

Essay question: Why minimalist music becomes so successfully matched up with visual images when placed in filmic contexts? What are the aspects that feature its appropriateness?

To date, despite the current ubiquity of minimalist music in media, there appears to exist few resources addressing the role of minimalism in film. As noted by Kyle Gann, “the bibliography of minimalism is, appropriately, minimal” (Eaton, 2008:4) and this could be attributed to the fact that its use on the soundtrack is a relatively recent phenomenon, since 1980 reaches a wider audience. Additionally, the majority of film music scholars deal particularly with classical Hollywood film music aiming to uncover its underlying meanings and functions in relation to the image. But what minimalist music comes to mean in multimedia? Why it becomes so successfully matched up with visual images and what factors determine its ability to be able to shift across different contexts being particularly appropriated?

In order to address these points, this paper examines minimalist music’s characteristics and their relationship with the image both from a historical/theoretical and analytical perspective. After tracing minimalist movement in music from its origins to present, providing a brief theoretical and historical background which demonstrates its development throughout time, the focus is shifted to the music – image relationship, which I approach in comparison to the traditional film music. Finally, I present an analytical case study which focus on a mainstream film (*The Piano*, 1993) composed by the minimalist composer Michael Nyman (1944). Through the analysis of three different scenes in which the same music is employed, I will explore the ways by which music, image and narration interact with each other so as to create a meaning, examining at the same time how the functions of the same minimalist piece may vary depending on the narrative context. By decoding

minimalism's potential meanings and functions in film as well as the factors that allow it to be adapted to a variety of visual contexts, this essay seeks to form a richer understanding of the reasons that lie beneath minimalist music's appropriateness when placed in filmic contexts.

Background

Minimalist movement in music began outside of academe as a reaction against the intellectual complexities and the emotional sterility of serial music and other modern forms (Atkinson, 2009:26). Its inception dates back to 1960 with La Monte Young's "Trio for strings" (1958) which is considered to be the first minimalist piece (Eaton, 2008:15).

Since then, minimalist music seems to have a long – standing relationship with the visual art movement. It was associated with other visual media and was often performed in galleries and lofts (Siôn & Evans, 2009:672). It was considered to be an avant – garde phenomenon as it was employed in short films, experimental films, documentaries and foreign films (Eaton, 2008:48). During these formative years of minimalism, minimalist works were characterized by static harmony, modal nature, constant pulse and modular repetition (Eaton, 2008:17). An example of this kind of austere minimalism is Terry Riley's "In C" (1964), a piece which helped minimalism to gradually move from the avant – garde scene into public consciousness (Eaton, 2008:15). In that period, some composers employed in their works further minimalist techniques and processes. For example, Reich explored the "phasing technique" with his piece "Its gonna rain" (1965) while Glass with his piece "One plus One" (1968) presented the "additive process" which refers to "rhythmic modules that are combined in continuous regular arithmetic progressions" (Eaton, 2008:17). It is worth noting

that in the late 1960s both Reich and Glass formed their own ensembles, as their music demanded particular performance skills (Siôn & Evans, 2009:673).

In the mid 1970s the austere minimalism changed to a more harmonically driven style. The compositions have continued to feature a steady pulse and repetition but have also employed hints of chromaticism, functional harmony as well as denser textures. These changes are reflected in Glass's "Music in 12 parts" (1971-4) and Reich's "Music for 18 musicians" (1974-6) (Eaton, 2008:20). Minimalism's influence gradually extended to mainstream culture and many non minimalist composers started to incorporate minimalistic techniques such as extended repetition and interlocking patterns into media compositions (Siôn & Evans, 2009:672). This was also a period where Glass demonstrated particular interest on Opera (*Einstein on the Beach* (1970)) and film and along with other composers like Nyman, Reich, Glass and Riley began to write for film (Eaton, 2008:48).

The 1980s highlights a period to what many academic authors term "post-minimalism" (Eaton, 2008:48). During that period an emphasis was given on harmonic motion, expressiveness, dynamic builds ups and melodic chromatic features. The first postminimal piece is consider to be William Duckworth's "Time Curve Preludes" (1978) for piano, which is based on drone, phrasal repetition, the Fibonacci series as a rhythmic device and quotations from Satie. Another piece that reflects the musical characteristics of minimalism of that period is John Adams's "Harmonielehre" (1984-5) where techniques of minimalism (repeated motives) are combined with neo romantic emotionalism (mahlerian chromatic language) (Eaton, 2008:22).

Following the success of *Koyannisqatsi* (1982), an avant – garde film that reached a wider audience, minimalist music soon extended to mainstream culture. Glass and Nyman, being recognized by a more diverse and wider audience, gained particular success with their film scores. A prolific period for minimalism seemed to emerge.

By the 1990s, minimalism was employed in mainstream Hollywood horror and science fiction films and gradually, by 2000 was absorbed into popular audiovisual culture becoming commercially appropriated and reaching a wide and mass audience (Eaton, 2008:48).

This brief historical background highlights the development of minimalist movement by informing us about both the long – standing association of minimalist music with the visual art as well as the changes in its characteristics throughout time. This development is reflected in the minimalist works mentioned above, which move from compositions closer to austere minimalist style to compositions with more embellishment and harmonic movement. What is more worth noting though is the fact that minimalist music although emerged as an avant – garde music, often being regarded as a stigma to some degree (Eaton, 2008:13), it turned out to be part of the mass market managing to approach a mainstream audience. Minimalism's current ubiquity in media features a style far more accessible than that of academic serialism, from where it emerged. This kind of proliferation gives rise to the question of why this kind of music is so approachable and appealing to people.

An interesting approach to this question is taken by Fink (2005), who tries to find the answer on minimalist's pulsed repetition, by drawing a comparison between repetitive advertising and minimalist music. He argues that consumer cultural practices are related to minimalism since its pulsed repetition is similar to repetition of

commercials that intend to create a desire for an object (Atkinson, 2009:25, Eaton, 2008:3).

It seems to me then that minimalism's static nature - as repetition is considered to be a static phenomenon - , could contribute to a great extent in its ability to attract the audience. However, minimalism's static nature does not only derive from repetition - although this is possibly the most salient feature - but also from other intrinsic musical characteristics, through which minimalism acquires its meanings. It feels necessary then to address the general characteristics that could embrace both minimalism and "post-minimalism"¹² These characteristics can form a broader view of its static nature and its further features that makes this style appealing. They can also form the basis for examining minimalist relationship with visual images in a filmic context.

In terms of harmony, minimalist music displays a simple harmonic palette as it features a limited set of chords that are usually consonant. The harmonic material tends to be diatonic or modal and the changes between chords or scales occur quite slowly. Regarding the instrumentation, composers often use a particular ensemble with all instruments play more or less continuously creating a sense of static instrumentation throughout the piece. According to Siôn & Evans (2009:673), sometimes an emphasis also is given on the "now moment" where spatial and acoustical by products such as harmonics or tonal fluctuations are used to create an abstract, colouristic and indeterminate static sound. Another prominent characteristic is the lack of extended romantic or expressive melodic lines since short melodic

¹ It is worth noting that minimalist pieces are quite diverse extending from more austere minimalism to less austere. These are some general minimalist techniques that composers use and It is quite obvious that not all of these musical traits can be present to one single composition.

² The outlined information about minimal characteristics is taken from Doran Eaton's Dissertation: "Unheard Minimalisms: The functions of the minimalist techniques in film scores"(2007:23,24).

patterns seem to take their place instead. Minimalist music is also characterized by a limited rhythmic palette since composers often use repetitive rhythmic patterns and a motoric steady beat. Moreover, formal structure usually is continuous since cyclical patterns, imitations, variations and modular forms are some elements that are used frequently. Additionally, techniques, such as phase shifting, additive process or its opposite, linear subtractive process, could be employed as structural devices (Atkinson, 2009:19) creating a sense of formal abstraction.

The above mentioned musical elements reflect minimalist's static nature as they display a slow change rate that fosters an "hypnotic state" by creating a different sense of time, where one listens for the smallest change (Eaton, 2008:24). Thus, minimal music appears to sound "easy on the ear" as it is consonant and displays simple material featuring to a great extent repetitive patterns and continuous form. We could argue that these characteristics create a musical style which is easily "understood" by ordinary people. Therefore, the fact that minimalism has succeeded in being approachable to popular culture could be attributed to this.

But what about minimalist music's meanings when placed in filmic contexts? Approaching the role of minimal characteristics in terms of sound – image relationship, particularly illuminating would be a comparison with the traditional film music. Since Classical Hollywood film score is based on some principles outlined by Gorbman (1987:73)³, it feels necessary to examine the ways by which both a conventional film score and a minimalist score can function toward the image in

³ The six principles of Classical Hollywood film music are: "invisibility", "inaudibility", "narrative cueing", "signifier of emotion", "continuity", "unity".

terms of these principles. However, the focus is directed on three of these principles; “inaudibility”, “signifier of emotion” and “narrative cueing”.⁴

In terms of “inaudibility”, narrative film music is not meant to be heard consciously and thus, it is subordinate to the primary vehicles of the narration such as visuals and dialogue (Gorbman, 1987:76). In this sense, traditional film music is absorbed into the images while, rather than being in the foreground, its role is to remain in the background supporting the image and the narration. Contrary to conventional film score, minimalist music seems to draw more attention. Some explanations for this would be that it is difficult to ignore a repeating, constant pulse and that some directors intentionally place the music in the foreground (Eaton, 2008:33). Although at times minimalism underpins or supports the images, a dialectical sound – image relationship is established in most contexts as music does not dissolve into the image but it interacts with it. Instead of being subservient to other’s dimensions of the film, it coexists with them in equal terms (Siôn & Evans, 2009:674). Seen in this light, minimalist music seems to retain, affirm and strengthen its own musical meaning in such contexts where a discourse is set up.

Additionally, traditional film music appears in cinema as a “signifier of emotion”. According to Sabaneev (1935) “music brings to the objectivity of the image an emotional, irrational, romantic or intuitive dimension”. Composers make use of specific culturally encoded, emotional connotations in order to convey emotion. For example, they may use dissonant harmonies or tritones in order to evoke fear or a melody based in minor harmony to convey sadness. Viewed as such, traditional film

⁴ We focus on these principles because in terms of the principles of “invisibility”, “continuity” and “unity”, minimalist music does not appear to be contrary to the conventional film music. However, regarding these principles, minimalist music demonstrates a different kind of interaction towards the image compared to the type of interaction of traditional film music with it.

music appears to have a goal as it “speaks, moves and intends” (Siôn & Evans, 2009:677) by making use of memorable themes with an attempt to enhance visual and emotional narratives.

Unlike conventional film music’s flexibility to be used as an emotional device, minimalist music, doesn’t seem to strive toward a goal. Its non linear and non teleological aspect that acquires (Siôn & Evans, 2009:678 - 9) is reflected in its intrinsic musical qualities, such as limited melodic content, slow change rate and continuous form. Due to these aspects, it fails to express emotional shifts or every action depicted on the screen. Rather than portraying moment to moment feelings, it could reflect a general mood “bathing an entire scene with affect, through its mode and tempo” (Eaton, 2009:35).

It is possibly minimalism’s “lack of resolution”, as McClary (2007) has put it, (in Eaton, 2009:256) that allows it to be “anempathetic”. In this sense, it maintains a distance from the onscreen emotional content and thus creates a space between spectator and film. The music is moving in itself in a way that it does not tell the audience what they should feel, forcing them to identify with the character. Rather, unlike narrative film score, the interpretative emphasis is given to the listener. Philip Glass’s views toward the importance of a work to remain open to different audience responses, is reflected clearly in his interview (Glass, 1990: 313-14):

“In fact, it is that space which is required so that the members of the audience have the necessary perspective or distance to create their own individual meanings. If you didn’t have that space there, if the music were too close [...] there wouldn’t be anywhere for the viewer to place himself. In that case [...] the music tells you exactly what to look at, guiding your eyes around the screen. This is exactly what you get on

propaganda. They're not allowing you to look. They are making you look. They don't allow you to see and react or think for yourself".

Hence, minimal attributes allow for a wide range of potential meanings, unlike the conventional film score whose meanings are more specific, in accordance with the visual and are based usually on culturally encoded connotations. Yet, is this open character of minimalism and its interpretative flexibility that makes the music "unable" to be regarded as a "signifier of emotion"? Does it really lack of this principle?

According to Morris (Koehler, 1998 in Eaton 36), although minimalism affords detachment, at the same time affords emotional connection. It would seem problematic to me then if minimalism had only the capacity to establish mood, since its ability to express emotion seems quite obvious. It could be argued then that minimalist music express emotion, though in a different way than the conventional film score does, as is less likely to force and direct our viewing, telling us how and what we should feel.

Regarding "narrative cueing", traditional film music is narrative and referential since it can illustrate through musical connotations specific events depicted on the screen, such as time and place. In this way, music can reinforce what is already signified by dialogue, color, gestures etc. (Gorbman, 1987:84). On the contrary, minimalist music is non narrative as it is closed off any external references. According to Wim Mertens (1983: 16-17), it is its non dialectical use of repetition that causes the music to become non narrative. Siôn & Evans (2009:673) support that minimalist composers had an aim to explore internal musical mechanisms emphasizing "internal objectiveness" and thus they eschewed any referential or programmatic content,

foregrounding instead generic musical qualities, such as repetition, imitation, variation, cyclical patterns and modular forms. Through these non referential generic patterns minimalism fails to employ the time place conventions as the conventional film scores can do. However, according to Eaton (2009:38), these conventions are possible in minimalism within its constraints. For example, Nyman integrates in his minimalist score for “The Piano” both Scottish folk tunes and romantic pianisms reminiscent of Chopin.

Hence, it appears that minimal music functions to a great extent in contrast to the traditional film music. Whereas, the conventional score “serves” the narration and is dependent on the visual images, minimalist music displays autonomy since it is not contingent upon the visual narrative, but it exists separately from it. Thus, it establishes a different relationship with the film from that of a traditional film score does. However, minimal attributes seem to do affect the visual narrative - though in a different way from the traditional film score- since they can potentially “bath” the images with mood, emotions and meanings.

It seems to me then that minimalism relationship with film comes to reveal a sort of duality that minimalism acquires when placed in filmic contexts. By arguing this, I refer to its “close” and simultaneously “open” character. On the one hand, It is self sufficient and closed to its musical attributes as it resist to depend and form its characteristics from the visual structure. On the other hand, it is “open” to the film’s images and narrative, that is, it can affect and influence them. According to Sion & Evans (2009: 674) the self sufficient and simultaneously “open” to outside influences, character of minimalism, allows music to be considered as “a parallel analogue” to other media. Sound structures parallel the visual structures in a way that they represent different independent paths that meet in the audiovisual dimension (Sion &

Evans, 2009:681). Having examined the three multimedia models proposed by Cook, they go further in stating that minimalism usually appears to establish a relationship with other multimedia that is based on the “complementation” model (Sion & Evans, 2009: 676). According to Cook (1998:), the complementation model refers to a relationship “when different media are seen as occupying the same terrain, but conflict is avoided”. In this sense, figurative and musical discourses appear to share a common ground without contradicting each other but providing different approaches to a given context. Thus, a complementary pairing of image and sound seems to take place usually when minimalism is placed in multimedia contexts.

A question now seems to emerge that leads me to the final part of the essay; Are these parallel symmetries the reason that lies beneath minimalism’s ability to become so successfully matched up with visual images and to be able to shift across different contexts being particularly appropriated? These questions will be approached through the analysis of three different scenes that employ the same music in “The Piano” (1993).

The piano

1. Sound – image relationship

“The Piano” (1993), directed by Jane Champion and composed by the minimalist composer Michael Nyman, succeeded in reaching a widespread commercial fame. According to Sion, (2007:196) “The Piano’s” strength lies in its ability to evoke a sense of musical self – sufficiency. Music “instead of hiding somewhere along the margin’s of one’s semi – conscious comprehension” (Sion, 2007:181), has a central role in the film encouraging a direct engagement with sounds and redirecting the course and outcome of the film

It is worth noting that the solo piano music was composed first with the aid of Champion's script and then was used as temp track for editing various scenes (Nyman, 1994:5). This cutting from the music is of utmost importance since music seems to gain a formal power not inferior to the visual. Nyman's approach to the score reflects the formalist parallelism between music and image discussed earlier. Nyman argues that the music he writes "has never been on images but in response to an idea, a methodology, a structure" (Riviere and Caux, 1987:78). He considers film music's proper function as being equal to that of any other genre, such as concert music. According to his view "sound has a tendency toward autonomy" (Nyman, 1978:92). This is illustrated in his ability to create "a self – contained independent world in music" (Sion, 2007:182) that free itself from the confines of the film's narrative by paralleling rather than reproducing the visual structures. At the same time music influences the narrative by supporting the ambiguity of the film. This is supported by Margolis () as he claims that "the message of the Piano is that it does not offer a message but that it makes available a variety of readings. So does the music". It reinforces the meaning of the film and its "psychological ambiguity" (Gorbman in Margolis, 2000: 53) by providing through its attributes an atmosphere of ambivalence, openness, depth and instability. It seems then that, despite its self sufficient character, music is open to the visual. What follows, is that the parallel symmetries of sound – image relationship discussed earlier, seem to be applicable to this film.

2. Music

As Nyman noted, "Quiet often a character of a scene exists only because of the music" (Simon, 1982:226). This seems to be the case in this film. The musical theme "The heart asks pleasure first" (Ex.1) that is used in the three scenes, is described by Gorbman as "Ada's theme" (Sion, 2007:193). Ada is the film's main character who

plays the piano. Due to her mute disposition the piano functions as her inner voice. She is a fictional composer and performer (Sion, 2007:183) who communicates her feelings and thoughts through music. She exists because of the music, as it is the only place she can find herself.



Example 1. “Ada’s theme”

The most salient characteristics of “Ada’s theme” is the repetitive constant pulse of a rapidly undulating accompaniment from where a melody, embedded with romantic sensibility, emerges. The harmonic palette is simple, based on modal and diatonic scales. There is a shift from Aeolian sound to the diatonic minor ($g \rightarrow g\#$) as well as to the relative major (C major) later on. Additionally, we could argue that a sense of impulsive spontaneity is created especially because of the changes in meter and beat that occur throughout the piece. In terms of orchestration, this theme (like the music throughout the film) is heard from piano, string orchestra with saxophones or the combination of these two. According to Sion (2007:188), the solo piano pieces represent the “diegetic” aspect (music played heard and experienced by the characters

of the film) that places the piano's image and sound at the very centre of the film's actions, whereas the orchestral score reflects the "non diegetic" dimension of the film which depicts mostly landscapes and the "natural order of things"(Sion, 2007:188). The combination of piano and orchestra provides a "quasi diegetic level" which according to Sion (2007) reveals music's dual role at both conscious and subconscious levels, that is, music "thinks" and "speaks" on behalf of Ada and film. Therefore, this tri – diegetic arrangement allows the piano to shift constantly from foreground ("diegesis") to background narrative ("non diegesis").

In all the three scenes I will analyze, music seems to express Ada's feelings and thoughts functioning as her inner voice. We could argue that music is the subtext of the visual as it forms the emotional viewpoint of it, by adding an extra dimension, an extra emotional and dramatic charge to the narrative. However, music's functions and meanings are different in each scene. Is it the visual that influence the music or the other way around? By examining in each cue the visual and musical aspects as well as the type of their interaction, I will explore the ways by which the same music can be applied to different contexts as well as the source from where the meanings emerge. The intention is to discover the factors that contribute to minimalist music's appropriateness in filmic contexts.

3. Analysis of the scenes

1st scene: 1:21:30'' – 1:22:53''⁵



Figure 1⁶: Stewart chases Ada

In this scene Stewart, having an obsessive love for Ada, chases her while she is struggling to get away from him. The accompanying music is heard from piano in a fast tempo, possibly depicting Ada's anxiety and fear. The orchestral score is also present although it is hidden in the background.



Figure 2: Static plan of both

At this point, the visual acquires a static character since Ada and Stewart as well as the camera do not move. However, the music keeps an indifferent character towards the image by maintaining the fast movement. We could argue though that the removal of the strings the time that the camera focus on her face, allows for the piano to be heard alone depicting in this way Ada's inner thoughts.

In this scene the music is not rendered to any changes in favor of the image. It is more "closed" to its intrinsic characteristics and at the same time more "open" to a variety

⁵ The order of the scenes outlined in the essay is different of their order in the film.

⁶ These pictures are snapshot and are taken from the movie "The Piano" (1993) through the use of movie maker.

of different readings. However we could argue that some coloristic musical aspects, such as the strings heard in the background, provide connotative features of nature. This is more obvious in the next scene.

2nd Scene: 0:14:14'' – 0:15:22''

The “quasi – diegetic” level asserts itself once again here, since the orchestral score is combined with the piano. Music illustrate Ada’s viewpoint of things (thoughts and feelings) as well as film’s narrative environment (landscapes, nature, habitants). The musical structure seems to form the visual structure since a different melodic phrase (example 2,3,4,5) is heard in each plan. Seen in this light, we could argue that the image is choreographed to sound. Our analysis will be based on this notion.



Example 2: musical phrase A

Figure 3: Piano in the beach (Plan 1)

The piano we hear is depicted in the plan (“diegetic” aspect) (fig.1). Musical phrase A (ex.2) is played in the piano in a slow tempo while accompanied by the sustained notes of strings which give a romantic and deeper texture (non “diegetic” aspect) to the visual. We also hear the “diegetic sounds” of the sea and birds. The camera gradually gets closer to the piano. The slow motion of music is in accordance with slow movement of the camera. Musical Phrase B takes the place of phrase A in but this time in a fast tempo. Since we have argued that in each plan we have a different

melodic motif, it seems that music here “brings” the image, as the change of the melodic phrase happens before the change of the plan.



Example 3: Musical phrase B

Figure 4: Ada's face (Plan 2)

Music gives motion and rhythm to this plan since the static image of Ada's face (fig.2) is accompanied by a fast flowing musical movement. A sort of circular movement of the camera though seems to “imitate” in a way the undulating motion of music. Music's minor and modal harmonic shades reflects to some extent Ada's sadness as she separates from the piano as well as her longing to take it with her.



Example 4: Musical phrase C

Figure 5: Male figures (plan 3)

The change of the melodic phrase happens simultaneously with the change of the plan. The static image again is in contrast with the fast movement of music. It is worth noting that the melody is presented in a lower register. We could argue that this change of register possibly marks the “male” aspect of the plan, as we see male figures walking through the mountain (fig.5). Viewed as such, music acquires a connotative aspect similar to that of the functional film music.



Example 5: Musical phrase D



Figure 6: Nature (plan 4)

Here, musical phrase D is introduced along with the new plan that depicts nature (fig.4). Unlike scene A, the camera now moves closer to nature (“non digesis”) while moving away from the piano (“diegesis”). It seems that the music drives forward the image since its fast tempo gives a false impression of a fast movement of the camera. Apart from the music, we also hear “diegetic” sounds of nature (birds) which introduce the next scene. Music is not cut abruptly but serves as a bridge between the scenes, functioning as a unifying feature.

In this scene, music seems to get “closer”⁷ to the image compared to the first scene. In terms of orchestration the sustained notes of strings make more obvious their presence and are used possibly to depict the big scenes of nature and landscapes. In addition to this, music acquires a functional dimension towards the image considering the connotative value of the low register mentioned before. Nevertheless, throughout the scene music it keeps an “anempathetic” character towards the image as it is “closed” to its structure. We could argue then that it is the image that tries to get closer to the musical form and not the other way around.

3rd scene: 1.37.10” – 1.38.57”

This scene depicts the removal of Ada’s finger by Stewart and is a culminating point in the film’s narrative. According to Sion (2007: 190) “her amputated finger signals both a physical and symbolic loss”. Ada not only lost a finger, but also her only way

⁷ More functional towards the image, approaching in a way the functional character of traditional narrative film music.

of self – expression. In this scene it is more obvious that her feelings are the music we hear.



Example 7: C major

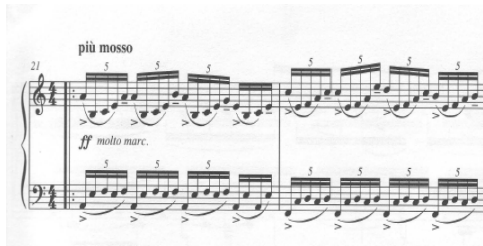
Figure 8:



Example 8:

Figure 9:

In the beginning of this scene we hear Ada’s theme while Steward forces her to go out of the house so as to punish her for being in love with Bains. Hints of major harmonies (ex.7) which are part of the musical theme accompany Stewarts anger and aggressiveness (fig. 8). This sort of major hints seem to provide an “unempthetic” effect in terms of the sound – image relationship. Ada tries to resist but she is unable to do so (fig. 9).



Example 9: Change of tempo

Figure 10: Ada's resistance

At this point music, while keeping the same melody and accompaniment, changes in terms of tempo and rhythm as it gets gradually faster (ex.9) We could argue that this faster – flowing rhythmic movement reveal her emotional intensity and her resistance that gradually becomes stronger (fig.10). It is worth noting that the music is not played in a strict tempo. The music seems to be reluctant to continue in some moments. This aspect could probably feature Ada's weakness to resist and her realization of this. Additionally, music's fast flow and motion seem to accelerate the slow movement of the visual, by driving it forward.



Figure 11: Stewart's shout

Figure 12: girl's yelling



Example 10: the music stops in the subdominant (IV).

The emotional intensity is at its greatest in this scene. The fast movement of music along with the “diegetic” sounds of Stewart’s shout (fig.11) followed by the sound of the hammer and the girl’s yelling (fig.12), give way to silence (fig13). The rapid flow of music stops abruptly without letting us hear a resolution (ex.10).

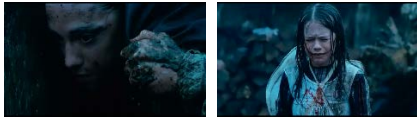


Figure 13: visual images accompanied by silence

In stark contrast with the the fast flowing movement, silence seems to reinforce more this dramatic moment. Deprived of her own means of self – expression, Ada (being the music) falls silent. The absense of music signify the absence of her inner voice , of her own self . It can “speak” to us by revealing the intensity of her physical and emotional pain in a more effective way than music could do .

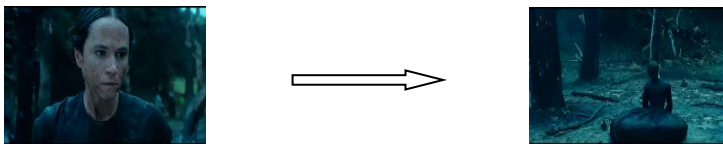


Figure 14: visual images accompanied by music in a slow pace

At this point, music starts again and continues from where it had stopped (fig.14). This time though, music makes its presence haltingly, in a very slow pace. In this way, music probably depicts her attempt to realize her loss and her difficulty to do so. The disorder and her confusing and tangled thoughts that are hidden inside her seem to be unable to find a clear way to get out of her easily. She feels broken, so does the music.

It is worth noting that from thereon in to the end of the film, Ada's theme is not heard again. Her amputated finger deprived her of the ability to play the piano as she did and to "speak" in the only way she could. Thus, the "diegetic" aspect of the movie gives the way to the "non diegetic" level.

Music in the amputation scene is rendered to changes in tempo. These tempo changes in music seem to create a different sense of time and give more or less motion depending on the visual moment. Music seems to follow the narration, though from the point of view of Ada. Thus, we could argue that in this scene music acquires a more functional character - "closer" to the image - towards the visual compared with the other two scenes. This is attributed to the fact that music influences the visual both by reinforcing the emotional content of the scene through silence, and by giving a different sense of time and rhythm to the visual.

After analyzing the above scenes, it could be assumed that the minimalist characteristics of the piece, such as the repetitive rhythmic flow, the slow harmonic changes, its modal and diatonic harmonic character and the static instrumentation create an indifferent character, parallel to the visual image, that allows music to be able to shift across different visual contexts. These minimal characteristics also seem to provide a musical structure that is flexible and easily rendered to slight changes. In each scene, music functions in a different way and this could be partly determined by how far or close the music gets from its original structure which reflects a kind of "pure minimalism" (repetitive, steady character, indifference to the image and "openness" to different interpretations). Therefore, the functions and the potentially constructed meanings derive not only from the visual narrative unfolding on the screen but also from the intrinsic musical characteristics which are rendered to changes in timbre, tempo, articulation and form/structure in order to get "closer" to the visual

narrative. These changes seem to determine the degree of music's functionality towards the image, that is, the further a scene gets from "pure minimalism" (its original structure) – because is rendered to more changes - , the more functional character towards the image can get. Seen in this light, in the scenes analyzed above, we move from the less "functional" music (less changes) to the more "functional" one (more changes).

At this point, after examining minimalist music from a theoretical and analytical perspective, we could argue that music's appeal derives to a great extent from its static (repetition, slow change rate) and consonant (diatonic, modal harmony) nature that makes it easily "understood" and accessible to a mass audience. In terms of the music – image relationship, we demonstrated how minimalism can function differently from the conventional film music due to its parallel and complementary relationship with the image. Through the analysis, we showed how these parallel symmetries allow the same minimalist score to be easily adaptable to different visual contexts functioning in a different way each time. Concluding, it seems to me that minimalism's appropriateness in the film derives from its flexible, and chameleon – like character. This sort of malleability allows minimalism not only to shift across different "visual landscapes or emotional states" (Sion & Evans, 2009:688)but also to be rendered to changes sometimes in order to fit the visual needs acquiring a more functional character towards the image. These potentialities feature minimalist music's appropriateness in film.

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