

**B(I)ending time, (de)compressing identity:
Creative thought and meaning construction in *Copy Shop* (2001)**

Abstract

According to the critics of Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT), most of its creativity-related applications tend to conflate the role of producer and consumer, implicitly proposing the deduction of the former's creative perspective from the finished product through a process of reverse-engineering the latter's meaning-making strategies. However, given the non-linearity and multi-directionality of the actual creative praxis, the relation between these two roles as heuristic categories need not be considered so much oppositional, as dialectical. Investigating the cognitive mechanisms involved in the ongoing creative process within the context of this dialectical relationship can help us gain some insight into both perspectives, while eschewing the elusiveness of their precise demarcation. The case study presented in this article constitutes such an attempt. By adopting a CBT approach, it offers an interpretation of the creative thinking behind the 2001 short film *Copy Shop*, informed by the documented insights of its creators. The article proposes a shift in primary focus from the mechanics of conceptual blending to its consequences in reference to the compression and decompression of vital relations and, more particularly, Time and Identity. On one hand, it aims at examining how the particular ways of populating and interrelating the mental spaces that input to the

blend at selected time points in the film occasion Time compressions and shape temporal experience. On the other hand, it concentrates on demonstrating how *Copy Shop* narrativizes the same processes of (de)compressing Identity that inform the conceptual blends it proposes.

Conceptual blending: From creative thought to meaning construction (and back)

Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT), also referred to as Conceptual Integration Theory, has placed creative thinking well within the range of its explanatory power ever since its earliest complete formulations (e.g. Fauconnier & Turner, 1996, 1998). In fact, the efficacy of CBT to lead to the emergence of novel concepts has been cited as one of the traits that differentiate it from other proposed theories of conceptualization, such as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (commonly regarded as its predecessor), Perceptual Meaning Analysis, and Conceptual Semantics (Antović, 2011). This has been the reason why it has been adopted for the investigation of creative thinking in many different research areas, such as language and literature (e.g. Piata, 2013), artificial intelligence (e.g. Pereira, 2007), music (e.g. Cambouropoulos et al., 2014), mathematics (e.g. Núñez, 2005), film studies (e.g. Coëgnarts & Kravanja, 2015), and semantics (e.g. Coulson 2001).

At the same time, creative thinking has been one of the main points of contention for the critics of CBT (e.g. Brandt & Brandt, 2005; Gibbs 2000; Ritchie, 2004; Stefanou & Cambouropoulos, 2015). Most of its creativity-related applications do not seek to explicate the unique cognitive mechanisms in which the

producer of a creative product is involved, a research project that might entail focusing on the heuristics employed by the producer when seeking to populate the input spaces of the deployed Conceptual Integration Network (CIN) in a given goal-oriented context (Veale et al., 2013b). Instead, they tend to conflate the roles of producer and consumer, implicitly proposing the deduction of the former's creative perspective from the established creative product through a process of reverse-engineering the latter's meaning-making strategies (Rohrer, 2005). Although this is a sustainable objection, the tacit binary between producer and consumer that underlies it upholds a conception of the creative process as extending linearly and unidirectionally from creative inception to finished product. However, the idea that "producers start from a blank canvas or empty page and work forwards, while consumers start from a finished artifact and work backwards" (Veale et al., 2013a, p. 18) is to a certain extent invalidated by the actual creative praxis (especially the artistic one): producers assume the consumer position when they inevitably approach critically their interim products, often retro-acting in a kind of trial-and-error fashion. On these grounds, the relation between the roles of producer and consumer as heuristic categories need not be considered so much oppositional, as dialectical. Investigating the cognitive mechanisms involved in the ongoing creative

process within the context of this dialectical relationship between creative thought and meaning construction may help us gain some insight into both perspectives, while eschewing the elusiveness of their precise demarcation. The case study presented in this article constitutes such an attempt. By adopting a CBT approach, primarily based on Gilles Fauconnier's and Mark Turner's seminal *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities* of 2002, it proposes an interpretation of the creative thinking behind the 2001 short film *Copy Shop* (Widrich, 2001, 2015), informed by the insights of its creators Virgil Widrich (direction, production, editing) and Alexander Zlamal (music, sound design) as testified in the film's official website ("Copy Shop," n.d.) and corroborated through direct communication with them.

There is a growing body of literature concerning the application of CBT in film studies (e.g. Fahlenbrach, 2008; Forceville & Renkens, 2013; Oakley, 2013) and film music in particular (e.g. Chattah, 2009; Fatihi, 2012; Sayrs, 2003). What this article hopes to add to this body is a proposed shift in primary focus from the mechanics of conceptual blending (e.g. inferring the constituent mental spaces of a CIN and their in-between connections) to its consequences in terms of conceptual compression and decompression. These processes concern what Fauconnier and

Turner have theorized as “vital relations,” “a surprisingly small set of relations rooted in fundamental human neurobiology and shared social experience” (2002, p. xiii). Among these relations, the ones most pertinent to the present study are Time (the relation between elements temporally separated), Identity (the relation between elements that share a common identity), Cause-Effect (the relation between two elements, one of which is considered the cause of the other’s effect), Space (the relation between elements spatially separated), Change (the relation between two elements, one of which is considered to derive from the alteration of the other), Analogy (the relation between two elements, each taken to be a different value for the same role), Disanalogy (the differing relation between two analogous elements), Intentionality (the relation between elements thought to be involved in an intentional act), and Uniqueness (the relation between elements taken to be singularly tautological) (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 93–101).¹ It must be noted that, more often than not, vital relations do not work independently of each other, but tend to proliferate in various combinations (e.g. Change is usually coupled with Identity or Uniqueness).

Along with scales, force-dynamic patterns, and image schemas, vital relations comprise the arsenal of interacting cognitive mechanisms that organize

the topology of mental spaces (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 104). Furthermore, vital relations also pertain to correspondences between topological properties of different mental spaces (constituent elements and/or their interrelations), facilitating cross-space mapping when these mental spaces enter a CIN as inputs that share a common generic structure.² Through the processes of “selective projection,” “composition,” “pattern completion,” and “elaboration” (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, pp. 47–49), a new cognitive structure emerges in the blended space, one whose organizing “inner-space” relations derive from the compression of “outer-space” relations between input spaces (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 93). Under blending, an outer-space relation is compressed into a tighter, scaled-down version of itself (e.g. Time may be drastically compressed to simultaneity), one or more relations are compressed into a different relation (e.g. Disanalogy is usually compressed into Change, and Change, with or without Identity, into Uniqueness), or an altogether new compressed relation arises in the blended space (e.g. Intentionality) (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, pp. 312–325). At the same time, “running the blend” as a scenario set dynamically to action also entails projecting from the blended space back to the input spaces (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 44), thus decompressing compressed relations. If compression is the primary

means of bringing diffuse relations to “human scale” (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 312), decompression, as pertaining to the ability to “unpack” the blend and ensure mastery over the entire CIN, is instrumental in attaining the impression of “global insight” (pp. 332–333). The continual compression and decompression of vital relations involved in conceptual integration aspire to a state of equilibrium that effectuates the achievement of global understanding at human scale, a necessary condition for the optimization of the emergent structure as novel meaning or concept.

Focusing on the compression and decompression of vital relations is pertinent to the present study because these relations, and especially Time and Identity, resonate in the testimonies of the creators of *Copy Shop* to be subsequently discussed. This resonance implicitly determines the particular goals of the study: on one hand, it aims at examining how the particular ways of populating and interrelating the mental spaces that input to the CIN at selected time points in the film (and especially music) occasion Time compressions and shape temporal experience; on the other hand, it concentrates on demonstrating how *Copy Shop* narrativizes the same processes of (de)compressing Identity that inform the conceptual blends it proposes. In considering the contribution of music

as a distinct mental space to these blends, we rely on the idea, consistently developed during the past ten years by Lawrence Zbikowski (2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015), that the patterned sound of music simulates dynamic processes, important to human culture, which typify sequences of physiological and psychological events associated with human emotion and/or movement. The fact that music provides sonic analogs to such processes (and, in so doing, activates recollections of embodied experience) does not deny it the possibility to function referentially, cueing reflection on the musical material itself and/or potential extra-musical associations within a personal or shared frame of reference.

Inasmuch as listening, imagining, or performing music partakes in shaping our experience of time, different functions of music shape our temporal experience differently: the temporal experience shaped through detached reflection, either independent of musical events, or on the very sequence of musical events (“reflected time”), is different from the one shaped through embodied immersion while attending to the ongoing dynamic process behind a sequence of musical events (“embodied time”) (Zbikowski, 2016). Far from being as clear-cut as the preceding exposition suggests, actual temporal experience occasioned by music is as complex and multi-faceted as the possible combinations of embodied and

reflected time allow for, let alone when music enters the multi-modal CIN of a cinematic film as a distinct mental space. In fact, the complexity of temporal experience associated with film music corresponds to the multivalent way in which music may be thought to contribute to such a CIN. We would like to suggest that certain analogized dynamic processes or symbolic references that the musical space has to offer become more or less specified when paired with corresponding relations or elements from the film's visual/narrative space under the control of particular vital relations (not least amongst which is Analogy), prompted by the common generic space shared by the different input spaces. These outer-space relations provide the enabling conditions for even seemingly unrelated sonic analogs or symbolic references from the musical space to have a conceptual import in the blended space through selective projection and composition. In this respect, it is through blending that film music simulates the dynamic processes of emotional and/or kinaesthetic responses to the film's visual and/or narrative cues.

What is less clear is the agency behind these (e)motional responses, potentially attributable to the film spectator, the film character, or even the "film's body," the heuristic fiction of a transparent presence betrayed by the technical means of representation employed by the film itself (Sobchack, 1992). This

ambivalence may be explained by what Adriano D'Aloia (2012, p.100) describes as the “quasi-intersubjective relationship” between these agents, a *sui-generis* characteristic of the film experience, often discussed in terms of “cinematic empathy” (Michotte, 1991).³ This relationship opens the possibility for the spectator to project personal affective responses back to the film character (e.g. as a potential etiological strategy for the latter’s actions), thus enriching the film’s narrative in a fashion not unlike the way pattern completion and elaboration enriches the blend. By encouraging the attribution of (e)motional responses experienced by the spectator to the film character, the blend highlights music’s resources as the exemplary communicative means for the qualified delineation of the film character’s subjectivity not simply as knowledge, but, most importantly, as simulated bodily experience. This seems particularly pertinent to *Copy Shop* given that it completely excludes verbal communication: with no spoken dialogue or narration, it is practically a silent film, whose soundscape is totally dominated by music and sound design.⁴ Furthermore, the way the presence of *Copy Shop*’s protagonist practically takes over its filmic landscape makes the aforesaid potential transference of affective responses all the more targeted and, hence, effective.

Copy(ing) Shop

Copy Shop tells “the story of a man [Alfred Kager] who works in a copy shop and copies himself until he fills the whole world.” The unrealism of this idea is congruent with the ironic description of *Copy Shop* as an “original copy film,” a description that is appropriately presented in the film’s official website in a tiled-copy format (“About,” n.d.). The duality of meaning behind this visually reinforced verbal irony discloses the kind of “duality-seeking perspective” that, according to Veale et al. (2013b, p. 55), constitutes one of the principal characteristics of creative behaviour.

If we try to think about the exploratory strategies that Widrich might have followed while seeking to exploit this duality with respect to the technical realization of *Copy Shop*, we may turn to the two similes he explicitly uses in his description of the film’s “identity”: “The frame as a copy of the original” and “Cinema as a copier” (“Identity,” n.d.). The apparent metaphorical import of these similes prompts us to deduce the CIN they may be involved in. The first one captures the analogical relation between the products of two different processes of visual imaging: xerography and cinematography. If these processes are taken to be input spaces in the CIN that defines the creative idea behind the technical realization of *Copy*

Shop, then they seem to mirror each other, filling differently the same generic frame slots (Figure 1).

The second simile conceptually correlates two mental spaces, the one with a much more intricate topology than the other: there are many aspects in “cinema” (e.g. filming, screen projecting, viewing) than in “copier” (simply the capture device used in xerography). In fact, this simile seems less like a metaphorical mapping and more like an economical way of describing the emergent structure of the CIN. It is worth noting that Widrich proceeds to explain this second simile by narrowing down the said correlation (“acoustic and optical”) between the copier and the film projector. However, mapping “copier” to “projector” is inconsistent with the generic frame set up by the previous metaphor (“copier” fills the slot “capture device,” while “projector” fills the slot “display”). It could thus be maintained that, through selective projection and composition, “copier” and “projector” are paired in the blended space.

The CIN connected with the emergence of the creative idea behind the technical realization of *Copy Shop* receives pattern completion from an unlikely source. In fact, its making was based on the animation of nearly 18,000 photocopied digital video frames:

The technical realization of *Copy Shop* involved the transfer of every single frame from the digital video tape into the computer once the shooting had been finished, from where the frames were printed out on a black and white laser printer and then filmed again with a 35mm animation camera. Thus video becomes paper, paper becomes film and the story of *Copy Shop* is brought to life again “copy by copy.” (“Identity,” n.d.)

In view of the fact that it serves as an additional pool of prior knowledge (containing, in fact, the compressed relation between copy and frame), the film animation of paper-printed digital video frames may be thought of as the organizing frame that provides pattern completion to the emergent structure. The organizing frame allows us to run the blend and project from the blended space back to the input spaces. This elaboration opens the door to numerous creative techniques, most of which are actually exploited in *Copy Shop*, e.g.:

- The vertical projection screen may become the horizontal glass pane of the copier, hence the repetitively passing light in the opening titles as a direct reference to the copier’s moving lamp.
- Kager’s apartment may become the inside of the copier, hence the alternating shots of the apartment (with Kager sleeping) and the copier’s

mechanical inner parts on the other side of its glass pane, swept on and off in the opening titles by the copier's moving lamp.

- The film frames may behave both like actual film frames (with the congruent possibility of film scratches, flashes, or glitches) and like sheets of paper, whisked through a copier (with the congruent possibility of the paper getting jammed, crumpled, or torn).

The originality of the creative idea behind the technical realization of *Copy Shop* is partly due to the imaginative compression of vital relations that accompanies its emergence, e.g.:

- Cause-Effect is compressed into Uniqueness: most notably, the cause of one input (running the copier as the cause of producing paper copies) is fused with the effect of the other (film projection as effected by the process of filming and editing).
- Time is compressed and scaled down: due to the zero-step compression of the aforesaid chain of cause and effect, what we are actually watching is the production process and the end result of this process at the same time.
- Space is compressed and scaled down: Kager's apartment is conceived as the inside of a copier. Also, conceding to the possibility of a copier being

able to copy a human being's self and life space as if it were a sheet of paper collapses three-dimensional to two-dimensional space.

- Identity is compressed into Uniqueness: running the blend creates a sense of ambiguity in terms of agency (e.g. between the copyist, the cameraman, the spectator etc.).

Added after the completion of the final cut, Zlamal's sound design serves the creative idea behind the technical realization of *Copy Shop* by including ambient sounds and sound effects related to both xerography and cinematography. More specifically, each of the two input spaces of Figure 1 may now be considered the blended space of a separate mirror CIN, wherein the projection of corresponding elements and/or relations from the two input spaces (visual/narrative and sound-design) result in the intensified compression of the Cause-Effect relation that connects them (e.g. the copier's repetitive mechanical sounds as effected by the repetitive movement of the working copier's mechanical parts). The selective projection and composition of sonic elements from both xerography and cinematography in the blended space of Figure 1 allows for the non-diegetic presence of sound effects throughout the film, e.g.:

- Indistinguishable from that of a film projector, the repetitive mechanical sounds of the copier, whisking paper in and/or copies out, runs throughout a large part of the film as continuous sonic background.⁵
- The sound design occasionally contains paper noises (paper sheets getting jammed, crumpled, or torn), as well as film noises (film getting scratched, flashed, or glitched).

Synchronized with related visual cues, these sound effects intensify, on one hand, the compression of vital relations, already achieved in the visual plane. For instance, the Cause-Effect compression of copier and projector is intensified by the indistinguishability of the corresponding operating sounds; the Space compression of apartment and copier is intensified by the copier's/projector's repetitive noise getting louder when, at some point, Kager looks into his apartment through the door mail slot (as if opening the copier's door). On the other hand, these sound effects act as incongruities in the blend that occasion its own unpacking and keep all mental spaces participating in the CIN active.

The creative idea behind the technical realization of *Copy Shop* is also supported by the minimalist musical style, expressly considered by Zlamal a sensible choice for the film's soundtrack (personal communication, May 16, 2016).

With its characteristic repetitive patterns, minimalist music provides sonic analogs to the dynamic process of repetition, defined as “successive occurrences of equivalent constructions” (Zbikowski, 2008, p. 289). On these grounds, it is not difficult to infer the cross-space mapping by Analogy between the music’s unmistakable repetitiveness onto the repetitiveness of the copier’s/projector’s mechanical sounds and, as a result of the Cause-Effect inner-space relation between produced sound and means of sound production compressed into Uniqueness, onto the repetitiveness of the movement of the copier’s/projector’s mechanical parts. It should be noted that establishing this analogical relation is crucial for the consolidation of the aforesaid mapping. Appropriately, Zlamal establishes this connection from the very beginning: in the opening sequence in Kager’s apartment, the copier’s repetitive mechanical sounds of the opening titles are soon overlaid with repetitive “sampled string-noises” that fade in and out, and then gradually phase into the repetitive acoustic ostinato of a string quartet. It is not difficult to see how the Analogy of the sonic events that comprise this sequence is compressed into Identity, at the same time that their Disanalogy is compressed into Change. These compressed relations are occasionally reinforced throughout the film with various techniques. For instance, from approximately 02:10 on, the

copier's repetitive noise is metrically synchronized with the music, as if the identical consecutive rhythmomelodic patterns are whisked out of the copier like identical paper copies. Approximately forty seconds later, Kager hastily unplugs the copier, whereupon the music abruptly stops, as if the copier were the music's actual sound source. These compressions evince the import of the aforesaid analogical cross-space mapping in a blending process, whose ramifications on meaning construction will be discussed in detail in the subsequent analysis of selected film excerpts.

Constructing Kager

The film opens with the alarm going off and Kager waking up, getting out of bed (already dressed), washing his face and combing his hair in the bathroom, and leaving his apartment (Figure 2). The commonplace character of these events, paired with the protagonist's vacant facial expression and impassive movement, implies a drastic compression of his entire life into a syncopated sequence of events from his everyday morning routine: what we are witnessing is only a snippet from Kager's repetitive, mundane life. Appropriately, the sequence of sonic events that accompanies this opening scene (just described in the previous paragraph) is

also highly repetitive. According to Rebecca Leydon (2002), the non-hierarchical organization of repetitive music is associated with the involuntary subject:

If the degree of “volitional will” of the musical subject is correlated with the sense of hierarchical organization, then the features of a particular hierarchy, such as its depth or granularity, will afford and constrain the musical subject’s identity in particular ways. Music that confounds hierarchic listening altogether because of a preponderance of undifferentiated “riffs” may suggest a “will-less” or “automatized” subject.

What is more, the repetitiveness of music intensifies our embodied experience of it.

According to Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis (2014):

Even as timbre can provide a locus for extended vocality, gesture for extended kinesthetics, and syntax for extended intentionality, repetition can function underneath to heighten all of these experiences, to systematically erode the distinction between the exterior and the interior, and to draw the listener into the world of the music. (p. 145)... Development asks us to follow a narrative set up by the music; repetition asks us to embody it. Development asks us to watch a story that’s out there in the world; repetition asks us to enter a particular subjectivity. (p. 148)

In this respect, the analogical cross-space mapping between visual/narrative space and musical space facilitates music's contribution to the blend as simulation of the embodied experience of a passive, involuntary consciousness. Allowing for the quasi-intersubjective link between spectator and filmic agent, we may share this simulated experience with Kager and, thus, not simply deduce his mundane reality, but, more importantly, experience it.

An unrelated element that the musical space may be thought to contribute to the blend at this particular point in the film pertains to the potential cultural references associated with its pitch material (Figure 3). If we were to identify references of stability and security behind major modality, combined with low dynamics and an undifferentiated (i.e. uneventful and predictable) rhythmic and metric context, we could project these qualities to Kager's repetitive, automatized life and ascribe to it a humanizing element in his de-humanized existence. In any case, whether in the form of sonic analogs or in the form of extra-musical references, the import of the musical space to the blend has a very important consequence for the rest of the film: it contributes to the construction of Kager's identity as emergent structure, or, more specifically, the emergence of something of his own sense of (motoric yet secure?) self.

Getting an embodied sense of Kager's own selfhood is further intensified by the use of a series of consecutive cutaways as soon as Kager steps out of his apartment building (henceforth, the *Unterwegs* [on the way] scene, Figure 4): zoom in on Kager's face as he stares at something; cut to what he is staring at (a man walking and reading newspaper); back to Kager's face, who then turns his head to stare at something else; cut to what he is staring at (a man walking his dog); back to Kager's face, who then walks away; cut to Kager approaching and stopping at a corner to stare at something with a different, somewhat affectionate expression; cut to a female florist, arranging flowers; cut to a close-up of Kager's face; back to a close-up of the florist, who turns to see and smile at him; back to Kager, who sets off again.⁶ This series of consecutive cutaways is so persistent and deliberate (especially when compared to the continuity of the compressed narration of the preceding shots) that it makes a striking impression. In fact, it is a technique that Widrich puts to the forefront of his creative conception:

Cinema enables the viewer to adopt an “alter-ego” for a while, safe in the knowledge that, no matter what happens, the film will be over at some point. This alter-ego can “slip into” one or more of the characters on the screen. In movies, identification is usually achieved by using “subjective shots” so that

the viewer sees what the character “sees”, thus merging with the character.

A sequence of this kind usually looks like this:

- A) Objective shot: The character looks past the camera
- B) Subjective shot: The camera shows what the character sees
- C) Objective shot: The character reacts to what he/she has seen.

“Copy Shop” takes this a step further: the viewer is identified with a character, who then proceeds to lose his own identity. (“Identity,” n.d.)

What Widrich is hinting at is what has been previously described as the inter-subjective linking of spectator and filmic agent, or, in other words, the structural analogy of the filmic experience to the empathic act as the enabling condition for “the processual analogy between the two experiences in their perceptual, emotional and cognitive stratification” (D’Aloia 2012, p. 93). The series of consecutive cutaways attests to Widrich’s attempt to utilize the aforementioned structural analogy to encourage the spectators to identify the (e)motional responses of Kager with what they experience in their own body.

The string of events presented through this series of consecutive cutaways is easily integrated into a tight scenario that compresses Time and Cause-Effect. As far as the former is concerned, in each cutaway, the Time relation between the

main and the interjected shot is compressed into simultaneity (if anything, because the cutaway is edited so as to be felt as an interruption of the otherwise continuous main shot),⁷ neutralizing the temporal distance between Kager's perception and cause of perception. This Time compression is instrumental in grasping Kager's perception as a zero-step compression of Cause-Effect. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002, p. 315), the compression of the perception and the cause of the perception is the most basic Cause-Effect compression in daily life. Through embodied simulation, we get to know Kager in the most essential way because we appropriate his unique mode of perception. Blended with the visual/narrative space, music's role in this appropriation is instrumental.

From the outset of the *Unterwegs* scene, the copier's/projector's repetitive background noise stops and the repetitive A-major pattern of the preceding scene keeps on to become the accompanimental ostinato to a cello melody (Figure 5). The repetitiveness of the music is now analogically paired with the repetitiveness of the action of walking, in which both Kager and other people in the scene engage.⁸ In fact, it is tempting to point out the subtle metrical synchronization of the ostinato with the gait of the newspaper man (at the half-note level), with the gait of the man walking the dog (at the quarter-note level), and with the gait of Kager himself as he

approaches his destination (the copy shop), whereupon the ostinato wears down to quarter-note triplets like a written-down ritardando (Figure 5, m. 14). The analogical mapping of the visual/narrative and the musical space on the grounds of the common dynamic process of repetition prompts the selective projection and composition of other topological properties of the two input spaces into the blended space. One of these properties pertains to the dynamic process analogized by the cello's lyrical, slow-paced melody that seems to grow out of the established ostinato by outlining the interval and pitches of the violin II part in rhythmic augmentation. For one thing, the cello entrance introduces for the first time a stratified texture with two hierarchically interlocked strata (the cello part and the violin I and violin II part). If we accept Leydon's proposition that "hierarchies that are shallow, with few levels, may suggest a tentative volitional state" (2002), then the cello line implies the emergence of a more willful subjective state than before. Furthermore, the melody's directionality, long-breathed sweep, and soaring intervallic leaps (note that the opening fifth A3–E4 is not followed by a counterbalancing motion in the opposite direction, but keeps pushing stepwise upwards to G4 before plummeting back to A3) may be thought to simulate the dynamic process of the (e)motional experience of a yearning, goal-directed

subject. What is more, there is a sudden local harmonic shift from A major to C minor in m. 5 (right when the consecutive cutaways begin), which is inexplicable from either a functional or a transformational perspective. This startling, unprepared shift introduces a syntactic disruption, whose implications of negative emotional valence ensue from the analogy between the dynamic path followed by the music in mm. 2–6 and the experience of striving (and possibly failing, if only temporarily) to attain a goal (for a similar case, see Zbikowski, 2010).⁹

When projected in the blended space and composed with topological properties of the visual/narrative space, the (e)motional responses, simulated by the sonic analogs offered by music, are easily attributable to Kager. From this perspective, the sequence of musical events that accompanies the film excerpt in hand offers us the rare opportunity to qualify and experience something of Kager's inner thoughts, feelings, or fears (underspecified in, if not absent from the visual/narrative plane) beyond his mundane routine.¹⁰ For one thing, with its male vocality, the cello melody offers a sonic analog to Kager's desirousness, impelling us to experience it as a force-dynamic pattern long before the object of his desire appears on screen. For another, we get to sense something of the negative emotional valence that accompanies his passive interaction with other people,

something in the approximation of unease, fear, apprehension etc. The result is an emergent structure unattainable outside the blend: an embodied sense of Kager's identity.

According to Turner, we gain our "sense of unitary and stable but changing 'self'" by integrating a mental web of different versions of ourselves in different mental spaces that all share the same identity (2014, p. 67). By blending "our present minds and our present memories of our former minds and conditions," we dynamically construct our sense of self over compressed Time (p. 70). This is exactly what the emergent structure of *Copy Shop*'s opening scene offers: it condenses Kager's identity by drastically compressing his (mundane) past and (hopeful yet apprehensive) present in preparation for an (ominous) future. In fact, the dynamic construction of Kager's embodied sense of self as emergent structure through a process of compression over time is crucial for the rest of the film because it is the failure of that exact process that will subsequently become the film's subject matter. Interestingly enough, the onset of this failure will coincide with a compelling opportunity for the spectator to shift into a new mode of temporal experience.

Copying Kager

After accidentally getting his hand caught in the copier and somehow copying himself while working in his copy shop, Kager returns to his apartment to start his everyday routine all over again. Indeed, he wakes up in his bedroom, only this time, while in the bathroom, he hears the alarm clock go off again and sees his doppelganger wake up and rise from bed (Figure 6). Kager stealthily follows him out of the apartment, watching him go through the same action sequence he had originally gone through himself. Widrich confirms that the frames used for this sequence were exactly the same as the ones used for the original sequence, only this time their status as “objective shots” is compromised because they are edited with cutaways to the observing Kager so as to be experienced as “subjective” ones (V. Widrich, personal communication, May 10, 2016). This blurring of the line between “objective” and “subjective” shots is Widrich’s express creative intention (“Identity,” n.d.). It should be noted that, compared to the original action sequence presented in the opening of the film, this one is temporally even more condensed, leading to the intensified compression of all related vital relations previously discussed.

It is not very common to have such literal repetitions in cinema, let alone on the technical plane as well (in the case of *Copy Shop*, the printed frames are quite literally recycled). In the rare instances when it happens, cinema acquires an almost musical quality. In the words of Margulis, “[if] music is the canonical domain of repetition, [then] when we reinterpret another domain to emphasize its repetitiveness, we are, in fact, examining a quasi-musical aspect of that domain” (2014, p. 4). In this context, it is only reasonable to have the said sequence of events accompanied by music that also repeats itself. In fact, the corresponding sequence of musical events is accordingly condensed as well, the onset of each discreet event happening earlier than expected (e.g. fewer repetitions of the introductory A-major ostinato and earlier entrance of the cello melody). Interestingly enough, the asymmetrical condensation of the musical and the narrative sequence throws the constituent events out of sync: the *Unterwegs* music now accompanies Kager’s morning routine. What is more, all musical events are varied, yet remain recognizable. In the new version of the bedroom scene, for instance, the intervallic content of the cello line is now contracted and its melodic contour only slightly altered, while the texture, timbre, rhythm, and harmony are retained (cf. Figure 5 and 7).

When identified, this kind of musical repetition temporarily diverts our attention from “capturing the phenomenal experience of an ongoing dynamic process” to attending to the actual succession of musical events that simulates this process (Zbikowski, 2016, p. 46). In other words, rather than being bodily immersed in a sequence of musical events, we are prompted to reflect, if only momentarily, to that very sequence. Insofar as the sequence of events usually entails the past (even though it may also entail the future as prospective possibility), reflection engages memory. In CBT terms:

If we remember an event, there is a mental space with the person remembering and a mental space with the event remembered. There is an Identity link between the rememberer in one space and the participant in the other. There is an Intentionality link of remembering between them. There is also a Cause-Effect link because the event is causal for the remembering. These Intentionality and Cause-Effect links are compressed in the blend into the category memory. (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 317)

As a matter of fact, it is because of the mediation of memory, and more specifically, of the episodic type, that the aforesaid shift from embodied experience to detached reflection brings about a corresponding shift in the mode of our

temporal experience often described in terms of time travel: “in focusing our awareness on impressions or experiences gathered by our former selves [...] our consciousness shifts to a temporal frame only tangentially related to that of everyday life” (Zbikowski, 2016, p. 45).

The almost literal repetition of the opening sequence of visual/narrative and musical events in *Copy Shop* compels us to suspend the temporal experience constructed by this very sequence and “step into time as it is constructed by the words, thoughts, and ideas that populate our recollections” (Zbikowski, 2016, p. 35). In this particular case, these recollections entail the inevitable comparison of the two versions of the same sequence due to the apparent Analogy and Disanalogy relations that connect them. In fact, this comparison constitutes nothing less than the construction of a blend (or, more precisely, a meta-blend) that implicates the two versions as already blended input spaces and compresses the two aforementioned vital relations into Uniqueness and Change respectively. Relations of Analogy and Disanalogy may easily be drawn between these inputs with respect to their visual/narrative aspects, their musical aspects, and the corresponding vital relations that connect them. Concerning the first, we witness the same action sequence as before, only this time temporally condensed, as

already noted, and from an unfamiliar, if not impossible perspective. The event that occasions this perspective is the appearance of Kager's doppelganger out of thin air, an unassimilable new element to the sequence's narrative logic established by the original version. The uncanniness of the literal visual/narrative repetitions that this new element triggers is set in relief when these repetitions follow each other in close temporal proximity, as in approximately 12:05, when the florist gets startled at seeing two Kagers consecutively arriving at the corner and stopping there to watch her. It is worth noting that these consecutive literal repetitions resemble imitative musical entrances, affirming Margulis's earlier comment about non-musical domains behaving musically when they incorporate repetition.

Appropriately, visual/narrative incongruities correspond to musical incongruities within the same frame of reference set forth by the original sequence. Not only is the succession of the more or less varied musical events accordingly condensed, as previously discussed, but it is also markedly discontinuous. With the use of sound-editing techniques (e.g. cutting/pasting), it is stopped in its tracks, abruptly skipping back and forth at different points in its timeline and subsequently resuming or restarting (e.g. the varied *Unterwegs* music seems to be completed by the time Kager leaves his apartment and then restarts more straight-forwardly

when he starts walking anew). Moreover, the musical texture progressively thickens through the addition of instrumental parts or countermelodic lines in the contrapuntal web via overdubbing.¹¹ Finally, melody and harmony sound at times incongruent, most notably at the previously discussed florist scene, when the two slip appropriately out of phase.

Concerning the connection between the visual/narrative space and the musical space, this is no longer supported by the same grounded analogical relations as before, given that, as already noted, the two spaces are asymmetrically condensed so as to be put out of sync with respect to their original correspondences. The primary vital relation that now connects them is Time, since their respective incongruities are temporally coordinated (e.g. the musical cutting/pasting is synchronized with the film cuts). In the blend, Time is compressed into Cause-Effect and Intentionality, as the synchronized onsets of visual/narrative and musical discontinuities imply some sort of intentional etiology between the two, almost as if the film cuts are meant to bring about needle-jump skips in the musical track (or vice versa). Inasmuch as the blend associated with the original sequence of events pertains to the emergence of Kager's identity, the emergent structure of the meta-blend that comparatively implicates the past and

present versions of the same sequence is ironically the disintegration of this identity. This is a compelling aspect of Widrich's and Zlamal's creative thinking behind *Copy Shop*: the film initially sets up the blend that solidifies Kager's identity and then proceeds to narrativize the disintegration of this identity by submitting it to a meta-blending process. This is a process not unlike the one Kager himself is involved in while trying to come to grips with the uncanny presence of a doppelganger tracking the same steps previously taken by him: in thinking about his former self as agent within a particular narrative context, he blends his present minds with his present memories of his former minds and conditions (Turner, 2014, p. 70).

As already discussed, the integration of present and past selves (presently remembered) into an idealized set of properties that qualify subjective intentionality, agency, and causality lies at the core of the imaginatively constructed self. According to Turner (2014), a human being's mental health is predicated on the ability to "manage this web of selves, contemplate past selves, judge them, reactivate them in the present, retire them, even suppress them... A person unable to work fluidly with this dynamic mental web of selves, adjusting projections, blocking projections, developing new stuff in the blends, and locating viewpoint and

focus, counts as mentally reduced" (p. 74). With respect to *Copy Shop*, Widrich's express creative intention to show "a protagonist fighting for his originality as an individual" is registered as Kager's struggle to manage the blend that he is ("Identity," n.d.). A largely unconscious cognitive process is actualized and the blend of Kager's self is drastically unpacked before his own eyes, threatening his grip on reality.

Although this is a process largely triggered by reflection, Kager's undoing as emergent structure is not simply deduced but also felt. In this respect, music's contribution to grounding the experience of identity disintegration is crucial. As the scene proceeds, it grows increasingly more complex and defamiliarized, analogizing dynamic processes associated with the unraveling of emotions of unsettledness and disorientation. Pertinent to the association of this growing complexity with the film's subject matter is Leydon's remarks on plural subjectivity: "Particularly deep or complex hierarchies or situations in which metrical relationships between figure and ground are ambiguous may suggest a split subject or a plurality of willful subjects" (2002). Analogous to the complexity of the mechanically manipulated musical material that accompanies the scene in hand, the unfathomable plurality of Kager's self is felt as discomforting overload of

mercurial emotional shifts. Interestingly enough, the sonic analog to Kager's plurality changes as the number of his copies increases in the next scene, which repeats once again the same sequence of events though much more drastically altered.

After "tearing" his doppelganger into oblivion, Kager returns to his apartment, only to find copies of himself cropping up all over the place. At first, these copies are not random, as each one occupies a different point in the timeline of the previous two narrative lines combined. Furthermore, the narrative now entails something that the previous ones did not: interaction (Figure 8). Widrich's creative thought transforms the kind of "fictive interaction" (Cánovas & Turner, 2016) in which all of us are often entangled while managing the web of our illusorily singular and coherent self into reality (as when we are talking to ourselves in the mirror). The protective template of fictivity, which "prompts us to integrate what we can and what we cannot perceive into virtual scenarios with emergent relations of causality, agency, intentionality, etc." (Cánovas & Turner, 2016, p. 51), breaks down and the aforementioned emergent properties are attenuated: each Kager is an independent agent, initially constrained only by the cyclic narrative of Kager's life story. The next (il)logical step is for Kagers to break loose of these constraints

as well. And so they do: not only previous versions of himself, but also Kager versions of the people that have adored the scenery of his mundane life are materialized; the man walking the dog, the newspaper man, even the florist become Kager (this last one comes with an ironic twist: if the florist stands for the object of his desire, Kager ends up occupying the position of that object, becoming the cause of his own effect). Given that our sense of self compresses not only past, but also possible or fictive identities of ourselves (Turner, 2014, p. 76), this is a blending of counterfactual spaces gone horribly real. By multiplying himself, Kager has untangled the web of his identity into the reality of his own extinction.¹²

The relation that enables the cross-space mapping between music and the narrative of precipitous fragmentation and imminent dissipation of Kager's singularity is, once again, that of Analogy. Reduced to fragments and dissociated from their original textural context, familiar musical patterns are drastically altered beyond recognition, their descent barely traceable due to the retention of only a few parameters of tangential structural bearing (e.g. timbre or articulation). Furthermore, these barely recognizable fragments are randomly interspersed out of place with respect to the original frame of reference. This loss of recognizability due to drastic transformation and referential dissociation abates the instigation of

memory, thus encouraging bodily immersion into the sequence of events attended rather than detached reflection on it. What is more, the temporal disposition of this sequence is so sparse as to make the music sound not only discontinuous, but also evanescent. If music offers sonic analogs to ongoing dynamic processes associated with human (e)motion, then, in this particular case, such a process is continuously hindered and stalled. On these grounds, musical inertia is reasonably paired by analogy with Kager's (and by kinesthetic empathy our own) bodily inertia, simultaneously projecting in the blend the simulation of experiencing feelings of bemusement and disorientation. Appropriately, the music overcomes its stunted state and restores its rhythmic fluency at the same time that the original Kager rushes out of the apartment.

Soundtracking failed blends

Widrich confirms that time and identity are recurring themes in his work. When asked specifically about the former, he responded:

Time to me is a way of looking at the world, a way of sorting information for our brains. But it does not exist; everything is there at the same time. I like the analogy with the film reel: the whole film is always there and time is just

the light of conscience looking at a single frame of it. (V. Widrich, personal communication, May 10, 2016)

Widrich's general outlook on time echoes a persistent scientific stance about the unreality of time that, according to Nyíri (2009), stretches from McTaggart (1908) and Minkowski (1923) to Barbour (2000). Interestingly enough, the latter explains the unreality of time in both cinematic and musical terms:

I suggest that the brain in any instant always contains, as it were, several stills of a movie. They correspond to different positions of objects we think we see moving. The idea is that it is this collection of "stills," all present in any one instant, that stands in psychophysical parallel with the motion we actually see. The brain "plays the movie for us," rather as an orchestra plays the notes on the score. (Barbour, 2000, p. 29)

Both Widrich and Barbour propose the compression of Time into a materialized simultaneity (the former in the form of a film reel, the latter in the form of a musical score). *Copy Shop* particularizes this Time compression by building on a creative thought that is informed by an ordinary cognitive process so entrenched in our everyday conduct, as to be transparent to consciousness.

As a cognitive process, conceptual blending cannot but fly under the radar of consciousness. According to Turner (2014):

The reason for the invisibility of blending is simple: The human mind is not built to look into the human mind. To look at blending is unnatural, perverse, weird. To look at it, we must trick powers of mind that were meant for other jobs into looking at what they were not built to look at. (p. 3)

And yet, what is exiled from reality finds refuge in art. *Copy Shop* takes the hidden process of conceptual blending that safeguards the sense of a coherent self and turns it into the object of imaginative play and artistic creation. Turning inner workings of the human mind into cinematic subject matter has been considered by film psychology the privileged site of the cinematic medium from its early days. In a 1915 essay entitled “Why We Go to the Movies,” Hugo Münsterberg describes the cinema as “the only visual art in which the whole richness of our inner life, our perceptions, our memory, and our imagination, our expectation and our attention can be made living in the outer impressions themselves” (2002, p. 178).

Appropriately, *Copy Shop* does exactly that: it takes the inner workings of conceptual blending and manipulates them in the context of its narrative and visual fabric. If the same cognitive processes that constitute the procedural means of

meaning construction can become the object of creative exploration, then conceptual blending may be foregrounded as the tangential common ground where the dialectical relation between producer's and consumer's perspective fulcrums.

What this article has tried to highlight is music's contribution to this creative narrativization of the blending process. For one thing, music's input to the multi-modal blend of the film's opening scene sequence is instrumental in occasioning the attainment of an emergent sense of the protagonist's integrated and coherent self as compressed identity. This experience of embodied immersion gives way to one of detached reflection in the subsequent scene sequence, marking a corresponding shift in the way the spectator's temporal experience is shaped. Along with the previous opening one, this new sequence inputs to a meta-blend that bends time by encouraging the spectator to blend the two sequences and contemplate their in-between relation as Analogy and Disanalogy compressed into Uniqueness and Change. Within this new comparative context, the relation between the musical and the visual/narrative aspects of the film loses the analogical grounding that originally particularized some of music's proffered sonic analogs. Instead, it is now upheld by a peculiar kind of synchronized dissociation, symbolically referable to the precipitating decompression of the protagonist's

identity. The (e)motional response to the drastic unpacking of the protagonist's blended identity is structurally analogized by the stunted music of the next scene sequence, when Kager starts interacting with the ad nauseam multiplying copies of himself. By losing its direct referentiality to the musical events of the previous two sequences, the music now reclaims its prerogative to occasion an embodied experience of this disintegration of identity. Allowing for the quasi-intersubjective link between agents implicated in the cinematic experience, the musically simulated (e)motional responses to such a disintegration may be both projected to the protagonist and felt by the spectator. From this perspective, if Widrich's film thematizes the failure of the cognitive apparatus that anchors our sense of unitary and stable self, Zlamal's music simulates the dynamic processes behind the grounded experience of such a failure.

Endnotes

¹ Following Fauconnier and Turner's practice, vital relations are capitalized so as to be differentiated from the colloquial use of the respective terms.

² Mental spaces may also be matched by mapping equivalent internal vital relations onto each other (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 106).

³ As will be subsequently discussed, occasioning this quasi-intersubjective relationship is an express purpose of Widrich's creative agenda in general and the creative thinking behind *Copy Shop* in particular ("Identity," n.d.).

⁴ We abide to Ward's working definition of sound design as "a process by which many sound fragments are created, selected, organised, and blended into a unified, coherent and immersive auditory image" (2015, p. 161). Despite propositions for a more inclusive definition of the term "film music" that encompasses not only the musical score, but also ambient sound and sound effects (e.g. Lipscomb & Tolchinsky, 2005), the present study considers music and sound design as constituting separate mental spaces in order to highlight music's import to the blend.

⁵ Given *Copy Shop*'s affinities with the silent cinema, this may also be a subtle tribute to it. Silent films were not really all that silent, since their screenings were inevitably accompanied by the continuous loud noise of the film projector (Cohen, 2001, p. 250).

⁶ Certain of these cutaways are emphasized through visual and/or sound effects, e.g. the cut to the walking man reading newspaper is done through the turning of

what appears to be a newspaper page; also, the shot after the second cut to the female florist, who now turns to smile at Kager, is prolonged and accompanied by the scratching noises and visual tear-ups of the frames/copies, like rifts in his otherwise mundane reality.

⁷ The continuity of the music that accompanies the scene is no doubt instrumental in the intensification of this compression.

⁸ The action of walking is here taken more in its narrative aspect than in its literal visual one. Although we witness only about five seconds of actual walking in the scene, these five seconds connote more within the particular narrative frame of reference (e.g. people walking to work, people walking their dog).

⁹ This syntactic disruption is subsequently normalized, as the passage soon restores its diatonic feel around E-flat major and eventually wears down with a written-out ritardando on a G minor sonority right as Kager reaches his destination.

¹⁰ Even Kager's neutral facial expression does not hint at anything more than the suspicion of an unqualified basic emotion.

¹¹ Zlamal's response to Widrich's urge for progressively "more action and more motion" in the soundtrack was to add a second string quartet (personal communication, May 16, 2016).

¹² At the end of the film, Kager is chased by his innumerable copies and eventually commits suicide by throwing himself off an industrial chimney.

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Figure 3. The string ostinato in the opening bedroom scene of *Copy Shop*, starting at approximately 00:47 (used with permission).

Figure 4. Ten freeze frames (in left-to-right consecutive display) from the *Unterwegs* scene of *Copy Shop* (Widrich, 2015, used with permission).

Figure 5. The music in the *Unterwegs* scene of *Copy Shop*, starting at approximately 00:56 (used with permission).

Figure 6. Six freeze frames (in left-to-right consecutive display) from the second bedroom scene of *Copy Shop* (Widrich, 2015, used with permission).

Figure 7. The opening music of the second bedroom scene of *Copy Shop*, starting at approximately 03:20 (used with permission).

Figure 8. Four freeze frames (in left-to-right consecutive display) from the third bedroom scene of *Copy Shop* (Widrich, 2015, used with permission).

Figure 1

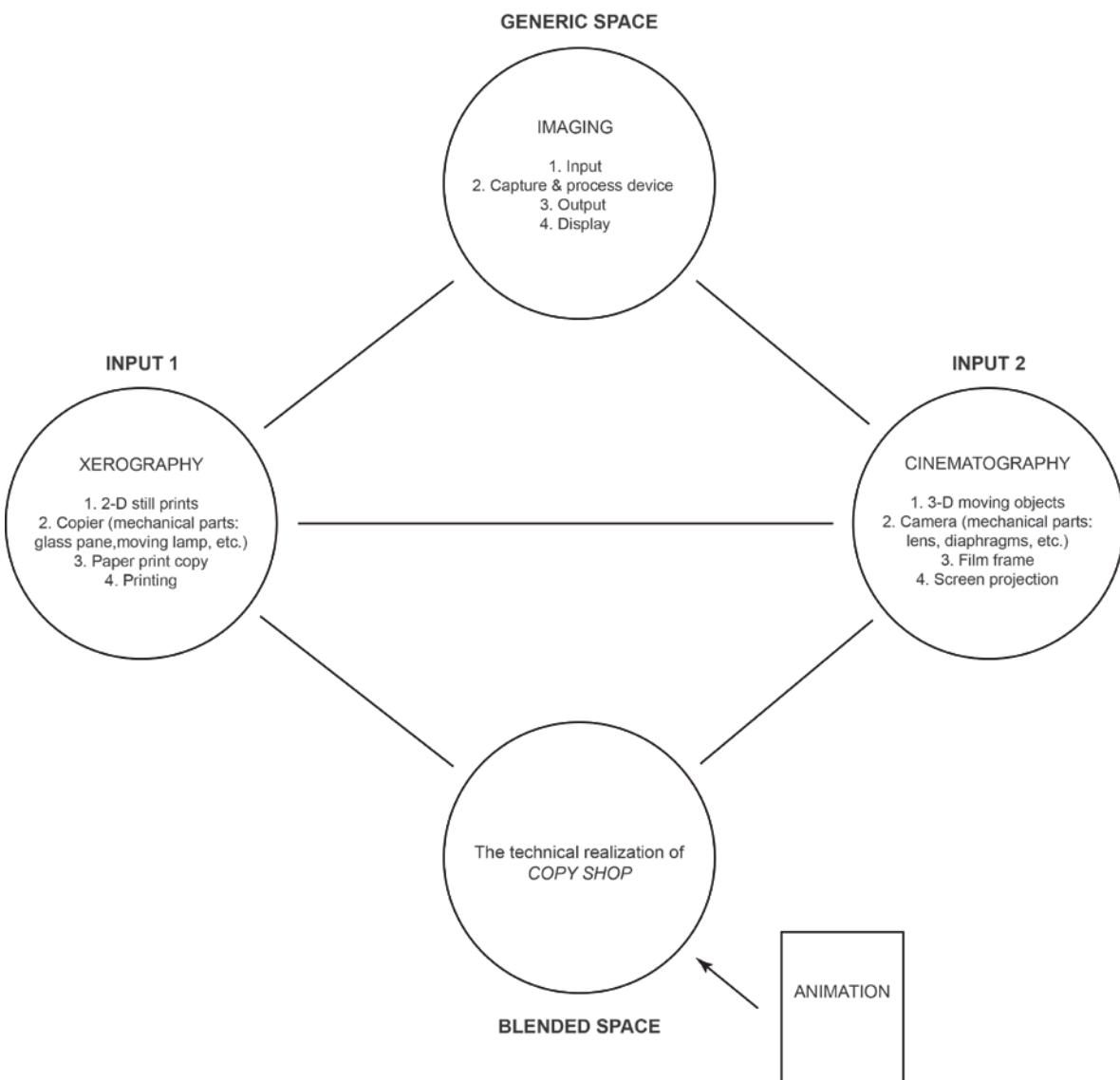


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

The musical score consists of two staves of music for three string instruments: Vln. I (Violin I), Vln. II (Violin II), and Vc. (Cello/Violoncello). The first staff begins with a dynamic of ***p***, followed by a measure of eighth-note pairs. The second staff begins with a dynamic of ***mp***, followed by measures of eighth-note pairs and sixteenth-note pairs. The music continues with various patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes, including grace notes and slurs. Measure numbers 1 through 10 are indicated above the staves.

Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

