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Editor's Note

Even with a relatively innocuous theme such as 'Sound on Screen,' by some sick serendipity *Cinephile* still ended up with bold art and essays about suicidal families, occult a/synchrony, and ominous sounds eliciting apocalyptic dread. Such is our habit: taking a relatively straightforward and inoffensive topic and vomiting all over it. Nevertheless, our academic aim is sincere in contributing to what is perhaps the most underappreciated and undeveloped area in film studies. This is not to discount what precious little theory does exist on film sound; our objective is to advance from this base in exciting new directions. Hence our enthusiasm to announce these six original pieces with a loud "blaaaarrgh!"

Sound design has become a point of interest for film scholars and enthusiasts alike, with an increasing amount of print and web-based writing being devoted to studies of Foley and other sound effects, film scores, post-production sound, as well as film sound celebrities such as Walter Murch and Bernard Herrmann. Of course, changing technology continues to be a primary focus of sound studies, as many viewers forgo high quality Dolby surround in favour of accessibility through laptop, iPod, or YouTube viewing.

Cinephile has taken this opportunity to highlight the way sound has always been a subconscious method of immersion into a film: even before the advent of sound-on-film technology, the cinema, of course, was never silent. Still, we often take for granted the subservient role of sound on screen, just as sound takes a back seat to the image in film theory. Yet, without sound, we end up feeling uneasy about what we are seeing, unsure if the silence is intentional, part of the diegesis of the film, or rather a glitch in the technology, a malfunctioning speaker, or trouble in the projection room.

With this in mind, Lisa Coulthard's exploration of how silence is used in the films of Michael Haneke underscores how much we rely on sound as part of the viewing experience. Two more theoretical approaches to sound follow, with Randolph Jordan's ecological interpretation of cinematic sound and K.J. Donnelly's latest contribution to

studies on sound synchronization. Moving further behind the scenes, Jay Beck reveals the complications of owning sound with his look at the voice(s) of *The Exorcist*, and Andres Lombana Bermudez discusses how the sounds of the "slap-of-the-stick" punctuate the comedic aspect of bodily violence in Warner Bros. Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies. In a shift to cultural studies, William Whittington connects East and West in his examination of how horror sounds transform in the process of adaptation from Japanese to Hollywood cinema.

The final article in this issue is our inaugural contribution to 'The New Scene Canon,' *Cinephile's* ongoing project of cataloguing the most influential and iconic scenes from the last 30 years (see Vol. 5.2, 'The Scene'). To this end, Mark Harris argues why the famous "Ride of the Valkyries" segment from *Apocalypse Now* is the second-best edited sequence in motion picture history. Harris dubs it the "Nowhere to Go but Down" scene because this is how Coppola reportedly felt at the time, while the scene itself serves as a consummate example of the requisite anguish that inspires great art. For more information on *Cinephile's* New Scene Canon, along with embedded video clips of the scenes discussed, visit our website: cinephile.ca

As the only graduate film studies print journal in Canada, *Cinephile* focuses on research that continues to expand the discipline, discovering original avenues for exploration in the dissolution of boundaries between film and cultural studies, high and low art. We encourage articles that satisfy both the academic and alternative demands of our readership, articles that are intellectual and provocative, intriguing and irreverent. For making this issue possible, we must graciously acknowledge the support of our advisor, Ernest Mathijs, administrators, Gerald Vanderwoude and Jennifer Suratos, art director, Bobby Mathieson, layout editor, Andrew deWaard, our editorial board, and the Department of Theatre and Film at UBC.

-Jessica Hughes

Contributors

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Mark Harris received first his Master’s degree in Film Studies, and then his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, from the University of British Columbia (the dissertation for his final degree earning him the Governor General’s Gold Medal in the process). He is the author of the long introductory essay to *Wild At Heart: The Films of Nettie Wild* as well as the prize-winning one act play, “Endserious.” To date, he has published approximately 4,000 articles in more than 50 periodicals, including *Film Comment*, *Wired*, *Canadian Literature*, and—especially—*The Georgia Straight*. He has taught Film Studies at UBC for more than a decade, and has no intentions of retiring any time soon.

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William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* and the Proprietary Nature of Sound

Jay Beck

The *Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973) was one of the first films of the 1970s that sought to break down the rigid barriers between the industrial definitions of dialogue, music, and sound effects, while also actively engaging questions about the ontological nature of sound in motion pictures. Released on December 26, 1973, the film represents director William Friedkin's calculated attempt to shock and terrify his audience using any means at his disposal. *The Exorcist's* subject matter, drawn from William Peter Blatty's best-selling horror novel of the same title, guaranteed a large audience for the film. But Friedkin wanted to make it more than just a simple adaptation. Along with a number of questionable methods for eliciting the 'proper' reaction from his actors—including the firing of guns on the set, physically striking his actors, and submitting them to torturous stunt work—Friedkin also experimented with a variety of special effects, makeup, and a highly expressive soundtrack. In light of these elements *The*

Exorcist can be evaluated for its attempts to directly stimulate the audience through formal means, especially through sound's ability to evoke the supernatural.

Most tellingly, Friedkin and his sound team utilized experimental sound techniques to further these goals and as a result the film was honoured for its accomplishments with an Academy Award for best sound.¹ Very often the result of these acoustic experiments was the pure physical stimulation of his audience. Friedkin claimed that, like

1. The Oscar was awarded to production mixer Christopher Newman and re-recording mixer Robert "Buzz" Knudson. The irony in this traditional breakdown of the award between production and post-production sound is that it effaced the contribution of several other individuals on the sound team. By means of contrast, the nomination for Best Sound Track at the 1975 BAFTA [British Academy of Film and Television Arts] Awards recognized the contributions of Christopher Newman, Jean-Louis Ducarme, Robert Knudson, Fred J. Brown, Bob Fine, Ross Taylor, Ron Nagle, Doc Siegel, Gonzalo Gavira, and Hal Landaker.



Hitchcock, he was attempting to manipulate the emotional responses of his audience. Yet, unlike Hitchcock, Friedkin was not interested in playing on the audience's narrative expectations, instead he preferred to affect them directly. According to the director, "People want to see movies because they want to be moved viscerally [...] I mean, I'm not interested in an interesting movie. I am interested in gut level reaction" (qtd. in McCormick 18). This emphasis on a "gut level reaction" meant that Friedkin was trying any and every possible effect to stimulate the audience. The result was a film that worked well in this regard, but it remains open to debate whether the presence of such creative sound work is a contribution of the director, his sound team, or if it is a byproduct of a large budget and a serendipitous labour situation.

What distinguishes *The Exorcist* in the history of 1970s film sound is the way in which any number of effects—visual and acoustic—are intrinsically tied to the supernatural aspects of the story. Often moving from a fully modulated optical soundtrack to absolute silence, the film primarily attempted to use the dynamics of the soundtrack to manipulate the emotions of the audience. Supervising sound editor Cecelia Hall has noted: "*The Exorcist* was one of the first films to understand the importance of affecting the audience psychologically. William Friedkin said he wanted it to be too loud because he wanted the audience to be slightly on edge by the middle of the film" (qtd. in LoBrutto 199). Though Friedkin's main concern was with standardizing audience reaction, a great deal of subtlety went into

the original construction of the sounds for the film. This was possible because Friedkin's willingness to experiment gave the effects teams wide latitude in the creation of new and shocking techniques. Importantly, none of the sound effects artists were members of the traditional Hollywood sound unions. Instead, each was hired as a freelance sound 'artist' outside of the jurisdiction of the unions or Warner Bros. studio. Bob Fine,² Gonzalo Gavira,³ Doc Siegel,⁴ Ken Nordine,⁵ and Ron Nagle were each contracted separately to design special sound effects for the film.

2. More than being just the developer of the Perspecta Sound system in the mid 1950s, Bob Fine was also a recording engineer and producer as well as the owner of Studio A in New York City. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Bob Fine and his wife Wilma Cozart Fine pioneered the "Living Presence" 3-channel recording series for the Mercury classical label. Although he is principally known for his vast contributions to the recording industry in the 1960s and 1970s, he also lent his talents as a sound mixer to two other film productions, *House of Dark Shadows* (Dan Curtis, 1970) and *Hercules in New York* (Arthur Allan Seideman, 1970).

3. Gonzalo Gavira is best known for his sound effects work in Mexican cinema, especially for his contribution to Alejandro Jodorowsky's *El Topo* (1970).

4. Doc Siegel was a recording engineer associated with many rock bands from the late 1960s and early 1970s including The Seeds, Buffalo Springfield, The Monkees, The Spencer Davis Group, and Black Oak Arkansas. It is through his work with Buffalo Springfield's 1967 eponymous debut that he would have first encountered composer/arranger Jack Nitzsche.

5. Chicago-based radio host Ken Nordine, who was not credited in the film, was hired by Friedkin in 1973 to develop a number

San Francisco-based musician Ron Nagle was hired by the film's editor Bud Smith to create custom sound effects,⁶ and Nagle combined his musical training with an astute knowledge of recording technology to develop several of the familiar sounds in the film (Ehrlich 16). Nagle had never worked in film sound before, but working both in San Francisco and with Jack Nitzsche in Los Angeles, he set forth to craft a number of unique sounds that were used on the final soundtrack. While in San Fran-

The Exorcist is unique in the evolution of film sound for how it blurred the boundaries between sound effects and music. The score itself was created by using extracts from experimental 20th century classical pieces by Anton Webern, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Hans Werner Henze, yet these extracts were exclusively used only during moments of narrative transition. The two main exceptions to this rule are also probably the most recognizable pieces from the film. The first is guitarist/composer Mike Oldfield's

A number of 'signature sounds' are associated with a particular narrative event: the insect buzz of the amulet, the rats scratching in the attic, the bouncing bed, and Regan's demonic head twist.

cisco, Nagle created sound effects by agitating several bees trapped in a jar, getting his dogs into a fight, and recording his girlfriend's stomach while she drank water (Ehrlich 16). Several of Nagle's sounds can be heard during the film's prologue set in Iraq, and each of the sounds was treated in the studio to estrange it from a recognizable source. This led to the creation of a number of 'signature sounds' within the film, each associated with a particular narrative event: the insect buzz of the amulet, the rats scratching in the attic, the bouncing bed, and, of course, Regan's (Linda Blair) demonic head twist.

of the effects for *The Exorcist*. Although the director claimed that none of Nordine's sound effects were used in the film, Nordine filed suit against Warner Bros. on 23 January 1974 to recover his contracted payment of \$35,633 and to seek proper screen credit. Although Nordine subsequently did not receive screen credit, he did receive a cash settlement from Warner Bros. in 1979 after it was demonstrated that some of Nordine's sound effects were used in the final film, specifically a number of the animal squeals and "the sound of hamster feet scratching inside a cardboard box" ("Nordine Vs. 'Exorcist'" 6). Also see "WB Settles On Trial's 4th Day" 6.

6. Bud Smith was hired to edit the Iraq prologue only. This was done so that Smith could edit and supervise the sound construction of Reel 1 while Evan Lottman and Friedkin were editing the rest of the film. See "Seeing The Invisible—Evan Lottman" in Oldham 219-234.

"Tubular Bells," when Chris (Ellen Burstyn) returned from location shooting and stumbled upon Father Karras (Jason Miller) for the first time, and the other is George Crumb's "Threnody I: Night of the Electric Insects" from his *Black Angel* composition, when Father Karras witnessed Regan's stigmata. Because each piece is associated with a significant narrative event, they achieved thematic status in relation to the film. However, this is most likely an effect that Friedkin did not want because the vast majority of the music in the film was marked by understatement, straddling the line between being perceived as music or ambient effects. According to the director, "the kind of music I wanted was number one, nothing scary. No so-called frightening music. No wall-to-wall music. [...] No music behind the big scenes. No music ever behind dialogue, when people are talking" (Friedkin 4).

Conversely, most of the signature sound effects created by Nagle and the sound artists did take on the musical function of leitmotifs throughout the film, and their repetition carried an emotional connection to a prior scene. This is because Friedkin did not want the music to carry most of the emotional weight in the film and thus the sound effects take up the work of stimulating emotions in the audience. Often this was done by the previously mentioned manipulation of the film's dynamics. This is especially noticeable during the Iraq prologue where the soundtrack expanded to its full dynamic range during the archaeological dig. Yet



with Father Merrin's (Max von Sydow) discovery of the amulet, the soundtrack immediately shrank to a perceptual 'silence' by eliminating the hard effects, music, and ambient wind, leaving just the sound of Foley footsteps. The sound that followed and which engulfed the soundtrack, Nagle's 'insect buzz' track, was one of the first signature sounds that occurred throughout the film and created thematic connections between their representative scenes. Another signature sound was that of the scratching in the attic, a sound heard in a number of scenes in Chris's apartment during the first half of the film. Constructed from a combination of "guinea pigs running on a board covered with sandpaper, the scratching of fingernails, and the sound of a bandsaw as it flew through the air," the effect, repeated several times, each time further unsettled Chris and the audience because the source of the sound was never revealed ("Warner Bros. Inc. and Hoya Productions, Inc."). By keeping the sounds offscreen, Friedkin enhanced the film's horror by letting the audience imagine the sources. For example, as Regan's possession developed, the audience was not allowed to see the events transpiring behind closed doors and was left to imagine the horrific visual elements that corresponded with the bangs, crashes, and unearthly moans emanating from the room.

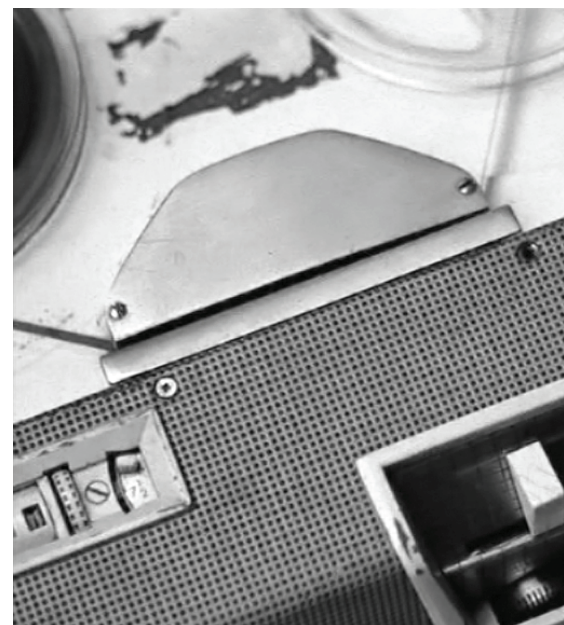
While these signature sounds are highly evocative and meticulously crafted, often their use fell short for reasons that have nothing to do with the sound team. *The Exorcist* is a compendium of interesting

scene-specific sound work without a larger system of sound use to integrate the sounds into the narrative. Because there is little subtlety in the dispersal of sound effects throughout the film, the film became anti-climactic once the exorcism begins. The presence of the most powerful and arguably least subtle sound effect, the demon's voice, introduced a highly conflictive element into the film: a deliberate break with the ontological nature of sound. By substituting Linda Blair's voice with any number of other voices, Friedkin created a powerful statement about the constructed nature of the soundtrack. The basic premise behind the exorcism scenes is that the audience has to believe that the voice of the devil is speaking through the girl's body. Although there is a powerful effect of cohesion created by the synchrony of the voice and lip movements, ultimately the audience was often pushed out of the diegesis by the overt number and types of sounds that the demon produces. The build-up of sound effects in the film thus left Friedkin with no choice but to overload the girl's voice with as many acoustic tricks as possible.

According to sound recordist Christopher Newman, Friedkin initially wanted the demonic voice to be heard as gender neutral, and Friedkin started to explore the possibility of utilizing other voices during the dubbing phase of the picture ("Fear of God"). According to Michel Chion, the powerful effect in the "mismatching" of actress Mercedes McCambridge's voice with Linda Blair's body was a pivotal moment in the status of the voice in cinema: "*The Exorcist* contributed significantly to showing spectators how the cin-

ematic voice is 'stuck on' to the cinematic body. This grafting of heterogeneous elements can be seen as *The Exorcist's* very object. Audiences could stop thinking of the voice as a 'natural' element oozing from the body on its own" (164). Yet even though Chion positions the film as a progressive moment in the evolution of film sound, the ultimate result of the film's impact was to foreground claims about the ontological 'purity' of film sound and the proprietary value of sound effects.

effects added to Linda Blair's portrayal of Regan. In an interview with Charles Higham of the *New York Times*, McCambridge recounted her contribution to the film as follows: "Doing that sound track was a terrible experience. I didn't just do the voice, I did all of the demon sounds. That wheezing, for instance. My chronic bronchitis helped with that" (qtd. in Higham D13). Upon the completion of her dubbing work, Friedkin supervised the mixing of McCambridge's voice and his notes include marks to slow down



Because the demon voices were considered sound effects rather than dialogue, Mercedes McCambridge's work creating the sounds was literally effaced from the film. In technical terms, her 'vocals' were edited and manipulated as sound effects, physically separated from the dialogue in the editing and mixing process (Buskin 33). Not only does this create a strange disjunction between the speaking voice and the voice that is ultimately heard in the film, but it also creates a labour conflict in terms of who is acting at any given moment. This makes *The Exorcist* an extremely interesting case on the proprietary nature of sound effects for two reasons. First, it sparked a controversy between the filmmakers and Mercedes McCambridge over the credit for vocalizing the demon's voice. And second, Friedkin's claim that the film's sound effects were the legal possession of the studio led to a well-documented court case that questioned the very ownership of sound.

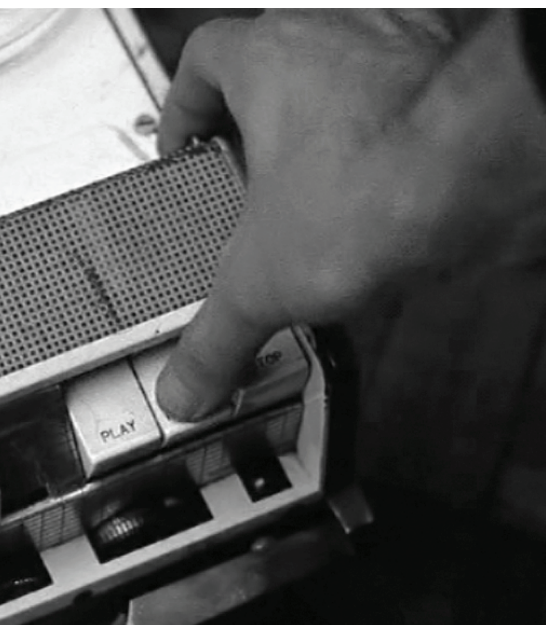
In the first instance, Mercedes McCambridge was not credited for her contribution to the film on its initial release in 1973 because her vocalizations were considered to be

certain sounds, to switch between the demon and Regan's voice, to build tracks from multiple takes, and to create a 'backward' voice by reversing the tape. Despite the manipulation of McCambridge's voice as an effect, her vocal phatic qualities are easily recognized and her performance lends a great deal of weight to the creation of the demon.

The suppression of McCambridge's screen credit was done in part to increase Blair's chance of receiving an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actress by not having to acknowledge the work of another actress in creating Regan's character. It was only after the Oscar ballots were tabulated in late January 1974 and Blair received the nomination that news was leaked to *Variety* and *Time* about Mercedes McCambridge's contribution (Higham D13). In an interview in early 1974, William Friedkin admitted that he chose McCambridge precisely for the desired "emphysemic" wheeziness of her voice, a sound that was used prominently whenever the demon was not speaking (Friedkin 9). Friedkin's refusal to credit McCambridge's contribution exposes an abiding Hollywood assumption

about film sound operating in the 1970s: that the voice of the 'speaking body' was intrinsically the real voice, while the voice being added in dubbing was somehow an added 'effect.' Despite the fact that almost all of the dialogue in the film was replaced in post-production, Friedkin established a precedent whereby the voice of the actors, whether recorded live or in ADR, was somehow the 'proper' voice to match to their body.⁷ Also, because the effects in the film were 'created' instead of 'generated' by the objects to which

several of the signature sounds created for *The Exorcist*. In the suit, the litigants claimed they were entitled to reparations because "the creation, development and execution of the sound effects in *The Exorcist* was a monumental task extending over many, many months at a cost of several hundred thousand dollars" ("Warner Bros. Inc. and Hoya Productions, Inc."). Claiming that the sound effects were copied by the Italian film did not mean that the actual effects were electronically duplicated, rather that they were



they are attached, it was assumed that they somehow held a proprietary value that was greater than the original sounds themselves.

This was evidenced in October 1975 when Friedkin and Warner Bros. brought suit against the Italian horror film *Beyond the Door* (*Chi sei?*, Ovidio G. Assonitis, 1974; U.S. release July 31, 1975) claiming that the film copied

7. This assumption of an ontological link between the speaking actor and the uttered voice is a notion that gained greater acceptance throughout the 1970s. The use of 'doubled' or dubbed voices in cinema is as old as cinema sound and can be traced from Warner Oland's singing voice in *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) to the explicit display of voice-doubling in *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952). However, due to the breakdown of classical recording and mixing strategies with the dissolution of the studio system, a countercurrent developed in opposition to the various experiments in sound and image presentation. This mode of filmmaking sought to reconstruct an ontological link between sound and image to cover over their split during the production and post-production process. For more, see Beck.

emulated and "arrived at only after the Italian film makers had 'studied and dissected' the effects achieved in *The Exorcist*" ("Warner Bros. Inc. and Hoya Productions, Inc."). Effectively what Friedkin and Warner Bros. sought to demonstrate was that the originality of the sound effects made them proprietary and therefore covered under copyright law. But the most disturbing aspect of the lawsuit was the way that it entirely downplayed the special contributions of McCambridge, the sound effects artists, and the musicians. Oddly, the suit cited only three sounds that were emulated in the Italian film: the sound of the loud scratching, the devil's voice within Regan, and the multifaceted voice of the devil ("Warner Bros. Inc. and Hoya Productions, Inc.).

Perhaps McCambridge not receiving proper credit is overshadowed by the way Friedkin and Warner Bros. did not recognize the basic conceit behind the sound effects in *The Exorcist*. Even though Friedkin posited the transparency of McCambridge's voice in creating the demon vocals, the lawsuit excoriates *Beyond the Door* for bearing "the heavy hand of the copyist" in recreating the effects (Smith 22).

What this implies is that the sounds being created for *The Exorcist* went beyond aiding and advancing the story to the point where the sound effects drew attention to themselves. However, in the process of doing so, the filmmakers contradicted the discursive function of effects work not bearing the trace of its artificial origin. In the end, it is precisely the fact that these effects stood out in the sound mix that made them open to replication.⁸

Ultimately the advances in sound technique and sound effects design in *The Exorcist* were overshadowed by William Friedkin's single-minded desire to stimulate his audience by any means available. Whereas the creation of the sound effects and musical elements in the film were produced on an unprecedented scale, the end result of their use was simply to manipulate the audience rather than to augment Blatty's story. Nearly every device in the film, from its makeup and prosthetics to its foul language and shock cuts, was calculated to have a maximum impact on the audience. Unfortunately, the result of the careful work that went into the creation of the sounds is that they are regularly overwhelmed by the cumulative weight of the other effects. Unlike the restrained use of sound in Hitchcock's thrillers, Friedkin's emphasis on affect strains the narrative coherence of the film.

Film critic James Monaco echoed this point when he wrote that:

[a]s an engine of manipulation, *The Exorcist* succeeds magnificently. What other film of recent years has had the medical, psychological effect it had? It is violently effective [...] From plot elements to special effects to the handling of sound (Friedkin has always been very conscious of the effect the level of the soundtrack has) to the nervous cutting of the music, *The Exorcist* is a catalogue of devices that work. But to what end? Technique is admirable, but eventually audiences want to hear the voice of the person who's telling the story. They may not like Bogdanovich's voice, but they can't even hear Friedkin's." (148-149)

What had the potential for being a taut psychological and supernatural thriller became a compendium of effects solely designed to manipulate the audience and to generate box office success. In the wake of the blockbuster aesthetic that emerged with films like *The Godfather* (Francis Ford

Coppola, 1972), *The Exorcist*, and *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), it became more and more difficult to integrate creative sound work into major motion pictures. Subsequently, a history of experimental sound creation and the contributions of several sound artists wound up lost in the mix.

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- "WB Settles On Trial's 4th Day," *Variety* 7 Feb. 1979: 6.

8. The case of Warner Bros. Inc. and Hoya Productions, Inc. v. Film Ventures International was heard on 10 October 1975. Although Judge David W. Williams ruled that the advertising campaign for *Beyond The Door* improperly suggested that the film was a sequel to *The Exorcist*, he did not find sufficient grounds to rule on the claim of character protectability under copyright laws. *Beyond The Door* completed a limited theatrical run where it received universally negative reviews and a minimal box office.

Acoustic Infidelities

Sounding the Exchanges between J-Horror and H-Horror Remakes

William Whittington

While her friends and co-workers continue to inexplicably disappear from Tokyo, Michi hurries into work and sees her boss standing against the far wall of his office. As she approaches and calls to him, she suddenly realizes that what she is seeing is only the shadowy outline of a man burned into the surface of the wall. The soundtrack falls silent as she studies the mark... then a single voice, isolated in the surround speakers, whispers: "Help Me." The disembodied voice floats in the space as Michi rushes from the room, closing the door behind her.¹

- *Pulse* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001)

In the post-*Psycho* era, horror films began to challenge what had once been considered 'good sound.' During the classical Hollywood period, a variety of 'good sound' practices evolved, including synchronous and faithful production recording, unobtrusive mixing techniques,

1. In her article "The Voice in Cinema: Articulation of Body and Space," Mary Ann Doane argues that sound in classical Hollywood cinema "sustains a limited number of relationships between voice and image" (34). Specifically, dialogue is generally limited to the left, centre or right channels in relation to a character's position on the screen. The practice developed as a means of minimizing the possibility of breaking the cinematic illusion for filmgoers. In *Pulse*, the unprecedented placement and movement of the voice is intentionally disruptive, occurring late in the film and disconnecting the voice from the body. As the same two words of dialogue are repeated, the voice moves hauntingly from the surrounds, to left and right channels, and finally to the front channel, affirming the sense of disembodiment.

and consistent patterning of sound effects and musical scoring, among others. The current practice of horror films is to intentionally violate these expectations to plunge filmgoers into a *cinema of disorientation*, evoking states of fear, anxiety, terror, and dread. This article considers the process by which contemporary Japanese horror (or J-horror) films are remade into Hollywood horror-thrillers (or H-horror), and explores the new perceptual challenges that emerge as the soundtracks are reconceptualized in ways that are often unfaithful to past sound traditions and practices. My aim is to specifically address the differences between narrative traditions and characterizations of evil, the influence of digital technologies, and the transnational exchanges between Japanese and American filmmaking as they relate to sound design. With regard to genre, this migration of J-horror audio techniques has served to revitalize horror within Hollywood, opening the door to expanded conceptions of what is horrific. Through the formal and thematic construction of new hybrid soundtracks, H-horror remakes, like their predecessors, ponder the dark side of globalism as it has revised traditional expectations surrounding economics, gender roles, and cultural and social exchanges. In the end, these films leave us with the sense that we are all haunted by the consequences of modernity.²

2. As sound theorist James Lastra notes: "...the experience we describe as 'modernity'—an experience of profound temporal and spatial displacements, of often accelerated and diversified shocks, of new modes of sociality and of experiences—has been

Mirroring the low-budget production and distribution models of American independent horror films of the 1970s, J-horror filmmakers over the past two decades have embraced new technologies and processes. These include using low-cost video cameras and non-linear editing systems to shoot and assemble their films, digital mixing software and recording hardware to create the soundtracks, and internet software and sites to distribute and exhibit the final results. In doing so, Japanese filmmakers fostered the rise of a cinematic movement that has redefined the horror genre through innovative narrative strategies and idiosyncratic (and highly-digitized) uses of sound and image. Historically, these films were produced quickly, shown globally (on DVD and the internet), and constructed using narrative modularity, so audiences could ‘graze’ on particularly horrific or uncanny scenes (Wada-Marciano 5).

Subsequently, the efforts of J-horror filmmakers repositioned Japanese cinema in the global marketplace, transcending previous limitations of cultural specificity, while expanding the models of media distribution to include platforms such as video games, *anime* and printed comics, or *manga*. J-horror added a bit of blood spatter to Japan’s “pink globalization,” which was defined by the resurgence of interest in Japanese cultural products, led by the popularity of *Pokémon* and *Hello Kitty* products and media (Yano 153).

Visually, J-horror films often incorporate surveillance footage, digital ‘errors’ and CGI innovations, which challenge the very nature of ‘film’ as a medium in that the image is no longer captured on celluloid. Simultaneously, J-horror soundtracks feature abstract audio designs, digital residue and artifacts, ambient music scores, and jarring editing patterns reminiscent of the French New Wave that challenge perception, offering new avenues into the uncanny. Films such as *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998), *Pulse*, *Dark Water* (Hideo Nakata, 2002), and *Ju-on* (Takashi Shimizu, 2003) reconsider the traditional modes of storytelling and sound practice so filmgoers must constantly re-evaluate reading protocols and expectations as related to temporality, synchronization, causality, and sound localization. This shifting terrain provides one of the great pleasures of watching horror films. Filmgoers are never fully aware of what lurks around the next corner, partly because sound and music do not function as reliably as they might in a classical Hollywood film, which would typically use a highly-structured and ‘transparent’ musical score to provide a sense of ‘des-

shaped decisively by the technological media” (4). J-horror sound cleverly offers a critical engagement of this experience while simultaneously providing an effective example of it.

tiny’ or ‘fate’ (Bordwell 33). As music theorist Peter Hutchings notes, sound and music in horror is purposefully “intrusive” and can “manifest in shocking or discordant” ways to “amplify visual moment of shock or suspense” (224).

The local and global success of J-horror garnered the attention of major Hollywood studios, which in recent years purchased the remake rights to a number of the films, including *Ringu* and *Ju-on*. These films were remade by Hollywood studios as *The Ring* (Gore Verbinski, 2002) and *The Grudge* (Takashi Shimizu, 2004), respectively, and both have since been serialized. During the remake process, there were expected revisions to casting and language, but surprisingly, the modular and non-linear narrative strategies and idiosyncratic audio and visual approaches remained somewhat intact. H-horror thrillers immediately habitualized these disjunctive strategies, yet reformulated their function as part of the narrative mystery that filmgoers were encouraged to solve to reach the ‘truth’ behind a supernatural occurrence.

It is important to acknowledge that the J-horror cycle is not entirely independent of H-horror, but rather, that the two are historically bound through patterns of borrowing, homage, and self-reflexivity. As Jay McRoy, editor of *Japanese Horror Cinema*, notes in his essay on *Ju-on*, J-horror directors like Takashi Shimizu (*Ju-on* and *The Grudge*) readily acknowledge the connection to Hollywood films, citing film series like *Friday the 13th* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* as models for his J-horror narratives (177). McRoy aptly argues that the resulting J-horror hybrids are connected to tensions within Japanese culture related to fears of losing “Japanese tradition” and the unforeseen complications of an “ever-emerging technological, global and postmodern Japan” (176). The description of the scene from *Pulse* that introduces this article exemplifies the new tension. In the scene, the white-collar boss of a small Tokyo company collapses into a digital shadow, losing all form. What remains is the disembodied echo of his voice, processed to sound like a recording on an answering machine. The recording and its placement is particularly telling, suggesting in its design a sense of isolation and disorientation due to technological intervention.³ This evacuation of the self through sound and image is a multifaceted commentary on modern Japan, underscoring the loss of human connection in Tokyo’s overwhelming urban landscape, the shifting of gender roles in the workplace, and Japan’s fracturing economic foundation, which currently favours the development of new technologies and media over traditional manufactur-

3. This sound usage offers a complication to Michel Chion’s *acousmètre* or voice “that is heard without its cause or source being seen” (18). The displacement is offscreen in the spiritual dimension as well as the dimension of the recording medium itself—the answering machine tape.

ing. It is ironic that J-horror films, which so vividly express the anxieties around Japan's post-war loss of cultural identity, have been the very means by which the country has enjoyed renewed recognition in the global marketplace of film, mass media, and art culture.

more focused on the nature of societal notions of right and wrong. The harbingers of revenge are typically supernatural entities such as ghosts, serial killers or monsters, but are injected into the narrative to represent a kind of ultimate consequence. The roots of the revenge formulas in Amer-

These forces become a kind of rolling dissonance, like an unresolved musical chord that leads to a new kind of horror, madness and apocalyptic dread.

The Tradition of Japanese Horror

In order to unpack the sonic exchanges between J-horror and H-horror, it is important to first examine Japanese tradition as related to the mode of storytelling within the horror genre. The “‘avenging ghost’ motif” has long been “a staple within Japanese literary and dramatic arts” (McRoy 175). These stories are often informed by various religious traditions of Shintoism, Buddhism and Christianity, and revolve around spirits (often female) seeking revenge. It is important to note that infidelity is often the trigger for the initial murder or set of circumstances that leads to a haunting by a vengeful ghost, which is the case in *The Grudge* cycle.⁴ Nonetheless, within Shintoist traditions, a central belief is that spirits (souls) and ghosts have established a constant presence in the world around us (the spirit world's version of interconnection). In J-horror films, the scope of an avenging spirit's revenge is far-reaching. At first, the spirit may seek to destroy the person responsible for his or her untimely demise, but then the revenge spreads. Soon, everyone within the narrative world is at risk (perhaps even filmgoers themselves), which functions as a kind of warning about complicity in the changes brought about by globalism. By contrast, American horror films tend to focus acts of revenge on a particular subset of victims, typically youths involved in morally questionable activities (e.g., drug use, premarital sex, and the like). The warning is

ican cinema have been shaped by a matrix of influences related to paradigms of justice, gender dynamics related to power, and cultural and religious norms. Historically, these factors heavily influenced the creation of the Production Code, which, over the decades from the 1930s to the 1960s, established the moral consequences for characters within classical Hollywood cinema. While the Production Code has been defunct for some time, it can be argued that filmgoers still establish many genre expectations based on the historical poetics that arose from these embedded standards. For instance, in recent horror films, the evil figure is subdued in the end by the “final girl,” who survives because she has maintained her virtue or discovered the “truth” behind a particular injustice (Clover 82).

The J-horror tradition subverts these expectations, offering a more frightening prospect—that evil is unbound. Supernatural forces in J-horror do not adhere to narrative containment or historical poetics; they possess their own logic based loosely on Japanese folklore, which can prove disorienting to audiences both inside and outside Japan. These forces permeate all levels of filmmaking from story structure to sound design, and become a kind of rolling dissonance, like an unresolved musical chord that leads to a new kind of horror, madness and apocalyptic dread. It is important to note that many J-horror films end with the suggestion of an annihilated world. The connections to fears of nuclear destruction are implicit, given the history of Japan since the end of World War II, and these underpinnings hint at much broader global considerations of the horrific, despite the cultural specificity of the films. In keeping with the tropes of Hollywood horror, the remakes do limit the reach of annihilation to a subset of characters, often leaving the rest of the world unaffected, but as ex-

4. In *The Grudge* cycle, an unemployed husband finds his wife's diary and discovers she has become infatuated with one of her instructors at the university. In a rage, the husband accuses her of infidelity, and brutally kills her, their son, and the family cat before committing suicide. The wife returns as the dark-haired wrath to seek revenge, while her son's spirit merges with the cat, screaming and yowling from the afterlife.

plained later in this article, this shift is not entirely optimistic or contained.

J-Horror Sound and Audio Infidelities

In J-horror, spiritual forces haunt the highest and lowest registers of the soundtrack's dynamic range, and, as a result, the spirit presence exists as a kind of deep structure, penetrating the entire story world and the lives of those within it. In general, the hierarchy of sound—dialogue, music and effects—is re-organized to create a sense of imbalance. In particular, *Ju-on* engages in a shifting pattern

view"). This strategy establishes the location of the story and links it to a quiet frustration and, more often, to brutal outbursts of rage. As many sound designers are fond of saying, sound can hold the "voodoo of the place"—its emotional soul (Haeny). In *Ju-on*, a Tokyo home sheds its domestic purpose to become the site of a haunting, retaining the supernatural imprint (or stain) of the violence and aftermath of a husband murdering his family. As many scholars have noted, Japanese cinema often engages the home as a microcosm of the social and cultural changes brought on by the shifting roles of women and men in the Japanese workplace (McRoy 176). The home is therefore



of sound design drawn from three sets of sound elements: first, ambient effects (such as bird songs, room tone, and city backgrounds) are used to emphasize domestic and urban realities; second, 'jolts' of low-frequency sounds (such as discordant musical tones and ambiances) are engaged in order to trigger anxiety, and; third, shards of high frequency sound effects (such as chimes, violin strikes and vocalizations) punctuate the soundtrack in order to intrigue and shock filmgoers. This approach to sound design forces filmgoers to constantly re-adjust their subjective positioning as they attempt to reconcile the extremes of the sound spectrum as if they were affixed to a swinging pendulum.

Overall, *Ju-on* is a surprisingly quiet film. The ambient sounds of birds, gentle wind and even street noises are understated in the overall mix. The location sound and postproduction sound effects are pristinely recorded and the emotional intentions are deliberate and contemplative. Hideo Nakata, the director of *Ringu*, identifies this approach as the "aesthetics of subtraction," noting that repressing sound can create a kind of "quiet" beauty ("Inter-

already a charged site for critiques of isolation and domestic anxiety. *Ju-on* establishes a template for sound design that emphasizes wind, bird songs, and the creaking movement of the home's wooden construction, evoking the unsettling sense of a ship on a rolling sea. Thematically, the intent is to indicate that this platform upon which the family unit is built is unstable and thus dangerous. To extend this sense of danger, low frequency rumbles are brought into the mix during the deaths in order to link the spiritual presence to the instability of the location, which could be any house or all houses in Tokyo.

Low Frequency Effects Re-Mixed

In the process of remaking *Ju-on*, *The Grudge* takes up the "quiet" pattern of sound design but re-conceptualizes it, adding more structured layers of music and sound effects to the ambient and contemplative 'silences,' in particular offering more extensive use of low-frequency effects and music (set in relief against high-frequency ef-

fects). In the past, many Hollywood sound mixers reserved the use of subwoofer effects for specific moments in a film. For instance, a low-end thud might be combined with a door slam in order to punctuate the finality of the gesture. Historically, sustained use of low frequency effects was often avoided for fear that the optical medium would be overwhelmed by the signal, leading to distortion or audio masking in exhibition venues.⁵ In H-horror remakes, however, characters live and die by the subwoofer. This remix strategy is in part an overcompensation in relation to the Japanese “aesthetics of subtraction,” which challenges the Hollywood ‘rule’ to cover all silences with sound. The re-

protective mechanism causes humans and animals alike to freeze in the presence of low-register sounds, fostering hypersensitivity as a means of assessing threats. In H-horror remakes, low-frequency sounds signify a threat not just to the life of a single character, but also to the entire collective of characters in the film (and even the audience in the theatre). The approach is viscerally effective in creating anxiety and horror. It is also thematically resonant, offering a cue to an unseen and uncontrollable threat—the grudge that the anguished soul repeats over and over as it tries to break the Karmic cycle.⁶

I would further argue that in place of the apocalyptic



conceptualized soundtracks also embrace the flexibility of the new digital multichannel sound formats, which offer clear separation of low-frequency signals into a dedicated speaker, thus avoiding the previous limitations of optical sound. The resulting mash-up between J-horror sound and H-horror leads to new visceral and thematic implications that are uniquely transnational. In the first sequence of *The Grudge*, home healthcare worker Yoko (Yoko Maki) is led to her death by the sound of deep thuds—a mix of knocks, creaks and ominous low-frequency tones. Viscerally, this emphasis on low-frequency sound is used to evoke primal mechanisms of fear. One study related to psychoacoustics associates this response to the concept of “vestigial reflexes,” which come from ancestral responses to environmental dangers from animals and the weather (Lang 137). This

endings in J-horror films, which provide an effect of sickening realization of inevitable annihilation, H-horror remakes displace this sense of dread into the soundtrack design, depositing it in the lowest registers of film sound. Both *Ju-on* and *Ringu* employ open-ended conclusions. In *Ju-on*, we see shots of an empty world much like the final shots in John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978), implying that the stain has spread across all of Tokyo and perhaps even the world. In *Ringu*, we see the reporter’s car driving into the distance as she intends to pass along the killer videotape to her parents. The intertextual reference to the *Terminator* franchise (James Cameron, 1984 and 1991), and specifically to the notion of ‘Judgment Day,’ cannot be missed in the visual design. However, both of these endings are absent from the

5. Masking refers to a condition in which one sound may cover another and render it inaudible or unintelligible. For instance, a low frequency rumble may mask mid-range dialogue. This problem has been mitigated somewhat in the digital age as sound signals have been separated.

6. This low-frequency sound technique recently appeared in *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2009) as a cue to the supernatural ‘events’ that infected the lives of a young couple in Southern California, reinforcing its status as a new code of horror sound design. It should also come as no surprise that this film also deals with issues of fidelity and trust.

remakes; rather, the dread is transformed and integrated into these films through sustained patterns of low-frequency effects and other sound elements. The apocalyptic dread is not a sickening surprise as it is in J-horror, but rather, a sustained state of anxiety with aesthetic and thematic intents that position the threat in the present rather than the future. In part, this is due to Hollywood's reluctance to engage in apocalyptic fatalism, which dampens box office profits and often mutes the possibility of franchises and sequels. More importantly, though, this exchange is indicative of the religious and cultural differences between Eastern and Western conceptions of death and the afterlife. As previously noted, the presence of spirits (ancestral and otherwise) is accepted as a part of Japanese thinking and culture; but for the benefit of North American audiences, Hollywood films must work to explain this notion through the formal aspects of the film medium without being too specific to one particular religion or political agenda. When a film cannot show a CGI version of heaven, it relies on sound design to establish a sense of the ethereal or the 'other side.' Through sound design and multichannel sound placement, the afterlife is superimposed as a kind of sonic shroud over the diegesis as well as over the theatrical exhibition space, and in this way, the sounds become the ghosts. These sonic hauntings function to remind filmgoers of the inevitability of death, but offer no specifics that might connect it to national or global trauma.

In-Conclusion

While the vengeful ghost may be vanquished for a time in both J-horror and H-horror, the horror genre—which is inherently subversive and self-perpetuating—never provides a successful resolution. Even knowing the 'truth' is not enough. In the *Grudge* cycle, the most recognizable sound is the high frequency vocalized clicking ("AHHHHHH") that precedes the gruesome attacks by the dark haired spirit.⁷ The sound effect is a combination of the director's voice and the recording of a finger raking over the teeth of a thick comb. The design functions as both a howl of grief and the roar of attack. However, it was not until *The Grudge 2* that the origin and 'truth' of the sound was revealed. During the original murder (which is presented in flashback), the enraged husband crushes the neck and vocal cords of his wife, and the clicking be-

comes her dying breath.⁸ But uncovering this mystery is not enough to dispel the threat, and the protagonist from that film dies as her throat is crushed in the same manner, thus affirming the unending cycle. Horror films are about repetition, an endless cycle of birth and death. This story is eternally unresolved, and each culture and generation fills the horror genre with its own anxieties, fears, and doubts, thus solidifying the perpetuation and popularity of the genre. H-horror remakes are haunted by global changes and exchanges, and their sound designs serve to simultaneously remind us of infidelities to past filmmaking practices related to 'good sound' as they show the way forward for the future of sound design and horror in cinema.

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7. The design of the effect is significant in that it provides the archetype for the construction of the overall sound design of the film. It establishes the use of contrasting low-frequency rumbles with high-frequency sound effects. This design strategy fostered the unique pattern of disorientation for filmgoers as they try to reconcile the extremes of audio perception.

8. It should be noted that in the original J-Horror version of *Ju-on*, the sound could be attributed to a different origin, specifically associated with the box cutter that the husband uses to kill his wife. As the husband expands and retracts the steel blade, it clicks loudly along the notches that hold it in place.



Listening to Silence

The Films of Michael Haneke

Lisa Coulthard



In a film within a film segment of Michael Haneke's *Code Unknown* (*Code Inconnu*, 2000), a character being shown a soundproof room is encouraged by the real estate agent to "hear the silence." Meta-diegetically associating silence with murder (the real estate is a mere performance aimed at luring victims into a soundproof torture chamber), this film within a film acts as an interpretive kernel for the film as a whole: *Code Inconnu*, like most of Haneke's films, is about the miscommunication inherent in verbal dialogue and the weighty meaning of silence. Placed strategically within a film that opens and closes with deaf children communicating through signs and gestures, this scene encouraging the audition of silence foregrounds the relation of hearing to understanding: opening with verbally silent but actively communicating children makes explicit not only the ability to hear silence but also the imperative to listen to it.¹ Articulating the distinction between hearing and listening, the film foregrounds the ethical and philosophical dimensions of the auditory as a necessary component for fruitful communication.

For a director obsessed with the essentially and perniciously assaultive nature of interpersonal disconnection and miscommunication, the interrogation of the auditory is a pointed one. Focusing on the violence bred by non-communication, Haneke renders emphatic the impossibilities of productive, transparent and meaningful human dialogue; words tell us little in Haneke's films, in which information is most effectively, and often traumatically, conveyed through technologized, impersonal communicative vehicles (videotapes, letters, drawings) or, more brutally, through violent action and gesture. Together these failures of communication and forceful violent gestures in Haneke demand the audience's attention to the ethical implications of the auditory—an attention that I will frame here in terms of listening. French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy notes in his recent and influential *Listening*, that the act of listening involves "an intensification and a concern, a curiosity or an anxiety," (5) that mere hearing does not. Rather than presenting a metaphor for clear understanding or even mere hearing, Nancy's focus on listening insists on the implication of the subject, on the approach to the self that is produced through the resonance of sound in the act of listening.² For Nancy, the listening subject is one in whom

1. Although the children are not completely vocally silent (since noises accompany their gestures), the basis for communication between them is non-verbal.

2. Nancy's conceptualizing of listening as resonance is linked to the work of Maine de Biran as Jacques Derrida perceptively notes in his *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy*. There, de Biran's analysis of the listening subject, the one who is his own echo, is quoted as follows: "The ear is as if instantaneously struck both by the direct external sound and the internal sound reproduced. These two imprints are added together in the cerebral organ, which

sound reverberates, for whom understanding is not fixed, stable and permanent but haptic, in motion and constant agitation."³

This metaphor of listening as a place of significance, of active engagement or approach to the self through resonance, is illuminated in audiovisual terms in Haneke's films through a rendering acute of ethical imperatives in acts of audition. In *The Seventh Continent* (*Der siebente Kontinent*, 1989), *Benny's Video* (1992), *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance* (*71 Fragmente einer Chronologie des Zufalls*, 1994), *The Piano Teacher* (*La Pianiste* 2001), *Time of the Wolf* (*Le Temps du Loup/Wolfzeit*, 2003), *Caché* (2005), *Funny Games* (1997, 2007) and *The White Ribbon* (*Das weisse Band*, 2009), a uniformity of style is readily identifiable and it is a formal identity shaped in large part by acoustic tendencies: minimal dialogue, only rare instances of music that are always in some way diegetically motivated, an intensification of Foley sounds associated with bodily movement and a massive dynamic range that shifts abruptly and violently between noise and silence.

This reshaping of the soundscape toward the resonant—to the sounds themselves rather than the meaning they carry (dialogue and music do not operate in the conventional ways that root, orient, and inform signification)—clearly works in conjunction with the openness, fragmentation, and complexity that are associated with Haneke's narratives: the ambiguous endings of *Benny's Video*, *La Pianiste*, *Le Temps du Loup*, *Caché*, and *Das weisse Band*; the segmented and multiple narratives of *71 Fragmente* and *Code Inconnu*. Fragmentary filmic structures, ambiguous

is doubly stimulated [s'électrise doublement]—both by the action which it communicates and by the action which it receives. Such is the cause of têtes sonores [literally, sonorous or resonant heads]" (148).

3. In some ways, Nancy's call to listen is mirrored in the therapeutically inflected idea of "deep listening." Most prominent in new age contexts of listening to one's mind in meditative states, "deep listening" has also been advocated as an approach to sound in auditory culture studies. For instance, in their introduction to *The Auditory Culture Reader*, Les Back and Michael Bull state that deep listening is to be opposed to easy listening and "involves attuning our ears to listen again to the multiple layers of meaning potentially embedded in the same sound" (3). In its emphasis on the complexity of sound and the significance of listening, this approach has some commonalities except for the very important difference that, for Nancy, the process is clearly one of ethical, epistemological, and philosophical disturbance, a fruitful agitation, rather than of enlightenment or discovery. This becomes most evident in his assertion of the resonant—active, agitated, reverberating—subject, who is in flux and motion and not tranquil or certain at all. It is also imperative that Nancy's listening is a play on the double meaning of *entendre* in French that implies understanding as well as hearing, an association that Nancy desires to break with the introduction of listening as resonance.

endings, and a loosened cause-and-effect chain mirror in each instance the failures in understanding that are essential to approaching the stories told. As the titles of some of the films rather simplistically and literally indicate, the story is unknown, hidden, or fragmented.

This fragmentation or sense of partial knowledge is perhaps most obvious in the aural minimalism that constitutes a significant part of Haneke's signature style. Paralleling this thematic fracturing of meaning are the formal, structural silences of Haneke's signature acoustically minimalistic style: the absence of non-diegetic music, the prominence of noise, the scarcity of dialogue. Moreover, when present, music and noise are not used in conventional ways, a feature that has led some to note the "fundamentally assaultive nature" of Haneke's sound (Peucker 132). For example, the elevation of outside traffic noise and the omnipresence of background sounds even in scenes of relative silence (the climactic bathroom encounter between Erika (Isabelle Huppert) and Walter (Benoît Magimel) in *La Pianiste*, for instance, is very faintly accompanied by the music from the downstairs auditorium, as is the scene of Erika breaking the glass and placing it into the student's coat pocket) do not work in a conventional manner to give the impression of an outside world or to provide atmosphere. Rather, this background noise and/or music operates abrasively, becoming distracting, burdensome, or intrusive; outside noise thus articulates not the comfort of an outside world but its absolute alienating and assaultive indifference. This is perhaps most evident in *Der siebente Kontinent*, where popular songs on the television or radio violently intrude to disturbingly score the actions depicted (the loud song playing on the radio during the family dinner scene with the brother or, most notably, the perverse presence of Jennifer Rush's "The Power of Love" that plays throughout the family's suicide scene).

In addition to its disjunctive relationship with the image, the assaultive nature of sound in Haneke has been tied to both its abrasive amplification and its pervasiveness; sound can never be offscreen as such and has the ability to move through spaces. We note this throughout Haneke's films where background sounds or sound from other rooms invade and redefine what constitutes private space; there is no such thing as aural private space in Haneke, a feature that is particularly evident in *La Pianiste* where there seems to be a constant and almost voyeuristic nature to sounds as they move through spaces intrusively and perniciously. As Jean Wyatt notes apropos of the apartment scenes in *La Pianiste*, the mother's voice penetrates everywhere and pointedly conveys "the stifling lack of space in which Erika lives and breathes" (457). The aural suffocation of the film pairs with the visual and psychological oppression to cre-

ate the impression of the uncanny maternal persistence and overbearing authoritarian presence upon which the film's articulations of sex and violence rely.

Added to these elements is Haneke's aurally disjunctive editing that cuts off sound (whether it be music, dialogue or noise) midstream or mid-note and radically contrasts acoustic tone and atmosphere between any two shots.⁴ Think, for instance, of the loud street scene following Majid's acoustically quiescent suicide in *Caché*, or the intercutting between loud music and silent credits that opens *La Pianiste*, the loud contrasts between exterior and interior shots in *Der siebente Kontinent*, or any of the abrupt and radical cuts that constitute the formal system of *71 Fragmente*. In each instance, acoustic contrasts are sharp and the cuts break off tone, harmony, or aural sustain midstream. Sound is not allowed to complete its attack-sustain-decay cycle in Haneke but is broken, severed at its attack or sustain—a rupturing that jars, assaults, and disorients the listener. We are denied the whole note or fullness of sound and are placed in a state of permanent dissatisfaction and discomfort as our aural expectations and pleasures are thwarted.

But more than the rupturing of sound, it is in the silences themselves that we find the loudest call to listen and strongest imperative to interrogate, contemplate, and resonate. As Nancy notes in *Listening*, it is in silence that we can begin to approach the self, for it is in the absence of noises, music, or voices that the subject's self can be heard: "'Silence' in fact must here be understood [*s'entendre*, heard] not as a privation but as an arrangement of resonance: a little—or even exactly...—as when in a perfect condition of silence you hear your own body resonate, your own breath, your heart and all its resounding cave" (21).

Silence is not, then, the absence of sound but its essence, and the body of the subject is its origin and endpoint. In light of Haneke's cinematic highlighting of the act of listening, it is interesting to note in Nancy's comment about the sounds of the body's cave the oblique reference to cinematic sound via that oft-cited paradigm for film—Plato's cave: "In Plato's cave, there is more than just the shadows of objects being moved about outside: there is also the echo of the voices of those who move them" (75). Not merely a shadow but an impression of images, the imaginary film screen of Plato's cave is also an echo of sounds, their resonance, and in both it operates as a metaphor for

4. In his work on Jean-Luc Godard, Alan Williams notes the prevalence of this technique in the cinema of Godard, where sonic transitions are stressed and the aural editing parallels the visually abrupt transitions. Other scholars of modernist and avant-garde cinema, such as Fred Camper and Des O'Rawe, have discussed the role of silence as a particularly effective vehicle for experimental and modernist effects.

the interior of the audiovisually defined self, a subject who is listened to as much as he or she listens. This is perhaps what Nancy is getting at when he notes that the resonant subject is not a phenomenological nor a philosophical subject, nor even a subject at all: rather this subject is “the place of resonance, of its infinite tension and rebound, the amplitude of sonorous deployment and the slightness of its simultaneous redeployment” (22). Listening, like hearing

to approximate silence with what’s called “room tone”. It’s like quiet white noise. But you can’t have zero” (1).⁶

The sound of silence, then, becomes the relative or approximate silence of background acoustic elements of space and room tone, or becomes an effect of contrast itself (a moment might seem silent when compared with a previous acoustically complex sequence), but is rarely in fact true silence.⁷ In terms of film sound, silence is relative, a con-

Silence is not, then, the absence of sound but its essence, and the body of the subject is its origin and endpoint.

itself, is an active process in time and space, that moves, resounds, and reverberates and the subject it constitutes is likewise in movement and agitation; even in silence then, there is not stasis as we auscultate our own bodies—it is corporeal movement itself that becomes amplified.

In its emphasis on the self and subjectivity, then, silence (or at least a kind of acoustic minimalism approaching silence) works to transform these aural moments into ethical ones. However, it is equally crucial to note the complexity of silence both as a philosophical and acoustic term: in film sound, silence most often implies room tone with the addition perhaps of background noise or the Foley sounds of footsteps, cloth movements, or object handling. Absolute silence, the playing of nothing on the soundtrack, is a cinematic rarity.⁵ For example, when discussing his desire to use total silence, filmmaker Mike Figgis notes that the conventions of film sound reject it: “It was something I’d wanted to do my entire film career, which is basically have *nothing* on the soundtrack. Every time I’ve tried to do that in the past, a sound person has said, ‘No, you can’t have *nothing* on a soundtrack. If you want silence, you have

constructed and fabricated *effect* of silence rather than any true entity or quality or even absence.”⁸ As Chion notes, “silence is never neutral emptiness. It is the negative of sound we’ve heard beforehand or imagined; it is the product of a contrast” (“Audio-Vision” 57).

Thus it is crucial to note that, although sound in Haneke’s films is what many auditors might mistake initially for silence, his films are in fact complex and layered acoustic creations; for instance, a scene without voice or music in Haneke is still rich with atmospheric sounds of outside traffic, the movement of bodies, the resonance of room tone, the echoes of bustling activity on roads or in buildings. In addition to these atmospheric acoustics, we can note the audible presence of life itself in Haneke through the acoustic properties of stressed corporeal movement (the sounds of moving clothes, footsteps, touching, the handling of objects, even breath). Not subtle or played low in the sound mix, these sounds of bodily movement are accentuated by Haneke, brought into the foreground. The brief close-up shots of the family’s morning routine in *Der*

5. Note, for example, that calls for quiet in the cinema—such as Adam Mars-Jones’ “Quiet, Please”—are primarily addressing music in film. And even those sound technicians and designers such as Walter Murch or Randy Thom, who note that recent cinema has become increasingly loud and that silence ought to be valued more, assert the exceptional place of true silence within the film text. Nonetheless, it is clear that silence (both relative and total) is an active subject for those who work in and theorize film sound. In addition to the seminal and influential work of Rick Altman on the non-silent nature of silent era cinema, see the essays of Chion, Figgis, Murch and Thom in *Soundscape*, as well as Gianluca Sergi’s *The Dolby Era*, and the web forum *FilmSound.org* for some indicators of contemporary interest in cinema silence.

6. Major sound designers and technicians such as Walter Murch and Randy Thom have reiterated this call for an inventive use of silence in contemporary cinema.

7. Note, for instance, an interesting exchange on *FilmSound.org*, in which a sound designer (Charles Deenan) asks “What is the sound of nothing?” and receives two replies, one of which emphasizes the idea of contrast (Mark Berger) and one that suggests the use of total silence (Randy Thom).

8. As Bela Balazs perceptively notes: “Silence [in cinema] is when the buzzing of a fly on the windowpane fills the whole room with sound and the ticking of a clock smashes time into fragments with sledgehammer blows” (207). Balazs also notes the exceptional status of cinema silence: “The presentation of silence is one of the most specific dramatic effects of the sound film. No other art can reproduce silence, neither painting nor sculpture, neither literature nor the silent film could do so” (206).

siebente Kontinent; the heavy breathing of Erika after her rape in *La Pianiste*; the rustle of clothes as Georges (Daniel Auteuil) gets ready for bed at the end of *Caché*: in each of these instances, the body becomes the centre both aurally and visually as vocality drops away and the focus tightens on the smallness of gestures and their weighty acoustic presence and significance. This concentrated reduction is achieved primarily through audio tracks that both amplify these sounds—sounds that would in any other mix likely be decreased in volume, treated as interference—and subtract those elements that would usually overpower them. For example, in *Der siebente Kontinent* we hear the acoustic details of the sounds of a polyester sock being pulled over skin and body hair with a precision and volume that makes palpable the unbearable, oppressive routine of the family. The sound itself is acoustically assaultive in its intensity, abrasiveness, and detail; it yells at us to listen closely, to accept that banal, seemingly pointless details can be heard and must be listened to. And this occurs not once but repeatedly throughout the small gestures that constitute the bulk of the film and that are replayed with similar detail throughout its duration.

This formal silence extends of course to the thematic and narrative foregrounding of the cruelty and brutality wrought by silence throughout Haneke's films. *Code Inconnu* is most overt in this via the concentrated attention to the multiple forms of and impacts of acts of silence and most concrete in the invisible yet aurally witnessed act of child abuse that occurs about halfway through the film. Anna's verbal silence in this scene, her muting of the television to hear, then her act of drowning the sound with an increase in the television's volume and her own consumption of wine, mark an ethical climax in the film. Although clearly heard, this abuse, which eventually ends in the death of the child Françoise, offers an emphatic pronouncement of the consequences of the failure to listen. As auditors to this violence, it is unclear whether we, like Anna, merely hear the crime or whether we truly listen. That is, in using all the usual acoustic indicators of point of audition sound (perspective, room tone, resonance, volume), Haneke places the focus on Anna rather than on the act itself—an emphasis that makes her ethical crisis the centre point for both the film and for us.

The ethical crisis correlated with Anna's silence pervades the text in a myriad of forms: the silences of war that may or may not be exacerbated by journalistic imaging, cultural silencing of dissonant opinions, and the painful silences of interpersonal communication within the family or couple. All of these are made concrete through the paradoxically verbally silent but thoroughly communicative deaf children who open and conclude the film. By opening

with a scene of deaf children communicating through actions, the film ties scenes of visual communication in the face of auditory interference to the heard but ignored abuse and (intimated) murder of a child (Françoise).

In his work on the voice in cinema, Chion stresses the ways in which the mute figure disturbs and reproaches: she or he acts as a kind of silent witness or moral centre—one who, as a knowing, “disturbingly limitless personage” (“Voice” 98), can provoke a sense of reproach or guilty complicity. As a visually present but emphatically silent vocal character, the mute disturbs the text in part because of his or her role as listener—a visually prominent reminder of the process of careful listening that carries with it an uncanny sense of power and hidden knowledge and disturbing reminder of our own role as auditors. In *Code Inconnu*, we see a clear illustration of this ethical centrality of the mute: pairing children who do not hear with the unseen, yet distressingly heard, “petite Françoise,” the film asserts the relation of audition to victimization, erasure and the imperative of a moral conscience. Moreover, we note the ways in which both the silent but seen and heard but invisible children in *Code* implicate us in the complicit act of secrecy: in the one instance, we are invited to share in their gestural game and in the other we are guilty of sharing in Anna's silent response to violence.⁹

In the privileged positioning of the children within the film, *Code* endows them with a kind of choral function, a thematic and ethical prominence that illustrates and complicates Chion's assertion of the moral centrality of the mute and his or her potential role as a kind of guardian of a secret. The children get the first and the last word in *Code*, and it is a word that is gestural, silent, and radically ambiguous: the first indicates fear, danger, hiding, while the last seems to imply some kind of bird in flight, movement upwards, or other utopic, metaphorically freeing gesture. In the end, we are left in the same position as the children who opened the film—guessing at the hidden meaning of the gesture, an activity that never seems to quite hit the mark. Like the silent Benny in *Le Temps du Loup* or the rejected orphan girl in *71 Fragmente*—both of whom exhibit behavioural mutism—these children in *Code* do seem to contain a secret insofar as they observe, take in, and seem to know the answers but do not enunciate their knowledge to the outside world in verbally articulated terms. However,

9. It is worth noting that many scholars have commented on the disturbing spectatorial complicity that forms a part of Haneke's style (see for instance Libby Saxton's analysis of the complicity of our gaze in the manipulation of offscreen space in *Caché*, Grossvogel's “Haneke: The Coercing of Vision” or Elizabeth Ezra and Jane Sillars's essay in the *Caché* dossier of *Screen*), but this sense of being implicated in the action is framed in exclusively visual terms.

because of the ambiguity that forms the centre of Haneke's cinema, this secret is of course called into question itself and is reduced to a kind of persistently misunderstood gesture or standing ambiguity; for Haneke, the moral secret the mute contains, then, is that there is no secret, no answer, no simple solution.

The deaf children in *Code Inconnu* thus signify the deliberate deafness of Anna (as well as other characters) as much as they do the characteristics of mutism cited by Chion. Indeed, their communicative gestures and drumming occupy a privileged space of interlocution not wit-

with regard to his use of real silence for a brief moment in his 1995 film, *Leaving Las Vegas*, it is clear that this is a point-of-audition (an acoustic analogue for point-of-view) aural effect—a suspension of sound, not its eradication—placing us in the head of Nicolas Cage who momentarily cannot hear. The images of someone running, of lips moving, of cars rushing by, all suggest the sound that ought to be there, sounds that we arguably hear on an imaginary level because of their emphatic acoustic absence. The film is not indeed silent at this moment but deaf, as we are placed in a character's aural subjectivity as he very briefly (again,

For Haneke, the moral secret the mute contains, then, is that there is no secret, no answer, no simple solution.

nessed elsewhere in the film. Similarly, the mutism found in Haneke's other films is not biological but rather tied to trauma, violence, abuse, or victimization of some form: Benny's silence after his father's murder in *Le Temps du Loup*, the orphaned child Anni in *71 Fragmente* and the failed communication attempts of Marian the Romanian boy in that same film. Even the verbally articulate son Pierrot in *Caché* can be framed in light of the morally provocative role of the mute; there is a sense that he holds the secret key to the events, that he knows something that the others (including the audience) do not—a power hinted at in his suspicion of his mother's infidelity as well as in the final scene of the film.

Taken together, these moments of silence (thematic or formal, relative or absolute) stress that one element of truly listening is to hear silence and to recognize that it is not silent at all. As I have noted, this is especially conspicuous in the case of cinema sound where filmic silence is usually used to designate an absence of foregrounded noise, vocal dialogue, or, most commonly, merely the lack of music.¹⁰ Even in those rare moments where a soundtrack drops out completely, where there is actual 'total silence,' the movement of images and even the film itself contain a certain sonorous visualization or a visual indication of an essential aural structuring absence. For instance, as Mike Figgis notes

the momentary nature of this moment as one of contrast is significant) loses hearing.

Even when total, then, silence in the cinema is never absolute: mechanical sounds, visual images that construct a hearing with our eyes and even the noises of our own bodies all carry a certain acoustic presence even in so-called total silence. Nonetheless, silence, whether diegetic, structural, or total, is a significant and potentially distressing intervention in the acoustic plenitude, lucidity, and seamless perfection we tend to associate with narrative cinema. The conventions, tropes and biases of current trends in cinema form eschew silence in any of its forms, except for those special isolated moments echoing a character's clearly demarcated subjective experience. However, as Michel Chion reminds us, the greatest potentiality for arguably the most significant technological development in contemporary cinema—Dolby sound—is the space it opens up for silence. Stressing noise reduction, Dolby opens a space for sound, one that Chion insists is there to be emptied, not just filled. At its most progressive and experimental, Dolby "makes silence deeper" ("Silence" 167), a feature that can operate to stress disjunctive contrasts, aural redistribution, and, perhaps most emphatically, the act of listening itself.

With the amplification of silence possible through the noise reduction of Dolby sound, the audience does not merely note an absence of sound, but the disturbing presence of silence itself, a feature that renders overt its function as auditors. So intense is this spectatorial sense of the duty, responsibility, and call to listening that, as Chion claims, in moments of silence it feels as if the film is listening to us: "Any silence makes us feel exposed, as if it were laying bare

10. Claudia Gorbman notes the complexity of film silence when she separates out film silence into diegetic, nondiegetic and structural silence (18-19). See also Martin Rubin's "The Voice of Silence: Sound Style in John Stahl's *Back Street*" for an example of how noisy silence can be, as well as Elisabeth Weis's *The Silent Scream—Alfred Hitchcock's Sound Track*.

our own listening, but also as if we were in the presence of a giant ear, tuned to our own slightest noises. We are no longer merely listening to the film, we are as it were being listened to by it as well" ("Silence" 151). Rendering explicit our contract to be a silent audience, the film makes us aware of ourselves, our own audio existence and resonance: it reverses our relation to the film in a way that activates those structures of listening emphasized by Nancy—duty, responsibility, activity, interrogation, and resonance.

As a point for traumatic disruption, silence can operate so that we become aware that it is the film that listens to us, that makes explicit our act of listening and that requires our own silence in response to its quiet. The moment of film silence—and here it is imperative that we are speaking of true (or at least approximately true) silence, not merely the absence of dominant music or vocal dialogue—exposes us, renders the act of listening subjective and imperative in its reflexivity and makes explicit the kind of resonant subject discussed by Nancy, the one who listens to oneself listening. This is why it is crucial to recall the impact of Haneke's title and credit sequences, cinematic moments rich with the anxieties, thoughtful contemplation, and resonance of listening to silence. Rendering us strangely complicit and demanding our attention, these moments of imposed silence are arguably a large part of what criticisms of Haneke's cruelty toward the audience rely upon: combined with the lack of conclusive endings, the eradication of the comfort, pleasure, and interpretive or emotional confirmation of response that are frequently a part of cinematic sound creates an uncomfortable viewing space where one is forced to confront one's own role as spectator and is required to respond to the film. I have framed this space of thought and freedom as an aural space, a space of listening—in short, as a space of an auditory and ethically inflected injunction to listen (to the film, to ourselves, and to ethics). Listening as resonance is not always a pleasurable activity, as it is one that requires active interrogation, a recognition of reflexivity, and a discomforting exposure of the self. This reverberating nothingness is evident in Nancy's resonant subject who listens above all else to his or her own being, a listening that I contend is most acute in silence and in the ethical imperative that this introspective interrogation contains: in short, in those cinematic moments of total silence where the film does indeed act as a giant ear, listening to us as we listen to ourselves listening to silence. In this way, audible silence can render explicit the ethical and ontological difference between hearing and listening and can remind us of our subjectivity and of the potentially troubling sense of duty and exposure that this implies.

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Audiovisual Ecology in the Cinema

Randolph Jordan

Tom Gunning tells us that Thomas Edison's stated goal for the Kinetoscope—to "[do] for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear"—is indicative of two concerns of the late nineteenth century: the separation of the senses popular for studies of perception, and "a desire to heal the breach" resulting from anxieties surrounding this separation (16). These technologies were born in an era in which science no longer regarded the human sensorium "as a single whole in which the various senses converged to produce a 'true' representation of the outside world, but as a bundle of processes, each subject to different physical conditions and processes of stimulation" (Gunning 14). Technologies of sound and image reproduction broke the senses free of their grounding in the human body and isolated them within devices that focused on a single sense at a time; the cinema offered the potential to re-unify these senses, albeit outside the body.

Gunning ties the "desire to heal the breach" to the myth of a total cinema that emerged shortly before these technologies were invented but which has yet to be realized, a situation André Bazin understood in 1946 when he suggested that with each new technological development, the cinema returns closer to its origins (Gunning 13). In short, the cinema was born from an idea about the potential for technology to reproduce reality in all its dimensions, a goal which fell short in the silent era but gets nearer with each new addition to the medium (sound, colour, etc.). So the joining of sound and image was an important step toward the re-unification of the senses within their technological

double. Yet, as Gunning suggests, "this recaptured wholeness must also display in some way its artificial stopgap nature, its incomplete restoration of coherence" (23). As such, myths about the cinema's abilities to wholly reproduce reality acted as a "fetish-like response in the face of a new threat of a loss of reality" under the "dissolving of the human sensorium" exemplified by these technologies (28). This is a situation that Gunning suggests we have not yet firmly come to grips with, even to this day. I argue that thinking about the cinema's divided nature along ecological lines yields a model for film sound analysis that can attest to the cinema's audiovisual totality while acknowledging the fundamental separation between sound and image that is a necessary foundation of the medium.

Audiovisual Ecology

For Michel Chion, the technical reality of cinema's dual nature has provided the basis for several decades of influential film sound theory. In his early work on the voice in cinema, Chion maintains that through the convention of lip-synchronization, "cinema seeks to reunify the body and voice that have been dissociated by their inscription onto separate surfaces,"—specifically, the celluloid image and the soundtrack—and in so doing it presents the illusion of a stable body (126). For Chion, "it is an inherent consequence of the material organization of cinema that the voice and body are at odds" (127). Yet, as Chion himself argues, to think of sound and image as separate

does little good in understanding how sound and image work together in any given film. This is why, in his quintessential book *The Voice in Cinema*, Chion proclaims that in the cinema “there is no soundtrack” (3). To talk about a soundtrack is to talk about sound as it exists separately from the image track, and this negates any discussion of the reality of most sound film: the fact that we hear sound and see images at the same time.

The history of sound cinema can be read as the evolution of how filmmakers deal with the division between sound and image, and to what extent they want to keep this division apparent or try to make it disappear. The technical divide between sound and image ensures there is always mediation between the two, and filmmakers must decide what conventions of synchronization they will adhere to, and what ideologies they subscribe to, in order to arrive at a particular approach to the exposure or erasure of this mediation. As Britta Sjogren reminds us, the very idea of synchronized sound is somewhat arbitrary, “for one ‘syncs up’ ‘non-sync’ sounds with as much diligence as ‘sync’ sounds in film production practice” (6). Audiovisual synchronization, then, is as much about the separate nature of sound and image as it is about their unification.

I refer to issues of sound/image synchronization as issues in audiovisual ecology. The term *ecology* is well-suited for my description of sound cinema as a medium simultaneously divided and whole. The most basic goal of ecology as a discipline is to study “the relationship between organisms and their environment” (Allaby iv). To understand the relationship between an organism and its environment is necessarily to understand their connection by way of their separation. Ecology shows how these organisms work as a holistic entity within any given ecosystem; yet, if we think of the ecosystem as a single entity, then there would be no need for the discipline of ecology to study it. The work of ecology unfolds on precisely the point of inextricable relationships between definitively individual organisms, each of which is also separate from the environment to which it is connected.

I propose that this basic template for ecology works well as an analogy for the study of sound/image relationships in film. Think of any given sound film as an ecosystem, and the technical divide between sound and image becomes the basis for understanding their connection in the audiovisual totality of the film. This audiovisual totality is created through the process of sound/image synchronization, the audiovisual ecology of the film. Therefore, I contend that an ecological approach to the study of sound/image relationships in film is one that acknowledges the audiovisual totality as dependent upon its divided nature, contrary to the generally holistic thrust behind most uses of the term *ecology*.

There would be little sense in adopting the analogy of ecology for use in film sound theory if we weren’t interested in addressing ecological issues within the films we analyze. I suggest that by attending to a film’s formal organization with the guiding concept of audiovisual ecology in mind, we can discover narrative themes of ecology expressed by its formal approach to sound/image relationships. And what better way to expose a film’s ecological bent than by bringing film sound theory into contact with acoustic ecology?

In her assessment of how sound studies disciplines might be useful to the film scholar, Michele Hilmes recognizes the potential relevance of acoustic ecology. In her words, acoustic ecology “could bring greater depth to that relatively untouched third dimension of the classic sound taxonomy: music, voice, and sound effects” (116). She equates the term *soundscape*, coined by R. Murray Schafer as the object of the acoustic ecologist’s study, with the idea of ambient sound in film that falls under the ‘sound effects’ rubric within the industry’s traditional division of labour. While acoustic ecology’s interest in studying the soundscapes of the world would certainly provide excellent conceptual material for studying the sound environment in which the characters of a narrative film live, this approach alone fails to achieve a truly ecological study of film sound: one that addresses the interrelationships between *all* the elements of a film’s soundtrack—the entire soundscape of the film. And, as I have suggested, the entirety of a film’s soundscape cannot be considered on its own, for in the audiovisual context of the cinema we are (almost) always looking at something while we are listening. The approach I am espousing here addresses any given film text in terms of its audiovisual ecology in which various aspects of image and sound are studied in terms of their interrelationships, not broken down into the classic taxonomy as so much film music analysis and work on the voice in cinema has done in the past.

The idea of audiovisual ecology in film begins best with another of Schafer’s coined terms: *schizophonia*, defined as the separation of sound from source via electroacoustical transmission (90-91). The concept of *schizophonia* was intended to address the power of sound technologies to disrupt the perception of both space and time within a given environment. *Schizophonia* is one element that threatens what Schafer calls the “hi-fi” soundscape. In his words, “the quiet ambiance of the hi-fi soundscape allows the listener to hear farther into the distance just as the countryside exercises long-range viewing,”—the opposite of the lo-fi soundscape in which “perspective is lost” when “individual acoustic signals are obscured in an overdense population of

sounds” (43). For Schafer, the presence of electroacoustically transmitted sound creates an artificial sense of distance while in reality contributing to the density of sound that ultimately hinders long-range listening within the environment.

Schafer’s thought is premised upon his irrational fear of 20th century technologies of sound reproduction and transmission. For him, the problem of schizophrenia is most severe when a reproduced soundscape replaces the soundscape of any given place, a nearly impossible situation

best understood through an awareness of the medium’s limitations. In audiovisual ecology, these limitations are exposed along the line dividing sound from image.

What is missing in Schafer’s account of schizophrenia is that it can be a productive incitement toward developing an awareness of technological mediation. Many artists have gravitated toward exploiting schizophrenic media in search of what Andra McCartney calls an “electroacoustic ecology”: a way of engaging with our environments that acknowledges the electroacoustic portion of the modern

Schizophrenic space replacement assumes a level of perfection in sound reproduction whereby an electroacoustically transmitted sound could be mistaken for the naturally occurring soundscape of a given environment.

I have dubbed “space replacement” (132). Schizophrenic space replacement assumes a level of perfection in sound reproduction whereby an electroacoustically transmitted sound could be mistaken for the naturally occurring soundscape of a given environment. This is essentially a fear of virtual reality—most likely to be realized in a modern film theatre—and it is premised upon the possibility of the “vanishing mediator,” described by Jonathan Sterne as a situation wherein “the medium produces a perfect symmetry between copy and original and, thereby, erases itself” (285). Within this construction, any recording/transmission technologies should vanish from perception when listening to the final product. But mediation cannot vanish, which is why James Lastra objects to the term “reproduction” when discussing technologies of recording and transmission, and moves instead to the idea of “representation” (153). Once we acknowledge that all recording and transmission is nothing more than representation, we are in a position of reception well suited to attending to how this representation is constructed.

The goal of audiovisual ecology in the cinema is to recognize the presence of mediation as a fundamental part of the cinematic experience, rather than to address film as a medium striving for virtual reality. With audiovisual ecology in mind, we can attend to the fundamentally schizophrenic separation between sound and image in film rather than buying into the illusionist premises of audiovisual synchronization that seek to erase the line of mediation between the two—the point of suture that psychoanalytic film theory identifies as the fetish point obscuring the absent site of production. The total cinema remains a myth

soundscape as just another element to be understood and engaged with (22). Such an electroacoustic ecology is a given in the environment of the sound cinema, and the premises of acoustic ecology can be well adapted for use in assessing film as a part of the environment in which we live. Acknowledging electroacoustic ecology is the first step toward engaging with the mediation between sound and image at work in the cinema. When presented with the schizophrenic reality of a film’s soundtrack, we are in a position both to understand our distance from it, and to use that position as the foundation for recognizing sound and image as being distanced from each other by way of their technological separation. Here we can recognize that the film’s audiovisual ecology is as much a product of distance between its two main channels of transmission as our own engagement with the film is dependent upon our distance from it.

Terminological Intersections

Whether or not we agree with Schafer’s ideas about how the signal-to-noise ratio of an environment affects those living within it, the hi-fi/lo-fi distinction actually provides a very useful conceptual tool for analyzing the auditory construction of space in any given film. There is a cluster of concepts in film sound theory that engage productively with the notion of hi- and lo-fidelity soundscapes that do not fall into the problematic construction of the vanishing mediator we find in fidelity discourse. For example, Michel Chion uses the term *extension* to discuss how far into the distance a film’s soundtrack allows us to hear, the auditory equivalent to depth of field

(87). Rick Altman's concept of *spatial signature* similarly addresses the distance between a sound source and point of audition by emphasizing the fact that sound will bear the markers of the space in which it is heard (24). Both simple concepts address how filmmakers can construct hi- or lo-fi soundscapes within the diegetic world by controlling our sense of space through evocations of the distance between source and listener. As such, these concepts can be read through the ideological underpinnings of Schafer's thought to reveal ecological issues at work in the audiovisual treatment of a film's narrative.

Chion's concept of *on-the-air sound* is also pertinent to Schafer's thought as it addresses sounds transmitted electroacoustically within the diegesis, such as music coming from a character's car radio or a voice from a public address system. Chion argues that such sounds "are not subject to 'natural' mechanical laws of sound propagation" and "enjoy the freedom of crossing boundaries of cinematic space" (76). On-the-air sounds can take on different levels of spatial signature depending on whether the filmmaker intends them to be grounded within the diegetic world, the realm of non-diegetic sound, or ambiguous spaces in between.

Interestingly, the use of a spatial signature attached to an on-the-air sound can work to either ground it within the space visible on screen or remove it from that space, thereby affecting our experience of auditory extension. As Chion observes, "a certain type of unrealistic reverberation, not commensurate with the place shown in the image, can also be coded as dematerializing and symbolizing" (116). As such, the on-the-air category of sound is charged with the implications of schizophonia but without necessarily buying into Schafer's bias against the technologies that make it possible. On-the-air sound can be a celebration of schizophonic potential; its use depends upon fluctuating levels of extension and qualities of spatial signature, and as such it acts as a nexus point around which the idea of schizophonia in the cinema can be tied to descriptive tools for film sound analysis.

Consider a brief example from George Lucas's 1973 film *American Graffiti*, famous in sound design discourse for Walter Murch's handling of Wolfman Jack's ubiquitous radio broadcasts, while the youth of Modesto, California in the 1950s cruise the streets with their car radios tuned to his frequency. Chion uses this film as an example for his discussion of how on-the-air sound can shift in register as the camera moves from car interiors to the spaces outside, running the gamut of possibility between inside and outside the diegesis (77). Murch achieved the variable spatial signatures through his "worldizing" process in which he re-recorded the sounds of the broadcasts in various (often artificially constructed) spatial environments

between which he could then fluctuate (qtd. in Ondaatje 119). When inside the vehicles, the radio sound bears the signature of the kind of space depicted on screen. The very need for such a worldizing process is a marker of the highly contrived nature of audio post-production; even when striving for absolute realism, filmmakers use elaborate contrivances to achieve their effect. Yet, *American Graffiti* isn't afraid to expose the seam between sound and image: when the camera breaks free of the car interiors the sound of the radio takes on an enhanced signature with exaggerated reverberation. This exaggeration simultaneously suggests a multitude of radios resonating through the streets all over the town, and a kind of ethereal presence that defies the laws of sound propagation, an evocation of the supernatural powers with which the Wolfman is associated. In *American Graffiti*, then, control over auditory extension and spatial signature is used both to ground the soundscape within the diegetic world and to transcend that world to provide access to realms existing only in cinematic representation.

The unnatural propagation of electroacoustically transmitted sound throughout the space of an entire town, replacing the 'natural' soundscapes with an artificial one coming from another place, is precisely the kind of lo-fi schizophonic situation Schafer decries. And yet, the Wolfman broadcasts in this film tap into the community of youth the narrative revolves around, bringing disparate people—often at ideological odds with one another—together through common interest. These broadcasts have a positive effect on the community, something Schafer's anti-technological bent would fail to account for. Further, these broadcasts reflect the varying degrees of empathetic relationships between these characters, providing a thread between their deepest hopes and fears as the sound of Wolfman's voice and music fills the spaces in which they live. These spaces are physical, psychological, and social: Murch's auditory treatments allow the sound of the broadcasts to cross the boundaries of the physical spaces of the automobiles enclosing these characters, just as the sound threads the spaces between their internal consciousness and the external world. As such, these auditory treatments are an example of what Randy Thom calls the "acoustics of the soul," referring to what he feels is the moot distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic sound when we understand how these different registers are embedded within one another (1-2). Attending to the role of Murch's handling of auditory spatial representation through the precepts of acoustic ecology enriches our understanding of how these characters navigate the relationships between physical, psychological and social space, revealing a powerful narrative theme of ecological engagement.



While ostensibly about sound, the issues raised by Schafer's concepts of schizophonia and the hi-fi soundscape are more generally about space, as are the film sound terms I have associated with Schafer here. I propose that what acoustic ecology has most to offer film studies is not specifically an enhanced appreciation of environmental sound, or even of sound in general, but rather an attention toward the formal organization of space within any given film. The terminology discussed here is designed to address the auditory qualities of space and its relationship to those living within it. These are the fundamental goals of acoustic ecology and of ecology in general. However, it is important to recognize that while certain qualities of extension and signature can be assessed with attention to sound alone, they require attention to the image in order to make that assessment complete. How can we address the ideological implications of reverberation on the sound of a radio broadcast unless we also attend to its visual corollary? Without the image, how do we know if a particular level of extension supports the film's visual perspective, or if it is intended to take the listener outside the world in which the characters live? It is on such points of intersection with the image track that the divide between sound and image often becomes apparent. As such, these tools for auditory analysis must extend into the realm of the image if we are to understand the audiovisual ecology of a film.

When Schafer imbibes in his anti-visual bias by quipping it is "better to see with the ear" ("Have Never Seen") he is at once willfully ignorant of the role of vision in our experience of the world, and strangely progressive in his implication that these two senses might be more linked than we think. The tension in this statement is the substance of audiovisual ecology. While attention to sound alone can help redress the imbalance of many decades of sight-centered film criticism, it is only the first step on the path to a truly audiovisual approach to the study of film. By embracing the myth of the total cinema as the product of technological division, we lose the need to use the myth to cover over anxieties about this division and can expose dimensions of formal organization that go far deeper than realist conventions of suture. The benefit of applying acoustic ecology to film studies is to recognize that understanding acoustic spatial organization in the cinema is essential. Yet, this spatial organization also depends upon the image, and there is a profound division between the two that always sets them at a distance from each other. Once this recognition becomes a staple of film spectatorship, then perhaps the cinema can cease its backward movement toward the original myth of its potential totality. Instead, we can embrace it as a medium perfect in its divided nature, and accept that its gaps are what hold it together in the end.

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Lunacy at Termite Terrace

The Slapstick Style of Warner Bros. Animation

Andres Lombana Bermudez

The slapstick tradition is a mode of comedy characterized by the use of physical violence, acrobatics, knockabouts, collisions, and horseplay. From the improvisational performances of Italian *Commedia dell'Arte* to American vaudevillian theatre, to the comedies and animated cartoons of American cinema and television, the spectacles of the slapstick tradition have been popular entertainment forms, making audiences laugh with the representation of exaggerated physical violence, wacky antics, and mayhem.

Sound plays a major role in slapstick comic routines. Gags, comic bits, or *lazzi* are a combination of aural and visual events that happen simultaneously. Physical violence and disruption, mockery and abuse of the body, acrobatics and grotesque movements are rendered as composites of visual elements and sounds. The word that gives name to the tradition illustrates clearly the integral relationship between images and sounds inside the comic routines. The foundational device from *Commedia dell'Arte*, the *batocchio*, is translated into English not just as a *stick*, nor just as a *slap*. *Slapstick*, a reduction of *slap-of-the-stick*, is a composite word that carries in its meaning the simultaneity of sounds and images. Such audiovisual simultaneity has turned into the conventional sound practice of the slapstick tradition for producing comic effects.

What I call *sounds of the slap-of-the-stick* are the different sounds that have been used across media to enhance

comic routines, adding acoustic physicality to them, exaggerating—even more—the violence and disruption, and materializing the grotesque movements and the mockery and abuse of the body. Visual impacts such as pratfalls, pie smashes, blows, collisions, squashes, and stretches turn into points of synchronization where the sounds of the slap-of-the-stick are heard. The perfect synchronization of the sounds and visuals finally creates the comic effect of meeting elements of different natures, such as sounds produced by a piece of metal hitting an anvil with the visual ‘bonk in the head’ of a cartoon character. The comic effect is achieved because the sound we hear is not the sound that a real human or animal body would produce when it falls or when it is being hit, but a highly amplified and concrete sound.

An important development of the slapstick tradition took place in American animation from 1937 to 1943. During this period of time, Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies—the theatrical animated cartoons produced by the studio of Leon Schlesinger and distributed by Warner Brothers—started to show an innovative approach to the re-interpretation of comic routines and to the construction of complex soundtracks rich in sounds of the slap-of-the-stick. On the one hand, taking advantage of the possibilities of the animation medium to transgress the physical laws of time and space, the artists from Termite Terrace (as animator Tex Avery famously dubbed Schlesinger’s studio)

rendered conventional comic routines in ways that were impossible to achieve on the stage or in live-action film. The mockery and abuse of the body develops into absurd squashes and stretches, giant impacts or impossible collisions; the grotesque movement turns into long falls from the sky, back flips without gravity, or impossible acrobatics.¹ On the other hand, the orchestration of a rich variety of sounds of the slap-of-the-stick with a continuous medley of musical genres played by a symphonic orchestra and with an exaggerated comic dialogue, gives rise to a complex soundtrack in which all the elements are tightly synchronized to the beat and to the image. The new slapstick approach did not disappear after 1943; it was matured, stylized, and became the trademark of Warner Bros. animation for the next twenty years.

In this article, I try to understand the principles according to which the Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies soundtracks are constructed and how they innovate the slapstick tradition. I describe the different tracks (music, dialogue, and sound effects) that constitute the complex soundtracks, characterize the human talent that was responsible for creating them (Carl Stalling, Mel Blanc, and Treg Brown), and explain the practices and technologies that were used in their production. Finally, in order to illustrate how all the elements of the soundtrack were orchestrated and the effects of their combination, I analyze the Looney Tune “Porky in Wackyland” (Robert Clampett, 1938).

Collaborative Technologies, Collaborative Practices

At Termite Terrace, collaborative technologies and collaborative practices were essential to the creation of a complex soundtrack and to tight audiovisual synchronization. On the one hand, at the human level the collaboration was exemplified in what was known as the ‘gag meeting,’ a kind of brainstorming or jam session. In the gag meetings, writers, directors, layout artists, animators, the music composer, the sound effects man, and the voice actor got together in a room, showed the stories and characters they were working on, and threw gags in to make them funnier and funnier. On the other hand, new technologies allowed for the standardization of production processes and the collaborative work among the ‘termites.’ Tools such as the exposure sheet, the bar sheet, and the click track were artifacts used for the convergence of visual and audio elements prior to the final stage of the animated cartoon in a film reel.

1. Although some of the potential of the medium to render physical violence and disruption had been explored before, the Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies from this period introduced a conspicuous acceleration in the timing of the slapstick gags.

The exposure sheets were pioneered in the early days of cel animation and became a standard of the industry. These were basically paper documents in which the action of a scene was systematically timed out frame by frame. From them, animators “drew and exposed the requisite number of pictures” (Curtis 195). Each frame was indicated in a numbered row that had many columns. Some of the columns corresponded to the cels that had to be layered (backgrounds and characters were drawn in separate cels) and their order (front, middle, back). Other columns corresponded to the camera instructions (fades and cross-dissolves, angles, pans, zooms). The exposure sheets accelerated the production of a cartoon—three cartoons had to be released for theatrical projections on a monthly basis—and facilitated the parallel way of working. At the same time, background artists were making the landscapes, animators were drawing the key poses of the characters, in-betweeners were drawing the character movements, the sound effects man was recording and selecting sounds, and the music composer was scoring. All of them had the exposure sheet as a blueprint for their tasks.

Bar sheets were similar to the exposure sheets in that they described very precisely the timing of the cartoon. However, bar sheets had an advantage: they provided more detailed information about the sound because they had space for writing down musical notation (the basic melody appeared in a staff), important parts of the dialogue (such as screams and shouts), and sound effects. Bar sheets looked like composites of a musical score, a storyboard, and an exposure sheet, and they are a unique example of the convergence of writing technologies in a single sheet of paper.²

The development of bar and exposure sheets motivated the creation of the click track. This tool was a sort of metronome that the musicians from the Warner Bros. orchestra listened to while they played the scores. Because the musical timing was tight to the number of frames, the ticks of the track the musicians listened to while playing were like sonic marks of certain numbers of frames. As Carl Stalling, the composer and music director, explained, “We made recordings of ‘tick’ sounds at different beats—a tick every eight frames, ten frames, or twelve frames—and played this on a phonograph connected to the recording machine and to earphones. Each member of the orchestra had a single earphone, and listened to the clicks through that” (Barrier 43).

Through his years at Termite Terrace, Stalling became a master of timing the music to the visuals using bar and exposure sheets, and influenced the way animators approached audiovisual synchronization. As Daniel

2. In fact, bar sheets have the word *bar* in their name because in musical notation, vertical lines (bars) are used to separate segments of time with a defined number of beats.

Goldmark points out, “According to Stalling, once the basic story for a cartoon had been finalized in storyboard form (usually 300-400 key poses and drawings), he would meet with the cartoon’s director and determine the various tempi for each scene. This mapping out of the cartoon’s action, known as ‘timing,’ enabled the directors to tell their animators precisely how many frames per second each scene had” (20).

Treg Brown also used exposure and bar sheets for making the sound effects track. Exposure and bar sheets not only allowed for the perfect audiovisual synchronization but also facilitated the sophisticated orchestration of sound effects with music. Thanks to these sheets, the sounds of the slap-of-the-stick Brown created were organized according to the tempo of the music and became important rhythmic marks in the complex sound-track.

Carl Stalling’s Music

Carl Stalling developed a compositional method for cartoon music that was based on silent film accompaniment improvisation. When Stalling says, “I improvised at the theaters, and that’s composing, but it’s not writing down” (Barrier 40), he is referring to an improvisation that relies heavily on the composer’s retrieval of information from music catalogues and music sheets. At Termite Terrace, Stalling had at his disposal not only the conventional silent film music catalogues that contained plenty of public domain works (usually pieces from the classic and romantic periods, and popular folk songs), but also an extensive catalogue of popular tunes that Warner Bros. owned and encouraged him to use. Stalling improvised by putting together, one after the other, bits and pieces of popular tunes, classical greats, incidental music, and his original compositions. This method, as Daniel Goldmark has stated, is a cue-by-cue (song-by-song) scoring style that “meshes well with the absurd, nonlinear logic of the Warner Bros. universe” (34).

Besides using musical quotations, Stalling also included his original music in the scores he wrote. His original cues were as varied in genre as the ones he quoted: they ranged from swing tunes to lullabies to lyrical and abstract melodies. In all of them, Stalling relied heavily on the timbre of specific instruments to comically exaggerate the visual action. Musical effects functioned in many of these cues as sounds of the slap-of-the-stick that punctuated the physical violence and grotesque movements of the comic routines. For instance, he used the trombone slide for a character

Porky in Wackyland (1938)



tumbling or falling and violent outbursts of brass and percussion when a character was being hit in the buttocks.

At the production phase of music recording, Stalling conducted the Warner Bros. orchestra (a fifty-piece ensemble) and supervised recording sessions of usually two hours for a single cartoon.³ The music was recorded in a sound-on-film track optically by means of electricity—more precisely, by the light of a bulb and amplified microphones. Since the sound-on-film technology made it possible to freeze the music in a single track, the music could be spliced and pasted later if necessary. Indeed, that process facilitated the construction of a continuous musical track full of abrupt changes.

Mel Blanc's Voices

Music was just one of three key elements in the complex Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies soundtracks. Mel Blanc, 'the man of a thousand voices,' was the protagonist of the dialogue track, the second of these elements. With his powerful vocal chords, his capacity for imitating diverse accents, and the ability of his sound engineers to manipulate the pitch of sound-on-film recordings, Blanc gave voice and personality to almost all the Warner Bros.' animated characters. From 1937 to 1943, Blanc created the voices of cartoon stars such as Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Tweety Bird.

Blanc's background in the entertainment business was crucial for providing personality to the cartoon characters. If Stalling brought the sound practices of silent film accompaniment to Termite Terrace, Blanc brought the sound practices of the radio comedians. For instance, Blanc was a master of mimicking accents, be it Bugs Bunny's Brooklyn jive, Speedy Gonzales's Mexican staccato, or Pepé Le Pew's French drawl. He could also comically exaggerate speech problems such as a lisp (Daffy Duck, Sylvester the Cat) and stuttering (Porky Pig) to impress upon the cartoon characters a unique sonic identity that the audience could immediately recognize.

An important characteristic of the voices Blanc recorded is that they are very concrete.⁴ Besides giving personality to the cartoon characters, the voices provide the charac-

3. As Daniel Goldmark has revealed, there existed a contract between Warner Bros. and Schlesinger, in which Warner "agree[d] to furnish and supply Schlesinger with...musicians, singers, voices, talent, sound, sound equipment and recording crew used in the recording of the cartoons...All recording of music and sound effects [was to] be done under the supervision of a musician and of a technician employed by Schlesinger" (21).

4. Mel Blanc understood the potential of his vocal chords when speaking in front of an electrical amplified microphone, and was able to do vocal acrobatics such as changing the timbre of his voice as he pleased.

ters with gravity and physicality, and sometimes work as sounds of the slap-of-the-stick. The extreme modulations in a sentence, the scratchy voice in a shout, or the off-key voice in a cry have a materializing effect that grounds the cartoon in reality. In the slapstick comic routines in which the cartoon characters mock and abuse their bodies or execute grotesque movements, the concrete quality of Blanc's voices becomes more prominent. For instance, when Daffy performs back flips and acrobatics in "Porky's Duck Hunt" (Tex Avery, 1937), "Daffy Duck and Egghead" (Tex Avery, 1938), and "The Daffy Doc" (Robert Clampett, 1938), a loud "Hooo Hooo!" emerges from the dialogue track and is repeated several times. This shout is characterized by an uneven modulation that goes up and down as rapidly as the cartoon character's movements.

Treg Brown's Sound Effects

However, although the music and dialogue tracks contain some sounds of the slap-of-the-stick (for example, cymbal crashes, piano glissandos, shouts, and screams), they are not as rich in this vocabulary as the sound effects track. Treg Brown, a former musician and film editor, was the termite denizen responsible for making, recording, editing, and selecting the noises that punctuated the exaggerated physical violence and grotesque movements displayed on the screen.

Brown systematically explored the comic potential of *synchresis* and was able to create many incongruous relations between sounds and images.⁵ Noises such as zips, car screeches, water squirts, plastic stretches, bulb horns, sirens, and 'boings' became hilarious when Brown used them to punctuate slapstick gags. For instance, the sound of a 'boing' could be played when the eyes of a cartoon character are poked; or the sound of a siren could be played when the bodies of cartoon characters are inflated as if they were balloons.⁶

Brown developed several methods for making the sound effect track. One of these methods consisted of recording the sounds of noise-making devices or 'traps' from vaudeville and silent film accompaniment such as horns, whistles, and crash-boxes. Although these traps were residual apparatuses from the early twentieth century, their

5. As Michel Chion explains, *synchresis* is "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and a visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time. The joint results independently of any rational logic" (63). *Synchresis* opens many opportunities for using sounds with comic purposes due to the possibility of incongruous encounters with the visuals.

6. Such use of the 'boing' sound can be heard in "Porky in Wackyland." The siren sound can be heard in "The Daffy Doc."

sounds acquired a new 'close-up' quality (free of reverberation) when they were recorded on sound-on-film using electrical amplified microphones. This new quality facilitated the exaggeration of their volume during the production process of dubbing (re-recording) the final soundtrack.

Another method Brown developed was rooted in the practices of sound effects men from radio and Foley artists from live-action films. This method consisted of creating sounds that would be heard as representations of aural events using a variety of physical objects and electrical amplified microphones. For instance, Brown would make a close-up recording of the tapping of two halved coconut shells on a wooden table, and then use that recording as a representation of a horse trot. As Blanc has pointed out, the imaginative work of Brown consisted of "shooting off a 45-caliber pistol to achieve the sound of a door's slamming shut, smacking an anvil to accompany footage of a cartoon character getting bonked on the head, or simulating a cataclysmic crash by dropping two armfuls of metal objects from the top of a ladder onto a concrete floor" (83).

In addition, Brown practised some alternative methods that were common among *musique concrete* composers and avant-garde sound artists such as the cutting and splicing of sound-on-film tracks as well as the changing of a sound's pitch by means of altering the speed of reproduction.⁷ Because sounds were frozen in sound-on-film tracks, Brown was not only able to cut and splice them and make sound montages, but was also able to store different recordings, which he used for later cartoon soundtracks. All these sound effects on reels were not only noises that Brown had recorded but also sounds that he had collected from the Warner Bros. live-action film soundtracks. For instance, the sound of an airplane that emerges in "A Tale of Two Kitties" (Robert Clampett, 1942) when Catstello is falling and doing back flips in the air was likely selected from the soundtrack of a live-action film.

Welcome to Wackyland: "It *Can* Happen Here"

In order to illustrate how all the elements of the complex soundtracks are sophisticatedly orchestrated, let us examine "Porky in Wackyland." The story of this Looney Tune is quite simple: an intrepid explorer tries to catch a unique wild bird in an unknown land. Upon landing in "Darkest Africa" Porky enters Wackyland and finds a topsy-turvy world full of oddities. One of the citizens of this crazy world is the unique Do-Do Bird, an anarchic clown that moves incredibly fast, mocks, and abuses Porky Pig's body, and controls gravity, time, and space. At the end of

7. These practices were inspired by film-editing techniques from the silent era. It is possible that Treg Brown learned them through his former job as a film editor.

the film, when Porky finally seems to catch the dodo, he is shocked by the fact that the bird is not really the last of the dodos. A multitude of these creatures surround him and scare him with their noise.

All the action seems to happen at a manic speed: at least fourteen slapstick gags are stitched together with the simple plot of a hunt. The contrast between slow- and fast-paced gags creates an energetic and dynamic rhythm. Thanks to this contrast, the soundtrack has a rhythmic tension that accentuates not only the surprising and shocking emergence of the slap-of-the-stick sounds but also the changes in music.⁸ The variety of the sounds of the slap-of-the-stick is impressive, ranging from sound effects (anvil hits, bulb horns, slapstick hits, boings, rubber stretching, car screeches, door slams, wood hits), to Blanc's shouts and screams (AAAAARRRG!, Yahooo!, uuuUUU!), to musical effects (cymbal crashes, high xylophone notes, outbursts of percussion and brass). The orchestration of such a medley of music, sound effects, and voices gives a rich texture to the soundtrack and, since all the elements have been synchronized with the beat and the frame, enhances the cartoon's apparent speed.

Many sounds of the slap-of-the-stick emerge from the sound effects track, masking the sound of the music track thanks to the clarity and loudness of the former's close-up perspective. During the music cue called "Schlesinger Swing" (lasting seventy-five seconds), one slapstick comic routine is punctuated by the sound of metal hitting an anvil. This gag is inserted inside a long panorama of Wackyland without any logical narrative development. After forty seconds of displaying different oddities that move with the hot rhythm of swing music, a cartoon character that looks like a prisoner appears holding a cell window. He desperately shouts, "Let me out of here!" several times until a policeman with a wheel instead of legs, a big moustache, a crescent moon in his long hat, and a big star on his chest hits him in the head with a truncheon. As soon as the prisoner's shouts emerge from the dialogue track, the volume of the orchestra fades out. This change in the dynamics of the soundtrack creates an aural suspense that ends when the sound of metal hitting an anvil is played in perfect synchronization with the visual impact. One second after the sound effect emerges from the soundtrack, the volume of the orchestra fades in and reappears with an energetic outburst of brass.

At other times, the sounds of the slap-of-the-stick emerge from the dialogue track, as when the Do-Do Bird

8. Sixteen music cues appear in the original cue sheet (see Appendix): six popular "Tin Pan Alley" tunes from Warner's Catalogue, one classical music piece (Rossini's "William Tell"), one folk song ("Mulberry Bush"), one swing piece ("Schlesinger Swing"), and several abstract and dramatic melodies.

introduces himself to Porky Pig. At this moment, a very unique music cue, 'Ad Libbing,' indicates the improvisation of the voice actor during three seconds while the orchestra remains in silence. Blanc recorded a very modulated "uuuuuuUUUUU!" that goes together with the visual action of the Do-Do scaring Porky with a very loud cry. As the pitch of the voice increases, Porky jumps and is sustained in the air for the length of the "uuuuuuUUUUU!" This cry functions as a sound of the slap-of-the-stick that accompanies the loss of Porky's balance and gravity and the following fall back to earth.

Although Brown's sound effects and Blanc's voices sometimes mask the sound of the orchestra, at other times the orchestra stands alone and provides the sounds that punctuate the mockery and abuse of the body as well as the grotesque movements. For instance, toward the finale of the music cue "Schlesinger Swing," a wacky creature appears on top of a flower playing a drum set not only with drumsticks but also with parts of his body (buttocks and foot). The cartoon character moves grotesquely and very fast in perfect sync with the drum solo that is played by the orchestra and ends bonking his head with a drumstick when the last cymbal crash marks the end of the music cue.

Speed is an important characteristic of "Porky in Wackyland." Not only do the characters move faster, but the rhythm of the music and the punctuation of sounds of the slap-of-the-stick also have a faster pace. Such energetic rhythm becomes especially relevant at the moment of the Do-Do Bird's chase toward the end of the animated short. During this period of time (seventy-eight seconds) eight different slapstick gags are piled up, three different music cues are played by the orchestra, several shouts and cries emerge from the dialogue track, and at least ten different sound effects punctuate the physical violence and grotesque movements of the cartoon characters.

During the last thirty seconds of the chase, the orchestra plays Stalling's cue "Captured"—alternating the fast tempo of the flurry of strings with outbursts of brass, trombone slides, and even silences. As five slapstick routines are executed, many sound effects emerge from the soundtrack, punctuating the mockery of Porky's body: the sound effect of a door smash is played when Porky collides with an elevator, the sound of two pieces of wood being struck together is played when the Do-Do hits Porky's face with a slingshot, the sound of a 'wood hit' is played when Porky collides with the buttocks of the Do-Do, and the sound of bowling pins being hit by a ball is played when Porky collides with a brick wall.

An analysis of "Porky in Wackyland" reveals how the complex soundtrack is integral to the slapstick style developed at Termite Terrace. The sophisticated orchestration of music, sound effects, and voices based on the contrast of volumes, musical genres, instrumentation and tempos creates a dynamic rhythm that is in perfect sync with the visual action. Furthermore, my analysis of the soundtrack demonstrates the rich variety of sounds of the slap-of-the-stick that are used for punctuating the mockery and abuse of the body and the grotesque movements of the cartoon characters. From the musical sounds created by certain orchestra instruments, to the vocal sounds made by Blanc, to the sound effects recorded, edited, and selected by Brown, the slapstick comic routines are always enhanced by aural events. Frequently, different kinds of sounds of the slap-of-the-stick (music, sound effects, vocals) are mixed together and mask each other. Other times they stand alone over the silence. Regardless, the sounds of the slap-of-the-stick emerge loudly from the soundtrack in perfect sync with the beat and contribute to keeping the energetic audiovisual rhythm.

In conclusion, the Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies soundtracks produced at Termite Terrace from 1937 to 1943 update the slapstick tradition with their sophisticated orchestration, tight synchronization to the visuals, and abundance of sounds of the slap-of-the-stick. Due to the collaborative practices and technologies used at Termite Terrace, music, voices, and sound effects are more than a simple accompaniment to comic routines: they are integral to them. The slapstick comic routines acquire the metric rhythm of music, and the music acquires the fragmented structure of the anarchic compilation of gags. The constant flow of sound, the medley of musical genres, and the exaggerated rhythmic punctuation of sounds of the slap-of-the-stick are essential to the fragmented narrative pace characteristic of the Termite Terrace slapstick style.

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On the Occult Nature of Sound-Image Synchronization

K. J. Donnelly

Moments of precise synchronization in films are the key instances for pulling together physically unconnected image and sound tracks into an illusory whole—both in experiential as well as industrial terms. The ‘lock’ of audio and visual exerts a synergetic, what might be described as an occult, effect: a secret and esoteric effect that can dissipate in the face of an awareness of its existence. Film tends routinely to move between moments of synchrony between sound and image and points where there is no apparent synchronization. Approaching audiovisual culture from this, more abstract, perspective illuminates it in a form that removes the overly familiar aspects that have militated against sustained and detailed theorization of sound in films, and the notion of ‘sound films’ more generally. Drawing upon theories of sound originally developed by psychologists or sound theorists including Sergei Eisenstein, Pierre Schaeffer, R. Murray Schafer and Michel Chion, points of synchronization can

be approached as a form of repose, providing moments of comfort in a potentially threatening environment that can be overwrought with sound and image stimuli. Correspondingly, the lack of synchrony between sound and images has to be characterized as potentially disturbing for the audience. Following this perspective, the interplay between the two becomes the central dynamic of audiovisual culture and its objects can be reconceived and newly understood along these lines. This is likely a ‘hard-wired’ process whereby we are informed about the space we occupy through a combination of the senses, and a disparity between visual perception of a space and its apparently attached sound (or vice versa) might have some direct physical effect, or set in progress an unconscious unease or dissatisfaction that the film will endeavour to develop and assuage as part of its essential dynamic. Indeed, such biological concerns about sound’s perception and its place in our survival likely have been transposed into cinema, even directly exploited

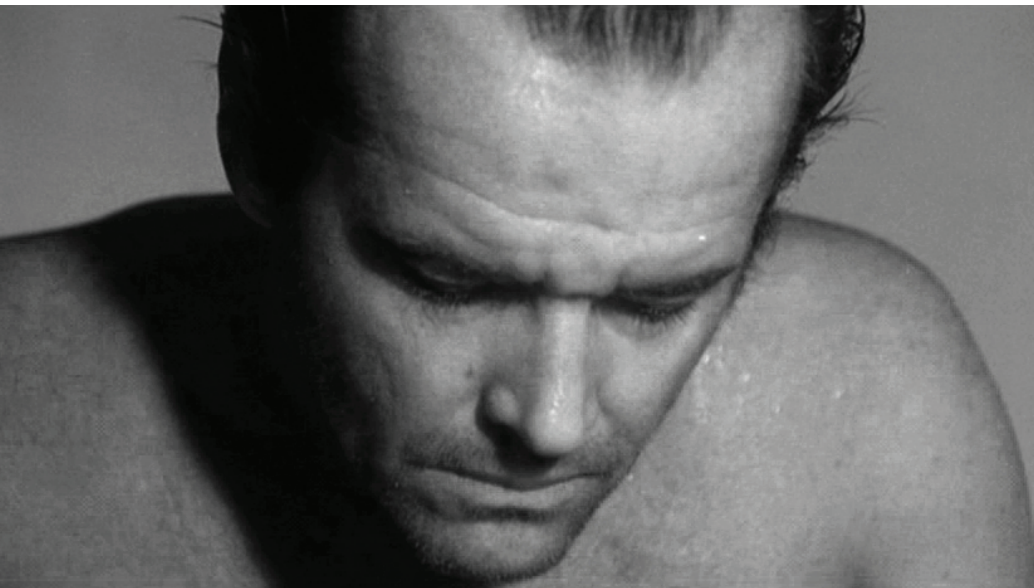
by cinema for the purposes of affect. This paper outlines a larger project, one that wishes to look askew at film, as a speculation, a rumination. My discussion aims to be tentative rather than conclusive.

There is surprisingly little written about synchronization of sound and image, and there certainly are no sustained studies. There is Michel Chion's discussion of 'synchresis,' the spontaneous perceptual welding of sound and image, and there was some concern in classical film theory

analyses of films take the illusion of unified sound and image as a 'given.' Earlier (talking about perception more generally), Maurice Merleau-Ponty noted that, "the only way to become aware...is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity" (xiii). My aim is momentarily to reconceive cinema as a set of *abstract* aesthetics rather than as an industrial practice or measured against a referent.

Contrary to the orthodoxy of historical discussion of the landmark 'talkie,' the debut of *The Jazz Singer* in Lon-

'Musical' aesthetics can doubtless offer something to audiovisual analysis of films as abstract structures.



(63-64). Writers such as Rudolf Arnheim, Bela Balazs, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein wrote notable articles and book chapters about sound synchronized to image. However, their writing on the subject was dismissed in a cavalier fashion by later film theory, merely as representing a response to a restricted period of cinematic transition. They developed the notion of parallel and counterpoint as descriptive of the relationship between image and sound. They were interested in the space between image and sound communication—and consequently valorized asynchrony—as central to the principle of montage, which they saw as the heart of cinema. I am interested more in precise moments of synchrony and their relationship to asynchrony. In the 1970s, Christian Metz noted that analysis needs to "go beyond" the illusion of films (735-36)—yet almost all

don in October 1928 was not quite a triumph of the magnitude of its earlier US debut. Musicians' newspaper *The Melody Maker*, in an article entitled "Flowers all over the Orchestra Pit" (in clear anticipation of the masses of unemployed cinema musicians to come), noted that the audience was in peals of laughter due to the synchronization failures across the evening's programme (1150). In terms of film production, key moments or sequences (such as dialogue sequences) tend conventionally to have action matched to sound through direct synchronization, yielding the illusion of a coherent 'reality.' However, many sequences (sometimes including dialogue sequences) are not shot with location or synchronized sound. This habitually is added later, as part of the post-production stage—the point where the overwhelming majority of film sound is created (not just musi-

cal score but also ADR ‘dubbing’ and Foley). Consequently, there are plenty of points where visuals and sound do not match directly; sometimes they match only vaguely, and sometimes they are connected in a manner that is not immediately apparent. Sound in the cinema is less concerned with capturing reality than it is with producing a composite of sound and image that will be accepted by audiences, and thus is essentially conventional in character. Much effort is expended in sustaining the customary illusion. The logic is not simply about cause and effect or sound sources appearing on screen; there are also dynamic and aesthetic concerns. Synchronization occurs through editing techniques, staging techniques, musical or sonic cadence, gesture, or other means. Incidental music is commonly written to fit the ‘rough cut’ of the picture and in the overwhelming majority of cases keyed to ‘sync points.’ There is a concrete status to ‘sync points’ and dynamic ‘hits.’

concentrated.) We can rethink film, though, as a different form of temporal movement, between moments of synchronized repose and unsynchronized chaos. Films contain a large amount of asynchronous sound that we tend not to notice or register consciously; film aims to ensure that we do not linger on these moments. However, every film that has a synchronized soundtrack will evince this sort of forward development or ‘movement.’

A notable example takes place in Michelangelo Antonioni’s 1975 film *The Passenger*, or *Professione Reporter*. There is a startling sequence, where the protagonist, played by Jack Nicholson, is assuming the identity of the man he met the previous day who has since died. As he pastes his picture into the dead man’s passport, the soundtrack consists of a conversation between the reporter and the dead man that is temporally unconnected to what we see. After some minutes, the camera alights on a reel-to-reel tape,



These points of synchronization might be apprehended as instances of repose, providing moments of comfort in a potentially threatening environment that can be overwrought with sound and image stimuli. Correspondingly, the lack of synchrony between sound and images has to be characterized as potentially disturbing for the audience, perhaps even as moments of textual danger. Thus, from this perspective, the interplay between the two becomes the central dynamic of audiovisual culture and its objects can be reconceived and newly understood along these lines. Indeed, much contemporary mainstream film is often thought of as movement from set piece to set piece, with filler material in between. (We may well realize that the exigencies of film finance and production dictate that certain ‘featured’ sequences are nodes where the budget is

revealing that we are listening to a conversation recorded the previous night. If we think of this sequence in terms of a ‘classical’ sound counterpoint, its key is in the space between the meaning of soundtrack and image track and their seeming temporal dislocation. However, thinking of it in abstract terms, the key moment becomes the ‘snap back’ of the sound and image at the point where we realize that we are listening to a tape. Indeed, this is a very dramatic moment but also a very important instant in structural and perceptual terms.

Rather than merely conceive this as an industrial process and a by-product of the conventions of framing, recording and post-production, I might suggest this is something potentially more profound. It can be approached as an abstract, unconscious, and aesthetic drama in itself,

where film might play out momentary and instinctual understandings of and responses to the world. Within this system, precise synchronization and complete asynchrony represent different extremes of film, and extremes of experience for the viewer/auditor. Asynchrony, or at least an uncertain relationship of synchronization between images and sounds, renders the audience uncertain, making them uneasy or afraid. On the opposing pole, (absolute) synchronization suggests to us, or dramatizes for us, a situation

ments. This process can be fleeting or take longer and unfold in a more leisurely manner. Thinking of this in musical terms, this is strikingly reminiscent of the harmonic movement of classical tonality, where music in the tonic key then 'develops' by moving (or 'modulating') into different keys before returning 'home' to the tonic key. Indeed, it could well be advantageous to think of film's temporal progression precisely in musical terms, where sounds and images form notable 'cadences' conjoining or ending sections of

There is something absolutely primal about the synchronization of sound and image, both in and out of the cinema.

where all is well with the world: everything is in its rightful place. Ambiguity about synchronization (or a total lack of it) is potentially unsettling. At the very least it is a different 'mode' from synchronized 'normality' on screen.

Film is precisely 'audiovisual' and the aesthetics of sound are at the heart of the medium. Indeed, contemporary sound design increasingly appears to be musical in inspiration, regularly conceiving of a holistic soundtrack and using technology developed essentially for the music industry. Consequently, the formats and logic of music can be used as a means of understanding film, particularly if one focuses on the abstract aesthetics evident in music and non-figurative art. While film may seem to be a figurative medium, it is also concerned with non-figurative aspects, such as time and impressions of space, which usually are associated more with arts such as music. I would argue that 'musical' aesthetics can doubtless offer something to audiovisual analysis of films as abstract structures. Consequently, films can be approached as a conglomeration of related abstract aesthetic concepts (line, contrast, dynamics, harmony and counterpoint, discord, rhythm and cross-rhythm, foreground and background, event and accompaniment, and register, for example) that 'make sense' in themselves as much as film's elements make sense—as dominant theory might argue—through recourse to a film's central narrative developmental drive. Such an approach allows a rethink of film, precisely as an audiovisual and essentially aesthetic medium.

Following the logic already outlined, we might reconceptualize films as a forward movement through time from moments of synchronization of image and sound through unsynchronized moments and back to synchronized mo-

space, narrative, or activity. Similarly, we might think of the resolution of dissonance to consonance in the vocabulary of tonal harmony as a metaphorical correlation to the relationship between synchrony and asynchrony in films. Such thought inspires an approach that reconceives film in terms of abstract dynamics and illuminates the sound film as an abstract psychology rather than as representation. We can see a succession of states that cohere around the existence of the audiovisual 'lock' between sound and image: precise synchronization, the 'plesiochronous' where they are nearly (or vaguely) in sync, and the unsynchronized (asynchrony), which can be fully disconnected in causal as much as psychological terms. These three states make dynamic transitions that manifest a temporal development across every film.

After taking analysis in to abstraction, looking into principles of contrast, tension-resolution structures, dynamic matching and contrast, homology and difference, and so on, I'm interested in introducing a degree of biological determinism to attempt to understand how synchronization appears to serve films. Human beings likely react to discontinuity between what is seen and what is heard on an unconscious or pre-conscious level. It is reasonable to imagine that this is a 'hard-wired' process whereby we are informed about the space we occupy through a combination of the senses. A disparity between visual perception of a space and its apparently attached sound (or vice versa) could have some direct physical effect on the inner ear akin to the delicacy of the balance mechanism, or set in process an unconscious unease or dissatisfaction that the film will endeavor to develop and assuage as part of its essential dynamic. This disparity in perception probably evolved as a defense mechanism that, for example, might inform us that

the wall at the back of the cave is lacking in echo, meaning that a large predator is there, hidden from sight. Such biological concerns about sound's perception and its place in our survival may well have been transposed into cinema, even directly exploited by cinema for the purposes of affect. Since the advent of 5.1 surround sound cinema, soundtracks have spatialized their elements as never before. Features such as the 'in-the-wings sound' effect still can make us partially turn our heads, forcing an involuntary physical reaction to sound. It is worth remembering that sounds that emanate from anywhere except directly in front of us are perceived as a potential threat, which corresponds with Schafer's characterization of acousmatic sound (32). Indeed, as these points attest, there is something absolutely primal about the synchronization of sound and image (both in and out of the cinema). Clearly, the senses of hearing and seeing are not totally separated. The cross-referencing of the two, making for a seamless continuum of perception would have to be approached as the dominant normality of human physicality.

The exigencies of the human body are partially activated and altered in significant ways by the cinema. I suspect that moments of synchronization between sound and image provide feelings of coalescence, joining up, and ultimately of integration. Integration on an aesthetic level homologizes feelings of integration on a level of physical-mental well-being and ultimately of wider social integration. Following Adorno's suggestion in *Philosophy of Modern Music* that cultural objects embody social substance (130), we might characterize the abstract play of synchronization in films (indirectly, at least) as a mirroring of the social and psychological processes of understanding our place in the world and perception of risk in modern life. In *Composing for the Films*, Adorno and Eisler discuss the separation ('counterpoint') of sound and image:

The alienation of the media from each other reflects a society alienated from itself, men whose functions are severed from each other even within each individual. Therefore the aesthetic divergence of the media is potentially a legitimate means of expression, not merely a regrettable deficiency that has to be concealed as well as possible. (74)

Since the introduction of synchronized sound, technological developments have allowed for more precise editing and synchronizing of sound and image. Developments in digital technology over the last decade or so have enabled a previously unimagined degree of control for filmmakers and an increasingly complex aesthetic experience for cinema audiences. Concurrently, in the world outside the cinema, we are in more and more situations where sound does not immediately match to our visual perception. This is

attested to by the visible proliferation of cellphones, iPods and ambient sounds in cities with no clear origin, such as distant traffic or aircraft. As many of us are aware, one effect of being in a world where there is increasingly less 'sync,' where things seem more 'out of sync,' is that of increased mental disturbance, cognitive dissonance, and stress.

Moving to an even more speculative conclusion: considering sound cinema in the light of its central illusion of synchronization, I would suggest, illuminates the process as being a magical talisman to ward off the natural separation of sound and image, at least as much as it is a banal industrial practice. It is 'occult' in that it manifests the belief that esoteric and secret ritual holds the world together (perhaps dealing with a deeper 'spiritual' reality). The approach outlined here reveals that synchronization of sound and image into a whole is precisely a point of *belief*, and thus desire must be central—something perhaps obvious, but forgotten in much recent thinking about films. Furthermore, while I characterize the 'lock' of sound and image as an 'occult' aspect of sound cinema, based on a secret knowledge and hidden hand, I also acknowledge the occult aspects of theory. The paper's title might not merely describe the hidden process afoot but may also register theory as esoteric *ritual* to 'de-enchant' film, and confront the secrets of the conceptual, psychological and ideological 'lock' between sound and image.

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THE NEW SCENE CANON

Chopping Choppers Unforgettably



The 'Nowhere to Go but Down'
Scene in *Apocalypse Now*

Mark Harris

Aucun hélicoptre, aucune fumée rose, aucun fleuve, aucun uniforme kaki, aucune jungle n'ont vraiment existé à l'écran depuis. Aucune film ne ressemble à celui-là. Pas même sa version initiale.

No helicopter, no pink smoke, no river, no khaki uniform, no jungle has really appeared on the screen since. No film looks like this one. Not even the original version.

- Cedric Anger

After the Odessa Steps Massacre in Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), the helicopter attack setpiece in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) is almost certainly the second-best edited sequence in the history of motion pictures. Like the third and final monument to the magic of montage—the attack on Hidetora's castle in Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985)—these episodes tend to stand out from the features of which they are constituent parts, like little islands of perfection; they are Matterhorns and Everests, not just separate peaks in ongoing mountain chains. Indeed, when considered as independent *courts métrages*, they seem aesthetically superior to the *longs métrages* from which they are abstracted, despite the absence of a proper beginning or end and so many other—usually essential—cinematic attributes.

The primary purpose of this essay is to find out how and why this should be.

One of the more intriguing things about this segment is the ease with which it sidesteps most of the controversy surrounding the production itself. The sequence was shot *before* Typhoon Olga destroyed Francis Ford Coppola's carefully constructed sets and *after* Harvey Keitel had been replaced by Martin Sheen in the lead role (the latter having also recovered from the heart attack that threatened to call for the appointment of a *third* star). Being so intensely visual and aural, it manages to avoid connection to all the literary references that sometimes threaten to strangle the core story like the tentacles of a Hugolien octopus. There is no need to weigh the relevance of James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890–1914), Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920) or T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (1925). Even the inescapable texts—Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), the film's source novel, and Michael Herr's *Dispatches* (1977), which provided *Apocalypse Now* with its ethos and moral tone (serving essentially the same function that fictional Ishmael did in Herman Melville's

Moby Dick [1852])—are kept on the back-burner for a short while.

The same applies to the cinematic references, the most obvious of which has been largely overlooked.¹ Most mercifully of all, it's a gossip-free zone, having nothing to do with Dennis Hopper's drug-addled antics, Marlon Brando's disappearing hair and apparently alarming girth, John Milius's right-wing views,² or Francis Ford Coppola's alleged megalomania.³

1. As Francis Ford Coppola told Peter Cowie, "Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, Wrath of God*...inspired me a lot" (Cowie 181). When one considers that the 1972 German feature mentioned above dealt with the increasingly insane quest of a professional soldier who gradually loses his mind as he travels down a jungle river in search of El Dorado, this is hardly surprising. In particular, there is a scene wherein a hallucinating Conquistador sees a Spanish galleon lodged high in an Amazonian tree. This was almost certainly the inspiration for the brief, but memorable, moment when Willard's PBR (Patrol boat) passes the giant tail section of a wrecked B-52. It might be worth mentioning here that this dream vision emphasizes the ahistoricism of a film that was originally supposed to be set in 1968. At the beginning of the movie, we get a quick peek at a newspaper headline announcing the 1969 Manson Family murders. And according to U.S. historians, it wasn't until November 22, 1972 that the "first B-52 of the war to be shot down [was hit] by a SAM missile" (Bowman 206).

2. The prolific screenwriter is widely believed to have been the first and most emblematic of the 'fat sissies with guns,' a scornful term reputedly employed by John Ford, William Wellman, John Huston and other Hollywood directors who had survived *real* baptisms of fire in the First and Second World Wars and didn't think much of 'movie brats' who were obsessed with violence without ever having seen real blood flow. To be fair, John Milius *did* try to join the U.S. Marine Corps during the early days of the Vietnam conflict, but was rejected on account of his asthma.

3. The evidence for which is, admittedly, enormous. According to Peter Biskind, "Coppola treated himself like a potentate, replicating America's intervention in the Third World in more ways than one" (Biskind 347). Even more damningly, Karl French tells

In a production famed for the things that went wrong, the helicopter attack scene was the one thing that went fabulously right.

The logistics, of course, did not come cheap. “Around 200,000 feet of film had been shot above and on the beach for the sequence—as much as some directors shoot for an entire feature” (Cowie 102). As for the military hardware required, “There were only twenty-four operational Hueys in the country, and Coppola demanded fifteen of them for Kilgore’s dawn attack at Baler” (Cowie 50). Because Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos was himself fighting insurgents at the time (some say Communists in the North, some say Muslims in the South, some say both), the military insignia had to be changed at least twice a day, and some choppers were withdrawn because they were about to be in *real* combat. As for the flight of jets that eventually drops the napalm that ignites the forest,⁴ they were of necessity Northrop F-5 Freedom fighters, and not the F-4 Phantoms that Coppola originally wanted. The Freedom fighters were cheap jets flown by budget-conscious air forces (such as Canada’s own), and never figured in the USAF’s inventory. Because the Defence Department disliked the script of *Apocalypse Now*, they declined to provide its maker with any of their ‘toys,’ even though U.S. military resources in the Philippines were extensive. Hence,

us that “[John] Milius often refers to Coppola as his Führer or even Hitler, and it is meant as a compliment” (163). Conversely, the director’s own journals are replete with self-doubt, with the fear that he was steering headlong into one of the biggest motion picture disasters of all time. In retrospect, virtually all of his onset excesses can be read as desperate attempts to avoid the creative paralysis engendered by self-hate. One should probably not forget that George Lucas was originally slated to helm *Apocalypse Now*, and it has frequently been said that *Star Wars* (1977) was his science fictional version of same, with the Evil Empire standing in for the United States and the photogenic rebels for the Viet Cong. Even Dusan Makavejev was offered the script at one point, but he turned it down. Clearly, this was one cup that could not pass from the Master of Zoetrope.

4. As Charles Tesson rhetorically asked in the pages of *Cahiers du cinema*, “*Était-ce moral de massacrer des paysages des Philippines, des passer des forêts entières au napalm pour les besoins d’un film*” (Tesson 44). Could this sort of criticism comprise yet another bond between Coppola and Werner Herzog, the man who, in *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), pushed behind-the-camera madness to what is still widely seen as its most extreme point? Of course in 1979, it seems most unlikely that anyone would have been too upset about ‘massacring Philippine landscapes’ or ‘subjecting entire forests to napalm for the benefit of a film.’ Thanks to the writings of Alexander Solzenitsyn and others, the colour ‘red’ had already been discredited on the left, but it had not yet been replaced by the colour ‘green.’

the ahistorical F-5s, a *faute de mieux* response if ever there was one.

Now we come to the central character in this story-within-a-story. As interpreted by Coppola regular Robert Duvall, Lieutenant-Colonel Bill Kilgore is lord of all he surveys (indeed, this is probably one of the greatest screen performances of all time). Ironically, the actor’s indisputable excellence has sometimes been seen as something of a drawback: “The Kilgore sequence has been criticized for being almost too good, the character too charismatic, so as to unbalance the film” (French 65).

Like so many of the protagonists in this drama, on paper Kilgore bore a different moniker. Just as Colonel Kurz was originally known as Colonel Tyler, so was this leader of men originally dubbed Colonel Kharnage (the sort of nomenclature you’d expect to find in Joseph Heller’s 1961 novel, *Catch-22*!). As the son of a rear-admiral and an amateur actress, Duvall had the ideal background for such a part, whatever the name of the character he portrayed. He was also known as a stickler for detail, a Method actor who sometimes made even the most fastidious members of his profession seem lazy by comparison.

In terms of historical pedigree, Kilgore has many models, but the most important are probably General George Armstrong Custer, Air Cavalry legend Colonel John B. Stockton, and homicidal General James F. Hollingsworth. Meanwhile, the man’s rhetoric veers between that of General George S. Patton—Coppola, it should not be forgotten, won his first Oscar for scripting a biopic of this man—and Air Force General-turned-politician Curtis LeMay (who famously favoured ‘nuking’ Vietnam back to the Stone Age).

In one essential respect, of course, Kilgore is nothing like the long-haired dandy who led the Seventh Cavalry to annihilation in the Battle of the Little Big Horn. If promoted, he would doubtless be counted among ‘the lucky generals’ that Napoleon so admired. This is because, as Willard observes shortly before the attack sequence begins, Kilgore “was one of those guys who have this weird light around them. You just knew that he wasn’t going to get so much as a scratch here.”⁵

5. Michael Herr’s contribution to *Apocalypse Now* is universally admitted to be essential, but some of it is indirect. Sent to Saigon by *Esquire* magazine to cover the war in 1967, this gutsy journalist stayed ‘in-country’ for two years, making friends with ‘grunts’ and war correspondents alike, surviving as they did on a mixture of drugs, adrenaline and fear. Some of his essays appeared in *Holiday*, *New American Review* and *Rolling Stone* as well as *Esquire*, so his 1977 book *Dispatches* was anything but a bolt from the blue. John Milius, for instance, freely admits to having been inspired by Herr’s article “The Battle of Khe Sanh,” later to reappear in *Dispatches* under a slightly shorter title. Herr wasn’t hired to write the voice-over narration of *Apocalypse Now* until 1978, but he saw

At the beginning of the sequence, Colonel Kilgore can be seen striding across the helicopter landing field with an assured step. His Cavalry Stetson, pearl-handled revolvers and yellow scarf connect him to both the Old West and the paintings of Frederic Remington, just as the Old West and Frederic Remington point directly at the works of John Ford. Interestingly enough, it is not *The Searchers* (1956), the fetish film for the entire movie brat generation that

To speed Willard and his three man crew on their journey up the river to deal with the now demented Colonel Kurz, they take part in the pre-dawn assault (a bit of a McGuffin, I know, but we'll let that pass). Only two make much of an impact. Chef (Frederic Forrest), after first scoffing at the idea, learns to sit on his helmet in order to keep his "balls from getting blown off." As for Lance, his surfing skills will ultimately earn him a most

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Coppola alludes to, but *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), Ford's first Technicolor pony soldier picture, and *The Battle of Midway* (1942), a short Academy Award-winning documentary that is every bit as 'mythological' as the director's genre work.⁶ The presence of a stetsoned, bandannaed bugler completes the illusion encompassed by Hollywood's most optimistic westerns, just as the following exchange between Kilgore and an unnamed gunner partially undermines it.

KILGORE: How you feelin' today, soldier?

SOLDIER: Like a mean motherfucker, *sir*.⁷

This is an attitude of which Kilgore obviously approves.

many chunks of his work already lodged in the Milius/Coppola script and outtakes (a claim which is hard to dispute, although Milius sometimes tries to do just that). Being the only 'veteran' of the bunch, Herr was the last word on the 'bad craziness' of that time and place, an expertise that would earn him an Academy Award nomination a decade later when he co-wrote Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). Basically, he is to the Vietnam dugout what Ernie Pyle was to the Second World War foxhole.

6. The truly transgressive moment in Ford's masterpiece, of course, occurs when Look's inoffensive body is found in the smoking ruins of the Native American village that the Seventh Cavalry has just ravaged. Clearly, Coppola didn't want to make the First Nations/Viet Cong connection *too* obvious, so he approached Ford's insight from an oblique angle.

7. Could he be the gunner from Kilgore, Texas who boasted to Michael Herr, "Got me one hunnert 'n' fifty se'en gooks kilt. 'N' fifty caribou" (qtd in French 125)?

unusual combat role.

At this point, the film's dreamy, synthesized music is replaced by an extraordinarily shrill version of Wagner's "Flight of the Valkyries."⁸

The camera now cuts to the Vietnamese village about to be assaulted.⁹ What we see are freshly washed flagstones; what we hear are the voices of happy children. Echoes of airborne danger arrive. Female NVA soldiers move the children to safety. One child is too young to grasp the gravity of the situation, and must be saved by a slightly older child. Like well-disciplined troops, the villagers race to their positions. The machineguns with which they must defend their village appear to be of pre-World War Two vintage. Nev-

8. Coppola was really attached to the 1966 Georg Solti version of this, the most 'Nazi'-sounding of Wagnerian riffs. His struggle for it was long and hard, but eventually he won out. Still, it was a near-run thing that could have ended up in the same virtual trash can as the F-4 Phantoms. One shudders to think what would have happened if he'd failed. The mixture of ambient sound, synthesized music and Germanic opera showed for the first time what Dolby stereo could really do. The cumulative effect still hasn't been equalled, never mind surpassed. For once, the phrase 'tapestry of sound' is more than just a cliché.

9. In her contribution to *Past Imperfect*, famed war correspondent Frances FitzGerald thought that "Coppola's recreation of a Vietcong village is fairly accurate, but there couldn't have been any flag-flying Vietcong villages intact on the coast after 1965 because the Americans had complete control of the air and such a village would have been too easy a target" (Carnes 291).

ertheless, that's all they have, and they'll do what they can with them.

The Hueys swoop in and proceed to take the village apart. The Americans seem to be entirely unaware of the disparity in strength that exists between them and the 'enemy.' Their hardware is state-of-the-art. Except for AK-47s, the Viet Cong must fight with museum antiques. Nevertheless, they do manage to shoot down several choppers before the Aircav swoops toward land.¹⁰

Throughout it all, Colonel Kilgore radiates self-confidence. Good shooting is rewarded with cases of beer. Wounded infantrymen are evacuated with all possible alacrity. Clearly, Kilgore is the kind of officer that all soldiers adore... except maybe for the terrified young man who keeps shouting, "I'm not going! I'm not going!"

When a "sapper bitch" throws a satchel charge into a Huey crowded with American casualties, Kilgore makes sure that she's shot in the back within seconds (as well as the entirely innocent woman fleeing next to her). It's only then that he notices that the beach beyond the village under attack offers excellent opportunities for surfing.

After landing his chopper in the sand, he convinces Lance and another soldier to ride waves with boards, one of which happens to be his. Mortar shells are falling all around them, but Kilgore is sublimely indifferent to shrapnel. This man is so invulnerable, he isn't even aware of it as something unique. His survival is a given, like gravity.¹¹

As Lance and an anonymous 'grunt' grudgingly decide that it makes more sense to surf than to sit on ground like sitting ducks, Colonel Kilgore 'extemporizes' his big speech, a burst of braggadocio that includes the memorable

lines "I love the smell of napalm in the morning... It smells like victory."

Of course, we can't actually *smell* the napalm—Smell-o-Rama not being included in Francis Ford Coppola's bag of technological tricks—but we can certainly see it. An entire ridge line goes up in flames, as does everything seeking shelter among the trees (including, no doubt, many animals, if not any luckless extras). Then the line of prisoners approaches the beach, and Kilgore—after referring to the Vietnamese as "gooks," "dinks," "slopes," and "fucking savage[s]"—becomes intensely concerned with the welfare of a single wounded child.¹²

What happens next depends of which version of *Apocalypse Now* you prefer, the 1979 original or the 2001 *Redux*, so I'm going to draw the curtain down here. As the defenders of both visions are more or less equally divided, it's probably wisest to bracket the action between the dawn bugle call and the line "Some day this war is going to end." There's 'war' on both sides of this sequence, but in the centre—the *storm's* centre—there is a curious sort of peace, narrative content notwithstanding, the strangely satisfying peace that always comes when an aesthetic ambition is perfectly achieved.

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10. Although, not everyone loved the Air Cavalry. In *Dispatches*, Michael Herr wrote, "The Marines did not like the Cav, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), they liked them even less than they liked the rest of the Army, and at the same time members of the Cav were beginning to feel as though their sole mission in Vietnam was to bail out Marines in trouble" (148).

11. It's interesting to note that Herr's ability to characterize men at war in Indochina extends far beyond his official credits for *Apocalypse Now* and *Full Metal Jacket*. Consider the following description of a Fourth Division soldier serving his third tour of duty in Vietnam. Previously, he was the sole survivor of two U.S. patrols that were not only wiped out, but subsequently 'polished off' with cold steel by the NVA. Now he just lives to kill, and his gaze has become so 'crazy' absolutely no one can now meet it. Here's his physical description: "He wore a gold earring and a headband torn from a piece of camouflage parachute material, and since nobody was about to tell him to get his hair cut it fell below his shoulders, covering a thick purple scar." (Herr 4). Rambo, anybody? Or how about this: "I kept thinking about all the kids who got wiped out by seventeen years of war movies before coming to Vietnam to get wiped out for good" (Herr 224). *Born on the Fourth of July* (Oliver Stone, 1989), perhaps?

12. A scene which, in retrospect, is eerily reminiscent of the news event surrounding the Iraqi boy who lost both arms to U.S. bombs during the early days of the Second Gulf War before being flown to America for the best possible medical treatment. If you didn't pay close attention, it would be easy to assume that the boy's arms had simply *fallen* off rather than severed by an armament.