an instrument so evocative of expansiveness in Morricone’s scores, emerges in the texture for the first time, playing a recurring motif that teeters between D and F sharp, clashing with the surrounding C-minor tonality. The opening shot of this flashback emulates a scene in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*, in which Clint Eastwood’s character is marched through a desert to the brink of death. Never is Roche’s metaphor of the ‘white hell’ (derived from the later chapter heading ‘Black Man, White Hell’) more apparent than when this representative of American racism is framed within the whitest of white landscapes – a tableau supplemented by Morricone’s ‘snow’ music (Fig. 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Death marches: Warren forces Smithers’ naked son through the snow in *The Hateful Eight* (above), and Tuco does the same to Blondie, only through the baking desert, in *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (below).

The relentless centralisation of a single figure in ‘L’ultima diligenza’ problematises the symphonic analogy; it is better described as a macabre orchestral fantasy on that ostinato. Evolution is still achieved through aforementioned experimentation with colour and

combinations in articulating the motif. A fine example of this is its sounding on muted *divisi* trombones overlapping one another's *portamenti*, though this passage, like that which features the choir, is only heard towards the end of the credits. The strong dynamics, lurid timbres, punchy attack, and driving rhythm – built on obligatory hoofbeat dactyls (a cliché Morricone never fully relinquished, even if they are rendered here on hi-hat) – of 'L'ultima diligenza', all at variance with the seamless fluidity of 'Neve', express the palpable approach of violence manifest in the progressing stagecoach. But, courtesy of a formal cohesiveness founded on thematic ubiquity, an impression is maintained of an integrated soundworld whose components shift in and out of each other and coalesce in a range of permutations – subverting the typical closedness of Morricone's cue structures and indeed of Tarantino's compilation scores.

A quality of the soundtrack of which the composer likely approved is the general segregation of music and dialogue. Since the latter is particularly profuse in this convoluted and atypically insular entry in Tarantino's filmography, the relationship music establishes with it correlates to that which it shares with the narrative structure more broadly. With a relatively small quantity of music in a lengthy feature, cues are widely spread and placed with greater purpose. Six chapters partition the film explicitly, but with an eye to the music, the narrative can be divided into three 'acts': the stagecoach journey to the haberdashery; the assembly and acquaintance of the titular group at that location; and the eruption of bloodshed and its aftermath following the revelation of the trap laid by Domergue's gang. Most of the original music, thematically connected to the imminence of violence, the advancing stagecoach, and the encircling inhospitable landscape, sounds in the first act, during which it is moreover silent when the camera occupies the stagecoach interior, giving the expositional dialogue in these sequences necessary space. The score's superimposition over the sound of howling wind in exterior shots further consolidates music's alignment with the elements.

Between the arrival at the haberdashery and the narrator's entry at the beginning of Chapter Four – two points separated by almost an hour – the only nondiegetic music heard is 'Eternity' (from *The Thing*; sounding when a rope line is erected to the stable and outhouse in the blizzard) and the extracts from 'Neve' accompanying Warren's flashback. This affords the plot-thickening discussions in 'act two' an abundance of space, but the equation of music and exterior is also fortified, even if the stylistic incongruity between the synthesised 'Eternity' and the rest of the orchestral score slightly weakens that association. But at the beginning of 'act three', it joins the narrator the instant he freeze-frames to jump back to earlier events in the story. This positioning strengthens the sense of an isolated diegesis inside the haberdashery, which further equates music with the 'white hell' outside. Material from 'Neve', 'L'ultima diligenza' and other cues 'I quattro passeggeri' and 'La musica prima del massacro' accompanies the flashback depicting the laying of the trap. Music more frequently overlays speech in this act ('Despair' underscores Mannix and Domergue's bargaining), and sounds alongside several violent outbreaks ('Despair' again, 'Bestiality', and 'L'inferno bianco'). Placement and function of these cues weakens the association of score and the outdoors, but the atonal language they utilise, and the derivation of two of these three

examples from another score altogether, distances them from the preceding material anyway. Pre-existing music also suggests Tarantino was rather more selective in determining the material that would facilitate these more delicate machinations.

Although Tarantino enjoyed an enhanced degree of license in manipulating the content Morricone provided, the use of original and non-referential music, precluding intertextuality, diminishes the music's metafictional capacity. The use of a handful of pre-existing items enabled him to sustain his discourse, however, and Morricone's own pieces served as conduits. While supporting the general hypotextual invocation of *The Thing*, soundings of 'Eternity' and 'Despair' are less explicit, but still charged; the former, heard in *Hateful* at the zenith of the blizzard's intensity, parallels the Antarctic conditions in *The Thing*, and the latter, underscoring Domergue's attempts to convince Mannix to betray Warren, emulates the shapeshifting evil at the heart of Carpenter's horror.

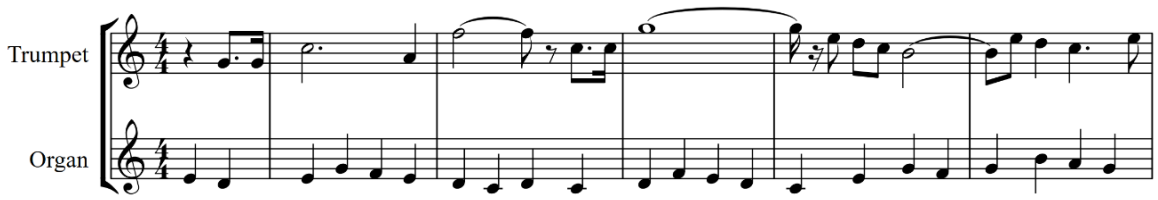
There is, however, a part of the original score establishing a poignant connection with what Roche discerns as the fundamental metafictional moral of *Hateful*. That part is the last cue before the credits, Morricone's final word in a western. It appears after Domergue is hanged by Mannix and Warren, the former having declined the outlaw's offer, maintaining his alliance with the Northern veteran. On this, Roche writes:

> [Domergue] is a convenient scapegoat through which masculinity can be affirmed across racial and regional lines … [but] far from defending misogyny, *The Hateful Eight* concludes, pessimistically no doubt, that the birth of an interracial nation comes at the cost of rejecting others, be they women, Mexicans, or homosexuals … It is hard to imagine a world, the film seems to say, where subjecthood can be effected without the violent abjection of an other.
>
> (Roche 2018, 123–4)

After Domergue's murder, as the two wounded men lay dying, Mannix asks to see a letter in Warren's possession that the major claimed to have received from President Lincoln, but which he admitted to be fraudulent. Warren obliges, and Mannix reads the letter aloud to the cue 'La lettera di Lincoln' (Ex. 6.6 below). Scored for solo trumpet accompanied by organ and strings, it evokes the militaristic pseudo-bugle calls of much older westerns, even featuring an opening figure reminiscent of 'Il silenzio'. But like that call it is increasingly lyrical, presenting a full-bodied diatonic tune, a crude countermelody to which is supplied by the organ.

It invokes an idiom traceable to the 'patriotic' codes of Copland's works (Lerner 2001, 479), definitively articulated in *Fanfare for the Common Man* (1942) and propagated in film through innumerable scores – including John Williams' for *Lincoln* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 2012). Through the codes, music denotes the underlying 'American' spirit that united and

unified North and South, the ‘house divided against itself’. At a subtextual level, it also exhibits empathy as well as complicity in the story’s prioritisation of political, regional, and racial accord over reconciliation along gendered lines. The misogynistic rift breached in the film goes unhealed; one group, Tarantino dictates, is always shut out. Sparing no thought for the persecuted, music endorses *this* union by championing *the* Union. But there is irony to this configuration; we know that the letter is fake, engineered as a means for Warren to deflect the racism in Reconstruction society that outlasted abolition. So the banal patriotism seems hollow, markedly so coming just moments after the disjunct, anarchic ‘Bestiality’ condemned the ghastly frontier justice enacted against Domergue.



Example 6.6 Transcription of the opening bars of ‘La lettera di Lincoln’, heard in the final minutes of *The Hateful Eight.*

‘La lettera di Lincoln’ is the score’s most ‘bespoke’ cue, the composition formally corresponding to an acute textual motif, the action and content of a specific narrative sequence, a tangible aspect of the metafiction, and American nationhood. It is, moreover, one of few cues that sound in their entirety, and constitutes an instance of committed dialogue underscore, which, at this concluding moment in film and western-genre filmography alike, thwarts its composer’s aesthetic preferences, much as it betrays womankind as represented by Domergue – and negates the dignity the music would communicate in isolation. The cue represents a fitting conclusion to a work posing ambivalent ramifications in the context of the ongoing relationship between Morricone’s legacy and the western genre.

Conclusions

At the outset of this enquiry, reference was made to a musically inspired analogy, used by Creekmur to describe the formulaic condition of the western: theme and variations. It is a comparison that could be justly applied to the entire concept of genre, as bemoaned by the 'common complaint' levelled against the inherently repetitive phenomenon: 'if you've seen one, you've seen 'em all' (Altman 1999, 25). As discussed, sampling is the typical response to this, the pursuit of the worthy connective 'theme' at the heart of a large body of work under a generic label or to an artist's name. In the case of the Italian western and its music, this theme has so often been equated to the Leone–Morricone stylistic paradigm. The other western scores, meanwhile, have long been spurned as lesser works of pastiche. Morricone's whistled themes have 'become trite', one critic wrote in an otherwise positive contemporary review of *Il mercenario* (Hughes 2004, 214) demonstrating this attitude. Creekmur's analogy can serve as an evaluative framework as we begin to contemplate what we have observed in our mono-generic filmography, bound by continuity and nuanced by change.

What has been revealed, then, through this study's attempt to consider the so-called variations? First it must be emphasised that it is scarcely feasible to make sense of these without understanding the blueprint that governs their fundamental, shared formal structures. The music in Leone's films, emulated in the Italian industry across all filmmaking parameters, served a unifying 'thematic' purpose, and it accordingly proved difficult to resist its magnetism in the present study, though it would have been fallacious to do so given its objectives. Analysing this material with an eye to its wider generic context revealed that there are more traditional elements in Morricone's characteristic western style than many who champion his innovativeness might suggest, and that these are symptomatic – and could be considered variations – of overarching trends in the history of western film-scoring. As Leone

enacted his innovations as he refurbished extant tropes, so Morricone reconfigured established attributes of traditional western music as part of an overdue stylistic makeover.

Genres function as a communicative structures co-created by – and mediating between – industry and audience. This Altman-derived model carries particular resonance in the case of Cinecittà's strategic reliance on *filoni*, which effectively served as vehicles by which to negotiate American cultural influence – situating the Italian western, appropriating such a conspicuously nationalistic genre, at a curious point of convergence. Given the distance from the mythic cultural institution of the western, socio-political shifts afoot in the 1960s, and the enormous financial weight thrown behind the *filone*, it is unsurprising that the Italian western effected an idiomatic overhaul. As Brizio-Skov (2011, 96) summarises, 'after the tough years of the reconstruction of postwar Italy, it was no longer possible to believe in the ideals displayed by the classic American western of the 1940s and 1950s'; the pluralist messages of the *filone* made it a typical product of the confusion and ideological turmoil of the era. This found expression in Morriconian idiosyncrasies like textural austerity and idiomatic diversity, but traditional features assisted in furnishing the necessary footholds to make these aesthetic developments more intelligible to filmgoers versed in American westerns. This corresponds, moreover, to financial expedients, which constituted the highest interests of the commercial stakeholders. Familiar, time-honoured elements facilitated engagement on the one hand; on the other, a debt to contemporary popular music appealed to modern tastes, while the sense of eccentricity and irony this fostered remained in step with the subversive and exploitative sensibilities of Italian popular cinema generally. It is telling that when Morricone was tasked with scoring a parodic, *Stagecoach*-based 'western' scene in a much later film owing nothing to these exigencies or the distinctive grammar of the Italian western – Tornatore's *Malèna* (2000) – he entirely eschewed the language he helped to define (incidentally steering clear of American-western tropes, too), anticipating his later response to *The Hateful Eight* (Fig. 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Renato projects himself and the object of his infatuation into a western-film setting in his erotic fantasy in *Malèna*.

Assessment of the neglected wider filmography, the findings of which represent this thesis' core contribution, has furthered our understanding of this dynamic. The composer's scores for the pre-*Per un pugno* Jolly westerns – and indeed the music he composed before working in the film industry – demonstrate a working knowledge of generic conventions. And the elements Morricone chose to sustain and develop in other scores, such as the Degüello-derived theme, use of the guitar, and transdiegetic movement, are consolidated as intrinsic to the theme and to the generic style in turn. Those that do not proliferate so widely, such as fragmentation, are shown to be distinctive in Leone's films, but not necessarily a crucial facet of Morricone's western syntax, even if they are established as wider genre tropes due to the popularity of those films; the overt use of this technique in a recent, high-profile production openly indebted to Italian-western rhetoric, *The Mandalorian* (2019–), clearly demonstrates the longevity of this device (Fig. 7.2).

Figure 7.2 Appearances of the Mandalorian (Din Djarin) are synchronised to an electronic effect extracted from the title music to his namesake series, as here when he enters in 'Chapter 5: The Return of the Mandalorian' from *The Book of Boba Fett* (2022), a different show inhabiting the *Star Wars* universe.

Evidencing the conditional strength of the genre frame and of the lucrative popular formula that Morricone fashioned, cohesive musical continuities in our filmography are akin to the unifying compositional material in theme-and-variations form. More adventurous variations (the trombone of 'La resa'), compositional novelties characterising particular films (the 'return' theme), and outright subversions of the norm ('Marcia dei Mac Gregor' [*sic*]) epitomise the vitality of Morricone's desire to 'break the rules of the craft', representing the opposing, developmental force defining that form. The emergence and establishment of contrasting stylistic solutions, particularly those that can be aligned to subgeneric divisions (biphonic guitar, mariachi, nonchalant swing), problematises the application of Creekmur's analogy. Connecting particular groups of films within our larger body of work, these are

effectively alternative themes, not entailing fresh material written in accordance with the same formulae but genuine idiomatic departures, albeit sometimes retaining kindred traits. Outlying films, generically speaking, such as *La battaile de San Sebastian, Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?*, and *The Hateful Eight*, are the most difficult to integrate meaningfully into this scheme. They demonstrate a lack of musical continuity corresponding to the other anomalous generic attributes that contribute to that peripheral status.

An essential aim of this investigation was to expand the scope of discussion beyond the confines and pitfalls of restricted Leonian selections. The process of reconciling this goal with that of providing meaningful assessment of Morricone's western music has been delicate. As stated, the draw of the 'Dollars' films in particular – profoundly influential as they were stylistically and industrially – has been powerful, their music defining expectations with which Morricone was continuously forced to wrestle. It is noteworthy that the same cannot be said of *C'era una volta il west*, and certainly not *Giù la testa*. While the former may match, even surpass its predecessors in terms of its wider cultural impact, it is ultimately of lesser influence as far as the codification of Italian-western music is concerned. Had the enquiry considered this impact, it would have faced difficulties in maintaining an even coverage given the great relative popularity and proliferation of material from Leone's films. Even so, sufficient genuine variety is exhibited in the remainder of the filmography to indicate that contrasting musical traits are obscured by a narrower, sampled focus. In addition to innate formal and semiotic peculiarities which can revealingly correspond to broader generic and cultural shifts, these films demonstrate above all Morricone's reactions to that changing landscape, as well as his efforts to innovate where possible amidst a congested, repetitive workflow and facing pressure to perpetuate a specific compositional formula. Consultation of Creekmur's analogy helps us to appreciate his negotiation of seemingly oppositional forces, where he was obliged to bend to those rules of the craft, where he circumvented them, and where he managed to use them to his artistic and professional advantage. Of course these mechanics transcend Morricone's personal situation, too; it is necessary to acknowledge that compromise of this kind is a response to challenges that are inherent to the film composer's predicament. His experience discloses various complexities of writing music in service to a popular industry, on the restrictions genre can impose on creative practitioners, and of the pursuit and exercise of freedom under such conditioning.

On the subject of the cultural dissemination of Morricone's music, much research in the field utilises that composed for Leone as a principal frame of reference; Marianna Whitmer's (2019) enquiry into the appropriation of this style in advertising is a prime example. But the impact of the music Morricone wrote for lesser-known Italian westerns is only just beginning to receive exposure. Tim Summers' (2022) discussion of 'Morriconian Aesthetics' in the popular video games *Red Dead Revolver* (2004) and *Red Dead Redemption* (2010) brings genre material written by other composers into the spotlight, relating it to Morricone's well-known compositional formulae. This material was likely chosen precisely because of its reduced familiarity and conspicuity, capitalising on diminished associative potential in a fashion comparable to Tarantino's almost complete avoidance in his compilation scores of

Morricone's music for Leone's films. This exemplifies contemporary recognition of the value of music taken from the wider corpus: endeavours with which the present findings could be coordinated. It is worth noting that this thesis appears only a few years after Morricone's death in 2020 at the age of 91, even before which substantial publications emerged presenting comprehensive retrospectives on his life and work, such as the De Rosa interviews and Maurizio Baroni's (2019) discography; Sciannameo's monograph and a French-language collection of essays edited by Chloé Huvet (2022) appeared soon after. This study, which has re-evaluated various widespread assumptions regarding a frequently discussed body of work, benefits from and offers up a contribution to this concentration of interest in Morricone's music and legacy.

Given that this text has dedicated a substantial amount of space to reflections on Morricone's own statements and principles, it would be prudent to consider briefly their intersection with the ideas outlined in the preceding paragraphs. His overarching two-part taxonomy is particularly relevant; the ideological and practical division of 'absolute' concert work and the 'applied' remainder encompasses his entire creative practice, and was a framework designed to address and resolve antagonisms between artistic impulse and professional obligation that can be compared to the relationship between the 'innovative' and 'imitative' genre films in our filmography. Did this empower him to reconcile those antagonisms? Or is the formulation of a discriminatory system itself symptomatic of the historical bias against film music that marked the sensibilities of many earlier Italian film composers? Doctrines cultivated in response to the challenges posed by the commercial impetuses of applied music, such as double aesthetics and the commitment to professionalism inspired by Salce, suggest accord between opposing forces, which in the case of the western oeuvre is borne out by the instances of technical innovation and evolution that have been discussed.

On the other hand, Morricone's discourses can be tinged, perhaps quite understandably, with a certain elitism that appears not to be commensurate with those musical developments; the sentiments explored at the beginning of Chapter Six are a prime example. Typically, it is the genre films that suffer, at best through neglect, at worst condemnation. Indeed the potency of genre itself – or, even more acutely, that of *filone* – as an industrial mechanism and generalising concept evidently tests the durability of his permissive philosophy. Alfred Schnittke declared that 'the goal of his life' was to 'unify' *Ernste Musik* and *Unterhaltungsmusik* (serious and light music), and pursued this end through his polystylistic syntheses (Ivashkin 1996, 117). It could be said that Morricone, seeking not to integrate but to segregate, instead perpetuates hierarchical attitudes.

Still, Morricone's music is of greater import here than his words. Accordingly, it is in practice that the 'contamination' (Miceli 2014, 11) of musical genres can be observed and placed in relation to the composer's professed pursuit of a synthesis of the 'highbrow and the popular' (Morricone and De Rosa 2019 [2016], 121) – or, in other words, the middlebrow. This pertains to a prominent area of interest in Italian cultural studies, where mass cinema has

long been identified not as commercial fare intended for exclusive consumption by lower classes, but an interclass medium unifying proletarian and bourgeois sensibilities (Spinazzola 1985, 345). Despite offering to Morricone an outlet for some compositional techniques characteristic of contemporary classical practice, westerns did not provide him with a popular platform for such fusions to the same extent than did, say, *gialli.* Westerns complemented Morriconian sensibilities in other ways, however, by appealing to dramaturgical experimentation and thematic composition, featuring sparse dialogue and frequently distinctive diegetic sound, and possessing an innate musical identity that invited engagement, ironic subversion, and renewal. Nevertheless, as is apparent in his statements, Morricone clearly struggled ideologically to reconcile a fundamental compositional duality, expressed in tensions between *assoluta* and *applicata*, impulse and expectation, innovation and derivation. Such dichotomies are characteristic symptoms of the essential 'anxiety' from which the search for the middlebrow arises; after all, it is 'founded on the idea of a gap to be overcome' (Chowrimootoo and Guthrie 2020, 373). For Sciannameo (2020, 123), Morricone achieved such a synthesis only at the turn in the 1990s, when he 'blurred the self-imposed distinction' between the twin pillars of his practice by integrating techniques exercised in contemporary concert works wholesale into film scores like *State of Grace* (dir. Phil Joanou, 1990) and *Bugsy* (dir. Barry Levinson, 1991).

For a demonstration of the ambivalent relationship between Morricone and the genre with which he will always be most closely associated, one need scarcely look beyond his experience with, and reflections on, the closing instalment in that body of work. *The Hateful Eight* facilitated his return to the western after decades in exile, and he intentionally avenged himself on the genre through an uncharacteristic score. The project marked an end to his avoidance of prestige US productions, partially instigated by the critical failure of *Mission to Mars* in 2000, and it would also earn him the coveted accolade that had long and notoriously eluded him: the Academy Award for Best Original Score. And yet, the composer's triumph over his fellow nominees might have been no less of a victory for his partnership with the western itself, vindicated and reinforced as a consequence of that success. Like the reciprocity inherent to any dynamic between a creator and a genre with which they engage, or the mixture of tradition and innovation that marks Morricone's music for westerns generally, the ramifications of *Hateful* for his relationship with the western are ambivalent, reflecting that the genre was at once his accomplice and nemesis. He certainly fixated on the negative consequences that it posed for perceptions of his work and legacy, even if it inspired work with which he was satisfied. At any rate, although Morricone might not have decisively outmanoeuvred the western in his career-long tussle with it, through *Hateful* he still managed to land a hefty last blow.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Chronological list of westerns with an original score either composed or co-composed by Morricone. Scores to films marked with an asterisk are either co-composed with, or credited to, Bruno Nicolai.

Film	**Director**	**English-language alternative title(s)**	**Italian/US Distributor**	**Month/year of release**
Duello nel Texas	Ricardo Blasco	*Gunfight at Red Sands*; *Gringo*	Unidis	9/1963
Le pistole non discutono	Mario Caiano	*Bullets Don't Argue*	Unidis	8/1964
Per un pugno di dollari	Sergio Leone	*A Fistful of Dollars*	Unidis	9/1964
Una pistola per Ringo	Duccio Tessari	*A Pistol for Ringo*; *A Gun for Ringo*	Cineriz	5/1965
Il ritorno di Ringo	Tessari	*The Return of Ringo*	Cineriz	12/1965
Per qualche dollaro in più	Leone	*For a Few Dollars More*	Produzione Europee Associati	12/1965

Sette pistole per i MacGregor	Franco Giraldi	*Seven Guns for the MacGregors*	Unidis	3/1966
Un fiume di dollari	Carlo Lizzani	*The Hills Run Red*	Dear Film–Dino De Laurentiis Cinematografica	9/1966
Navajo Joe	Sergio Corbucci	-	Dear Film–Dino De Laurentiis Cinematografica	11/1966
Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo	Leone	*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*	Produzioni Europee Associate	12/1966
I crudeli	Corbucci	*The Hellbenders*	Cineriz	2/1967
Sette donne per i MacGregor	Giraldi	*Up the MacGregors!*; *Seven Women for the MacGregors*	Unidis	3/1967
La resa dei conti	Sergio Sollima	*The Big Gundown*	Produzioni Europee Associati	3/1967
Da uomo a uomo	Giulio Petroni	*Death Rides a Horse*	Titanus	8/1967
Faccia a faccia	Sollima	*Face to Face*	Produzioni Europee Associati	11/1967
La battaile de San Sebastian	Henri Verneuil	*Guns for San Sebastian*	Alpherat–Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	3/1968
*Corri uomo corri**	Sollima	*Run Man Run*	Italnoleggio Cinematografico	8/1968
...e per tetto un cielo di stelle	Petroni	*A Sky Full of Stars for a Roof*	Compass Film	9/1968
Il grande silenzio	Corbucci	*The Great Silence*; *The Big Silence*	Fox Films	11/1968
C'era una volta il west	Leone	*Once Upon a Time in the West*	Euro International Films–Paramount Pictures	12/1968
*Il mercenario**	Corbucci	*The Mercenary*; *A Professional Gun*	Produzioni Europee Associati	12/1968
Tepepa	Petroni	-	Heritage Italiana	2/1969
Un esercito di 5 uomini	Don Taylor	*The Five Man Army*	Delta / Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	6/1969
Two Mules for Sister Sara	Don Siegel	-	Universal Pictures	3/1970

Vamos a matar compañeros	Corbucci	*Compañeros*	Titanus–Consorzio Italiano Distributori Indipendenti Film	12/1970
Giù la testa	Leone	*Duck, You Sucker!*; *A Fistful of Dynamite*; *Once Upon a Time … the Revolution*	Euro International Films–United Artists	10/1971
La banda J. & S. - Cronaca criminale del Far-West	Corbucci	*Sonny and Jed*	Titanus	8/1972
La vita, a volte, è molto dura, vero Provvidenza?	Petroni	*Life Is Tough, Eh Providence?*	Euro International Films	10/1972
Che c'entriamo noi con la rivoluzione?	Corbucci	*What Am I Doing in the Middle of a Revolution?*	Dear Film	12/1972
*Ci risiamo, vero Provvidenza?**	Alberto De Martino	*Here We Go Again, Eh Providence?*	Cineriz	11/1973
Il mio nome è Nessuno	Tonino Valerii	*My Name Is Nobody*	Titanus	12/1973
Un genio, due compari, un pollo	Damiano Damiani	*A Genius, Two Partners and a Dupe*; *A Genius, Two Friends and an Idiot*	Titanus	12/1975
Occhio alla penna	Michele Lupo	*Buddy Goes West*	Titanus	3/1981
The Hateful Eight	Quentin Tarantino	-	The Weinstein Company	12/2015

Appendix 2

The following list compiles all films referred to in the main text outside the filmography outlined in Appendix One. Titles marked with an asterisk involved Morricone personally or feature his music.

Director(s)	**Title**	**English-language title**	**Distributor**	**Year of release**
Aldrich, Robert	*Vera Cruz*	-	United Artists	1954
—	*Sodom and Gomorrah*	-	20th Century Fox	1962

Altman, Robert	*McCabe & Mrs. Miller*	-	Warner Bros.	1971
Antonioni, Michelangelo	*Cronaca di un amore*	*A Story of a Love Affair*	Fincine	1950
—	*L'avventura**	-	Cino del Duca	1960
—	*La notte*	-	Dino De Laurentiis Distribuzione	1961
—	*L'eclise*	-	Cineriz	1962
Argento, Dario	*L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo**	*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*	Titanus	1970
—	*Il gatto a nove code**	*The Cat o' Nine Tails*	Titanus	1971
Balcázar, Alfonso	*Il ritorno di Clint il solitario**	*The Return of Clint the Stranger*	Movietime	1972
Barboni, Enzo	*Lo chiamavano Trinità...*	*They Call Me Trinity*	Delta	1970
—	*...continuavano a chiamarlo Trinità*	*Trinity Is Still My Name*	Delta	1971
Bellocchio, Marco	*La Cina è vicina**	*China Is Near*	Columbia C.E.I.A.D	1967
Boetticher, Budd	*Seven Men from Now*	-	Warner Bros	1956
Bonnard, Mario, and Sergio Leone [uncredited]	*Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei*	*The Last Days of Pompeii*	Filmar Compagnia Cinematografica	1959
Boorman, John	*The Exorcist II: The Heretic**	-	Warner Bros	1977
Carpenter, John	*The Thing**	-	Universal Pictures	1982
Carreras, Michael	*Savage Guns*	-	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	1961
Cavara, Paolo	*I malamondo**	-	Titanus	1964
Coppola, Francis Ford	*The Godfather*	-	Paramount Pictures	1972
Corbucci, Sergio	*Massacro al Grande Canyon*	*Grand Canyon Massacre*	Titanus	1964
—	*Minnesota Clay*	-	Titanus	1964
—	*Django*	-	Euro International Film	1966
Curtiz, Michael	*The Comancheros*	-	20th Century Fox	1961
Damiani, Damiano	*Quién sabe?*	*A Bullet for the General*	M.C.M.	1967
De Palma, Brian	*The Untouchables**	-	Paramount Pictures	1987
—	*Mission to Mars**	-	Buena Vista Pictures	2000
De Santis, Giuseppe	*Rome, ore 11*	*Rome 11:00*	Titanus	1952

De Seta, Vittorio	*Un uomo a metà**	*Half a Man*	Dear Film	1966
De Sica, Vittorio	*Ladri di biciclette*	*Bicycle Thieves*	Ente Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche	1948
DeMille, Cecil B.	*The Plainsman*	-	Paramount Pictures	1936
Eastwood, Clint	*American Sniper**	-	Warner Bros	2014
Farrow, John	*Hondo*	-	Warner Bros	1953
Fellini, Federico	*Lo sceicco bianco*	*The White Sheik*	P.D.C.	1952
—	*La strada*	-	Dino De Laurentiis Distribuzione	1954
—	*8½*	-	Cineriz	1963
Ferroni, Giorgio	*Un dollaro bucato*	*Blood for a Silver Dollar*	Euro Films International	1965
—	*Per pochi dollari ancora.**	*For a Few Extra Dollars*	Fida Cinematografica	1966
Fleischer, Richard	*Barabba**	*Barabbas*	Columbia Pictures	1961
Ford, John	*Stagecoach*	-	United Artists	1939
—	*My Darling Clementine*	-	20th Century Fox	1946
—	*The Searchers*	-	Warner Bros	1956
—	*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*	-	Paramount Pictures	1962
Fregonese, Hugo	*Blowing Wild*	-	Warner Bros	1953
Gariazzo, Mario	*Il giorno del giudizio**	*Day of Judgment*	Paradise Film Exchange	1971
Germi, Pietro	*In nome della legge*	*In the Name of the Law*	Lux Film	1949
Giovanni, José	*Le Ruffian**	*The Ruffian*	L'Agence Méridionale de Location de Films	1983
Hathaway, Henry, et al.	*How the West Was Won*	-	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	1962
Hawks, Howard	*Red River*	-	United Artists	1948
—	*Rio Bravo*	-	Warner Bros	1959
Hertz, Gary	*Run Man Run: 35 Years Running**	-	Blue Underground	2003
Hill, George Roy	*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*	-	20th Century Fox	1969
Huston, John	*The Bible: In the Beginning…**	-	20th Century Fox	1966
Hutton, Brian G.	*Kelly's Heroes*	-	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	1970
Joanou, Phil	*State of Grace**	-	Orion Pictures	1990

Joffé, Roland	*The Mission**	-	Columbia-Cannon-Warner Distributors	1986
Karlson, Phil, and Franco Cirino	*Hornets' Nest**	-	United Artists	1970
King, Henry	*The Gunfighter*	-	20th Century Fox	1950
—	*The Bravados*	-	20th Century Fox	1958
Kurosawa, Akira	*Yojimbo*	-	Tōhō	1961
Leone, Sergio	*C'era una volta in America**		Titanus	1984
—	*Il colosso di Rodi*	*The Colossus of Rhodes*	P.A.C.	1961
Levinson, Barry	*Bugsy**	-	TriStar Pictures	1991
Lorentz, Pare	*The Plow that Broke the Plains*	-	U.S. Resettlement Administration	1936
Mann, Anthony	*The Man from Laramie*	-	Columbia Pictures	1955
—	*Man of the West*	-	United Artists	1958
—	*Cimarron*	-	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	1960
Marchent, Joaquín Luis Romero	*Tres hombres buenos*	*Implacable Three*	Exclusivas Floralva Distribución S.A.	1963
Mastrocinque, Camilo	*Diciottenni al sole**	*Eighteen in the Sun*	Cinedistribuzione Astoria	1962
—	*I motorizzati**	-	Unidis	1962
Milestone, Lewis	*Of Mice and Men*	-	United Artists	1939
—	*The Red Pony*	-	Republic Pictures	1949
Morassi, Mauro, and Dino Risi [uncredited]	*Il successo**	-	Incei Film	1963
Onorato, Maria Virginia	*L'ultimo uomo di Sara.**	*Sarah's Last Man*	Italnoleggio Cinematografico	1974
Pasolini, Pier Paolo	*Uccelacci e uccellini**	*The Hawks and the Sparrows*	Consorzio Italiano Distributori Indipendenti Film	1966
—	*Teorema**	*Theorem*	Euro International Films	1968
Pastrone, Giovanni	*Cabiria*	-	Itala Film	1914
Peckinpah, Sam	*Major Dundee*	-	Columbia Pictures	1965
Petri, Elio	*Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto**	*Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*	Euro International Films	1970

—	*Un tranquillo posto di campagna**	*A Quiet Place in the Country*	Produzioni Europee Associate	1969
Pontecorvo, Gillo	*La battaglia di Algeri**	*The Battle of Algiers*	Magna	1966
—	*Queimada**	*Burn!*	Produzioni Europee Associate	1969
Porter, Edwin S.	*The Great Train Robbery*	-	Edison Manufacturing Company	1903
Reed, Carol	*The Third Man*	-	British Lion Film	1949
Reinl, Harald	*Der Schatz im Silbersee*	*The Treasure of the Silver Lake*	Constantin Film	1962
Rossellini, Roberto	*Roma città aperta*	*Rome, Open City*	Minerva Film	1945
Ruggles, Wesley	*Cimarron*	-	RKO Radio Pictures	1931
Salce, Luciano	*Il federale**	*The Fascist*	Cinedistribuzione Astoria	1961
—	*La voglia matta**	*Crazy Desire*	Cinedistribuzione Astoria	1962
—	*La cuccagna**	*A Girl... and a Million*	Euro International Film	1962
—	*Le monachine**	*The Little Nuns*	Cinedistribuzione Astoria	1963
Sollima, Sergio	*Città violenta**	*Violent City*	Universal Film	1970
—	*Revolver**	-	Panta Cinematografica	1973
Spielberg, Steven	*Lincoln*	-	Walt Disney Studios	2012
Squitieri, Pasquale	*Il pentito**	*The Repenter*	Cecchi Gori Group	1985
Steiner, Ralph, and Willard Van Dyke	*The City*	-	American Documentary Films and American Institute of Planners	1939
Stevens, George	*Shane*	-	Paramount Pictures	1953
—	*Giant*	-	Warner Bros	1956
Sturges, John	*Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*	-	Paramount Pictures	1957
—	*The Magnificent Seven*	-	United Artists	1960
Tarantino, Quentin	*Reservoir Dogs*	-	Miramax Films	1992
—	*Kill Bill: Volume 1**	-	Miramax Films	2003
—	*Kill Bill: Volume 2**	-	Miramax Films	2004
—	*Death Proof**	-	Dimension Films	2007
—	*Inglourious Basterds**	-	The Weinstein Company	2009

—	*Django Unchained**	-	The Weinstein Company	2012
—	*Once Upon a Time in Hollywood**	-	Sony Pictures	2019
Tati, Jacques	*Mon oncle*	*My Uncle*	Gaumont Distribution	1958
Tavernier, Bertrand	*Round Midnight*	-	Warner Bros	1986
Taviani, Paolo, and Vittorio Taviani	*Allonsanfàn**	-	Italnoleggio Cinematografico	1974
Tessari, Duccio	*Forza "G"**	*Winged Devils*	United Artists	1972
Tornatore, Giuseppe	*Nuovo Cinema Paradiso**	-	Titanus	1988
—	*Malèna**	-	Medusa Distribuzione	2000
—	*La migliore offerta**	*The Best Offer*	Warner Bros	2013
—	*La corrispondenza**	*The Correspondence*	01 Distribution	2016
—	*Ennio**	-	Dogwoof	2021
Tourneur, Jacques	*Canyon Passage*	-	Universal Pictures	1946
Verbinski, Gore	*Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*	-	Buena Vista Pictures	2007
Verneuil, Henri	*Le clan des Siciliens**	*The Sicilian Clan*	20th Century Fox	1969
Vidor, King, et al.	*Duel in the Sun*	-	Selznick Releasing Organization	1946
Visconti, Luchino	*Bellissima*	-	CEI Incom	1961
—	*Senso*	-	Lux Film	1954
—	*Rocco e i suoi fratelli*	*Rocco and His Brothers*	Titanus	Lux Film
Walsh, Raoul	*Pursued*	-	Warner Bros	1947
—	*The Sheriff of Fractured Jaw*	-	20th Century Fox	1958
Wayne, John	*The Alamo*	-	United Artists	1960
Webb, Robert D	*The Proud Ones*	-	20th Century Fox	1956
—	*Love Me Tender*	-	20th Century Fox	1956
Wellman, William A.	*The Ox-Bow Incident*	-	20th Century Fox	1943
Wertmüller, Lina	*I basilischi**	*The Lizards*	Cineriz	1963
Wood, Sam	*Our Town*	-	United Artists	1940
Wyler, William	*The Big Country*	-	United Artists	1958

—	*Ben-Hur*	-	Loew's	1959
Young, Terence	*Dr No*	-	United Artists	1962
Zinnemann, Fred	*High Noon*	-	United Artists	1952
Zurlini, Valerio	*Il deserto dei Tartari**	*The Desert of the Tartars*	Italnoleggio Cinematografico	1976

Appendix 3

List of instrumental abbreviations used in transcriptions.

agtr acoustic guitar (steel-string)

bgtr bass guitar

bj banjo

bn bassoon

cbn contrabassoon

chr choir / chorus

cl clarinet

cst celesta

db double bass / double basses

drm drum

egtr electric guitar

eh cor anglais

fl flute

gl glockenspiel

hh hi-hat

hca harmonica

hn french horn

hp harp

hps harpsichord

jh jew's harp

mc men's chorus

ngtr nylon-string guitar

ob oboe

org organ

picc piccolo

pno piano

rec recorder

sd snare drum

str string ensemble

syn Synket

timp timpani

tpt trumpet

trb trombone

va viola / violas

vc violincello / violoncelli

vce voice

vn violin / violins

wc women’s chorus

wh whistle

ww woodwind ensemble

12gtr 12-string guitar

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