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THE CALL OF THE BEYOND: MUSIC IN ANTONIONI'S RED DESERT

Remembering Oleg Sergeyevich Semenov

Abstract. This article discusses Michelangelo Antonioni's use of music in his 1964 film *Red Desert (Il deserto rosso)*. Before *Red Desert,* Antonioni had avoided the Hollywood convention of the near-continuous musical score, and made only very sparing use of largely diegetic music. Instead of music in any straightforward sense, he used a kind of structured sound-effects score instead. In *Red Desert*, there is much more music, and in many ways it performs the traditional function of elucidating or enhancing the film's narrative and symbolic elements. Even so, the content of the music was strikingly original at the time: an abstract electronic score by Vittorio Gelmetti. Close examination reveals Antonioni's subtle and ambiguous play with the diegetic or non-diegetic role of his music. At the same time, he retains a sound-effects score that begins to take on musical properties, and which also has a significant function in elucidating the narrative.

The two scores contribute much to Antonioni's portrayal of the central character, Giuliana. Much of the critical response to the film took the main theme to be alienation brought on by industrial development, and demoted the story of Giuliana's mental illness, assuming that she was to be understood as frivolous and trivial as a character. This article presents an alternative reading, drawing on the rich musical evidence that Antonioni did indeed place his plot at the centre of the film, and, contrary to many of the critics, it demonstrates how the music foregrounds the mental state of Giuliana and

invites the viewer to view her plight with compassion.
Keywords. Antonioni, *Red Desert*, music, electronic, sound effects, soundtrack, mental illness, symbolism, modernism

In his early films, Michelangelo Antonioni's use of music differs radically from the Hollywood norm of an almost continuous musical soundtrack that unobtrusively created a suitable mood for each scene. In Antonioni, by contrast, we are struck at first by the absence of music, and perceive it as silence, a gap in the soundtrack. On several occasions, indeed, Antonioni spoke against the standard use of music, which to his mind was a kind of external commentary that allowed the viewer to bypass the image, and for Antonioni, this amounted to bypassing the film itself.[1] Even so, sound remained an important dimension for Antonioni, and he sought to control the sound just as much as the image. In both *L'avventura* (1960) and *La notte* (1961) he experimented with the organization of sound effects into a quasi-musical score: «For *L'avventura*, I had my crew record a huge variety of sound effects: every kind of noise made by calm or rough sea, or by the waves crashing down on the rocks and inside the caves, and so on. I had hundreds of reels of magnetic tape, just for the sound effects. Then I selected those that I would use for the soundtrack of the movie. I think this is the kind of music best suited for the images. […]. Ideally, one could create a marvellous soundtrack using noises, and then put it in the hands of an orchestra conductor. Ultimately, though, maybe only the movie director would be able to do it…» (quoted in [1, p.4]).

Even when music (in the normal sense) does finally make an appearance towards the end of *La Notte*, its use is anything but conventional. There is an all-night party, and when we first hear the sounds of a jazz quartet, their music seems non-diegetic. At first light, the camera takes us out of the house and into the garden, where we see a jazz quartet playing. The acoustic, however, belongs

[1] Antonioni, as quoted in Roberto Calabretto [1, p.3].

clearly to the studio, and not to the open air, and on close inspection, the musicians are not playing the music we hear (nor miming to it accurately, although the discrepancy is not blatant). So the originally non-diegetic music has moved closer to being diegetic, but still remains at a distance from the scene. A little later, the same music behaves in a non-diegetic manner again: the two main characters (a married couple in crisis) have been walking slowly down the garden, away from the camera, and the moment they come to a standstill is timed to coincide exactly with the end of the piece of music. During their walk down the garden, we could only hear the music, but now the conversation re-emerges.

When the music restarts, the viewer will most likely suppose that its status will be non-diegetic once more, especially since the end of the film is obviously very close. This would allow the music to continue into the end titles once the last line had been spoken. This does indeed happen, but a little later. First, there is a disruption when the wife turns around in the direction of the musicians back at the house (who would now be far away, but still sound as if they are beside us). She refers to them directly, bringing the music back towards the diegetic end of the spectrum: "What do they expect? Do they think their playing will make the day any different?" Her remark is ambiguous, itself both diegetic (when taken at face value) and non-diegetic, if she is understood to be crossing the fourth wall and addressing the audience: perhaps the music will at least give *them* some comfort at the end of the bleak story, even if it cannot help the two characters? At the very end of the action, the music moves to the foreground of the soundtrack and we hear it as the director's closing comment on the film—the music is melancholy but unsentimental. This subtle play between the diegetic and non-diegetic is at the heart of Antonioni's use of music, which is highly self-conscious and even self-referential.

After the studied avoidance of music through most of *L'avventura* and *La notte, Red Desert (Il deserto rosso*, 1964) is striking for its embrace of music, but this has both conventional and highly unconventional

aspects. The music follows tradition by representing people, objects and events in the action, and by helping to create and enhance the mood of various scenes. It also latches on to visual symbols and other elements of the narrative in a Wagnerian/Hollywood manner. But the kind of music Antonioni has chosen was anything but traditional, especially for its time. Instead of using an orchestra or a jazz ensemble, Vittorio Gelmetti's score consists of electronic music, which in the early 60s was still little known outside the small following enjoyed by the musical avant-garde. This choice of music matched the film's frequent evocations of abstract expressionist painting (for example, in the scene where samples of paint in different colours had been randomly splashed on the walls of a room that was intended for shop space in the future). But even the apparently traditional aspects of the score sometimes form the basis for a deception, in the manner of apparently obvious visual metaphors that turn out to be red herrings. The richness of this film lies in its abundance of techniques for creating meaning in a way that always seeps beyond the boundaries of any attempt at a straightforward, self-contained reading. The musical score is a part of this overflowing richness, sometimes assisting the viewer, sometimes causing confusion. The musical soundtrack is still more complicated than Gelmetti's score, since there is also an elaborate scoring of sound effects that was assembled by Giovanni Fusco, not unlike the electronic score representing the squawking of thousands of birds in Hitchcock's thriller of the previous year, although Fusco's sounds are much more variegated (the Italian release of *The Birds* at the end of 1963 was too late for any influence to be attributed to the Hitchcock soundtrack).[2] This essay is an attempt to makes sense of how the Gelmetti and Fusco contributions function within the film's narrative.

At first, the very distinction between an abstract electronic-music score and a score of organized sound effects (electronic or

[2] The "sound-effect score" has been analysed in great detail by Roberto Calabretto in [1].

electronically manipulated) might seem pointless or spurious. The soundscape of rhythmicized effects such as the hum of the factory or the noise of the sea clearly has its own musical aspects, and like the musical score proper, it influences our perception of the narrative, as we shall see later. Sometimes when we hear a sound effect, we cannot even be sure whether it is intended as realistic or symbolic. Since the electronic musical score also contains much noise—unpitched material—we might suppose that there is merely a continuum from the most musical passages through to realistic sound effects. But the film does not bear this out, because the cues of electronic music are discrete and quite short, each with a definite beginning and ending, and appear in longer gapped sequences within single scenes.

The electronic music (hereafter EM) is heard immediately the film begins, during the opening title sequence. I will refer to this passage as the "overture", because it provides us with a musical preview of the action, as in most operas and many Hollywood films. As a sprawling industrial plant gradually emerges from the fog on screen (we never find out what it manufactures, but we can see that it pollutes mightily), we hear the hum of the machinery or generators, and then out of this emerges the EM with its disturbing knocks and swipes. Just under a minute later, a third component is introduced, a soprano solo—a lonely female voice. The melody has an Oriental character (especially as it begins and ends), and its mood swings between melancholy longing and a free-spirited joy. The vocal performance is virtuosic and yet naïve at the same time, as if the singer, although very capable, is free of the constraints of professional discipline.[3] This melody stretches out for another two minutes and, importantly, it gradually takes over the soundtrack, with the EM disappearing, followed by the factory hum. For the last 30 seconds of the opening titles, all we hear is the singer.

[3] The soprano part is sung by Cecilia Fusco, a professional opera singer, and the daughter of Giovanni Fusco who worked on the soundtrack.

When the music ends, the film proper begins,[4] and the soundscape switches abruptly to the more aggressive and rhythmical noises of the factory. In this dystopian industrial landscape, alongside a picket line of strikers, the central character appears. Giuliana, as she is called, leads her young son by the hand, her fashionable green coat and high-heeled shoes at odds with the mud and debris around her. Here begins her troubled journey.

The second sequence of EM cues appears at the 17' mark, and echoes the factory noises of the previous scene through its own continuous humming and rhythmical murmurings. Giuliana is alone in the frame, inviting us to associate the EM with her interior world, especially when it stops for a few seconds at the moment when she is distracted from her thoughts by the arrival of her husband. The EM is effectively the sounds in Giuliana's head, and in this scene, it represents her anxieties and fear. When Giuliana shares the torments of her nightmare with her husband—a sensation of being sucked into quicksand—the EM returns and continues to sound while Giuliana begins to weep, while her husband tries to comfort her, but as his caresses become more intimate, Giuliana's reacts negatively.

There is a short passage of EM at about the 25' mark, when Corrado, a colleague of Giuliana's husband, seeks out Giuliana, intrigued by her on first sight. Giuliana is clearly anxious and her behaviour is odd and unpredictable. At this point, instead of following Corrado in search of adventure, she sits down next to a fruit seller as if suddenly overcome by fatigue. "Are you tired?" Corrado asks her. She does not answer immediately, and during the pause (filled by EM) we have a chance to notice that the fruit and chestnuts on the stall are coloured grey—in his colour films, one of Antonioni's trademarks was to paint objects, both large and small, in order to create correlations

[4] For timings, I have used the Italian-produced DVD *"Il deserto rosso", un film di Michelangelo Antonioni, versione restaurata*, Cinema Forever, PSV34000 (2014). In this DVD, the original titles were preceded by a new sequence of titles pertaining to the restoration, lasting just over one minute, so I have subtracted about a minute from the timings of scenes in the film.

between colour and emotion. Later the same day, when Giuliana tells Corrado about her mental illness and her suicide attempt, there is no music. This introduces a complication in the role of EM: it is not a general accompaniment to Giuliana's illness, but indicates on particular occasions that her mind is afflicted.

The film's lengthy central scene features Giuliana, her husband, Corrado, and another three friends, who spend the afternoon drinking and flirting in a small wooden shack by a quay at a seaport. During the scene, an emotional and erotic connection is established between Giuliana and Corrado, to the extent that it becomes obvious to all present. The scene's closing sequence also reveals the gravity of Giuliana's condition with unexpected force. The revellers in the shack watch as a doctor climbs aboard a ship that is moored nearby. A little later, a yellow flag is hoisted, indicating an outbreak of some infectious disease onboard (as one of the revellers tells the others). Giuliana panics, runs for the car and almost drives into the sea, coming to a halt only at the very end of a pier. While the action is very tense, surprisingly, there is no EM. We may be able to discern a certain logic here: in earlier scenes, the EM told us that Giuliana's illness was more serious than her behaviour alone would indicate, whereas in the scene with the car, her behaviour is so extreme that the assistance of the EM is not required.

In any case, Antonioni is able to create correlates from other dimensions of the film. Visually, a thick fog begins to gather in the later part of this long scene, symbolising the state of Giuliana's mind. Tightly linked to this, the music of organised sound effects also contributes a symbol of its own, namely ships' foghorns, which partition time through their mysterious iterations. The ships and smaller vessels passing through the frame also take on a symbolic aspect because of the magnetic pull they exert on Giuliana's mind. The mysterious quality of the foghorns is enhanced by the fact that they seem to come from somewhere outside the frame, since their sound never clearly coincides with any ship as it comes into view. The foghorns actually

seem closest at the moment when Giuliana is literally *on the edge,* showing that they are as much part of the furniture of her deranged mind as a realistic soundscape of the seaport.

In contrast to the foghorns, the scene in the shack also features some lively dance music on the radio coinciding with Giuliana's change of mood, when she joins in with the merriment and even takes the lead for a while, comically imitating sexual arousal after she has eaten some allegedly aphrodisiac quails' eggs. But the music stops, and the foghorns eventually call to Giuliana once again, drawing her into another world. Living in the real world is clearly a struggle for Giuliana, and we find out later, she is only attempting to do so because she gave her promise to the doctors who were treating her at a mental hospital.

At the 81' mark, we enter a fairy tale that Giuliana relates to her son. The colours in this episode are sharply different from everything before and after, the azure sea and the pink sand of the beach providing joyful relief from the greys, dirty greens and red tones that dominate the rest of the film. This riot of colour was not the result of Antonioni's paintbox tricks but was taken from nature (as seen through Technicolor, that is), leaving the location of Sardinia's Budelli Island to work its magic. In the fairy tale, we see a teenage girl, perhaps Giuliana idealised picture of her younger self. She swims and sunbathes, completely at home in this paradisiacal landscape. This is when the Oriental song from the film's "overture" finally reappears, allowing us to place its joyful arabesques in the context of a dream in which Giuliana longs for another world to inhabit.

The beach fantasy episode shows us that the film's overture was actually very traditional in form, in spite of its electronic music and industrial sounds. Both operatic overtures and Hollywood title music acted as musical equivalents to "teasers" in television thriller series, giving us tantalising previews of what was to come. The title music of *Casablanca* (1942), for example, opens with some earnestly dramatic music, followed by an oriental theme evoking the location of Morocco, and then cuts to the *Marseillaise*, which prefigures the film's climactic

scene. Red Desert's title music behaves in a similar way, presenting the central divide between Giuliana's adult malaise and her idealized childhood, which map onto the divide between an industrial dystopia and a natural paradise.[5] At a more abstract level, the film presents the problems of the individual in the modern world (Giuliana's inability to adapt to adult life), and the problems of world at large (industrialisation that is both chemically and aesthetically toxic).[6] The fact that the soprano melody is Oriental evokes a common fantasy trope that had already been strongly present in *La Notte*, where it was Africa that was portrayed as as the exotic dream place for a natural human happiness [3, p. 84-85]

The appearance and disappearance of a mysterious tall ship forms the fairy tale's centre point. The ship seems to be devoid of crew or passengers, in an apparent reference to the Flying Dutchman legend. In her encounter with the mysterious ship, the girl on the pink beach experiences for the first time the longing that separates a pubescent teenager from a child in a state of innocence. It is the moment when her sexuality is awakened, the song emanating from everywhere while the rocks of the shoreline seem to take on fleshly forms and colours. But it is also more than just that—perhaps a suggestion that from now on the heroine will be searching for a meaning to her existence and the world itself. The dream-world encounter with a mysterious tall ship gives us a key to the soul of the adult Giuliana, who continues to pine after passing ships, drawn by the sound of their foghorns.

Giuliana's longing is for another world, the chief motif of the Symbolism that shaped the arts at the turn of the century. This other world offers perfection, but the road that leads there passes through death. Giuliana is not unlike a Symbolist maiden, a Mélisande wrapped

[5] Christine Henderson eloquently explains how these two layers are connected, making use of motifs Lacan and Kristeva. [2, p. 161-178].

[6] This should not be taken too far, however, since Antonioni insisted on many occasions that industry and technology possess their own beauty, as some aspects of the industrial scenes in Red Desert do indeed bear this out.

in the enigmatic trauma of her previous life and now trapped in a reality from which she is profoundly alienated. This Symbolist situation is also reflected in Antonioni's portrayal of Giuliana's mental illness, which exceeds the bounds of realism, and becomes a romanticized condition that gives the heroine a special sensitivity. She sees the world in a way that those around her cannot, and the musical score(s) tell us that she also hears it differently. The sea evokes in Giuliana that longed-for other world, and she is fascinated by it, even though she is afraid to direct her gaze upon it. Not all the products of an industrialised world are at odds with this otherworldliness: she is also fascinated by the technicians in Medicina who are setting up elaborate apparatus "for listening to the sounds of the stars". Aside from the single appearance of the Oriental song in the fairy-tale episode, musically, the world beyond is symbolised tentatively by the sound of the foghorns, as mysterious as the fog that accompanies them. And although they may be perceived as a kind of music, their source is ultimately rooted in the real world, unlike the EM, which is only in Giuliana's mind.

Earlier in the film, Giuliana's son had apparently contracted a paralytic condition, but her telling of the fairy tale comes to a sudden halt when she realises that his illness was feigned, merely an attempt to gain attention from her. This leads to the final, climactic phase of the film. The next block of EM, which begins at the 90' mark, is particularly intense, with a series of 20-30 second cues separated by short gaps. The content has also changed: instead of the anxious knocking and swiping sounds we heard at the beginning, there are sustained pitched sounds instead. These are an elaboration on the symbolic foghorns, which have been transferred from the sound-effects score to the musical score, a dramatic correlate of the fact that the foghorns, as we noted earlier, began as diegetic sound, but also became part of Giuliana's mental soundscape. Giuliana, losing her composure again, runs to Corrado's hotel, so distressed that she has trouble even recalling his name. She confesses to him that she is very ill, and she has little hope now of any recovery. Corrado is both puzzled and excited by the apparent signs

of Giuliana's desire for physical intimacy, and a seduction begins. The EM heightens the tension: the short cues now in such quick succession that they are like contractions that periodically grip and release her, only to return with renewed force. At the 100' mark, Antonioni harks back to his treatment of the music at the end of La Notte, when the non-diegetic EM suddenly seems to become diegetic when Giuliana takes notice of it and looks for its source. She goes to the window and pulls aside the curtain, only to see a street that is deserted apart from one man walking by. This explains nothing of course, as we should realise, since the EM can only be "diegetic" within Giuliana's psychosis. Still, we might have hoped for something of significance in the street, but Antonioni awakens this desire only to frustrate it.

When Corrado and Giuliana make love, the harsh greens and reds of the hotel room modulate into saturated pinks, as if reminding us of the dream-like beach. But this illusion (accompanied again by the foghorn-inspired EM) is shattered by the harsh (diegetic) sound of a car passing by. We find that Giuliana (while the camera was turned) has already run out of the hotel, understanding even in her confusion that an affair with Corrado cannot offer a solution.

In the next sequence of EM cues, the character of the music is still more agitated, but its distinctness as music is compromised by its resemblance to the sounds that we might expect to hear in a port at night. This oddity falls into place if we interpret the scene as a dream sequence, for which there is ample evidence. It is the most surreal section of the film, in which we find Giuliana trying to gain entry where she cannot, and she meets a man who speaks to her, but she is unable to follow his words.[7] In a dream, the soundscape of Giuliana's deranged mind and the environmental sounds are one and the same, hence the difference in the behaviour of the EM score here.

[7] The man is a sailor, and the language he speaks is Turkish, although the subtitles in the DVD tell us, bizarrely, that it is Russian. The sailor is quite prosaically asking Giuliana whether she needs help, offering her coffee, and so on. But if this is a dream, the viewer is not intended to understand the sailor.

If in many previous scenes we noticed ships gradually getting closer, now the whole frame is taken up by a huge red hull of a ship which Giuliana has decided she must board. The moment when she speaks to a Turkish sailor who doesn't understand Italian is her attempt to communicate directly with a representative of the other world. By asking him whether the ship can take passengers, Giuliana is contemplating the possibility of suicide. Her failed attempt to communicate with the sailor prompts a soliloquy that leads her to repudiate this course of action. She is not alone in the present world, and the thought of her family holds her back.

In the final scene which is a kind of reprise of the opening scene, we return to the original industrial landscape, in which Giuliana is again wearing her green coat and leading her son by the hand. Bright yellow smoke issues from the chimneys, and the boy asks his mother whether the birds would die if they passed through it. Giuliana replies that the birds have learnt to evade this danger. Her words sound positive, and it appears that she has pulled through the worst of her illness and is regaining a hold on life. But the EM creates a disturbing counterpoint to this apparent happy ending, becoming more intense as it proceeds, and continuing beyond the appearance of "the end" *(fine)* on the screen. The swipes and knocks which we remember from the opening scene, return with a vengeance. And because this music of Giuliana's illness has now spilt over the boundaries of the narrative, it transmits a vague dread to the viewer as if Giuliana's demons have moved on to our own minds.

It is this disturbing, open ending that makes us realize that the apparently traditional uses of music in the film have, to some extent, led us astray. The EM had been developing along with the plot, intensifying as Giuliana's state of mind deteriorated. But in his aberrant use of the EM at the film's end, Antonioni makes us wonder who can hear the music, what it represents and what it is telling us, as he had done at the end of *La Notte.* Is it telling us that Giuliana's mind is in fact beyond repair? Perhaps, but perhaps not, since this would not

only belie the promise of her words to her son, but also the conclusion of the ship dream sequence (which would then serve no particular purpose in the narrative). Perhaps, instead, the psychotic EM is merely serving as a kind of theme tune, reviewing the general character of the film without any bearing on the final scene? But this seems too simple, given the subtleties of Antonioni's approach to music, and it is too intense to leave the viewer with any such impression. This final moment of confusion takes firm ground away from underneath our feet, bringing us as close as possible in the dramatic arts to a kind of empathy with Giuliana: it may seem that we are on firm ground, but with the next step, we might be sucked into quicksand.

Is has been noted that *Red Desert was* both a challenging modernist masterpiece and a box-office success on the cusp of Antonioni's mainstream recognition (his next film, *Blow-Up*, was in English and aimed at an audience beyond the arthouse circuit). And although the musical score is electronic, the bare fact that *some* kind of music was used at all can be regarded as a step towards the mainstream for Antonioni. Like standard musical scores, it usually plays a clear role in the film's drama and symbolism. And yet the closer we listen, the better we can appreciate the subtlety of the EM's interaction with the sound-effects score; the two can overlap in time and sometimes in content (the foghorns), blurring the distinction between the external and internal worlds, and the distinctions between natural, technological, and imaginary sounds.

One further significant aspect of the film's music deserves discussion: its contribution to the portrayal of the heroine. Many commentators have noted Antonioni's sympathy for his female characters (at least in the early films); as Joseph Luzzi puts it, "Whereas the men in his films are ready for sex and little else—*Red Desert* is no exception—Antonioni's women are generally complex, lovely, subtle, and intelligent creatures too good for the worlds they grace" [4, p. 205-209]. Even so, contemporary critical reception of the films tended to bypass the distinctive features of Antonioni's story and

characters (here, Giuliana's mental illness and her attempts to cope with it), and instead focused on what they saw as the big, important themes. *Red Desert* was therefore "really" about industrialization and the alienation that comes in its wake. Critics rarely matched Antonioni in his sympathy for Giuliana, and even took a hostile stance, as in Stephen Taylor's 1965 review, which dismissed Giuliana's illness as "neurosis à la mode", the behaviour of a bored, leisured woman married to a factory manager on a good salary. Half a century later, this approach still has its advocates, like Haime N. Christley, who in 2011 insisted that the film was about "alienation, anxiety, modern life, and industrialized landscapes", and that its "preoccupations with the physical environment overtake… the human concerns". Giuliana, he thought, was chiefly worthy of attention because she was the first of a series of "shrilly neurotic housewives of postwar cinema" [5].

But there is surely a point in looking at the story that Antonioni has given us, in all its details. We do not know whether her illness is purely neurological, or whether it stems at least partly from some psychological cause, some trauma in her past, but she is clearly oppressed by her illness, feels that she is failing both as a wife and as a mother, and the lack of any signs of recovery creates a malign feedback loop. Monica Vitti brings a remarkable degree of skill and imagination to this role, with her hunched shoulders, angular, jerky movements, and her habit of walking close to walls. Giuliana's contemplative attitude to the world around her is miles more attractive (in the world of the film) than her husband's complacency; Corrado may be more appealing, but his man-of-action approach to Giuliana's problems is bound to fail. In some mysterious Symbolist manner, Giuliana is the character who is connected to the natural world: to the stars (in the Medicina scene), or to the sea (in the shack scene). As for the rest, she is "afraid of streets, factories, colours, people, everything". In the final scene, when she and her son talk about the dangers of the toxic yellow industrial fumes for the birds who fly through it, there is a clear parallel with Giuliana herself, and we may also recall that

Maeterlinck's Mélisande dies of a wound "the would hardly have killed a bird".[8]

Giuliana does not find much real sympathy for herself within the story, aside from the Turkish sailor whom she cannot understand (and even he may only be part of a dream), but she has Antonioni's sympathy and no doubt the sympathy of many viewers, despite the critics who prefer to look elsewhere for the film's meaning, as if this weak, unstable woman is unworthy to be situated at the centre of an intellectually challenging film. And as I have argued here, it is Antonioni's use of music that allows us the best access to Giuliana's inner world. The camerawork does not fulfil this role—it is not committed to Giuliana and her point of view. As Luzzi puts it, "the film's principal visual tension lies in the contrast between subjectivity and objectivity, between free indirect point-of-view shots that give us Giuliana's perceptions, and tracking shots that render her a pointedly sexual object". [4, p. 207]. The music, on the contrary, belongs exclusively to Giuliana: the EM offers us a direct access to her mind, the soprano solo holds the key to her past and her soul, and the music of the foghorns evokes that world beyond that is calling to her. Even when the EM spills over from Giuliana's mind (as at the very end), it is to create an intimate connection between her and us, the viewer, inviting our sympathy and compassion. Compassion—which poured out so vividly in the last scene of *L'avventura*—was Antonioni's antidote to the alienation rampant in the world. Through music, even such unusual and adventurous music as in Red Desert, the viewer is asked to rise to compassion. To paraphrase the heroine from *La Notte*, it is *this* that can make a difference to the day.

[8] The link between Antonioni and Symbolism has been noted by several commentators. David Huckvale in his Visconti and the German Dream: Romanticism, Wagner and the Nazi Catastrophe (xxx), includes Antonioni in a list of directors who were heirs to the Symbolist aesthetic [6, p. 131]. Ned Rorem makes the connection precisely between Mélisande and Antonioni's heroines ntonioni himself never mentioned em makes a precise connection between Mic. Antonioni'imate connectiothe idea of the beyond th in «A Mélisande Notebook" [7].

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