

## **Introduction: The spatiality of instrumental music**

Film is a perennial interest in popular geopolitics (Power & Crampton, 2006; Shapiro, 2009; Funnell & Dodds, 2017; Saunders & Strukov, 2018), reflecting a broader focus on visual popular culture and its intersection with ‘the geopolitical’ (Macdonald, Hughes & Dodds, 2010; Hughes, 2016). Of less concern is music. Where music has been addressed, accounts generally consider lyrical rather than instrumental, treating music as another kind of meaning-rich text (Boulton, 2008; Street, 2013; Liu, An & Zhu, 2015). What is sometimes acknowledged in these analyses, but largely unexplored, is the conceptualisation of instrumental music as a mode of communication in itself – able to convey emotion, feeling, and certain understandings of space and place. In this article, an initial sounding of this area is made, focusing on instrumental, diegetic film score (music without lyrics composed to accompany film, which the audience can hear, but the film’s characters cannot).<sup>1</sup> Drawing from wider work in human geography that has considered sound from non-representational perspectives, and film music studies, the discussion here broadens understandings of how geopolitical knowledges are produced and communicated.

Film score is paradoxical. At one extreme, it is considered a method of supplementing the slower parts of a movie’s narrative: “no one notices it, except that something would be missing if it were not there” (Scheurer, 1998, p. 172). At the other extreme, score is seen as central to filmmaking – required for a great film to be great, and with the ability to save a film that might otherwise fail (Scheurer, 1998). An award for Best Score has been presented at the Oscars since 1935. More popular amongst many audiences than the classical canon, film score has been integrated into the repertoires of many international orchestras, helping to keep orchestras solvent (Kalinak, 2010). The world’s leading film composers – such as John Williams, Hans Zimmer, Danny Elfman – command salaries of up to \$2 million per picture, making them competitive with leading actors and directors. In this article, the focus is on Western film score, but scores for non-Hollywood productions, including Bollywood, are becoming increasingly popular globally. Composers such as the Indian, A. R. Rahman, have blurred these divides, scoring productions around the world.

Like language, music is built on units, grammars, forms of expression. For Timothy Scheurer, from the perspective of film music studies, these are “aural building blocks that, due to a host of

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<sup>1</sup> The diegetic/non-diegetic binary, while widely used in film music studies and sophisticated enough for the purposes of this article, is not without debate. For an account of how the binary might be refined, see Neumeyer (2000). This article does not consider sound effects or foley, but these sonic aspects of film might comprise future work in the area (see Conclusion).

contextual factors, become motifs that communicate an idea immediately, efficiently, and effectively to an audience. In the truest sense of the word, they are indeed musical cues” (Scheurer, 2005, p. 158). These cues are normally recognisable to (Western) audiences, Scheurer (2005, p. 158) explains, because they are “largely drawn from the musical vocabulary of classical (especially post-Romantic) music literature, light-classical music, and classic Hollywood genre films themselves.” In addition, they are cues often instilled by education. Historically, symphonic music has been used to encourage an appreciation of European cultural monuments (Neumeyer, 2000). Today, in the UK, music lessons are compulsory up to age 11, so that pupils might understand “a universal language that embodies one of the highest forms of creativity” and “listen with discrimination to the best in the [principally Western, classical] musical canon” (Department of Education, 2013). Landmark exponents of this canon, such as J. S. Bach, provide the very basis for the tonal structures of much modern music (Eliot Gardiner, 2013).

These musical cues are frequently wedded to spatial knowledges. Writing from a regionalist perspective – which has been the bedrock of geographical engagement with music, especially in the US (e.g. Nash, 1968) – Shobe and Banis (2010, p. 87) have described how “music often serves as a surrogate for cultural understandings of place as well as regional stereotypes”. These understandings intersect with musical style in different ways, in different places. In focus groups in the US, for example, Shobe and Banis (2010, p. 92) have found that bluegrass, a genre with which participants were unfamiliar, nevertheless conformed well to pre-existing notions of rurality, associated “with the Appalachian Mountains, Appalachia (as a cultural region), and Kentucky (the bluegrass state)”. Such stereotyping exists at a global scale, too – often in highly-politicised ways pertaining to group identities like race and gender (see below). Outside of these place-based associations, music is spatial in other ways. In the case of film score, its scale can be broad (Jerome Moross’ *The Big Country*, 1958) or claustrophobic (Howard Shore’s *Panic Room*, 2002), rendered through stylistic associations explored in greater depth below.

In addition to the explicitly spatial, musical cues often align with particular actions, emotions and identities. To represent heroism, for example, “composers often rely on gestures that employ vigorous or driving rhythms, dramatic intervallic leaps, especially of a fourth or fifth or an octave, or soaring melodic patterns that exploit chords outlining the fifth (1-3-5) or octaves or ascending melodic lines to underscore the exploits of the hero” (Scheurer, 2005, p. 158). In the case of film score, musical approaches to conflict can be bombastic (Elmer Bernstein’s *The Magnificent Seven*, 1960) or more reflective (Georges Delerue’s *Platoon*, 1986); film score’s emotionality can be colourful (John Williams’ *Superman*, 1978) or more withdrawn (Trent

Reznor and Atticus Ross' *The Social Network*, 2010). As with the paragraphs above, this does not mean that music cannot be interpreted in multiple ways, but that composers and listeners usually engage with music through thoroughly socialised frameworks and conventions, "maintaining complex relationships with the social world" (François, 2007, p. 35). As such, it is helpful to consider music in traditional, representational ways – as a part of a structured, intertextual mosaic, in which meaning is made through listening, reception, interpretation, comparison.

But music is also something else: affective – and in a way that is often considered unique (Meyer, 1956). It has been observed, for example, that classical instrumental music calms pre-literate humans (infants), as well as adults (Field, 1999). This has made its discussion a preserve of philosophers, who have often invoked the soul and the divine in explaining how music precipitates emotional reaction, regardless of the listener's musical learning (Pelosi, 2010). Together with the structures above, which help to make music interpretable, this makes it key for accounts of music to move beyond the representational/non-representational binary that remains an ongoing debate in popular geopolitics (see below). Rather, as Cresswell (2012, p. 100) has contended, a critical position is required that exceeds both approaches, "to figure out how representation *works* in and with the world" – an aim that, despite surface disputes, remains central to theorists of both approaches (Cresswell, 2012; Anderson, 2018). Instrumental music cannot be understood solely through structure and the decoding of meaning, the preserves of representationalism, nor can it be divorced from the same, as the next section explores.

### **Film score and the geopolitics of instrumental music**

Music has been of (at least niche) concern to geographers since the 1960s, with Peter Nash's 1968 'Music regions and regional music' commonly cited as the first geographical treatment of the topic (Carney, 1998). With the 'new cultural geography' of the 1980s, cultural forms achieved especial prominence in geographical analyses (Jackson, 1989). Principally, however, these focused on visual, rather than aural cultural productions (Cresswell, 2010). Thus, Susan Smith, writing in 1997, argued that new cultural geography's concern with landscape (e.g. Cosgrove, 1984; Duncan, 1990; Daniels, 1993), although well-developed, nevertheless privileged painting over music, despite the rich Renaissance canon of musical approaches to place. Smith, together with several other geographers (e.g. Kong, 1995; Nash & Carney, 1996; Smith, 1994, 1997; Carney, 1998; Cornell & Gibson, 2002), sought to correct this lacuna, bringing music more fully under geography's purview. Nevertheless, by the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, analysis of music

in geography was rare. Just over a decade ago, Hudson (2006, p. 626) could (fairly) describe “music and its relation to place [as] a rather neglected topic in human geography”.

In the years since, several musical genres have been considered in the field, focussing on their intersection with questions of identity, place and the political. For example, Maalsen and McLean (2016) have examined pop music and gendered power relations through public radio in Australia; French (2017), the spatial imaginaries of rap music in the US; Smith (2017), the relationship between British rock band, Led Zeppelin, and post-imperial British society. Johansson and Bell’s (2016) recent collection, *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, has brought together several of these perspectives. In political geography, and critical geopolitics particularly, accounts have considered similar questions, albeit with a greater emphasis on state actors, conflict and the spatialities of power, as per the traditional foci of political geographies (Toal, 2018). For example, Boulton (2008) has considered the Jacksonian geopolitical cultures of post-9/11 US country music; Street (2013), the association of music and political rights in Russia through the activist group, Pussy Riot; Liu, An & Zhu (2015), how China’s geopolitical strategies are represented in popular song on state television.<sup>2</sup>

What many of these accounts share is that their case studies have been addressed principally as ‘texts’ through their lyrics. In this way, despite their non-textual subject, they follow the text-centred approach to cultural products that has been a legacy of new cultural geography – perhaps especially in political geography and critical geopolitics, where visual modalities continue to garner the most attention (Rech, 2015; Hughes, 2016) (e.g. Shapiro, 2009; Ingram, 2012; Carter & Dodds, 2014; Dittmer & Latham, 2015; Funnell & Dodds, 2017; Grayson, 2017; Coletti, 2018; Thorogood, 2018; cf. Pinkerton, 2008; Pinkerton & Dodds, 2008; Weir, 2014). For some, the irony of this position has been recognised, and met with efforts to move past text-centric approaches to music in geography. In 2005, Anderson, Morton and Revill (2005, p. 640) were amongst the first to advocate “a shift towards... musical practice and performance rather than focusing on music or sound as textual objects”. Their work has been followed by several other interventions in human geography that have sought to better understand music, and the acoustic, as non-textual cultural forms (e.g. Gallagher & Prior, 2013; Duffy, Waitt & Harada, 2016; Waitt, Ryan & Farbotko, 2016).

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<sup>2</sup> For further reflection on music from the perspective of International Relations, see Davies and Franklin (2015), Hast (2018).

Broadly, these interventions have been informed by the rise of non-representational theory: an approach that has supplemented human geography's focus on representation with "an emphasis on practice, embodiment, materiality, and process" (Simpson, 2015). Waitt, Ryan and Farbotko (2016, p. 284), for example, through the case study of a climate change protest march in Australia, have highlighted the 'visceral politics of sound', arguing that the rhythm of protest marches (bands, chanting, footfall, etc.) offers "a strategic starting point to understand power, subjectivity and place". In a similar vein, Kanngieser (2015, p. 2) has argued that "sound, as all transversal phenomena, is situated in an always-political dynamic... Sound brings into the world novel relations, it shifts paradigms and builds new formations". Such accounts echo the (fleeting) reference to instrumental film score in McCormack (2003, p. 499) – perhaps the first in political geography – which explores how John Williams' *Star Wars* theme contributes to a "*Star Wars* affect, an abstract yet moving complex of gestural, figural and musical refrains." Through this, McCormack (2003, p. 488) says, "the world is emergent from a range of spatial processes whose power is not dependent upon their crossing a threshold of contemplative cognition".

These non-representational approaches are conceptually useful, highlighting the affective and emotional dimensions through which representations like instrumental music work. These are aspects often poorly theorised by traditional, occasionally static representational accounts in political geography (Dittmer & Gray, 2010), which, like human geography (e.g. Thrift, 2008; Pile, 2010; Vannini, 2015; Anderson & Harrison, 2016), has seen increasing attention to NRT in recent years (e.g. Dittmer, 2014; Müller, 2015; Laketa, 2016; Bos, 2018). The notion of pre-cognition, in particular – highlighted by McCormack – lends itself to the analysis of instrumental music, which conveys meaning, especially emotional, without pre-existing knowledge of musical grammars and forms, as above (Stewart & Walsh, 2001). Thus, we might think of particular musical refrains – especially where these contribute to the construction of categories like nationhood, gender and ethnicity, as in this article – as an example of what Connolly (2002, p. 34) calls 'somatic markers': "intersubjective structures of affect and memory" that operate "below the threshold of reflection" (Toal, 2003, p. 858).

But, there are limits to non-representational approaches to the audible. Concern with how music affects has rarely resulted in close readings of the mechanics of particular musical examples – their form, style, phrasing, notation, instrumentation, and so forth – and how these convey meaning. Rather, non-representational accounts frequently conceptualise in generalities and universals (Nash, 2000; Tolia-Kelly, 2006; Sharp, 2009; Cresswell, 2012), with the stress on pre-cognition often excluding the social (Åhäll, 2018). The same is true of theorisations of 'the

subject' in NRT, which, in an effort to move away from 'static' markers of identity, have reconstituted the subject as contingent, processual, relational (Simpson, 2017). Where the subject has been defined, this has often been ambiguous, such as the "creative" or "post-encounter" subject (Wylie, 2016, p. 101; Simpson, 2017, p. 2). "What is missing", as Cresswell (2012, p. 102) has remarked, "is a group subject marked by all the old important forms of 'identity', such as class, race, and gender." Such analytical frames are necessarily reductive, but important precisely because people (continue to) identify with and act through them: NRT's focus on flux overlooks their remarkable durability (Cresswell, 2012).

This article employs the strengths of both approaches: it stresses the importance of understanding cultural forms as affective, with the potential to influence (differing) audiences often beneath the level of critical awareness (Anderson, 2018), but also queries the abstract, depoliticised manner in which affect is frequently discussed (Åhäll, 2018). Taking its cue from affectual auto-ethnographies, such as Revill (2004) and Simpson (2008), it presents the author's interpretation of a series of film scores. To evoke these, as far as text can, the article is written in what NRT calls a 'lively' manner. In this way, it follows Ingold's (2015, p. viii) invocation, regarding NRT's methodologies, to explore the "expressive possibilities of the word". But at the same time, this article structures its account through the conventional geopolitical analytical frame of identity/difference, considering nationhood, gender and race, in particular. In this, it builds on Wood (2012), who has sought to stress music as both a medium through which identity is reproduced, but also a place where ideas of identity can be received and negotiated. Specifically, this article traces the affectivity of musical expression through the actual mechanics of particular musical scores.

To date, such specificity has not characterised geographical approaches to music. As such, this article draws from an interdisciplinary body of literature, principally film music studies (e.g. Scheurer, 1998, 2005; Laing, 2007; Cooke, 2008; Griffith & Machin, 2014; Howell, 2015), that has better delineated the components of instrumental film score. Building on these – Griffith and Machin (2014), in particular – this article explores how instrumental film score affects across three registers: the stylistic, the kinetic and the associational. The first refers to the 'intertextuality' of instrumental music, such as the association of minor key jazz music with crime, sleaze, sex and race – the feature of instrumental music that requires, perhaps, the greatest learning. The second refers to physical correlates, such as the relationship between rhythm and heartrate, with a higher tempo suggesting urgency and movement. The third refers to music's connection with our everyday soundscapes, for example a sudden clash of cymbals might

symbolise a crash and conflict, the light twittering of a flute birdsong and thus rurality. Such features are highlighted to consider how instrumental film score is affective, as well as what geopolitical knowledges it might communicate.

Foremost amongst these knowledges, and the underlying theme of this article, is how instrumental film score serves to articulate the opposition between self/other. In particular, it foregrounds nationhood, and its gendered and racialized dimensions, showing how the Western film scores discussed here render national and supra-national difference musically. Indeed, the classical style, in which most instrumental film score is written, is intimately connected to identity formation, with classical composers historically serving a key role in communicating understandings of nation and nationhood (Smith, 1997; Kelly, 2008). In this way, this article draws from the classic concerns of political geography and critical geopolitics with identity/difference, especially that predicated on national identity (e.g. Dijkink, 1996) – a concern that, with the current rise of nationalist movements, shows little sign of becoming outmoded. By adding a close reading of the affective mechanics of instrumental music, though, it seeks to open-up a further site for the analysis of popular geopolitics, arguing that musical characteristic like melody, instrumentation, and musical dynamics (variation in loudness), even at the level of the individual musical bar, are geopolitical phenomena.

In structure, this article considers the construction of nationhood, gender and ethnicity in film scores set in three geopolitical contexts – each a conflict in which the US has been central, and which continue to proliferate in Western popular culture (Boggs & Pollard, 2015). In the first, it considers how film scores like *Casablanca* (1942) cement World War Two's reputation as 'the good war', through a generally straightforward good/evil nationalistic moral binary (Crampton & Power, 2005). In the second, it considers a series of Cold War thriller scores, showing how these mobilise a gendered, normative understanding of which bodies should undertake securitising geopolitical action on the state's behalf. In the third, it considers how the racialized spaces of the War on Terror are rendered through scores like that of *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), which problematize these conflicts, but still interpret exotic locales through Western musical conventions. By aligning these geopolitical periods with these three conventional tropes of political geographical analysis, this article offers three 'soundings' of the ways that film score might be addressed. As well as capturing this article's acoustic focus, the term is used here to highlight this article as a preliminary survey of the area.

In addition, by taking this chronological approach, this article is able to acknowledge the changing craft of film scoring over time, and its relationship to geopolitical cultures. Early American film scores from the 1930s onward, like the films they accompany, often reflect the contemporary importance of nationality as a marker of identity for Western and American audiences (Cooke, 2008). Many film scores today share this approach. But, as this article discusses in its later sections, as the US' relationship with the world has changed, so too have the ways in which film score has sought to capture this relationship, even if a foundational rendering of identity/difference has remained constant. In keeping with this chronological approach, it should be noted that this article is one, historically-situated interpretation of these scores, informed by current knowledge (of conflicts and their ultimate trajectories) unavailable to the scores' composers. As Reyland (2012, p. 67) states, "readings of music in film can never be, and should never be, entirely decontaminated or 'cleansed' of the detritus of their continuing historical reception." This article is a first step in considering how instrumental film score might be brought under geopolitical attention.

### **Sounding I: Nationalism and World War Two**

Questions of nationalism and war have been intrinsically connected with Hollywood film score since its inception, manifested through the persons of the earliest film composers. With the decline of silent film in the 1920s and the orchestras that accompanied them, and the advent of the technological possibility of film with its own sound, more serious attention was devoted by directors and producers to score. Its purpose was simple: to enhance a film's storytelling, using music's emotional potential to paint character, time and place. While score existed by the 1920s (Slowik, 2012), *King Kong* (1933) is conventionally highlighted as revolutionising the field. Its score, by Max Steiner, heralded the arrival of non-diegetic music as the norm in Hollywood productions. Steiner himself was a Jewish émigré from Europe. Many of his fellow composers during Hollywood's 'golden age' (late 1920s-early 1960s) shared his background, including Erich Korngold (*The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938; *The Sea Hawk*, 1940), Franz Waxman (*Rebecca*, 1940; *Rear Window*, 1954) and Miklós Rózsa (*Spellbound*, 1945; *Ben-Hur*, 1959). Classically trained in the music schools of Europe, these composers introduced lush orchestrations of the Western, symphonic style into Hollywood productions.

Typically, their scores are bombastic, confident, patriotic – celebrations of their adopted homeland. With minimal phrasing, the moral righteousness of Western characters is espoused. The opening of Steiner's *Casablanca* (1942) provides perhaps the classic example. With the



opening credits, the Warner Bros. logo shimmers into a map of Africa. A cymbal clash and trumpet fanfare accompany the superimposition of the names of the film's three leads and heroes: Humphrey Bogart (Rick), Ingrid Bergman (Ilsa) and Paul Henreid (Laszlo). This typical curtain-raiser then shifts into a minor key; the film's title appears, the rhythm changes, the overtones become Arabesque (Neumeyer & Buhler, 2015). As Steiner's name appears, the register shifts again, and a trumpeted rendition of *La Marseillaise* bursts into the melody. As Griffith and Machin (2014, p. 79) state, "national anthems often use a stepped increase in pitch to suggest the steady feel of brightness and energy associated with the [idealised] national spirit." But here, the final note is flattened: "we are alerted to understand that the struggle for freedom is still much in doubt." (Marks, 2000, p. 119).

*Casablanca*, released in 1942, was designed as a thinly veiled call for American involvement in the European theatre (Reyland, 2012): "I bet they're asleep in New York", says protagonist Rick, ruefully: "I bet they're asleep all over America". The Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, had triggered the United States to declare war on Japan on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Three days later, Germany and Italy, Japan's Axis allies, declared war on the United States. But it would be several months before the US military deployed to the European theatre, as the country prepared its armed forces. By May, 1942, the US had begun direct military assistance to the campaign against Italian and German forces in North Africa. But, for some on the Allied side, full deployment was taking too long. Ironically, *Casablanca* (the city), in part for the strategic reasons identified in the voiceover above, hosted an Allied conference to plan the next phase of the European campaign in January, 1943. But at the time *Casablanca* was in production, US commitment was yet to be realised.

In this way, *La Marseillaise*, led diegetically by Lászlo toward the middle of the film, functions as a patriotic rallying cry for the US to come to the aid of her oldest ally, with "Laszlo... challeng[ing] the Germans on the ground most sacred to German culture, that of music." (Neumeyer & Buhler, 2015, p. 106). The unequivocal celebration of America by Steiner is a call to arms; the score invokes an idealised France of the past – Rick and Ilsa's Paris – to emphasise what requires saving for the future (Hoeckner, 2007). That World War Two represents an unalloyed example of good versus evil, however, marks almost all Hollywood depictions of the conflict. As Crampton and Power (2005, p. 51) state, World War Two functions cinematically as "a frame of reference for good or just wars." As such, the binary of good/evil colours the majority of score pertaining to the conflict – in distinction to more ambiguous wars, most recently the War

on Terror (see below). *Casablanca*, as one of the first and perhaps most unambiguous of these scores, sets the tenor for many of Hollywood's later musical representations of the conflict.

A list of the top-grossing films to feature World War Two since 1980 provides a point of approach. In order of highest gross, they include: *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) (scored by John Williams), *Pearl Harbor* (2001) (Hans Zimmer), *Dunkirk* (2017) (Zimmer), *Unbroken* (2014) (Alexandre Desplat), *Schindler's List* (1993) (Williams), *The Imitation Game* (2014) (Desplat), *Fury* (2014) (Steven Price), and *Valkyrie* (2008) (John Ottman). As with Hollywood's 'golden age', the majority of these scores – reflecting the broader profession – have been produced by a small number of Western, male composers (see Conclusion). Beyond this, four of the top seven have been written by the two composers whose films, in aggregate, have grossed the highest in history (over \$11 billion each): John Williams and Hans Zimmer. The work of both is steeped in the classical Hollywood tradition, featuring full orchestras, grand themes, the power and pomp of brass, the emotion and nuance of strings. Through the 'affective architecture' of their scores (adapting Adey [2008]), the US, and then her Allies, are positioned at the head of a moral geopolitical hierarchy.

In *Saving Private Ryan*, the opening scene depicts a veteran returning to Normandy to visit the war graves of his brothers. As he falls to his knees, a close-up shot of his eyes fades to Omaha Beach in 1944, as he reminisces of his experiences in the European theatre. The following, much-celebrated scene depicts the D-Day landings from the perspective of the US' Charlie Company. It unfolds without sound until the battle is over, whereupon Williams' score returns as the camera pans across the carnage left behind on the beach. The juxtaposition of intense, unscored combat scenes with scored non-combat scenes, characterises the remainder of the film. Principally, the score paints the GI of World War Two, especially during D-Day, as emblematic of what Tom Brokaw (2005) has popularly called 'the greatest generation'. For Roberts (2013, p. 57), this is the "myth of the manly GI" – a term referring less to the actual heroism of many servicemen, evidently great, than the fact that this has become the defining popular image of the GI in the European theatre.<sup>3</sup> Williams' score underpins this construction by (literally) trumpeting the feats of Charlie Company.

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<sup>3</sup> 'GI' is often taken to mean 'general infantry', but may stem from 'government issue' (Kennett, 1987). Here, it is used in the former, colloquial sense.

As with any memorial, Williams's score is also concerned with time and its relationship to space (Jones, 2011). Staccato drum rolls throughout the score highlight the film's martial aspect, placing the events on-screen in a long line of American military exploits crucial to the nation's founding and standing, and echoing the rows of war graves rendered visually at the start. The score's recurring motif is the six-minute track, *Hymn to the Fallen*. With trumpet and French horn in the foreground, the motif nods to the American bugle call, *Taps*, performed solo during military funerals (the American equivalent of the British salute, the *Last Post*). As the track continues, the brass is joined by the swell of strings, before the entire orchestra enters, including choir, highlighting the score's religious, specifically Christian overtones. As in *Casablanca*, choral music, through its religious associations, provides the film's moral centre (Reyland, 2012). Reaching a crescendo, the supporting orchestra falls away. By the end of *Hymn to the Fallen*, only the brass lingers, tailing-off diminuendo, again echoing *Taps* – a final salute to the American servicemen of a grateful nation.

Necessarily, these scores are a brief sample. But in their reinforcement of particular World War Two narratives, they echo numerous examples of the genre in Hollywood, including Jerry Goldsmith's *Patton* (1970) and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970); Lalo Schifrin's *Kelly's Heroes* (1970) and *The Eagle Has Landed* (1976); Elmer Bernstein's *The Bridge at Remagen* (1969) and *The Great Escape* (1963); James Horner's *Enemy at the Gates* (2001) and *Windtalkers* (2002). Returning to typology outlined previously, these narratives of World War Two are rendered in the examples here through stylistic associations between drum rolls and the martial, choral music and the sacred. More explicitly, national anthems are employed to elicit support for particular nations/alliances (Cooke, 2008). Sympathy is invoked through the emotionality of strings, and their ability to echo kinetically the vulnerabilities of the human body. This section, therefore, has considered how this affective architecture seeks to create a particular, nationalistic disposition in the audience. The following sections discuss how such nationalistic dispositions are gendered and classed.

## **Sounding II: Gender and the Cold War**

In addition to imagining the nation through a realist paradigm as the ship of state, moving patriotically through time (Martin Jones & Smith, 2015), instrumental film score produces nationhood at smaller geopolitical scales, including that of the body. This includes the gendered alignment of women/men to certain national spaces, actions and pursuits, as feminist geopolitics has foregrounded (Dixon & Marston, 2013). In 2010, Dittmer and Gray called for the greater

integration of feminist perspectives into popular geopolitics. This has been heeded by several studies, which have sought to better engage with how emotion, embodiment and gender intersect with the popular geopolitical (e.g. Glynn & Cupples, 2015; Kirby, 2015, 2019; An, Liu & Zhu, 2016). Taking its cue from these, this section considers how instrumental film score paints gender, using the example of Western, Cold War-themed film, principally the spy-thriller. While the Cold War – a period of military, economic and cultural competition, contested principally by the US and the Soviet Union from the end of WWII (1945) to the Revolutions of 1989 – is synonymous with this genre, the spy thriller has a longer lineage.

Conventionally, the first spy thriller film is cited as Alfred Hitchcock's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935), based on the adventure novel by John Buchan (1993 [1915]). The film's opening score, by Jack Beaver and Louis Levy, lays down many of the recurring tenets of the genre. Opening with disjointed trumpets, these rise through the octave, ratcheting up the tension, before sounding together in apparent warning. A drum roll precedes what initially seems a valedictory refrain, but in a portentous, minor-key: querying, rather than answering. The trumpets switch to a lower, more ominous register, and are joined by rolling violins, which sweep upward, increasing the tension again. As the title appears, the woodwind section, in a moment of humour, bounces downward like footfalls on a staircase: a nod to the film's title. The trumpet theme returns, violins join together in a sustained, high pitch, played in an anxious *vibrato*, and the trumpets blare one last time. In short, the score is unwilling to provide the audience with the certainty of a straightforward, recurring motif. This uneasiness is intensified by the changing prominence of the orchestra's four sections – there is no principal theme, nor principal instrument.

This tone of suspense and intrigue is characteristic of espionage thriller scores, from *North by Northwest* (1959), to *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1965), to *The Conversation* (1974). As these attest, the period in which such films peaked, in terms of popularity, was the Cold War. On the American and Soviet sides of the Iron Curtain, the possibility of the 'enemy within' became a source of especial anxiety; the spectre of full-scale nuclear warfare the existential, less tangible backdrop. Perhaps because of this, films concerned specifically with the nuclear standoff, while plentiful – e.g. *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), *Fail Safe* (1964), *Thirteen Days* (2000) – are dwarfed in number and popularity by films concerning the war 'in the shadows' – a genre dominated by the *James Bond* franchise. Rather than presenting the horror of nuclear exchange, the spy thriller depicts the Cold War in an understandable, engaging, even entertaining manner (Denning, 1987). Central to this presentation is a firm demarcation between the roles of (mainly active) male and (mainly passive) female characters in securitizing the state.

The character of the spy in popular culture is synonymous with masculinity. From serious entries (*The Ipcress File*), to comedic (*The Pink Panther*, 1963), to those that blur this divide (Roger Moore's oeuvre as James Bond), a near constant is a male lead. The spy thriller's score frequently reflects this, communicating "the values of spying, its association with masculinities, adventure, mystery, secrecy, suspense and danger" (Griffith & Machin, 2014, p. 77). The high-tempo guitar riff of Monty Norman's opening *James Bond* theme is perhaps the best-known example: a rumbling line of extended drama set entirely in the minor key, before a two-note trumpet breaks the tension. In musical terms, this dramatizes espionage as continually perilous, with the occasional eruption of action – gunfire or an action set-piece, usually triggered by the male protagonist. Indeed, the *James Bond* theme encapsulates this, its ending punctuated by trumpets that accompany Bond's famous gunshot toward the camera. In this way, the theme institutes a series of binaries – between suspense and action, the intimate and expansive, the female and male. Such binaries form the basis for the *Bond* series' instrumental music, and the wider series' eroticisation of 'exotic' female bodies (Dodds, 2003; Funnell & Dodds, 2017).

In *The Ipcress File*, the opening theme also accompanies the visual introduction of the film's male protagonist, Harry Palmer. Scored by John Barry, composer of a dozen scores for the *James Bond* franchise, it again foregrounds the tension between the fragile (female) and the robust (male) – delicate string, harp and flute lines, broken by the twang of a cimbalom (a hammered dulcimer). Again, a series of dichotomies are posed, the soundtrack underscoring how quickly passivity can turn into action, implicitly to be realised by the film's male lead at some point in the future. As well, the *legato* qualities of the strings, harps and flutes, through film score's kinetic potential, imply the (stereotypical) sensuousness of the female form. The brusque, staccato of the cimbalom not only functions as a sharp, male rejoinder to this, but also, in an associational capacity, suggests the ricochet of bullets, which indeed occurs later in the film. Beyond this, registering barely in the background, a saxophone plays a winding jazz riff, making *The Ipcress File* one of the first espionage films to connect the erotic, exotic associations of this musical style to the heterosexual norms of the male spy.

The association of jazz with women, *via* a male heterosexual perspective, is put to work by film score in several ways. In the 1920s, jazz was banned on most American radio stations, considered both scandalous and subversive (Pinkerton & Dodds, 2008, p. 6). In large part, this derived from its association with African-American culture, and so other, well-established fears around hypersexualisation of the Afro-Caribbean body, and its threat to traditional white, heterosexual

norms (Monson, 1995). Such associations were spatialized, and reflected in film score: “From the 1940s onwards, the presence of jazz in film soundtracks habitually indicated alcoholism, drug addiction, crime, corruption, sleaze and sexual promiscuity, often in urban settings” (Cooke, 2008, p. 214). In other words, jazz was raced, gendered and located in particular ways. Its association with urban, rather than rural landscapes, also made it well-suited to evoking the place in which espionage typically occurs – gone are the broad fields, forests, skies and seas that characterised the decisive encounters of World War Two, replaced by the labyrinthine complexity of the streets, corridors and indoor locales in which the spy operates.<sup>4</sup>

Outside of jazz, the music accompanying female characters in spy thrillers often follows another pattern. The latest entries in the *Bond* franchise provide several examples. The ‘Bond Girls’ Madeleine (*Spectre*, 2015), Severine (*Skyfall*, 2012), Camille (*Quantum of Solace*, 2008), Vesper (*Casino Royale*, 2006), Jinx (*Die Another Day*, 2002), Elektra (*The World is Not Enough*, 1999), each have their own theme in their respective scores (the first two by Thomas Newman; the remainder by David Arnold). Uniformly, these are played *legato*, with strings and piano foregrounded. They are gentle, beautiful, often highly affecting – in other words, the conventional feminine. This is as true for Jinx, an NSA agent who helps Bond shoot his way out of trouble, as for Vesper, a more traditional ‘Bond Girl’, who serves chiefly as Bond’s passive love interest. Other examples include the themes for Julia (*Mission: Impossible III*, 2006), Marie (*The Bourne Ultimatum*, 2007), Irina (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, 2011). The high emotion and affectivity of these women’s themes is crucial – often, they are characters who provide a narrative impetus for the male lead, generally including the woman’s rescue at some point (Griffin, 2015).

The intersection of gender and heteronormative logics works in further ways. While the themes discussed here align with female characters, they are also generic love themes – their lush orchestration, and heavy use of strings, used to represent love in the romantic classical tradition. This reflects the fact that the majority of leads in spy thrillers are heterosexual, thus femininity and love, from their perspective, often overlap. Themes for female characters are written in this style – such as the *leitmotifs* for the Bond Girls, above – but rarely themes for male characters, because they are rarely the love interest. As such, love itself is frequently gendered and sexualised in the spy thriller score. For female characters to be rendered via modes other than a

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<sup>4</sup> The use of jazz to render female characters as the love/sex interest of a heterosexual male traverses genres, including the scores for *Some Like it Hot* (1959), *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988), *Body Heat* (1998).

love theme is possible, but infrequent – often available only to those who transgress conventional female norms. For example, Xenia (*Goldeneye*, 1995) is Bond's antagonist, portrayed as a hypersexed, hyperviolent *femme fatale*. As such, her theme – compared to that of the film's traditional love interest, Natalya – is bombastic: it matches the kineticism of Bond's own theme, because, while Xenia's motives are immoral, she otherwise behaves as he behaves.

### **Sounding III: Race and the War on Terror**

Hollywood score was born of the Western classical tradition, making it intrinsically a method by which non-Western peoples and places are rendered through a Western aesthetic. More specifically, Hollywood has long portrayed non-Western, usually non-white peoples through certain, well-established musical conventions – what Cooke (2008, p. 89) has called “musical stereotyping”. These draw on the stylistic knowledge of audiences, discussed in the Introduction, to present musical shorthands that capture the Otherness of particular groups. To return to the example of *King Kong*, parallel fourths and fifths – a simple musical structure – are used to represent the ‘primitive natives’, “and later appeared ubiquitously in Hollywood scores for ‘other’ peoples as diverse as Native Americans and ancient Romans” (Cooke, 2008, p. 89).

Unsophisticated music mimics ‘unsophisticated’ peoples, while richer and more complex orchestrations are reserved for more complex, Western characters. In *King Kong*, such stereotyping is used for black characters, but similar reductions are employed elsewhere, up to the present day. This is perhaps especially true in musical renderings of the Middle East, which often play with traditional Arabic musical forms to provide a shorthand sense of place.

Maurice Jarre's overture for *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) provides a classic example, with an Arabesque *leitmotif* recurring in its grand, classical, string-led opening. Later, signifying the various perils (T. E.) Lawrence faces in the Middle East, the theme breaks, the tempo increases, and a drum roll, separate brass theme, and cymbals are introduced – the latter emulating *zills*: finger cymbals used in Middle Eastern belly-dancing and Ottoman-style military bands. This direct method of conjuring the exoticism of Arabia is used frequently in other films, both for Arabic characters and Arabic locales. Examples from across genres include *Aladdin* (1992), *The Mummy* (1999), *Three Kings* (1999), *Charlie Wilson's War* (2007), *Taken 2* (2012). The ‘musical stereotyping’ of *Aladdin*, in particular, came under scrutiny after the first version of its opening song, ‘Arabian Nights’, was criticised by the US Arab Anti-Discrimination League. As a result, lyrics were altered that described Arabia as a place ‘where they cut off your ear, if they don't like your face’ (Belkhyr, 2013). The instrumental stereotyping of the region, though, perhaps because

instrumental music has encountered less critical attention than lyrical (see previous sections), caused no consternation.

In addition to Arabesque notation, Western films featuring the Middle East often use another kind of musical expression to evoke place, engaging both the stylistic and kinetic aspects of music. This phrasing is vocal, usually wordless, and often features ululation – a sustained, wavering sound, resembling a wail with trilling, used at various Middle Eastern rituals and events to express heightened emotion. Such ululation features in perhaps the most well-known Arabic musical passage, the Islamic *adhan* – recited and broadcast by a mosque’s (male) *muezzin* as a call to prayer. Dramatized versions of the *adhan*, or abstract vocals emulating it, feature in a series of films concerning the Islamic world, and pre-9/11 Islamist terrorism, including *The Siege* (1998) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001).<sup>5</sup> In *The Siege*, it accompanies the abduction of a sheikh, while the camera pans across a desert landscape; in *Black Hawk Down*, another desert is pictured, as a male, quavering voice mourns the victims of the Somali famine that triggered the 1993 American military intervention. In each case, the stylistic associations suggest a (generic) Islamic world; the kinetic associations, the pathos of the human voice.

These films provide a context for film scores of the War on Terror. The start of the war, which continues today *via* military strikes against Islamic State, is conventionally traced to al-Qaeda’s attacks on New York on 9/11 (2001). The military response to these, by an international coalition led by the United States and the United Kingdom, initially encompassed Afghanistan, al-Qaeda’s base of operations, but later expanded, by dubious justification, to include Iraq. While US president, George W. Bush, declared victory as early as May 2003, shortly after Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi regime had been toppled, a series of insurgencies have maintained the conflict. Estimates vary, but several hundred thousand people, mostly civilians, have been killed during the war’s prosecution (Physicians for Social Responsibility, 2015). In the West, substantial critical attention has been devoted to this death toll, as well as a perceived erosion of human rights, the war’s factitious justification, and the rise of extraterritorial military intervention – including the 9/11 attacks themselves, extraordinary rendition, and automated drone attacks (Scahill, 2013). Despite Bush’s us/them rhetoric, the conflict has been marked by complexity and blurred boundaries (Gregory, 2011).

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<sup>5</sup> Other examples, not featuring Islamist terrorism, but seeking to conjure the Islamic world using this approach, include *The World is Not Enough* (1999) and *Viceroy’s House* (2017).



From the mid-to-late 2000s, a series of films sought to capture this complexity, often presenting ambivalent, uneasy depictions of the war, including *United 93* (2006), *The Hurt Locker* (2008), *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) and *Eye in the Sky* (2015). While the scores of these films still draw from the Orientalised melodic themes above, they largely dispense with the stereotypes presented by pre-9/11 films like *The Siege* and *Black Hawk Down*, refusing clear bifurcations between geopolitical morality/immorality.<sup>6</sup> *Zero Dark Thirty*, a film received by audiences as both pro- and anti-US military intervention in the Gulf (Purse, 2017) – suggesting it captures-well this sense of ambivalence – represents a useful case study. Indeed, the film itself was implicated in the domestic politics of the War on Terror, with (unproven) accusations from Republicans that the Democratic Obama administration (2008–2016) leaked information to the film’s makers for propaganda purposes. The film dramatizes the search for, and assassination of, Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, killed by US SEAL Team Six in 2011 at his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. His killing marks the film’s denouement.

As SEAL Team Six departs for the bin Laden raid, Alexandre Desplat’s score introduces a subtle, two-note dirge from the brass section, before a plain beat arrives, reflecting the heartbeats of the crew and the incessant chop of the helicopters’ rotors. Woodwind enters, moving up and down a scale, but providing no melody; the drone of the trumpets becomes louder as the helicopter approaches its target. After the attack, played out in silence, the music returns, again with the languorous drone of trumpets, sounding two deep notes repeatedly. A melody eventually arrives, quivering (briefly) in an Arabesque style, but the only sustained line is the incessant drone of the brass, underscoring all else. What the raid has accomplished is ambiguous: the Black Hawk helicopters are rendered in the score as unrelenting and oppressive; the dirge of their engines, captured through trumpets, neither moral nor immoral, but tools that express the US’ military dominion over this space. In this way, visuals and soundtrack align to express both definitions of drone: a monotonous musical note of low pitch, and an unthinking object (in this case, pilotless aircraft) employed at the behest of a central command.

Similar musical approaches are used elsewhere to express a similar ambivalence about the conflict, including *United 93* (John Powell) and *The Hurt Locker* (Marco Beltrami and Buck Sanders). In this way, films ambivalent about the War on Terror communicate their

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<sup>6</sup> Here, films ethically ambiguous about the War on Terror are focused on, to show how even the scores of films with progressive goals nevertheless situate the audience in particular, politicised ways. For further discussion of the War on Terror on-screen, see Carter and Dodds (2011).

problematisation through score. In *Zero Dark Thirty*, this includes score's stylistic, kinetic and associational qualities. In the first, the faint integration of the Arabesque into melodic lines seeks to emplace the audience within a particular imaginative space; in the second, an incessant beat, as the camera shows the helicopter crew preparing for their assault, refers to the soldiers' elevated heartbeats, as they close-in for the kill; in the third, the same beat, and the recurring unmelodic drone of the brass section, mimics the sound of the helicopter itself – the monotonous slap of its rotors drawing Seal Team Six closer to their target. This is score of a style different to that in the preceding sections – neither a patriotic call to arms, nor elegy to the tragedy of war, but an ambiguous soundscape that reflects a struggle to find meaning in geopolitical events.

At the same time, the score, even if it avoids celebrating or glorifying the conflict it depicts, is orientated firmly from the audience's (assumedly Western) perspective. In *Zero Dark Thirty*, instrumental music and camera perspective align, in that the audience is presented with the view from behind SEAL Team Six as they enter bin Laden's compound, accompanied by the last refrains of the instrumental score that introduced these characters as they prepared to depart moments before. In other words, the score and visuals emplace the viewer empathetically with the American combatants, even if the film's narrative is reticent to form a firm judgement on the war's morality. In the case of this particular scene, there would likely be little objection to this alignment. But elsewhere, the film uses the same technique for the portrayal of torture by US service personnel (Lovatt, 2015). To this end, Lovatt (2015) highlights the political importance of how spectators are situated by film music – emotionally, ethically and politically. In response, Lovatt calls for an 'ethical spectatorship' that rests on the ability to listen more critically – a call that sets-up this article's conclusions.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, the case has been made for the greater consideration of instrumental music in the production and communication of geopolitical knowledge. In particular, this article has focused on the example of instrumental film score. In the music accompanying several World War Two films, the popular imagining of that conflict as an enduring example of *jus ad bellum* (Rengger, 2002), with a clear moral bifurcation between good/evil, is reinforced; in the score of the Cold War espionage thriller, the roles of men and women in securitising the state – and in social relations generally – are demarcated; in the score of several recent War on Terror films, and despite the spectre of America's ambiguous imperialism in that conflict, the audience is aligned with the Western experience. In doing so, this article highlights a further mode through which

geopolitical understandings are communicated to audiences – who, in the UK, view nearly 4 billion films on television per year (BFI, 2018).

For what purpose are these understandings communicated? This article has sought to show *how* and *why* instrumental Hollywood film score might be considered geopolitical, rather than focusing on the designs behind this. Like film more broadly, score is certainly intended, in large part, to entertain – to enhance film’s storytelling by painting character, time and place in particular ways. Given that Hollywood caters for, principally, Western audiences, it is perhaps unsurprising that Western historical norms – around nationality, gender, and race – have figured centrally. From a different perspective, conceptions like James Der Derian’s (2001) ‘military-industrial-media-entertainment network’ might be invoked. In part, the film scores discussed here are part of an effort, whether intentional or not, that legitimises certain kinds of Western military intervention in certain spaces, reinforcing gendered and racialized norms in the process. The pool of film score composers, cited throughout this article, is small in terms of number, even smaller in terms of demographics. Further research might unpack how this size impinges, or not, on the plurality of perspectives expressed by Hollywood score.

Perhaps the most important finding here, however, is how film score frequently supports a binary politics of identity/difference. Such an effect is accentuated by the fact that music, contrary to text, affects both through frameworks of meaning established by other musical iterations, instilled by education and experience, but also pre-cognitively, through emotional reactions that, if they are learned at all, are not specifically tutored. In this way, by orientating the viewer with respect to geopolitical events in particular ways, film score runs against notions of deliberative democracy (Connolly, 2002). This occurs in more and less obvious fashions. For example, bombastic scoring can celebrate Western national identities in a straightforward, often obvious manner. But film score can also affect in other, more subtle ways. Employing romantic score for female characters not only reinforces gendered and sexualised hierarchies, but conditions the way in which certain people and events are understood; using romantic stylistic devices to render certain characters’ interactions precludes these from being understood in other ways. Such effects are exacerbated by the fact that sound is immersive in a way that vision is not – *in situ*, it cannot be turned-off.

The interpretations here are only three soundings, and it is important to recognise their limits. The films discussed, while forming coherent perspectives on these conflicts and issues, do not represent the only musical opinions of the same. While the scores accompanying World War Two

films have frequently been nationalistic, some, like *The Thin Red Line* (1998) (Hans Zimmer), are more reflective, as befitting a film with a firmly anti-war stance (Shapiro, 2009). Similarly, *American Sniper* (2014) (Craig Armstrong), with its rock and roll infused main theme, presents a less ambivalent rendering of the Iraq War than films like *Zero Dark Thirty*. As an introduction to the area, this article has offered an indication of how film score might be interpreted, recognising that the analytical frames privileged here – nationality, gender, race – are often intersectional in ways that targeted readings can obscure. In addition, this article has focussed on Hollywood film, but this is only one site at which score is performed. Television series and computer games, expanding in market share, increasingly feature dedicated instrumental music. The cinemas of other regions (including US independent cinema) will also be important sites for further analysis.

That instrumental score is almost always bound-up with questions of identity/difference should also not preclude its enjoyment. Building on the work of film music studies, this article has hopefully shown it to be a rich and interesting medium, often aesthetically beautiful, with much to communicate. What is required on the part of the listener, as Lovatt (2015) has argued, is an attentiveness to the ‘politics of aesthetics’ – an attentiveness that has clearly been the case in film music studies for some time, and that political geography might also benefit from. For Lovatt (2015, p. 25), this “ethical spectatorship may require cinematic auditors to listen more critically”. Such criticality is crucial, in that film score, like film, comes inherently from a particular, situated perspective – and in the immediate future, in Hollywood at least, one that appears to be the preserve of a select group of composers. In political geography, which continues to foreground the geopolitical knowledges communicated by popular culture in its analyses, this makes musical literacy an important addition to its methodological toolkit.

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