

Zhao Jiping's Film Score in *Yellow Earth* (1984): Constructing and Subverting Perceptions of  
Diegetic Boundaries

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## Abstract

This thesis examines how Zhao Jiping's film score in *Yellow Earth* (1984) establishes distinct identities for the diegetic and non-diegetic (presentational) space, as well as how Zhao manipulates the audience's perception of musical-spatial boundaries in order to create moments of musical significance during the "river scenes." To model the diegesis, I use a perception model approach combined with work by Winters and Yacavone. This frames the diegesis in relation to reality, without being beholden to it, and attributes to the audience an active role in constructing the diegesis, internally and subjectively expanding on fragments presented by the film. I then characterize the music of the diegesis as being representative of the Shaanbei region of China, using folk singing and instruments indigenous to the region. The music of the presentational space uses melodic material derived from the diegetic music, supported by orchestral music in a style similar to mixed instrument ensembles in Model Works. During the "river scenes", Zhao's music gradually detaches the audience's sense of anchoring in the diegetic space and pivots into the presentational space, creating an intense contrast that supports the narrative significance of the scene. Afterwards, similar techniques are then used to gradually re-anchor the audience back into the diegesis. Using models of the diegetic and presentational spaces that incorporate recent shifts in academic perspective, this thesis demonstrates Zhao Jiping's nuanced understanding of how an audience perceives musical space, both by creating distinct identities for the diegetic and presentational spaces, and by manipulating audience perception of space in order to create moments of musical significance.

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## Introduction

*Yellow Earth* (黃土地), directed by Chen Kaige (陳凱歌), was released in 1984 to a diverse array of responses from domestic Chinese audiences and international audiences alike.<sup>1,2</sup> While the film had difficulty attracting critical praise in China following its initial release (although it had little difficulty attracting critical attention), international audiences quickly praised the film as being one of the most significant films to emerge from China since the 1940s.<sup>3</sup> Chen Kaige's reputation as an up and coming director began to pick up pace following the release of *Yellow Earth*, but his career was not the only one that benefited significantly from the film. Zhang Yimou (張藝謀), later famous for directing films such as *Red Sorghum* (紅高粱), *Raise the Red Lantern* (大紅燈籠高高掛), *Ju Dou* (菊豆), and many others, was in charge of the cinematography for *Yellow Earth*, which received significant praise for the camerawork.<sup>4</sup>

Another figure for whom *Yellow Earth* was an important beginning was the film score composer, Zhao Jiping (趙季平). Beginning with *Yellow Earth*, Zhao Jiping would go on to score dozens of films released in China, most famously in frequent collaboration with Zhang Yimou.<sup>5</sup> However, despite Zhao Jiping's role in scoring music for some of the most critically acclaimed Chinese films of the 1980s and 1990s, his scores have received very little attention or discussion

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<sup>1</sup> I am writing Chinese names, titles, and other proper nouns using both the pinyin system of romanization (absent tones), and traditional Chinese characters. Exceptions are made for some authors of works which are written with alternate spelling systems, such as the Wade-Giles system, due to some individuals preferring this system for personal romanizations.

<sup>2</sup> McDougall, Bonnie. *The Yellow Earth: A film by Chen Kaige with a Complete Translation of the Filmscript*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1991. McDougall provides one of the few documentations of domestic and international responses to the film, both in the immediate period following release and in the subsequent years.

<sup>3</sup> McDougall, vii.

<sup>4</sup> McDougall, 111.

<sup>5</sup> Xiao, Ying. "The Convergence of Popular Music-Film: Zhang Yimou-Zhao Jiping and Spectacles of Sound." In *China in the Mix: Cinema, Sound, and Popular Culture in the Age of Globalization*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 52; Ng, Yvonne. "Imagery and Sound in *Red Sorghum*." *KINEMA*, spring (1995); Thompson, Brian C. "Zhao Jiping and the Sound of Resistance in *Red Sorghum*." *Studio Musicologica* 56, no.4 (2015): 356.

in English-language academic or popular literature. Only a couple English-language publications exist which discuss Zhao Jiping's musical scores, and they tend to focus on individual films instead of taking broader looks at Zhao's compositions.<sup>6</sup>

It is especially surprising to see the lack of discussion on the music of Zhao Jiping when considering the success (both critically and popularly) of the films on which he has worked. Furthermore, the films themselves, such as *Red Sorghum* or *Farewell My Concubine* (霸王別姬), have been discussed at length in academic literature in regards to other topics.<sup>7</sup> Films that Zhao Jiping has scored have received awards at international film festivals, and have been instrumental and impactful films when considering the development of China's domestic and international reputation for film, and yet Zhao Jiping himself is relatively unknown in comparison to the directors of the films on which he's worked.<sup>8</sup> Considering the historical, artistic, and socio-political importance of these films, Zhao Jiping's scores deserve attention and consideration in the manner that other elements of the films have received.

In *Yellow Earth* Zhao Jiping composes a score which interacts with, and subverts, the audience's perception of musical space. These spaces, the diegetic and the non-diegetic, are each given distinct and contrasting musical characterizations that clearly distinguish them from each other. The diegetic space is scored to reflect the realism of the film's diegesis, using instruments and styles endemic to the real-world time and place in which the diegesis is set.<sup>9</sup> The non-diegetic

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<sup>6</sup> English-language publications focus most heavily on Zhao Jiping's compositions for *Red Sorghum* (1987). See Ng; Thompson.

<sup>7</sup> To list all discussions in other fields would be impossible. However, discussions frequently focus on Zhang Yimou's cinematography, depictions of women and other themes regarding gender, and political and ideological messaging or undertones in relation to contemporary political climates in mainland China in the 20th century.

<sup>8</sup> Evidenced by a paucity of English-language publications mentioning Zhao Jiping by name, the popular encyclopedia Wikipedia having a three sentence entry for Zhao Jiping, and the conspicuous absence of Zhao Jiping's contributions to Chinese music in reference books such as Liu, Ching-chih. *A Critical History of New Music in China*. Translated by Caroline Mason. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Shaanbei (陝北), northern region of Shaanxi (陝西) province, 1939

space is scored with music that derives its melodic content from the diegesis, borrowing instrumentation, melody, or both, frequently accompanied by full orchestral scoring to provide textural and harmonic support. These characterizations of the spaces, and the relationships between them, reflect Zhao Jiping's personal biography and values, in addition to reflecting more widely held values both socially and culturally during the period in which *Yellow Earth* was produced and released.

While Zhao Jiping carefully characterizes and delineates separate identities for the musical spaces, he also obfuscates perceptions of boundaries between the two spaces. At narratively crucial moments of *Yellow Earth*, Zhao actively shifts the audience's sense of distinctly separate musical spaces by moving music in and out of the diegetic and non-diegetic spaces, creating dramatic contrast which coincides with the narrative. This creative play and experimentation demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the musical-spatial boundaries in the minds of the audience, and recognizes that by creating distinct and contrasting musical spaces, boundary lines can be established and then manipulated to create musically significant moments.

Zhao Jiping's score in *Yellow Earth* is intimately enmeshed within the film, engaging heavily with the diegesis while remaining aware of the audience, engaging with their expectations, understanding, and experience in a dynamic and empathetic manner. It creates distinct and separate musical spaces, at times even forming a sense of rigid separation, but then makes the boundaries between spaces fluid as it moves between them, the music sharing melodic material and voices across the spatial boundaries. In the relationship between musical spaces, the film score emphasizes depictions of realism and human experience by foregrounding the lives of the common people.<sup>10</sup> Zhao Jiping's score for *Yellow Earth* is an integral part of how the film is experienced,

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<sup>10</sup> The importance of these themes appear in the few biographical documents available regarding Zhao Jiping. See Miller, Allan. *Zhao Jiping*. Directed by Allan Miller. 1996. Paris: Les Films d'Ici, 2021. DVD. Renwu "Wei shidai

and its impact on the audience cannot ever fully be detangled from the film experience at large. Considering the existing discussions of *Yellow Earth*, and with the important influence *Yellow Earth* had on both domestic and international audiences and critics, Zhao Jiping's score deserves consideration, investigation, and discussion similar to the attention other facets of the film have received.

Zhao's score in *Yellow Earth* is comprised of musically distinct diegetic and non-diegetic spaces, and despite clear differences between the characters of the spaces, there is significant artistic play in how Zhao engages with the boundaries between the spaces. In my research, I construct a preliminary understanding of the diegetic setting in order to place instances of diegetic music, and then proceed to place non-diegetic music by identifying their location outside of the diegesis relative to the diegetic music. After having categorized and located the diegetic and non-diegetic music, I characterize the music of the spaces. The music of the diegetic space is comprised of indigenous folk singing from Shaanbei as well as "northwest wind" music (usually in the form of *chuishou* [吹手] ensembles or extensive use of the *suona* [唢呐]).<sup>11,12</sup> Music of the non-diegetic space is comprised of melodic material derived in part from the diegesis (usually folk singing or *suona*), combined with European orchestral scoring. This mixing of Chinese and European instruments is similar to the mixed instrument ensembles used when scoring Model Operas during the Cultural Revolution, a style formalized by Yu Huiyong (于會泳).<sup>13</sup> Having identified and

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er ge Zhao Jiping." 《人物》. "為時代而歌 趙季平." (《People》"Songs for the Times, Zhao Jiping") Aired September 5, 2015. CCTV, 2015. Accessed January 28, 2022. <https://tv.cctv.com/2015/09/05/VIDE1441385643980301.shtml>

<sup>11</sup> For further information on the phenomena of "northwest wind" as a musical stylistic trend in late 20th century Chinese film music, see Xiao, Ying. "Northwest Wind: Folklore, Vernacular, and the Chinese New Waves." In *China in the Mix: Cinema, Sound, and Popular Culture in the Age of Globalization*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 18.

<sup>12</sup> For further information on the music of the Shaanbei region more specifically, as well as *chuishou* ensembles and the *suona*, see Jones, Stephen. *Ritual and Music of North China, Volume 2: Shaanbei*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Fan, Xing. *Staging Revolution: Artistry and Aesthetics in Model Beijing Opera during the Cultural Revolution*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018: 160; Kraus, Richard. "Arts Policies of the Cultural Revolution: The

characterized the diegetic and non-diegetic music, I then demonstrate how Zhao Jiping uses the shared material between spaces as a pivot on which to create a dramatic shift in perceived musical location during the riverbank scenes. Zhao's score in *Yellow Earth* engages extensively with the audience's sense of musical spaces by giving both distinct musical characters to each the diegetic and non-diegetic spaces, as well as dramatically shifting between the spaces at moments of narrative and emotional climax.

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Rise and Fall of Culture Minister Yu Huiyong.” In *New Perspectives on the Cultural Revolution*, edited by William A. Joseph, Christine P. W. Wong, and David Zweig, 119-241. Boston: Harvard University, 1991.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

### Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies*

Discussions in film music literature regarding diegetic and non-diegetic music usually trace their roots back to Gorbman's 1987 publication *Unheard Melodies*.<sup>14</sup> In it, Gorbman draws on Genette's and Souriau's definitions of the diegesis, identifying the diegesis as being the "narratively implied spatiotemporal world of the actions and characters."<sup>15</sup> Gorbman builds on this definition by considering the implications of how such a world would be constructed and interpreted by onlookers, what role film music might play in the construction of said world, and how music might be considered within it or outside of it. Gorbman introduces ideas of diegetic music (music located within the diegesis) and non-diegetic music (music located outside the diegesis), but wastes no time complicating the categories by questioning understandings of boundary delineations, definitions, terminology, and other elements.<sup>16</sup> The concepts of diegetic and non-diegetic music, from the moment they enter into the discussion at large with Gorbman's publication, have had visible contradictions and irregularities that have provided fertile ground for subsequent discussions and publications.<sup>17</sup>

*Unheard Melodies* also discusses critical ideas regarding the definition, and the role of, the soundtrack in a film. Gorbman examines at length how music can provide emotional guidance for the audience, engaging with musical codes to induce particular reactions.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, there is exploration of a more inclusive understanding of what constitutes the soundtrack of a film.

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<sup>14</sup> Gorbman, Claudia. *Unheard Melodies*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Gorbman, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Gorbman, 20-30.

<sup>17</sup> Hardly a single publication on the topic of diegetic and non-diegetic music exists without mention of Gorbman's contributions to the discussion.

<sup>18</sup> Gorbman, 13.

Gorbman explores the idea of film music as sound, and draws parallels between sound design, audio production, and film music, and even considers the important role of silence in film.<sup>19</sup> These ideas of a more expansive and inclusive concept of a soundtrack anticipate a major shift that occurs in some areas of the film music literature.<sup>20</sup>

Across a variety of topics, Gorbman plants the seeds of multiple questions relevant to my research. *Unheard Melodies* begins to examine pertinent issues such as the role music plays in establishing an understanding of the diegesis, the subjective and perceptual role the audience plays in constructing the film diegesis, and critically investigating what audio elements constitute the soundtrack. Gorbman begins discussions on a variety of topics, which when elaborated on by subsequent publications by additional authors, form integral parts of my theoretical framework.

### Michel Chion's *Audio-Vision*

Another arguably foundational publication for understanding diegetic and non-diegetic music is Chion's *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* in 1994.<sup>21</sup> This publication covers an expansive number of topics relating to sound in film, with concepts relating to diegetic and non-diegetic music being only one of the ideas discussed. In regards to diegetic and non-diegetic music, Chion emphasizes the importance of visual and audio interplay in shaping the audience's perceptual understanding of the diegesis, as well as their perception of where music is located within the film.<sup>22</sup> Chion incorporates important cognitive psychological elements such as the spatialization of sound and the biological imperative to be able to locate sound, as well as our innate ability to

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<sup>19</sup> Gorbman, 18.

<sup>20</sup> For a recent example see Kulezic-Wilson, Danielja. *Sound Design is the New Score: Theory, Aesthetics, and Erotics of the Integrated Soundtrack*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Chion, Michel. *Audiovision: Sound on Screen*. Edited and translated by Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

<sup>22</sup> Chion, 69.

determine a multitude of information about the physical space that a sound originates from as a result of certain acoustic qualities the sound possesses.<sup>23</sup> The visualization of sound sources also plays an important role in Chion's understanding of the audio-visual relationship, and Chion splits diegetic sound into onscreen and offscreen categories, as he considers this distinction to be significant enough to warrant new categories.<sup>24</sup> Acousmatic sound is another important term that Chion introduces, which is sound without a visualized source in the diegesis. In a framework that emphasizes spatialization of sound, this quality is a significant enough differentiation from the norm to warrant specific terminology.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, in addition to ideas regarding spatialization of sound, Chion describes at length the phenomena of synchronization in regards to audio and visual elements of film. The simultaneous occurrence of both a sound and an action on the screen magnetize the sound and image together in a synchronization that can be acutely perceived by the audience. Chion's emphasis on the synchronization of audio and visual elements is due to the strong sense of interlinkage created by this phenomenon, the implications this creates regarding the audience's perception of where sound is located, and how artists can utilize this information in the creation of artistic works.

*Audio-vision's* most relevant contributions to my research are understandings of the relationship between audio and visual elements in film, as well as the relationship between sound and (physical) space. Chion's consideration of whether sources of sound are on-screen or off-screen, as well as the concept of acousmatic sound, are all important tools I use to evaluate how anchored music is to the diegesis. Additionally, the idea synchronization provides for me a useful tool to

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<sup>23</sup> Chion, 25-34.

<sup>24</sup> Chion, 73.

<sup>25</sup> Chion, 71.

help establish the relationship between sounds and their sources as visualized in the diegesis, as well as identifying spatial information in the sound of the music provides key connections (or lack thereof) between the music and the diegetic space.

### A Useful Distinction? Communication Model, Perception Model, and the Fantastical Gap

Stemming from significant publications such as Gorbman and Chion, a series of notable discussions appear in the academic literature, one of the most important of which is regarding the communication and perception models of analysis.<sup>26</sup>

The communication model has been historically quite common in film music literature, using a tripartite division of composer - film - audience, where the composer is seen to communicate a meaning (or message) through the medium of the film to a receptive audience.<sup>27</sup> Notable critiques of this framework include the fallacy of intentionality attributed to the composer, the reduction of the film to a vehicle for a message, and the passive role ascribed to the audience.<sup>28</sup> The various shortcomings of the communication model have led to the gradual movement away from it, and the embrace instead of a perception model which forefronts the personal and subjective perceptual experience of the audience in the framework. The perception model, rather than emphasizing a communicated message from the artist to the audience through the film, instead forefronts how the film is experienced and perceived from the perspective of the audience. This perception model attributes agency to the audience in way the communication model does not, and

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<sup>26</sup> The preference of a perception model over a communication model is a central argument to Neoformalist authors. See Thompson, Kristin. *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Audissino, Emilio. *Film/Music Analysis: A Film Studies Approach*. Edited by K.J. Donnelly. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Audissino, 31-32; Heldt, Guido. *Music and Levels of Narration in Film: Steps Across the Border*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013, 76.

is less likely to simplify or reduce the film to a vessel or container for a message.<sup>29</sup> The perception model is thus an important part of my research, and I ensure that the audience's experience and perspective forms an important component of my analysis.

With the shift away from the communication model, some authors identified a perceived conflict between the perception model and using diegetic and non-diegetic classifications. The question of whether or not music is located within the diegesis could be considered an act of sourcing (or locating) the music, which usually requires the identification of an explicit or implied source.<sup>30</sup> In the context of the shift away from the communication model, distinguishing between diegetic and non-diegetic categories could be considered a reversion to communication model thinking, as locating the source of the music is arguably analogous to emphasizing the sender or communicator of the music. The core of this argument is that it urges caution when utilizing diegetic and non-diegetic terminology and analytical methods, as they contain within them an element of communication model bias.

Another criticism of the diegetic/non-diegetic distinction is in relation to the larger trend in film music literature of utilizing a more integrated model when discussing film music. Film music studies have historically tended to excise music from the film in order to analyze it, which has been criticized as creating sterile understandings of the music that are divorced from the context in which they appear (the film). To push back against separatist conceptions of film music, newer publications seek to integrate the music within the film and to avoid removal of context when analyzing music.<sup>31</sup> In relation to the diegetic/non-diegetic distinction, criticisms are levied that the act of placing music "inside" or "outside" the diegesis creates a problematic structure that

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<sup>29</sup> Audissino, 53-60.

<sup>30</sup> Notable arguments regarding the sourcing of music can be seen in Audissino, 31; Heldt, 77.

<sup>31</sup> Audissino, 45-60; Winters, Ben. "Musical Wallpaper? Towards an Appreciation of non-Narrating Music in Film." *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 6, no.1 (Spring 2012): 51.

implies especially that the non-diegetic film is in some way “outside” of some element of the film. It is important not to conflate being outside the diegesis with being external to, or separate from, the film itself.

However, despite these misgivings, there has been significant support for the continuation of the diegetic/non-diegetic distinction. Stilwell’s description of the “Fantastical Gap” in 2007 in particular left a large impression on film music literature.<sup>32,33</sup> In it, she outlines instances where film music is heard or felt to shift between diegetic and non-diegetic space, creating moments where the ambiguous or fluid placement of the music within spaces elicits strong emotional or narrative significance. Stilwell’s argument is that these strong and outwardly evident moments of significance demonstrate that the diegetic/non-diegetic distinction is both actively being engaged with in artistic practice, and is either a conscious or unconscious understanding within the perceptual experience of the audience since they can perceive these moments of play.<sup>34</sup> The “Fantastical Gap” provides sufficient justification for the importance of the diegetic/non-diegetic distinction by rooting it in ongoing artistic practice and the audience’s perceptual experience. The aforementioned issues surrounding the communication model and the separation of music still remain true, however instead of serving as arguments against the use of a diegetic/non-diegetic framework, they acted as warnings to remain aware of during my research.

The relevance of the diegetic/non-diegetic distinction is further cemented by literature published by those that belong to the field of narratology.<sup>35</sup> These authors seek to understand film

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<sup>32</sup> Stilwell, Robynn J. “The Fantastical Gap between Diegetic and Nondiegetic.” In *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*. Edited by Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard D. Leppert. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007, 184-202.

<sup>33</sup> Stilwell’s publication “The Fantastical Gap...” can be found cited in nearly all discussions regarding diegetic spaces and boundaries in film music following its publication in 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Stilwell, 200.

<sup>35</sup> Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985; Metz, Christian. *Language and Cinema*. Translated by Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok. The Hague: Mouton, 1974.

music as it relates to the narrative present within the film. Beginning as early as Chion, with his emphasis on synch points, narratology has provided a large body of quality literature that demonstrates the active play between diegetic and non-diegetic music (and the liminal spaces between and outside of them) as it relates to narrative threads in film.<sup>36</sup> The film music narratology literature builds on the work of authors such as Stilwell to further explore the ways in which movement between diegetic and non-diegetic spaces (and of course many other film music elements) interacts with the narrative of the film in significant and noteworthy ways.

With Stilwell (and other authors) having argued a largely acknowledged case that the distinction of diegetic and non-diegetic is worthwhile, subsequent discussions have focused largely on terminology and definition. The debate on appropriate terminology and boundaries for diegetic music, non-diegetic music, and other potential categories, is vast, with almost as many different combinations of terms as there are publications on the matter.<sup>37</sup> Exhaustively aggregating all variations in terminology would be a fraught endeavor, and so it is rather more useful to consider arguments regarding definition and terminology in relation to two main spaces; the diegetic space and the “other” space (popularly known as the non-diegetic space).

### The Diegetic Space

Defining the diegetic space is difficult and contains within it a myriad of problems. For many purposes in academic literature, a working definition of the diegesis might be simpler in nature depending on the nature of the analysis. However, due to the nature of my research, a more

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<sup>36</sup> Buhler, James. *Theories of the Soundtrack*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019, 151-186; Heldt, *Music and Levels of Narration in Film*.

<sup>37</sup> Just a few examples are Audissino and Gorbman’s use of diegetic/non-diegetic/meta-diegetic, Chion’s use of onscreen/offscreen/non-diegetic, Heldt’s use of diegetic/narration, Winter’s use of intra-diegetic/extra-diegetic.

complex understanding of the diegesis is required. Unfortunately, attempting to more precisely define a film's diegesis quickly becomes a much more difficult task.

Of central importance to understanding the nature of the diegesis is the general movement away from the communication model towards the perception model in the literature. Although previous understandings of the diegesis contain within them perhaps no overt reference to the idea being used in a communicative sense, there are still important lessons to be learned from the shift in values associated with the adoption of the perception model over the communication model. An understanding of the diegesis should not center the communicator's (director, author, etc.) conception of the diegesis, but should instead center the audience's perception and construction of the diegesis.

The adoption of the perception model has coincided with, and perhaps precipitated, a shift towards a cognitive and perceptual framing for the diegesis. Heldt, Winters, and Yacavone all emphasize that the audience's understanding of the diegesis is largely subjective, and that the diegesis cannot be properly understood outside of this subjective experience.<sup>38</sup> The diegesis can be understood as a world inside the film that is largely unable to be seen or perceived by the audience, except through the audio-visual elements (such as dialogue, ambient noise, film shots, etc.) provided by, and which constitute, the film itself. This means that the diegesis, as a world within the film, can only be seen through the fragmented pieces provided by the film. These fragments are inherently incomplete, as the sum totality of the diegesis cannot be presented by the

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<sup>38</sup> Heldt, *Music and Levels of Narration in Film*, 52; Winters, Ben. "The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Music, Film, and Narrative Space." *Music and Letters* 91, no.2 (2010): 224-244; Yacavone, Daniel. "Spaces, Gaps, and Levels: From the Diegetic to the Aesthetic in Film Theory." *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 6, no.1 (Spring 2012): 21-37.

film in any realistic means, and so the audience's understanding of the diegesis (as presented by the film) can only be incomplete.<sup>39</sup>

However, despite the fragmented presentation of the diegesis by the film, the audience plays an active role in completing the diegesis. The fragments are expanded on in the mind of the audience, filling in the gaps between what is provided by the film, creating an expanded understanding of the diegesis that is deeply indebted to the audience's subjective and individual experience. This subjectively expanded understanding of the diegesis is argued, by the same authors and others, to be comparable to reality without being beholden to reality, and is further mediated by cultural expectations and previous experiences.<sup>40</sup> This method of understanding the diegesis forefronts a perception based audience experience, in line with current values aligning with the perception model.

The works of Yacavone and Winters in particular provide me with a working understanding of the diegesis that operates within the perception model. Key to this perspective is understanding the inherently incomplete view of the diegesis provided by the film, as well as the active and subjective role the audience plays in completing the diegesis within their own mind. This understanding of the diegesis incorporates the subjective and perceptual aspects of its identity, and forefronts the active participatory role of the audience in the filmic experience.

### The "Other" Space

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<sup>39</sup> Yacavone, Daniel. *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015, 27.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, Jeff. "Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music." *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 2, no.1 (Spring 2009): 1-25; Winters, *The Non-Diegetic Fallacy*; Yacavone, "Spaces, Gaps, and Levels:".

Understanding the “other” space (popularly known as the non-diegetic space) that exists alongside the diegesis is difficult due to a lack of consensus on the nature of said space. It is in attempting to understand the “other” space within films that authors have put forth a variety of new terminology, as well as created numerous additional categories to expand beyond a simple binary or dichotomy.<sup>41</sup> This is partly due to the fact that many authors seek to have a more appropriate manner with which to describe the space other than simply in opposition to the diegetic space, taking issue with labelling it “non-diegetic”. It is in attempting to better describe the space that this diverse array of terminology and definitions have emerged, but there are a couple framings that have emerged as popular ways to describe the space.

A common perspective on the “other” space is that it is an area of narrative phenomena. Some authors in the narratology field see it as a narrational space in particular.<sup>42</sup> They argue that in the narrational space, outside of the diegetic space, music provides narrative elements or engages empathetically with the film narrative. This creates a diegetic/narrational space dichotomy, where music can be understood to be of either the diegesis, or the narration of said diegesis.

Another important look at a similar but contrasting understanding of the “other” space is the labelling of the space as a presentational space.<sup>43</sup> When the concern is less explicitly aimed towards the narrative implications of music in the space outside the diegesis, it moves towards an understanding more of the presentation of the diegesis being a defining characteristic of the “other” space. The presentational space is where elements that are external to the diegesis, but still part of the film and play a role in the presentation of the diegesis, are placed. I use a presentational framing

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<sup>41</sup> See footnote number 34 for some examples of additional terminology.

<sup>42</sup> Heldt, *Music and Levels of Narration in Film*; Buhler, *Theories of the Soundtrack*, 151-186.

<sup>43</sup> Yacavone, *Spaces, Gaps, and Levels*.

for the “other” space, as a narrative framing relies too strongly on the function of filmic elements, instead of relying on a positional and spatial understanding.

While there are a wide variety of different publications offering a diverse array of terminological solutions to describe and label the other space, both the narratological and presentational framing provide for me the most useful understandings of the space. Both of them emphasize the space as being one which engages with the audience, and emphasizes the role that the space plays in mediating and presenting the diegesis to the audience in the form of a narrative. These perspectives emphasize the importance of the audience’s experience viewing the film, and seeks to frame the spaces as places where communication occurs, as well as engagement with the audience.

## Chapter 2: Framework

### Shifting away from the Communication Model, and towards a Perception Model

At the center of the framework for my research is the importance of considering the perception model and its benefits, while avoiding the pitfalls of the communication framework. The communication model is associated with a series of issues in film music literature, and the shift towards the perception model has been the solution to the majority of these issues. In regards to how this has informed my framework, I have avoided attempting to decipher communicated messages by Zhao Jiping. Instead, I have emphasized the music as having value and interest outside its potential role as a carrier of a message, and I have kept the audience's perspective and perceptual experience central to my analysis. This means framing research through the lens of how the music is experienced and perceived, instead of what it communicates.

### The Film as an Integrated System

Another important perspective I have included in my research is an integrated (non-separatist) understanding of the film music in *Yellow Earth*. There has been a historical preference in the film music literature to excise music from the film in order to discuss it, and it has resulted in the omission of important insights on how the music functions within the film.<sup>44</sup> Considerations of the film as a unified system, instead of a collection of disparate parts, necessitate that the music be considered within the context of the film in which it occurs, as it is an integral part of the music's identity. When film music is removed from the film the myriad ways in which the music interacts with other elements of the film are lost, or made unintelligible. My research seeks to, whenever

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<sup>44</sup> Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis*, 45; Winters, "Musical Wallpaper?...", 40.

possible, consider the music in the context of the film, taking account of other audio, visual, and narrative phenomena that might be interacting with the music.

### “Contrapuntal” Shortcomings

I also avoided discussing the relationship of filmic elements (music, sound, visuals, narrative, etc.) in contrapuntal terms. Previously in the literature, there has been the tendency to arrange film elements in pairs and discuss them in terms of “agreement” or “disagreement” (consonance or dissonance). Audissino in particular identifies the trap present here in noting how this traditionally causes analyses to prioritize and forefront moments where there would be perceived to be a disagreement, or a sense of change. When the music is perceived to be moving along smoothly, in agreement with the narrative, there is often a tendency to overlook it. The contrapuntal framing of agreement and disagreement (with the comparison being drawn to the binary consonance and dissonance of counterpoint) creates hierarchies and biases when discussing soundtracks that can result in misallocated resources and efforts.<sup>45</sup> The solution to this is a more egalitarian understanding of the soundtrack, where hierarchies of importance are not biased towards moments that “stand out.” The importance of silence, so-called “wallpaper music,”<sup>46</sup> and other less flashy parts of a film’s soundtrack have been the source of fascinating and important discussions, and I give these moments equal consideration as potential areas of interest when engaging in my analysis.

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<sup>45</sup> Audissino, 26.

<sup>46</sup> Winters, “Musical Wallpaper?...”

### Bottom-Up, not Top-Down

Another issue central to my research is the importance of avoiding top-down theory. Although this is, in some ways, a somewhat vague consideration when said in the abstract, I believe that it is incredibly important in conducting valuable research.<sup>47</sup> In my research I ensure that my theory, methodology, and overall research is informed first and foremost by Zhao Jiping's music in *Yellow Earth*. Research about art, its context, and its impact, needs to stem first and foremost from the realities of the art and the artistic practice that produced it. Research should be responsive to the works and materials being discussed, adapting and being flexible as understandings and framings change. Analyses should seek to shed light on and help understand the artwork and the contexts surrounding it, and not prescribe to the artwork how it is that it should be.

### Material Constraints and Limitations

The process of creating a film often involves large numbers of people from across multiple disciplines and industries, and depending on the size of the film, can take lengthy periods of time to produce. This means that there is an ongoing process of negotiation involved in the making of the film. Technological limitations, budgetary costs, time constraints, political pressures, market influences, and many other factors can tangibly alter a film as it is being made and released.<sup>48</sup> With a tendency to forefront the perceived "artists" involved in the making of the film such as the director or the film score composer, the decision whether or not to include music in a scene, or to film the scene in particular location can simply be the result of some of these material realities involved in the making of the film, and not an artistic choice made to serve a grander goal by the

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<sup>47</sup> Audissino writes at length about the pitfalls of attempting to use "Grand Theory" or other methods that attempt to utilize one all-encompassing method or theoretical approach when discussing film music. See Audissino, 51-53.

<sup>48</sup> McDougall documents a number of technical, budgetary, and other constraints that noticeably impacted the production of *Yellow Earth* in particular. See McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, 25-54.

director (or other significant agent). Filmmaking is a complex process involving significant cooperation across wide periods of time and fields of specialty, with constraining influences directly impacting the final product, and so I incorporate considerations for these material and “external” pressures into my research whenever relevant.

### Inclusive Understanding of a Soundtrack

Due to the scope of my research being specifically about the music of Zhao Jiping in *Yellow Earth*, I have had to carefully consider my definition of the soundtrack. Publications by Kulezic-Wilson and others emphasize the importance of understanding a film soundtrack as being more than just the music that plays during the film.<sup>49</sup> They highlight the importance of audio production, mixing, effects, silence, ambient noise, and sound effects in how the soundtrack is perceived by the audience, building on ideas raised by Chion. All these elements combine and work together to create the audio portion of the film alongside the music, and they can all behave and perform in ways (function, emotive impact on audience, etc.) similar to music when considering the impact on the audience’s experience. This is directly related as well to the note on the importance of considering material realities of the film making process, as in most films (*Yellow Earth* is no exceptions) there is not usually one single person to whom all sound is attributed. There are composers, sound design technicians, mixers and producers, etc., who all take part in the shaping of the soundtrack, and even if you consider only the music of a film, there are still multiple individuals or teams that are involved in integrating the music into the film and preparing it for viewing.

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<sup>49</sup> Chion, *Audiovision*, 66-94; Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 18-19; Kulezic-Wilson, *Sound Design is the New Score*.

In regards to my research in particular, focusing specifically on Zhao Jiping, having an inclusive understanding of Zhao's music in the soundtrack means incorporating elements of the mixing and the production into my analysis. As Zhao Jiping does not seem to have played a role in the sound design of *Yellow Earth*, I will be limiting the aspects of the soundtrack that I discuss to the music and the way that it is produced and mixed.<sup>50</sup> This means reverb and other audio effects (especially ones that imply spatialization), volume, and other production elements will be considered when seeking to relate the music to the diegetic and presentational spaces. Because of the scope of my research focuses on the music and the manner in which it is produced, I will be referring to the "score" of *Yellow Earth* when speaking specifically of music, and the "soundtrack" when inclusively considering audio elements in general, as the definition of the soundtrack is now more inclusive and expansive and should not be used when referring solely to the music that occurs in the film. Despite my research focusing only focusing on one part of the soundtrack, an inclusive understanding of the soundtrack still benefits my research as it highlights how different elements of the film's audio (and members of the film's sound production team) work together.

### Understanding Spaces by Location, not Function

An important element of my framing is locating music within musical spaces properly through spatialization, and not through function. There is a tendency in the literature to blur lines between musical function and musical space, often conflating function with location.<sup>51</sup> Arguments are made that music belongs in narrative spaces due to its role in signaling some aspect of the

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<sup>50</sup> Zhao Jiping is credited as being composer or music writer (作曲), with a separate credit given for sound recording (录音) to Lin Lin (林临) for *Yellow Earth*.

<sup>51</sup> Despite discussion by Gorbman and others emphasizing the ability of music in film to perform a variety of roles regardless of the music's location within the film, there have been attempts, especially amongst authors ascribing to narratological schools of thought, to determine the location of music by examining the music's function.

narrative, or that the music might belong in the diegetic space due to the music helping establish the diegetic setting.<sup>52</sup> However, over and over across multiple publications and authors, it has been shown that although there are tendencies towards certain relationships of function and location, it is a case of correlation not causation.<sup>53</sup> There have been myriad examples of music existing in a space while taking on many possible functions. Space and function are two fascinating properties that music can have in a film, but they should not be conflated. They are independent variables that engage in significant interplay, but they must be treated as distinct categories. My research specifically investigates Zhao Jiping's engagement with musical spaces, not the function of his music, and so I structure my definitions and understandings around location, and not function.

#### Yacavone's Definitions of the Diegetic and Presentational Spaces

Due to the central role they play in my research, the diegetic and presentational spaces should be defined and understood with as much specificity as possible. Although there have been numerous publications that have contributed to understanding diegetic and presentational spaces, the work of Yacavone provides the interpretations most in-line with the values and ideas of modern film music literature.<sup>54</sup> Yacavone's publications focus around theoretical understandings of the worlds that exist within films, and although the publications do not specifically discuss the role and place of music in these spaces, Yacavone provides the most convincing argument for how to understand the diegetic and presentational spaces.

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<sup>52</sup> Heldt, as an author in the narratological field, acknowledges the diversity of function of film music but still argues a case for narrative function as a defining trait of music in the non-diegetic (or the narrational) space.

<sup>53</sup> See Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*; Heldt, *Music and Levels of Narration in Film*; Neumeyer, David. "Diegetic/Nondiegetic: A Theoretical Model." *Music and the Moving Image* 2, no.1 (2009): 26-39.

<sup>54</sup> See Yacavone, *Film Worlds*; Yacavone, "Spaces, Gaps, and Levels...".

Yacavone's main divisions are the world-in (the film) and the world-of (the film).<sup>55</sup> Both of these terms are chosen because they carefully emphasize that the spaces of the film are part of the film as a system. There is an intentional avoidance of terminology that implies an "inside" and "outside" or anything along a binary that implies something is external or extraneous to the film. This particular line of thinking aligns with my emphasis on having an integrated understanding of the filmic system, ensuring that all the spaces being discussed are still integral parts of the film as a unified whole.

### The World-in

The world-in is essentially analogous to the diegesis as discussed elsewhere in the literature, although Yacavone expands on the understanding in key ways. Yacavone first emphasizes that the world-in does not have to be realistic (bear resemblance to the reality of our day-to-day lives), and that realism is often a misattributed quality to the world-in (or diegesis). The world-in is perceived by the audience through a selective group of scenes, shots, angles, and stills that are given to them by the film itself. Therefore there exists a collection of fragmented glimpses into the world of the diegesis provided by the film to the audience, and assuming there is no information external to the film being provided (which can occur), these fragments are the sole "evidence" provided for the audience to understand the diegesis.<sup>56</sup> It is after these fragments are provided that the diegesis begins to be expanded in the mind of the audience. Yacavone argues that the audience expands on and builds up the diegesis beyond the fragments provided by the film through a complex process of perceptual and personal experiences. Yacavone explains that the mind seeks to understand what lies beyond the fragments by using logical deduction and inference based upon understandings of

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<sup>55</sup> Yacavone, *Film Worlds*, 30-35.

<sup>56</sup> Yacavone, "Spaces, Gaps, and Levels...", 29.

how worlds work.<sup>57</sup> This understanding of how things “work” is fundamentally rooted in the audience’s personal subjective understanding of the world around them, which itself is influenced by past experiences, cultural influences and lessons, understandings of morality, science, etc. Yacavone states that, “In other words, it is the viewer who perceptually and imaginatively actualizes this inescapably referential level of a film on the basis of the prior knowledge and experience that he or she brings to it, including that of what is and is not fictional (even if this may not always be certain or clear-cut).”<sup>58</sup>

If I were to attempt to summarize in brief, the film provides to the audience brief insights into the world-in the film through shots/scenes. The audience then internally expands on these fragmentary insights through logical inference and assumption as to the nature of the world-in the film. These assumptions and inferences are informed by the audience’s personal perception of reality and the world around them, which is a complex and nuanced understanding that incorporates personal experiences, values, cultural norms and understandings, and even artistic and genre norms. This is directly related to Yacavone’s argument that realism plays too important a role in some definitions of the world-in the film, as although the diegesis is understood in relation to reality, the reality to which it is compared is an extremely complex entity constructed out of many subjective, perceptual, and personal experiences both unique to and shared between members of the audience.<sup>59</sup>

This understanding of the world-in forefronts the perceptual experience of the audience, and casts them as the active participators in the construction of the world-in. This aligns with the perception model’s understanding of the audience and their experience as active and important

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<sup>57</sup> Yacavone, “Spaces, Gaps, and Levels...”, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Yacavone, “Spaces, Gaps, and Levels...”, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Yacavone, “Spaces, Gaps, and Levels...”, 31.

parts of the filmic experience. The glimpses of the world-in are provided by the film, through all the various tools that a film has at its disposal, such as visual scenes, still images, music, ambient sound, narrative, etc.. This aligns with a more unified and non-separatist understanding of the film, seeing it as a system of many different interrelated parts that are best understood in combination and in relation to each other set within their own context, and not removed from the film for a surgical dissection. The source of this understanding begins fundamentally with the film itself and what it is that it presents to the audience, which then goes on to the perceptual experience of the audience, all of which helps avoid a top-down model of theory, since the work and how it is experience is fore fronted in Yacavone's understanding of the world-in.

I will be using Yacavone's world-in to understand the diegesis of the films, because of its flexibility and the aforementioned ways in which it aligns with modern developments in the film music literature. It is an understanding that allows for nuance and audience agency in the construction of the diegesis, and instead of trying to explain away ambiguities and disagreements on the nature of the diegesis, it embraces the subjective and personal nature of the diegesis. The limits of the diegesis in film, and the nature of it, is inherently tied to each audience member's personal understanding of the world around them, and the world that they expect to see in the film. This allows for an inclusive understanding of the diegesis, where many things can be simultaneously true for different individuals.

### The World-of

In regards to the "other" space of the film (the non-diegetic), Yacavone contrasts the world-in with the world-of. The world-of the film contains within it the sum of the filmic experience that can be sourced from the film itself (this does not include external elements of the film viewing

experience such as room lighting, the comfort of your seat, etc.) The world-of contains the multitude of elements that makeup the multilayered and complex system that is the film. Yacavone identifies the world-of as being fundamentally presentational in nature due to its role in the presentation of objects, spaces, and the overall diegesis of the film for the audience.<sup>60</sup> In addition, emphasis is put on the important ways in which the world-in and the world-of are dependent upon each other within a filmic system:

“Represented and fictional realities, and the larger story-world of which they are a part, are contained within it in the manner of an active, functional, and interdependent integration toward specific artistic ends (with such integration obviously lacking from nonnarrative, abstract, and experimental films). While the fictional reality constructed and communicated is fundamentally *representational* and denotational, the world-of a film—as corresponding to the totality of a cinematic work as made and as experienced—should be thought of as (also) fundamentally *presentational*. Although the former has the uniqueness and stability of a representational schema that must be completed through viewer attention and knowledge, it is the latter— typically *when combined with representation* —that possesses much of the perceived singularity of form, affect, and nonliteral meaning associated with works of art, be they paintings, poems, dance performances, or films.”<sup>61</sup>

This understanding of the world-of the film from Yacavone identifies the second space of the film to include alongside the world-in (or diegesis). Similarly to how

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<sup>60</sup> Yacavone, “Spaces, Gaps, and Levels...”, 35.

<sup>61</sup> Yacavone, *Film Worlds*, 33.

Yacavone's understanding of the world-in is flexible in its definition due to the role the personal and subjective experience have in the shaping of the world-in, the world-of is also somewhat amorphous in its shape and location. The space of the world-of has the film itself as the external boundary, since it does not include external factors to the film, and it contains within it the world-in.

Yacavone's world-of provides a useful framing to understand film music located outside of the world-in (or diegesis). It is inclusive and flexible, and emphasizes the dynamic relationship between the different spaces within the film. As a pair, the world-in and the world-of cover the sum totality of what is contained by the film, and include the audience as an active participator and creator of the experience.

### Final Terminology

Throughout the literature there are many terms for the diegetic and non-diegetic spaces. Although arguments are made for a variety of differing labels, Yacavone's world-in and world-of make for the strongest case which aligns with the values espoused in the film music literature regarding research practices. However, although these terms are useful from a theoretical standpoint, I use the terms diegetic and presentational in my research.<sup>62</sup>

While the use of the term diegetic for the world-in is nearly universal, the need for the presentational term is due to multiple reasons. The first is that the use of terms such as the extra-diegetic and the non-diegetic do not serve to describe the "other" space in a constructive or positive way. The presentational space is extremely important for the film

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<sup>62</sup> Prior to this point in the paper I have been using non-diegetic for the purpose of clarity, as it is a more widely popularized and known term for the space that I prefer to call the presentational space.

and for the audience, and it should have a term and definition that can positively define it in a way that is not just in opposition to the diegesis. Additionally, the terms of the world-in and the world-of from Yacavone are accurate, but suffer from an issue of intelligibility in writing. They serve as very useful theoretical concepts, and are described and explored in extreme detail by Yacavone from a theoretical perspective, but they are not necessarily practical to use due to their visual and phonetic similarities, making them easy to misread or say aloud, especially by those less familiar with the concepts. Describing the spaces in the film as diegetic and presentational allows for clear visual and phonetic distinction, as well as both words providing clear signaling as to the natures of the spaces.

Fundamentally, I believe that Yacavone's understanding of spaces within a film allows for flexible definitions that can actively respond to the artworks. With some shifting of vocabulary and definition for practical purposes away from world-in and world-of towards diegetic and presentational, Yacavone's theoretical framework provides a model that aligns with the values centered within film music discourse. The framework is inclusive, forefronts the audience's experience, appropriately ascribes the audience agency, sees the film as a unified and interrelated system, and allows for understanding of filmic spaces to be informed by the individual artworks on a case by case basis. This flexibility and set of values provides the most appropriate framework for understanding and discussing spaces in film.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

In my research, one of the first issues I addressed was regarding language barriers in publications. There is a paucity of publications in the English-language literature on *Yellow Earth* as well as on Zhao Jiping. Because of this, although my research does not extensively engage with topics of discussion that appear in Mandarin-language publications, I have had to rely at times upon information gleaned through the publications of multilingual researchers who have proficiency in both English and Mandarin.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, I made use of my modest Mandarin to do some personal translations of documentary material when possible, and when assessing if the content of a publication was relevant enough to pursue a full translation.<sup>64</sup>

I began my research by first establishing a preliminary understanding of the nature and setting of the diegesis, which in the case of *Yellow Earth* is located in a real time and place in northern Shaanxi (陝西) province, also known as Shaanbei (陝北) in 1939.<sup>65</sup> I needed to understand the diegesis in a broader sense because the diegesis provides spatiotemporal information such as geographic locations and points in time, as well providing information as to the rules that govern the diegetic music. Seeing as the diegesis is perceived through what is presented to the audience by the film (following Yacavone's theories of the world-in and world-of), I first had to identify whether or not the diegesis bears resemblance to or is influenced by real world places and times. The title screen and scrolling text that open *Yellow Earth* provided explicit context to the setting for the film's diegesis, and confirmed that it draws directly from a real time and place in history. This meant that I was able to engage with external resources relating to that

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<sup>63</sup> Authors such as Xiao have been extremely important regarding any writings on Zhao Jiping's music.

<sup>64</sup> This only became relevant regarding the personal translation of the CCTV mini-documentary on Zhao Jiping, see footnote number 9.

<sup>65</sup> Established explicitly by the opening scenes of the film, with scrolling text, in addition to information presented in McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, regarding the setting of the film.

time and place in history in order to learn more about the setting of the diegesis, taking care to make sure that I remained open and aware to potential disconnects where the film might not exactly align with reality.<sup>66</sup>

When engaging with *Yellow Earth* and external resources in order to better understand the context of the film and its diegesis, it was important that I engaged in self-reflection as a researcher. Following Yacavone's understanding of the diegesis, a large part of the understanding of the diegesis is internal, subjective, perceptual, and individual to the audience who is perceiving it. This means that my particular cultural, social, and personal perspective bears impact on my understanding of the diegesis. Since the diegesis is only shown in fragments through the film, occasionally supplemented by external resources, a large part of the diegesis is the "filling of the gaps" done by the audience (myself). As a researcher, I am not objective, and it is important that I actively engage in self-reflection and respond appropriately to assumptions and biases that I may have. This is of particular importance in the context of my research, where I am coming from a university background heavily indebted to a European tradition of knowledge and knowing with historical roots that influence the way modern institutions and researchers function. My background bears influence on the way that I understand and perceive the world, especially in regards to my academic research.<sup>67</sup>

Another important aspect of my self-reflection is understanding the ongoing legacy of colonialism, with particular emphasis on how European-influenced academics (from the tradition

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<sup>66</sup> Important topics that were the focus of my contextualization were regarding the Yan'an conference on literature and art, the early history of the CCP and their roots in the Shaanxi region, music of the New Culture movement, as well as other early and mid 20th century historical, political, and artist trends and events.

<sup>67</sup> For larger discussions regarding ethical cross-cultural research practices, see Cleary, Linda Miller. *Cross-Cultural Research with Integrity: Collected Wisdom from Researchers in Social Settings*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; Court, Deborah. *Qualitative Research and Intercultural Understanding: Conducting Qualitative Research in Multicultural Settings*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018; Robinson-Pant, Anna, and Alain Wolf. *Researching Across Languages and Cultures: A Guide to doing Research Interculturally*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

in which I am trained) have historically approached and discussed cultures perceived to be “other” to their own. As a researcher discussing films from China, and seeking to understand diegetic worlds that are spatiotemporally located within 20th century China, my understanding of China, its culture, and its history, is influenced by colonial legacies and narratives. There is no quick-fix or simple answer as to how to navigate or solve this dilemma, and modern ethical research practices emphasize the need for ongoing self-reflection and reflexivity.<sup>68</sup> From the perspective that I exist in, there are some elements of Chinese culture and history (and by extension the diegetic worlds of the films) that I am not able to understand, and will not be able to speak about with authority. This does not mean that there is no place for cross-cultural research, but instead means that it should be undertaken with appropriate caution, self-reflection, and humility. My own perceptions and understandings have a massive influence on my understanding of the diegesis, and it is crucial that I engage in this self-reflection and reflexivity as a researcher if I wish to more appropriately understand the diegetic world of *Yellow Earth*.

Once I achieved a preliminary understanding of the diegesis using information both internal and external to the film, I was then able to better examine the music of the diegesis. I first located the diegetic music, due to visualized diegetic music being the most reliable category of film music to locate. My argument for the strength of visualized music as diegetic in nature is due to the cognitive factors brought up by Chion, who emphasizes human perception of sound as being fundamentally tied to our understanding of its source and what the sound can tell us about the source of the sound.<sup>69</sup> When the film provides us with source for the music that is visually anchored within the diegesis (onscreen), acoustically anchored within the physical diegetic space (volume, frequency range, reverb, etc.), and logically anchored in the diegesis (consistent with the audience

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<sup>68</sup> For further discussion on reflexivity and reflection, see Cleary, *Cross-Cultural Research with Integrity*, 21-47.

<sup>69</sup> See causal listening, Chion, *Audiovision*, 25.

understanding of the diegesis), then the strongest argument possible can be made for the diegetic locality for the music.

I began by identifying instances of visualized music, and confirming the music's visual, acoustic, and logical anchoring to the diegetic space. Visual confirmation is straightforward, in that a visible source needs to be observed onscreen which is perceived to emit the music, either because of the nature of the source (a cello is seen being played as a cello is heard), or because the source is seen to be rhythmically synched with the audio in a way that implies its source (such as seeing someone's lips move as you hear someone speak). This relationship of sound and image draws from Chion's theories on synchronization and synch points, which outline the relationship created in the mind of the audience when audio and visual elements are synchronized in time in a way that implies cause and effect or other relationship.<sup>70</sup>

Next, I established whether the music was acoustically anchored in the diegesis. Acoustic confirmation specifically refers to whether the acoustic information in the music reflects the immediate diegetic locality. This refers to particular qualities the music might have, such as frequency range, reverb, volume, etc. These elements of the music indicate distance, the size and nature of the room, and the nature of the source.<sup>71</sup> To continue with the cello example, the cello might visually be made of wood, and is being played in a large concert hall, while the point of audition is far away at the back of the hall. To be acoustically anchored in this diegetic setting, the cello would need to sound like it is made of wood, not metal (this could be due to a large amount of factors such as particular overtones, but the perception of the audience being that it is made of wood is what is crucial). It would also need to be somewhat quiet, as might be expected of a solo instrument in a large hall. The reverb of the room (the ambient acoustic feedback of the shape,

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<sup>70</sup> Chion, 58.

<sup>71</sup> For information able to be gleaned from listening, see the three listening modes, Chion, *Audiovision*, 25-34.

size, and surfaces of the hall) would also need to be consistent with a professional concert hall. In addition, higher frequencies diminish first as distance increases, and so if one is significantly far from the stage, some of the higher frequencies might be less perceivable. The act of acoustically anchoring music within the diegesis could be reduced to a scientific and quantitative endeavour of decibel readings and frequency analysis, but what is most important in a perception model framework is the experience of the audience. This means that what must be considered is whether or not the music is *believably* anchored within the diegetic space; a belief that will, of course, vary from audience member to audience member depending on their personal circumstances.

The third task I undertook was determining whether the music was logically consistent with the diegesis. This category can overlap with visual and acoustic anchoring, as visualization and acoustic quality are both “logical” qualities of the diegesis. However, this category is of course by nature extremely subjective. Believing that the source of the music is present in the diegesis is an important consideration to have, because so much of the diegesis is internally constructed. If the source of the music is visually and acoustically anchored in the diegesis, but some element of the presentation or narrative causes the audience to perceive that the music might not actually be present despite contrary “physical” evidence, this perception must be given weight. In adopting a perception model, and in accepting that a large part of the diegesis is internally and subjectively constructed, means that part of the diegesis presented by the film should not be prioritized over the perception of the audience. In cases where audience perception does not align with visual and acoustic anchoring, the issue arose as to how to weight the evidence. I considered if elements of the diegesis presented by the film are more important, or if elements of the diegesis constructed by the audience are more important. Although it is a difficult question, because I am using a perception model I choose to forefront the experience of the audience in these considerations. This

means that although visual and acoustic anchoring are important for establishing whether or not the music is located in the diegesis, the perception of the audience in believing music to be part of the diegesis is an integral consideration in my research.

After having identified the visualized diegetic music, I then took to identifying acousmatic music. In acousmatic sound, the source of the sound is not visually confirmed, but is implied to exist within the diegesis. Chion alternatively describes the visualized-acousmatic categories as being essentially similar to onscreen-offscreen.<sup>72</sup> It is an important distinction and category to consider because there is a limit to how much can be presented visually in a film (through shots, framing, etc.), but acoustically speaking there can be almost no limit to how many sounds can occur together.<sup>73</sup> Many things can be heard without being visualized on screen, and this reflects the reality that just because the source of a sound might not be visible (it being behind the listener for example), it does not mean that the source of the sound is not anchored in reality. Chion presents a novel test for a quick assessment when thinking about acousmatic sound, in that it should in all respects be relatively indistinguishable from visualized sound if the visuals are removed.<sup>74</sup> This is to say that the sound (music) should acoustically and logically anchored within the diegesis even if you are not visually able to anchor it. Identifying acousmatic music in *Yellow Earth* followed a similar process to the visualized diegetic music, only relying more heavily on acoustic and logical anchoring instead of visual anchoring. Acousmatic music is important to distinguish from presentational music, as both categories lack visual anchoring in the diegesis, but importantly acousmatic music contains other cues that indicate its location in the diegesis.

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<sup>72</sup> Chion, 73.

<sup>73</sup> Chion, 67-68.

<sup>74</sup> Chion provides the example of closing one's eyes to assess whether or not the aural fidelity is comparable. *Audiovision*, 82-83.

After having identified visualized and acousmatic diegetic music, I was left with the remaining music that didn't easily fit into the two categories, which were either presentational music or music that lies outside of any proper category (such as in the "Fantastical Gap").<sup>75</sup> Unfortunately, there lay an issue I perceived in defining and understanding presentational music. I have not found a convincing argument for how to define presentational music other than in the negation of the diegetic (i.e. define it as the music that is not in the diegesis).<sup>76</sup> Attempts have been made to define and understand presentational music through the function or role it plays in the film, however the sheer diversity of function that occurs regardless of locality with music in film gives credence to the argument that function is independent from locality (although there is certainly tendencies and common practices where they align). This means that presentational music is to be identified and defined by confirming that it is *not* located within the diegesis, with no real alternative way to define it in a more constructive fashion. The presentational space is a space of artistic play, narrative significance, and great pleasure to researchers, audiences, and filmmakers alike, and because of this it holds an important role in the conception of film music (whether it is called non-diegetic, presentational, extra-diegetic, or something else). I believe that there may be a method to identify presentational music without relying upon proving it is not in the diegesis, because there is the theoretical language and understanding to describe the presentational space in ways that don't rely upon the diegesis entirely. However, the methodology for putting this understanding and framing of the presentational space into practice eludes me, and the scholarship at large, and would be a great contribution if it were to be formalized.

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<sup>75</sup> Stilwell's terminology.

<sup>76</sup> To clarify: the term non-diegetic describes the space only as the (not)-diegetic space. I am looking to define the space in a manner than describe it for what it is, instead of what it is not.

Despite these issues with identifying presentational music from a practical methodological perspective, I still needed to differentiate presentational music from music that fell outside of any clearly defined spaces. I separated the presentational music from the other music due to presentational music containing little to no visual, acoustic, or logical anchoring within the diegesis, whereas in comparison instances of music that contained ambiguous or variable amounts of anchoring would be considered outside of a clearly delineated space. This distinction between presentational music and music outside explicit spaces was a difficult one to make, and categorization of music into one category or the other was frequently conditional, and I remained flexible and ready to amend my assessment of the location of the music should further information or evidence present itself.

Once the music was roughly organized into diegetic (visualized and acousmatic), presentational, and the Fantastical Gap, the spaces were then able to be characterized. It is from this characterization of spaces that I sought to understand the instrumentation, genre, style, mixing, logic, etc. of the music in each of the musical spaces in order to observe how Zhao Jiping plays with and engages with the spaces in his music. In this characterizing, it was important to temper my assessments with considerations for some of the practical, logistical, and technical limitations surrounding the conception, production, and release of a large film work such as *Yellow Earth* and *Red Sorghum*. Consideration of some of these factors that are external to the artwork but inextricably linked with it were important, especially considering the enormous influence real life social, political, cultural, and economic circumstances had on the filmmaking process. In addition, my work of self-reflection and reflexivity as a researcher continued to play a central role in my research. I needed to be honest and critical about what the limits of my knowledge are, critique

what are valid sources of information, and look to avoid colonial and neo-colonial frames of thinking in regards to cross-cultural research.

## Chapter 4: *Yellow Earth* (1984)

*Yellow Earth* is directed by Chen Kaige, with Zhang Yimou in charge of cinematography, and Zhao Jiping scoring the music for the film. Premiered in 1984 in China, the initial reception was lukewarm, although it eventually garnered international attention and became an essential film in the Chinese canon.<sup>77</sup> Due to the attention and praise that the film received, there is widespread discussion and research on the film, with numerous publications in English-language academic journals and books. However, the majority of the discussion has focused on directorial, cinematographic, or socio-cultural topics surrounding the production and reception of the film.<sup>78</sup> The music of *Yellow Earth* was composed by Zhao Jiping, who also scored numerous other films directed by Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige,<sup>79</sup> the result being that his scores were heard around the world because of the presence of these films at international film festivals and other international events. Zhao's score for *Yellow Earth* was present everywhere that the film was, and because of this, discussions regarding the international impact and importance of *Yellow Earth* should include discussions of the music within it.

In *Yellow Earth* Zhao Jiping's score forefronts the music of the diegesis, and uses the contrasting music characterizations of the diegetic and presentational spaces to create musically significant moments when shifting between them. *Yellow Earth* presents a diegesis that seeks to mirror the reality of rural peasant life in northern Shaanxi province in China, and Zhao Jiping (being a native of the same general region) draws on his deep knowledge of the region's musical

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<sup>77</sup> See McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, 55-130 for an extensive discussion regarding all sorts of reception across regions and periods of time.

<sup>78</sup> See footnote number 4.

<sup>79</sup> Due to the lack of English-language scholarship on Zhao Jiping's film scores, the popular website IMDb has the most comprehensive collection of Zhao's works. See "Zhao Jiping," IMDb, accessed April 15, 2022, <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0947921/>

traditions to compose a score that either sits realistically within the diegesis (when the music is in the diegetic space), or uses melodic material from the diegesis with accompanying orchestral scoring (when the music is in the presentational space).<sup>80</sup> This fore fronting of realistic diegetic music reflects a set of priorities and beliefs that Zhao Jiping learned from his father from a very young age, which strongly influence Zhao's compositional style throughout his career.<sup>81,82</sup>

## Plot

Set in early spring 1939, the film begins with Gu Qing (顧青), or “Brother Gu” (顧大哥) as he later introduces himself. He is shown walking through the open, somewhat barren expanses of the yellow earth plateau of northern Shaanxi province, on a mission for the Red Army to collect local songs to re-write and use to inspire the communist troops. He finds himself later at a rural village, arriving as a wedding procession and ceremony are ongoing. Brother Gu is invited to sit and eat with the village as they feast to celebrate the wedding, and he joins them at one of the

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<sup>80</sup> Zhao Jiping has training in both European and Chinese musical traditions, especially the music traditions native to the region of China around Xi'an where he spent much of his life. See Miller, *Zhao Jiping*, as well as the CCTV mini-documentary 《人物》“為時代而歌 趙季平”.

<sup>81</sup> Zhao discusses his belief in the importance of fore fronting the lived experiences of the common people, or *laobaixing* (老百姓), as well as the influence his father played in instilling these values in him from a young age. Again, see Miller, *Zhao Jiping*, as well as the CCTV mini-documentary 《人物》“為時代而歌 趙季平”.

<sup>82</sup> Zhao Jiping's use of local music styles and his interest in the lives of ordinary people frequently appear in Mandarin-language publications on his music. See Huang, Shizhi 黃世智. “Minzu wenhua yuansu de qiaomiao yunyong – lun guishipian ‘Dahong denglong gao gao gua’ zhong jingju de zuoyong” 民族文化元素的巧妙運用——論故事片《大紅燈籠高高掛》中京劇的作用 [Ingenious use of National Cultural elements – On the role of Peking Opera in the feature film “Raise the Red Lantern”]. *Dianying pingjie* 電影評介 17 (2013): 18-22; Wang, Lin 王琳. “Difang xing yinyue yuansu zai Zhao Jiping shengyue zuopin zhong de yingyong fenxi” 地方性音樂元素在趙季平聲樂作品中的應用分析 [Analysis of the application of local musical elements in Zhao Jiping's vocal works]. *Yinyue chuangzuo* 音樂創作 4 (2017): 102-104; Zhang, Lihua 張麗華. “Minyue zai dianying peiyue zhong de biaoyi gongneng fenxi - yi Zhao Jiping wei Chen Kaige ‘Bawang bie ji’ peiyue wei li” 民樂在電影配樂中的表意功能分析——以趙季平為陳凱歌《霸王別姬》配樂為例 [Analysis of the ideographic function of folk music in film music – Taking Zhao Jiping's score for Chen Kaige's ‘Farewell my Concubine’ as an example]. *Huanghe zhi sheng* 黃河之聲 21 (2016): 105.

tables. As they eat, a beggar walks among the tables singing, prompting Brother Gu to take notice and pull out his notepad to take notes.

As Brother Gu's accommodations are shown with a local family (the Father, an older daughter Cuiqiao [翠巧], and a younger son Hanhan [憨憨]), the discussions between Brother Gu and the father begin to outline the sordid life of women and daughters in this rural village. The marriage ceremony which helped open the film was between a girl no older than 14, and Brother Gu's host makes it clear that the value of a daughter is in their marriage. Brother Gu mentions the more progressive view of women in society that is spreading in the south (of China), where women are free to choose whom they marry and when, prompting the host to question the worth of these women. All while Brother Gu and his host are talking, Cuiqiao works quietly in the background, clearly listening to the stories of women and daughters with agency to decide their own lives.

This rural, traditional servitude is contrasted with a more modern, communist-associated emancipation of women and girls throughout the film, as Brother Gu stays with the family. He assists the family with plowing the fields, and repairing clothing, and all the while Cuiqiao hears more and more about the freedoms that exist with the Red Army, and the changes that are happening outside of her village. The tension builds in Cuiqiao as she contemplates a life of choice and freedom with the Red Army, and as the months pass, Brother Gu eventually has to return to the Red Army, having collected local songs he had been studying while staying with the family. Cuiqiao takes this chance to ask to leave with him to join the army, but Brother Gu stipulates that he must get permission from his superiors before allowing her to join, prompting an agreement that he would return in the spring of the next year to come get her. Cuiqiao is left in the village, with an impending marriage to a much older man on the horizon, and only Brother Gu as hope for her escape.

As the winter stretched on, Cuiqiao is married off, and moves out of the family household. Her misery at the prospects of her future is clear, and in a brief encounter with her younger brother Hanhan as he collects water from the Yellow River, she tells Hanhan that she is running away from the marriage. She outlines her plan to row a boat across the powerful Yellow River to seek out a detachment of the Red Army that is stationed somewhere on the other side, and tells Hanhan that she feels this is her only choice, unsure if Brother Gu will ever return or will return in time for her. As she takes off in a boat onto the water, she sings of her plight and her struggles and hopes. Her voice is abruptly cut off, and the rushing of the water in the river grows to fill the scene as shots of rapids and torrential waters move across the screen. Her drowning is not seen, nor is it necessarily heard, but the abrupt finality of her end at the hands of the mighty river is hard to doubt.

In the spring Brother Gu returns to the village (presumably with permission for Cuiqiao to join the army), arriving as the villagers are engaged with a ritual praying for rain to end a drought. As the masses of people pray together, they eventually are worked up into a frenzy. From the crowd, Hanhan sees Brother Gu in the distance, and runs to him in desperation. The film ends here, with Brother Gu (likely) about to learn the news of Cuiqiao's departure or death.

#### Establishing the diegesis: Internal diegetic information

The film contains textual information in the form of initial scrolling text which establishes (presumably) factual diegetic context for the film; visual information such as physical geography and scenes of rural peasant life; audio information such as music, voices and ambient noise; and narrative information such as dialogue about events happening outside the initial presentation of the film.

The initial scrolling text that opens the film reads as such:

“In September 1937, the establishment of the United Front against Japanese aggression forced Jiang Jieshi to acknowledge the status of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Area. Because of the persistence of Nationalist local government in parts of central Shaanbei, despite the cooperation between the Nationalists and the Communists, feudalism was still deeply entrenched and the people still suffered under heavy oppression. In this ancient land, the melodies of *xintianyou* drift the year round... Members of the literature and arts troupe of the Eighth Route Army formed into teams and fanned out in different directions. They hoped to find the origins of Shaanbei folksong...”<sup>83</sup>

As this text moves slowly across the screen from bottom to top, it is followed by a title “Early Spring 1939”. This opening text is a crucial point for understanding the diegesis of the film, as it is the first information about the diegesis presented to the audience. It describes a diegetic world in language that implies a historical account, framing events with authority. The text is presented as part of the presentational space, not the diegetic space, being unattributed to any actor within the diegesis, and so speaks with directorial authority instead of the subjective view of a character. This tone and authority with which the information is presented lends weight to the truth of what is said, and combined with its introductory placement within the film, means that the audience would likely be extremely receptive to the information contained within the message.

The message itself describes specific historical periods in time and in place, as well as political dynamics and large scale events (such as the Japanese invasion of China), that all exist in

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<sup>83</sup> McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, 175-176.

reality.<sup>84</sup> These locations and times are verifiably true, and even if some information might be arguable (the Nationalists' responsibility for the continuation of feudalism in rural areas would require a separate discussion), the diegesis is still presented as occurring in a real spatiotemporal location (Shaanbei) and engaging with real events in said location (Communist and Nationalist party conflicts, Japanese invasion of China, Communist battle against feudalism in China). If we are to begin our understanding of the diegesis as being understood in relation to reality, but not obligated to adhere to reality, then this initial text begins by cementing the diegesis of *Yellow Earth* firmly amidst real-world locations, time periods, and events in the Shaanbei region of northwest China in early spring, 1939.

In regards to visual information about the diegesis, *Yellow Earth* does not disappoint. Zhang Yimou is in charge of cinematography for *Yellow Earth*, and his camerawork has received awards from critics around the world over the span of many decades, with *Yellow Earth* being no exception.<sup>85</sup> The film is absolutely filled with slowly panning shots of desolate vistas on the yellow earth plateau, the geographical feature that dominates the Shaanbei region in China. The wide expanse of yellow silt is carved through by thousands of small rivulets that feed into the mighty Yellow River (the colour of silt giving the river its name), and the film contains many shots of the torrential waters of the river as it winds through the countryside.

In addition to geographical features of the area, the film shows the peasant village where the film takes place. This includes the homes carved into the dirt hillsides of the region (the region is famous for this particular style of dwelling), the clothing and style of dress of the people of the region, and the habits and tasks that the villagers perform. All of these reflect the difficult lives of

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<sup>84</sup> McDougall leads her translation of the film with a brief contextualizing page, confirming the historical accuracy of the setting and song-searching practice by the army at the time. *The Yellow Earth*, 173.

<sup>85</sup> Zhang Yimou won Best Cinematography for *Yellow Earth* at both the Golden Rooster Awards and Nantes Three Continents Festival.

rural peasants in the area, as well as the endemic poverty in the region.<sup>86</sup> In interviews, Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou describe their journey to the region for filming, and their desire to shoot everything on site in order to properly depict the natural setting, as well as the look and feel of the lives of the people of the region.<sup>87</sup> From these visuals, the geographical region introduced by the initial text is reinforced using real shots of the region, and the visual depiction of peasant life, emphasizing the paucity of resources available and the difficulty of the life which they are enduring, reinforces the real needs and struggles of people who live there. There are clear depictions of the real struggles of having enough food, sourcing water many miles away, the difficulty of keeping warm, and many other day-to-day struggles that would dominate the lives of the rural poor in Shaanbei during this period in history.

The non-musical sounds of the diegesis also reinforce the realism of the diegetic setting. The soundtrack for the film uses a wide variety of ambient and material noises. Visual shots of the geography of the region are often accompanied by howling winds, constructing an affect of emptiness and vastness that reinforces the visuals. The Yellow River's appearance on screen is accompanied with the sounds of running water, and this trend continues throughout the film, with the ambient noises of the geographical location being prominently set within the scenes. The material sounds of the actors and their actions are also very audible, which further establishes a sense of material "realness" where actions create audibly tangible results in the soundscape. Footsteps, idle chatter, the crackling of fire, and other ambient and material elements of the diegesis are included in the soundtrack, adding dimension to the diegetic setting by anchoring as

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<sup>86</sup> McDougall, in *The Yellow Earth*, documents the fieldwork done by the production crew of *Yellow Earth* on site in northern Shaanxi province. Extensive footage, recordings, and documents were taken in order to be able to attempt to create a film that accurately reflected both the physical landscape of the region as well as the lives of the people who lived there.

<sup>87</sup> Zhang Yimou, interview by Kwok-Kan Tam. In *Zhang Yimou: Interviews*. Edited by Frances Gateward. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2001, 104-105.

many elements as possible within a logical diegesis that mirrors the audience's real experience, where footsteps on gravel crunch, and firewood pops and crackles as it burns.

In addition to these sounds, the narrative of the film also remains generally within the bounds of reality (given the diegetic setting). From my (audience) perspective as a researcher from Canada, having engaged deeply with English-language materials on film's diegetic setting, the actions and personalities of the characters do not at any point seem unrealistic. This is not to say that every part of the film narrative is fully in line with reality and historically accurate, but rather that the actions, motivations, and relationships of the characters all generally appear reasonable from an audience perspective. There are rarely any moments that would make the audience question the realism of the diegetic setting, and the moments that do still make sense in the context of a film, if not the diegetic setting.

This combination of textual, visual, aural, and narrative information presented by the film work together to construct a diegesis that is firmly rooted in the reality experienced and understood by the audience. Specific historical times and geographic locations are described, depicted, and explored in the film, while realistic narratives and events occur in the setting. *Yellow Earth* presents a fundamentally realistic view of its diegesis, providing the audience with a solid understanding of the diegetic world with which to interpret and understand the film.

#### Establishing the diegesis: External diegetic information

Although *Yellow Earth* provides detailed information about the diegetic world, there are additional external sources that can be used to further expand the diegesis. Considering the diegesis is anchored so firmly within a real-world time and place, it is fully reasonable to assume that any factual information about the Shaanbei region, such as cultural, historical, or geographical

information, can be logically considered to exist within the diegesis as well unless there is an explicit contradiction presented in the film. Since the inclusion of all relevant external information to the time and place of the diegesis is nearly impossible, what this means is that when questions arose regarding the nature of the diegesis, the reasonable course of action to find a solution was to seek out verified information on the topic through traditional channels such as books, academic publications, documentaries, interviews with members of production, etc. A diegesis that is firmly anchored in a real time and place means that factual information about said time and place can be logically extended to the diegesis.<sup>88</sup>

### Diegetic Music

Now that there is a preliminary understanding of the diegesis, the diegetic music can begin to be characterized. The first place to start in constructing an understanding of the diegetic music is with the visualized diegetic music.

### Visualized Diegetic Music: Instrumental

The first type of visualized diegetic music presented to the audience is the instrumental music performed during the marriage ceremony that helps open the film. Appearing around 3:15 into the film, this processional *chuishou* ensemble comprised of *suona* and percussion winds its way across a crest of hills. The scene forefronts the musicians, with no dialogue taking place, and the sounds of the instruments mixed very loud for the audience. The visual shots also emphasize the instruments in particular, giving special attention to both the *suona* and the percussion instruments as the film provides close up shots of the individual instruments. The music being

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<sup>88</sup> This does not mean that information can logically be extended wholesale, but that factual real-world information provides a useful starting point for understanding events and aspects of the diegesis.

played was music typical of *chuishou* ensembles, and would normally be heard for special events such as a marriage (as depicted in *Yellow Earth*) or a funeral.<sup>89</sup>

This opening scene of the *chuishou* ensemble provides for the audience an immediate and clear depiction of what the music of the diegetic space sounds like. The music is visually anchored in the hillsides of Shaanbei, and the relationship between what is heard (the music) and what is seen (the performers) is emphasized through a series of closeups of the performers. Additionally, the performers are further anchored into the setting of the diegesis later in the scene as they make their way closer to the village. As the procession moves by, many villagers take a seat on the dusty hillside to observe and enjoy the fanfare. This is further engagement of diegetic characters acknowledging and interacting with the music, cementing its location in the diegesis.

One of the less convincing aspects of the anchoring of this processional music in the diegesis is the aural component. Although the instruments used and the style of music being played were shot with great loyalty to local traditions and practices, the sound production for the *chuishou* ensemble is not necessarily realistic to the environment being depicted. Although the volume of the ensemble begins quiet when seen in the distance, and slowly increases in volume as the ensemble draws nearer (mimicking reality), there isn't further treatment of the sound to represent distance more accurately. This could have included a reduction in higher frequencies at a distance, with them gradually increasing in proportion to lower frequencies as the procession drew "closer". This would imitate the tendency of higher frequencies to travel shorter distances. In addition, the clarity of the sound and uniformity of the reverb without any discernible delay implies a stationary sound source that is in a constant "room" or physical space. This is contrary to the depicted ensemble moving across wide open spaces and through the bottom of valleys, two environments

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<sup>89</sup> For further information on *chuishou* ensembles and use of *suona*, see Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China Volume 2*.

that would have distinctly different acoustics. The reason for the lack of realism in sound production and mixing here could be for many reasons. One is that interviews have shown that Chen Kaige had little experience and knowledge regarding sound design and sound production, and may have easily overlooked this aspect while producing the film.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, it has been noted that there were many technical limitations encountered by the production team as they attempted to film onsite in Shaanbei. Because of this, they were unable to do a proper recording of audio as they shot, and had to rerecord the audio and music in studio when they returned to Xi'an to finish editing and production.<sup>91</sup> This would account for the acoustical treatment of the *chuishou* recording, which quite likely is the natural acoustics of the recording studio in which they performed in Xi'an, with some basic mixing and editing for clarity purpose. Finally, another possibility for the lack of spatially realistic sound production might be because clarity was desired for such important music (important for establishing the sound of the diegesis). Artificially creating an acoustic environment that mirrored what is seen on screen would reduce the clarity of the audio as certain frequency ranges would be reduced or removed, and additional acoustic effects applied. Any of these three reasons provide possible explanations for the lack of spatially realistic audio production, and regardless of the reason why, I believe that the multitude of evidence anchoring this music within the diegesis provides ample evidence that the music is located within the diegesis, regardless of some discrepancies of audio mixing and production.

It is also worth noting that there is no ambient or material sound being played while the *chuishou* ensemble performs. There are no sounds of the procession moving such as footsteps, or the sounds the donkeys might make, and there no sounds made by the villagers as they appear alongside the procession to watch. Again, the decision to not include ambient sound here might be

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<sup>90</sup> McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, 46.

<sup>91</sup> McDougall, 47.

for the purpose of musical clarity or limitations on being able to overdub additional audio without creating an overly “busy” soundtrack.

Presenting diegetic music so early in the film ensures that the audience has established an understanding of the music of the diegesis as soon as possible. It also might imply that music is central, or at least important, to the people presented in the diegesis, given its preferential treatment as the sole fixture of a scene so early in the film, as well as the gleeful reception of the music by the villagers.

Although the two processional scenes provide the majority of the visualized diegetic instrumental music, there are instances with a solo *suona* is also presented playing, such as at 6:35 and 65:15. The treatment in these couple instances is identical to the treatment given to the *chuishou* ensemble as whole, with explicit visualized playing of the *suona*, with the sound production and treatment being not quite realistic in the creation of an acoustic space.

There is also a drum and dance troupe with *suona* presented near the end of the film, around 67:30 in the film. This visualized scene of performers and dancers provides a depiction for the audience of how the local musical traditions might be used in the context of the Red Army.<sup>92</sup> Similar instruments are depicted to what was seen in the *chuishou* ensemble, with clear shots of the performers playing along the music being heard, visually anchoring the music within the diegesis. This music is also anticipated by the narrative of the film, as Brother Gu had previously mentioned the desire of the Red Army to repurpose folk music for use to inspire the Red Army troops. Although Brother Gu had been referencing folk singing for the purpose most explicitly, the logical extension that local instrumental traditions would be used as well is not unreasonable to assume. This music is therefore logically anchored within the setting, as the Red Army repurpose

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<sup>92</sup> McDougall notes the historical practice of utilizing folk traditions in mobilizing peasants. *The Yellow Earth*, 173.

another musical tradition to suit their purposes. Once again, the acoustic space created through the audio production and mixing is not realistic to the depicted scene, but likely clarity and technical limitations drove that decision.

### Visualized Diegetic Music: Vocal

In addition to the highly visible and highly anchored *chuishou* ensemble music presented at the beginning of the film, there are also many occurrences of visualized folk singing as well. The first instance of visualized folk singing is the beggar singing around 8:50 at the wedding feast. As the beggar sings, again the ambient noise is faded out so as to forefront the music (as well as to likely reduce overall busyness and noise). The singing is clearly visually anchored in the scene, as the beggar's mouth is visible onscreen as he sings, clearly showing him as the producer of the sound. The style of singing is also authentic to the region, being the product of extensive interviews and research done by the production team of the folk singing in the region, and the singer himself being a singer of reputation in the region outside the context of the film.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, Brother Gu and other characters in the scene are shown to react to the music, further anchoring the music as an active and engaged element of the diegetic space.

Similarly to the processional *chuishou* music mentioned earlier, there is some discrepancy between realistic acoustic space and what is heard in the audio mixing and production. Although the sound source is much more static here, and so a static treatment of acoustic space is more realistic, the fact that it is set in a busy eating area filled with people talking and eating would imply that the clarity of the singing would be at least somewhat obscured by the ambient noise of

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<sup>93</sup> To be specific, the singer who recorded the audio of the folk singing heard in the film is He Yutang (贺玉堂), who was met by Chen Kaige and the film crew when interviewing singers from around the region of Shaanbei in the search for songs for the film. McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, 31.

the room. The removal of ambient noise when the singer begins seems to likely again be for clarity's sake, ensuring that the audience can experience the music more fully. In addition to considering clarity, the same considerations of technical limitations and sound design experience mentioned in regards to the instrumental also might apply in this situation. The singing is presented in as clear a manner as possible, given reasonable consideration for limitations, while still ensuring that it clearly belongs within the diegetic space presented. This particular instance of singing is also very early in the film, similar to the *chuishou* procession. For similar reasons then, it can be understood that this would also contribute to a very early formation of the audience's conception of the music of the diegesis.

In addition to the beggar's singing, other individuals as visualized singing within the diegesis as well throughout the film. Cuiqiao at 22:30, Hanhan and Brother Gu at 40:45, and Cuiqiao's father at 51:35, all sing directly onscreen, with themselves being clearly signaled as the source of the singing. These moments of song are treated similarly to the beggar's scene, including the fore fronting of the music and the particular style of audio mixing and production. However, although each of these moments are very important regarding the narrative of the film, I believe that the beggar's singing (similarly to the *chuishou* ensemble) is likely the most impactful on the audience's construction of the musical-diegetic space due to the presence of the scene so early in the film.

#### Acousmatic Diegetic Music;

*Yellow Earth* has numerous instances of diegetic music where the source is not immediately visible within the diegetic scene. The very first footage of Shaanbei in the film is accompanied by the distant singing of an unknown person, witnessed and noted by Brother Gu, the voice

reverberating off of the hillsides. Cuiqiao's singing near the end of the film, around 60:25, is similarly treated. Although Cuiqiao is clearly the source of the sound, since her dialogue shows that she is wanting to sing for Brother Gu as he departs, she is not visibly *seen* to be singing in any of the scenes presented in the film. Both of these instances show a particular type of sound treatment of acousmatic music that differs from the treatment of visualized music.

Although the acousmatic music in *Yellow Earth* is faithfully authentic to the diegetic setting in regards to style (which follows Chion's assertion that acousmatic music should mimic visualized music if the listener closes their eyes), there is a difference in regards to the sound production of acousmatic music. In both these examples I bring up here, the distant singing at 2:30 and Cuiqiao's distant singing at 60:25, the singing occurs in tandem with ambient sounds of the environment (the howling of the winds). This contrasts directly with the treatment of the visualized diegetic music, where the ambient noise is cut from the audio while the music or singing plays in order to forefront it more clearly. Instead, these acousmatic performances battle against the ambient sounds of the landscape.

Additionally, the audio mixing and processing is different. Generous use of delay and reverb, to an excess that challenges a "realistic" interpretation, emphasize and lean in to the physical acoustic space surrounding the singers. The reverberation and delay imitate how the voice would echo and bounce off of the cliffsides and terrain of Shaanbei depicted on film. This shows a clear awareness of some kind that the acousmatic music is to be presented differently than the visualized music to the audience. One effect of this type of audio mixing and production is that it more firmly anchors the music in the diegetic space by more accurately representing the physical landscape. This perceptually helps offset the loss of visual cues anchoring the music to the diegesis but creating a stronger audio anchor.

Overall, the diegetic music of *Yellow Earth* is established most clearly and most solidly in the opening scenes of the film. The visualized *chuishou* ensemble, and the visualized beggar singing, both present instrumental and vocal music that is visual, aurally, and logically anchored within the time and place of the diegesis. Additionally, acousmatic music is usually presented with an increased amount of aural anchoring within the diegesis, likely to offset the lack of visual anchoring that serves as the main anchor of the visualized music. The diegetic music composed by Zhao Jiping remains loyal to the real-world spatiotemporal setting from which the diegesis draws its inspiration.

### Presentational Music

The presentational music in *Yellow Earth* is most easily characterized by the use of an orchestra to accompany melodic material that “sounds” like it could originate in the diegesis. The melodic material, such as played during the initial scrolling text or shots pan across the landscape at 38:05, is usually played by a solo instrument. Over the course of the film, string instruments (likely *erhu*), woodwinds (perhaps *xiao*, and at times certainly the *suona*), and even plucked instruments (perhaps related to *pipa*), all take turns playing melodic material that is not visually, aurally (although there is occasional reverb added), or logically contained within the diegetic scene at that moment. However, the melodic material is frequently drawn from the diegesis, usually fragments of the “*Nü’er Ge*” sung by Cuiqiao.<sup>94</sup> This quotation of diegetic music, and the prominent role that the *suona* in particular has in playing these quotations in the presentational space, create a link between the diegetic and presentational spaces. There is at times shared melodic material, and at times shared instrumental and stylistic elements, which helps bring

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<sup>94</sup> Xiao, *China in the Mix*, 37.

together the two discrete spaces while still keeping them distinct due to an unambiguous lack of logical and visual anchoring with the presentational music.

This melodic material that is used in the presentational space is also frequently accompanied by a full (likely European) orchestra. While this orchestral music has been criticized by some, it is featured prominently in the presentational space of *Yellow Earth*.<sup>95</sup> It can initially appear almost jarring to hear a full orchestra, given the general musical loyalty to the diegetic setting. However, this orchestra place makes more sense in the film when considering some factors external to the film itself.

Chen Kaige mentions in an interview that the decision to use orchestral scoring was to appeal to perceived audience tastes around the time of the film's release in 1984.<sup>96</sup> This impression of audience tastes was likely informed by the influx of foreign films that began appearing in China post 1976, since the orchestral scoring in *Yellow Earth* would be familiar to most audiences with an ear for "Western" cinematic scores. Additionally, the use of the orchestra to accompany the melodic material can be understood in the context of Zhao Jiping specifically.

Zhao's experience with both European and Chinese instruments is a result of the training he received in both traditions throughout his education, as well as his experience working on the production of Model Operas after 1971. He was involved in the production of many Model Operas following his graduation in 1971, including over a hundred productions of *Hong Deng Ji*.<sup>97</sup> These Model Operas were a form of Beijing Opera, a staged production with music, that was developed in China under Mao as an art form that could be used as a vehicle to disseminate party ideology to

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<sup>95</sup> McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, 110; Xiao, *China in the Mix*, 37.

<sup>96</sup> McDougall, *The Yellow Earth*, 46.

<sup>97</sup> CCTV documentary, 《人物》“為時代而歌 趙季平”, 14:10.

the masses.<sup>98</sup> It was seen as both an educational and artistic tool, with the mass participation in production and almost mandatory attendance for many of China's citizens, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). As the Model Operas played a central role in the ongoing revolution in China, there was strong centralized influence on their production, which included the music. Although there is much difficulty in finding accurate compositional attribution for many Model Works, the role of Yu Huiyong is central to the particular style of orchestration used in the Model Works.<sup>99</sup>

Yu Huiyong was the major proponent of a new style of music writing for staged works that formed the framework for many of the Model Operas. Yu Huiyong sought to take advantage of particular timbral qualities and dynamic ranges of both Chinese and European instruments, and sought to create mixed instrument ensembles for performances. Eventually, the formula that began to be popularized was the mixture of Chinese melodic and rhythmic instruments with the support of a European orchestra for harmonic texture and colour. This particular combination allowed for the expression of Chinese melodies and character in the melodic and rhythmic sections, which European instruments playing only supporting roles, which would forefront the Chinese elements.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> The term Model Opera can be substituted with Revolutionary Opera, Model Work, or other appropriate terms, depending on differing English translations of yangbanxi (样板戲), literally model or template (樣板) + play or drama (戲).

<sup>99</sup> For more on Model Operas, see Clark, Paul, Laikwan Pang, and Tsan-Huang Tsai. *Listening to China's Cultural Revolution: Music, Politics, and Cultural Continuities*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; Clark, Paul. "Model Theatrical Works and the Remodeling of the Cultural Revolution," in *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution 1966-1976*. Edited by Richard King. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2010; Fan, "Fresh Yet Familiar: Music"; Ludden, Yawen. "China's Musical Revolution: From Beijing Opera to Yangbanxi." PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2013.

<sup>100</sup> For more on Yu Huiyong, see footnote number 12 in addition to Ludden, "China's Musical Revolution"; Ludden, Yawen. "Making Politics Serve Music: Yu Huiyong, Composer and Minister of Culture." *TDR (1988-)* 56, no.2 (Summer 2012): 152-168

In this style of Model Opera music pushed by Yu Huiyong, you could hear Chinese melodies played by Chinese instruments, with harmonic texture and colour added in with a European orchestra. This style would very likely have been encountered many times over by Zhao Jiping as he assisted in the production with numerous Model Works over the years in Shaanxi province in the 1970s. It would have also been a style that he would have felt comfortable writing in, considering his experience with both European and Chinese musical traditions and his experience with Model Works.

This style of Chinese musical character and European musical support is extremely similar to the presentational music in *Yellow Earth*. The film uses melodic material influenced either stylistically or instrumentally by the diegesis, which is then supported texturally and harmonically by the full orchestra. Not only is this a style that Zhao Jiping would be comfortable and able to compose in, it would be a style of music familiar to much of the audience in China, considering that *Yellow Earth* was released less than a decade after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The presentational music of *Yellow Earth* is largely this particular style of mixed ensemble and mixed tradition scoring, with diegetically related melodic content and supporting orchestration that is best understood as a product of the particular social, historical, biographical, and cultural context that the film was released in. It provides an audible contrast to the music of the diegesis due to the lush orchestration that accompanies the melodies, while still remaining related to the diegetic music through its use of melodic material and instrumentation that is at least adjacent to the diegesis.

### Other Music (The Fantastical Gap and others):

With the diegetic and presentational spaces characterized in regards to music, further exploration can be done of instances that might fall in the so-called Fantastical Gap, or at least instances that don't easily fall into either the diegetic or presentational spaces. Although there are many instances of nuanced play with the perception of musical space, arguably the most significant from both an analytical perspective and perhaps the audience perspective are the "river scenes" where Cuiqiao sings on the riverbanks of the Yellow River. There are multiple instances of the river scene throughout the film (at approximately 12:10 and 38:30, although there are multiple allusions to the scene at other points in the film), however the first occurrence strikes the most dramatic moment with noticeable play with the audience's perception of diegetic and presentational musical spaces.

The scene begins with the visuals and audio affirming the diegetic context. As the Yellow River is shown in the context of the arid landscape of Shaanbei, the sounds of the river are the only audio presented. As the camera pans across the river, labourers are scene working alongside the riverbank, and you can hear the rhythmic chants as they work. The chanting appears alongside the sounds of the river, and although the sounds of rhythmic chanting can be presumed to be coming from the labourers on the riverbank, the connection between them is rather tenuous. The labourers are seen from a distance, and there is no visual confirmation of them as the source of the voices, nor is their labour synchronized with the chanting in any way explicit enough to suggest that the rhythmic chanting coincides with their actions.

This chanting begins the process of detaching the audio of the moment from the diegesis, and begins the shift towards the presentational space. While the ambient sounds of the river at the beginning of the scene help emphasize the diegetic setting, the subsequent entrance of the rhythmic

chanting (with its tenuous connection to the diegesis) begins to unanchor some of the moment from the diegesis, and the audience's sense of grounding begins to float free.

As the scene progresses, the chanting continues and the sounds of the Yellow River continue in the background. A quick cut and Cuiqiao appears onscreen, and you both hear and see her bend over and scoop water into a bucket. While Cuiqiao has not yet made a sound herself, the bucket's entrance into the water and motion through it produces splashing in a realistic manner, providing again another diegetic anchor alongside the ambient sounds of the river, all while the chanting continues and destabilizes an auditory sense of location.

Approximately 30 seconds into the scene, an orchestra enters into the soundtrack, playing lush romantic chords as an introduction into a musical moment. This orchestra, which sounds European both in style and in instrumentation, appears as an explicitly presentational piece of music seemingly fully outside the musical landscape of the film that had been previously established. Prior to this moment, the audience had heard exclusively music of Shaanbei, be it folk singing or *chuishou* ensemble, and the music had occurred exclusively within the diegesis.<sup>101</sup> The entrance of a full European orchestra in this moment conversely enormously with the previously established sense of music in the film, which coincides with being the first unambiguously presentational music.

The entrance of the orchestral music at the river scene joins the ambient sounds of the river and the chanting of the labourers in shifting the audience's sense of music (and audio) location within the diegetic or presentational space. As the diegetic space is initially emphasized with the ambient sounds of the river water, the labourers begin to subvert the sense of space through their

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<sup>101</sup> There is the odd exception of the music playing as text scrolls onscreen at the very outset of the film, but this music provides only a brief moment of music before the diegesis is presented to the audience. This music is possibly present to ensure there isn't full silence as the text appears, however it also serves to provide a small insight into some of the timbres of the film's music at the beginning.

tenuous connection with the diegetic action. Acoustically and visually anchored to the setting in only the most tenuous way, the chanting begins to detach the audience's sense of space from its solid anchoring in the diegesis that had been firmly established by the film up to this point. As the sense of space begins to distance itself from the diegesis, the orchestra enters and presents not only the first instance of explicitly presentational music, but also an entirely different style of music (European orchestral music) to the music of the diegesis. The effect of this is dramatic, so much so that critics question whether or not the music is appropriate for the scene.<sup>102</sup>

Moments after the orchestra finishes its initial prelude, Cuiqiao joins it by singing the "Nü'er Ge" (女儿歌). Cuiqiao joins the orchestra in the presentational space as she sings, all while she physically remains within the diegesis, collecting water from the Yellow River. She sings in call and response with the orchestra, with the orchestra repeating fragments of her melody and actively engages with her melody. Her singing is heard clearly and without any audio effects that would indicate that she is singing by a riverside, and like the instruments of the orchestra, have the clarity of a studio recording. This contrasts with the fact that Cuiqiao is depicted to be alongside the Yellow River, engaged in collecting water for the household. Her physical presence by the riverside is emphasized by the fact that the sounds of the river and the water continue to play in the background alongside her singing and the orchestral music, acting as a reminder of the diegetic location. The sounds of the diegesis continue, and although there is no proper acoustic anchoring of Cuiqiao's singing in the scene, nor is there visual anchoring (she is not seen to be singing at any point), there is still the implication that this scene presents some form of labour song similar to the chanting of the labourers from the beginning of the scene. While the presentational music takes the forefront of the scene, the diegetic setting does not disappear, and asserts itself in subtle ways

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<sup>102</sup> See footnote number 91.

throughout the scene by inclusion of water sounds and the visual-narrative plausibility of this being a song that Cuiqiao sings to herself as she does her chores.

As the scene comes to a close, the music and audio provides a gradual return from the presentational to the diegetic space. Following the brief climax of the song between Cuiqiao and the orchestra, the orchestra recedes and slowly disappears completely as Cuiqiao sings her final verse. The final verse already begins to convey the sense of being more diegetically anchored as the orchestra fades and the sounds of the river and creaking wood of the shoulder yoke bearing the weight of the buckets of water emerge to the forefront of the audio. Eventually, even Cuiqiao stops singing, and only the creaks and water noises of the ambient environment remain. This gradual shift from a strongly presentational space filled with orchestral music in call-and-response with Cuiqiao's disembodied singing, towards the diegetic space eventually populated only by the ambient sounds of the river and the wooden creaks of the yoke guides the audience back into the diegetic space after such a contrasting and dramatic diversion away.

Although the river scene lasts roughly only two minutes, the music and audio (along with some visual assistance) transports the audience from an explicitly diegetic musical space into the presentational space, and then carefully back to the diegetic space. *Yellow Earth*, up until this point in the film, has presented a strongly diegetically anchored setting for the music, with frequent visual, acoustic, and narrative anchoring in the scenes. Because of this strongly diegetic setting, the shift into the presentational space in the river scene is especially dramatic by contrast. Despite the extremity of the contrast, the scene takes the time to untether the audience from the diegetic space through the use of ambient noises and ambiguously anchored chanting from the labourers alongside the river, preparing the way for the dramatic entrance of the orchestra fully in the presentational space. Similarly, the return to the diegetic space is also prepared for the audience,

with the gradual removal of presentational elements until all that is left to be heard is the ambient diegetic noise of the scene.

This river scene exemplifies Zhao Jiping's engagement (and *Yellow Earth's* more broadly) with diegetic and presentational music spaces within the film. Observed as a scene in isolation, the river scene presents a tactful and dramatic usage of various musical and audio elements to prepare a shift from the diegetic to the presentational, and then to return back with similar care. In the context of the film at large, the scene's shift is felt to be even more dramatic given the establishment of an explicitly diegetically realistic musical setting in prior scenes. The moment of emotional profession by Cuiqiao as she sings of her fate as a rural, poor, woman is heightened by the accompaniment of such a dramatic shift between musical spaces.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Zhao Jiping's score for *Yellow Earth* has musically distinct characterizations for the diegetic and presentational spaces. The film begins with an almost immediate depiction of visualized diegetic music, both instrumental and vocal. This immediate characterization, which follows the scrolling introduction text and the shots of Shaanbei as they establish the diegesis, provides for the audience a distinct and concrete understanding of the musical sound of the diegesis, which is accurate to the real-world time and place depicted in the diegesis. As the movie progresses, the audience begins to form a sense of the presentational music through scenes which have melodic material loyal to the diegesis, while being harmonically and texturally supported by a full orchestra. This style of European orchestra providing harmonic textural support to Chinese melodies and lead instruments reflects both trends external to the film, and Zhao Jiping's distinct musical education and background. These two musical characterizations, of regional Shaanbei music for the diegetic space and diegetically-anchored melodies supported by a European orchestra for the presentational music, provide distinct identities for the two spaces.

Despite the distinct characterizations of the diegetic and presentational spaces, Zhao Jiping blurs the boundaries between them and actively shifts perceptions of space at narratively significant moments. Most clearly on display during the river scenes, the audience's sense of space is shifted from the diegetic to the presentational first through the use of acousmatic sound to destabilize the previously firm anchoring in the diegetic space. As the audience's sense of location in the diegetic space is undermined, Cuiqiao's singing combines with an orchestra firmly in the presentational space, causing a dramatic shift in the audience's perception of musical space. Following this shift, the audience is guided back to the diegetic space through the gradual removal

of presentational elements, coming to rest firmly anchored in the diegetic space with ambient diegetic noise.

The audience's perceptual journey from the diegetic to the presentational and back again is guided by the musical scoring, which coincides with and amplifies the narrative significance of the scene. Zhao Jiping carefully guides the audience through different perceptions of locality using musical elements derived from the diegetic setting, fully presentational orchestral scoring, and the integration of ambient noise to emphasize the presence of the diegesis. All of these techniques display a nuanced awareness of the audience's perception of musical space, and Zhao Jiping's music guides the audience throughout the river scene.

Zhao Jiping's score forms an integral part of *Yellow Earth*, and contributes significantly to the effectiveness of the film's presentation. The score, as demonstrated in the river scene, actively supports and works with the narrative at moments of significance to amplify the presentation of the scene. In the integrated system of a film, all the various elements that comprise the film work together to shape the audience's experience of the film, and as such the music of the film should receive consideration and discussion along the lines of existing discussions regarding narrative, cinematography, and other factors.

With how significant *Yellow Earth* has been for the global reputation of Chinese cinema, especially at international film festivals, Zhao Jiping's role in the film's success needs to be addressed. This thesis serves as a study of Zhao Jiping's effective use of musical spaces in *Yellow Earth*, and how he manipulates audience perception of space to create moments of dramatic contrast in support of narratively significant scenes. However, Zhao Jiping has scored dozens of other films, many of which have received as much as or even more critical acclaim than *Yellow*

*Earth*. His scores, being important parts of the integrated system of the films in which they occur, deserve further inquiry and study in line with discussions of other filmic elements.

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