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# **EMPOWERING FILM SOUND PRACTICE**

**Countering visual hegemony and industrial ideology  
with reference to the short-film 'Fade'.**

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# 1. ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the possible marginalisation of sound practices in contemporary mainstream film and television, the fundamental reason for which amounts to a dominant, delineating visual culture (a visual hegemony) that is proliferated within filmmaking practice via ideological and technological means. Evidence for the discussion consists of historical and anecdotal accounts. The discussion is framed by broader concepts of ideology and industrial structures by philosophers: Antonio Gramsci, Dick Hebdige, Louis Althusser and Theodore Adorno. The central contention is that due to the belief that sound is 'passive' and a 'secular' sphere of film production; it is frequently underrepresented and provided as a 'sweetener' to make the visual elements more tangible. The term secular here refers to sounds often segregated and subordinate position in comparison to metaphorical 'deification' of visual practices.

My assertion is that this ideology, reinforced by industrial constraints, can belittle the expressive power that sound offers. The practical work builds from this a philosophy that empowers the soundtrack in production and reception, by exploiting the subjective, emotive and sensorial nature of sound to create an aesthetic that demands further engagement from the receiver. This is achieved by engendering experimentation and discourse between picture and sound edits. Ultimately this is framed by a guerrilla filmmaking process of film production and a subsequent exploitation of the freedoms of workflow during postproduction that working as an auteur affords.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This thesis consists of a selection of written chapters totalling 18,000 words that supports a piece of research through practice - the practical element of which takes the form of a 15-minute short film, referred to as *Fade*, which is presented on DVD and Data DVD, alongside other illustrative works. The practical element is framed by a discussion and critique on the possible marginalisation of soundtracks in film due to ideological, technological and industrial factors. The discussion is elucidated by historical and anecdotal evidence. This evidence is expanded further through the use of philosophical perspectives of industrial and capitalist structures.

The practical work itself looks to ways with which to counter this marginalisation by building a philosophy centred on both process and aesthetics, which empowers the soundtrack to be an 'equal partner' in the film's production and reception. Commentary is given throughout the discussion on the details of the film's production, including the technological, philosophical and collaborative implications of the work.

This thesis contains:

- a) DVD containing the 15-minute short film *Fade* and DVD extras (containing further illustrative examples).
- b) This document containing written chapters in support of the creative work of no more than 18500 words.

### 3. A PERSONAL PREFACE

Before beginning the more academic side of the discussion, I feel it is best to offer some background to my personal development and the climate within which this thesis gestated. This is something I feel that many practice lead research approaches could benefit from, particularly those within the humanities and creative arts spheres: think of it as a reflexive, auto-ethnographic introduction, which is a similar approach to that within Anahid Kassabian's (2008) paper on *The New Problematics of Sound and Music*, in which Kassabian uses her own personal background as a case study to highlight issues within the field of sound studies.

This MA by research has been taken on a part-time basis, the reason for which was so that I could devote ample time to working professionally and developing my skills and portfolio outside of the academic arena. I aimed to build upon the skills and interests engendered during my bachelor degree in music technology and popular music, which in its final years revolved primarily around audio-visual work, popular music and narrative story telling. At times, I thought the professional work was having a negative affect on my academic research, as it felt like I was operating in two separate worlds that were at odds with each other. The professional world demanded technical precision, a quick turn around and often formulaic creativity (the kind that is easily read by the audience) versus the academic world, which demanded intellectual and philosophical precision, had a relatively slow turnaround and allowed almost total creative freedom (the kind that is sometimes difficult to pin down). Learning to switch between these mind-sets involved its own learning curve. Sometimes I found that there were times when I was bringing deep philosophical questions about audio-visual relationships to the professional world (sometimes to be shut down by the editor or director I was working with - but not always). Inversely, there were times that brought an 'industrial' frustration to 'pointless' over-intellectualisation found in academic discussion. The key to balancing these worlds was not in segregation, but in learning to mix approaches and viewpoints. There are times when those worlds are not

so far removed. This thesis reflects that position, as it attempts to combine industrial and academic concerns.

I think it's very important to state that my MA was not done in a film school, but a music department. Outside of my main personal tutor, there was little provision for support with regards to any form of a 'classical' film school education - by which I mean an institutionally structured learning environment that simulates professional collaboration in the production and post-production of filmmaking, while simultaneously learning critical skill sets. The exceptions to this situation were an intensive month studying at the International Filmschule in Köln (Germany) under the School of Sound program, and short courses with the Sennheiser Sound Academy. I don't see this lack of classical training as a significant problem, as it forced me to research and learn first hand almost everything from working in the industry - on film sets or directly with editors and directors in post-production. For the most part I was learning through trial and error, picking up information when problems arose. This is especially true with regards to picture editing and Non-Linear Editor (NLE) to Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) workflows between separate practitioners operating on platforms by different developers. As this thesis explores, issues to do with this work exchange is a continuing problem.

With regards to learning in the professional field, sound recordists are in a unique position when compared to the rest of the crew with respect to learning the broader skills of filmmaking. We are one of the few members who, in order to be able to work to high level of accuracy, must understand many other departments' practices (especially in a climate where sound is increasingly misunderstood or undervalued). For example:

- When working with Lavalier (lapel) microphones and transmission packs, you must work closely with costume to find a placement that both produces a signal free of clothing noise, but also that doesn't disrupt the costume's appearance.
- When working on heavily lit interior sets, it helps to develop an understanding of how the lighting arrangement will limit or enable certain boom positions as well as being aware of what noises or

interferences some lights emit, particularly identifying the cheaper ones.

- Ultimately having an awareness of the Director of Photography's changes and the final composition of the shot is paramount. Understanding how lens focal dimensions affect the frame, enables you to pre-empt boom positioning and search for alternative placements or methods.

This puts sound practitioners in a very strong position to observe the intricacies of the visual side of the film making process. For me, this kind of experience was invaluable - particularly on the smaller crews where the set dynamic allows for a tighter collaboration between core members, meaning more discussion (and question asking on my part) could take place about what each member was doing, as opposed to being bound to a heavily segregated departmental hierarchy. When I say smaller crews I'm referring to those of less than five people, which regardless of the increased workload on crew members, tend to work a lot faster because of a 'simplified' workflow and 'lower' production value (less intricate lighting, costume, make-up etc).

During the professional development I made a number of strong working contacts and my portfolio grew with an increasing number of high profile clients and projects (including work with The Guardian, eBay and Microsoft). Likewise, along side these projects I was involved in numerous feature, independent and low-to-no budget films. From this range of professional practice I had the opportunity to experience a wide view of how sound is positioned within the industry and this primary experience slowly came to inform the central theme of the thesis. I began to see how sound practices, because of their secular nature (often operating separately from camera and other visually centric departments), seem to be becoming increasingly marginalised within the industry. This is something I soon realised was the concern of many other sound practitioners, but equally recognised amongst some directors and producers. This thesis examines these concerns against primary and secondary evidence and puts into practice some of the approaches to filmmaking being adopted within pockets of the industry.

During the course of this research and professional development I have spoken with many other practitioners in film, television, music, photography and art. They constitute a wide mix of ability, career statuses, nationalities and areas of practice. Some of these discussions arrive anecdotally throughout the paper.

One particular principle appeared multiple times after a number of separate discussions with practitioners, particularly those from North America. Many referred to it as 'the beginner's mind', which originated from a Zen practice taught by the First Master of Zen Center, San Francisco and Carmel Valley, Shunryu Suzuki:

The mind of the beginner is empty, free of the habits of the expert, ready to accept, to doubt, and open to all the possibilities. It is the kind of mind which can see things as they are, which step by step and in a flash can realize the original nature of everything. (Suzuki, 1970, p.13-14)

Spiritual connotations aside, when confronted with the pressures of 'forced creativity', the monotony of more procedural tasks or the intimidating presence of beginning a large project, this mindset is a comforting one to reflect upon and from time to time adopt. I feel it's equally applicable to this kind of academic pursuit, as it is one that aims to critique such an institutionalised, industrialised sphere of the creative world - filmmaking. In essence, it suggests removing the notion of correct or incorrect, leaving one with a naivety and willingness to experiment, to push a boundary and subvert a norm.

Therefore, in keeping with the philosophy of Suzuki, I have tried to enter this research free of many preconceptions towards what I think I know about how to make a film, in the spirit of 'the beginner's mind'. Likewise, I encourage whoever reads this to stop reading any further in the paper and watch the film *Fade* (on accompanying DVD and Data DVD), so that you are not significantly influenced by my discussion.<sup>1</sup>

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The DVD contains chapter markers to easily navigate to scenes referred to in my self-analysis. The Data DVD contains the same files in HD but without chapter markers.

## 4. VISUAL HEGEMONY

### *Theory, Technology and Industry*

#### 4.1 Introducing Visual Hegemony

Why is it that we preoccupy ourselves with the visual? In the scholarly world there seems to be no end of readers and journals devoted to the study of visual culture and image studies; cinematography, visual advertising, the male gaze, scientific visualization etc. In particular, why is the visual given so much of our time and attention while we are afforded two equally stunning pieces of omnidirectional, omnipresent sensory apparatus merely inches from the dominant eye? These are huge questions and I do not intend to answer them directly, as this thesis is a contextualisation leading toward a creative reflection. It is not a scientific study of cognitive process. However, a prevailing answer to image bias on a broader social level lies with what Jean-Louis Comolli referred to as the 'hegemony of the eye' (1980, p.126) - a modern western paradigm grounded on the primacy of visual stimulus.

This visualist attitude is historically prominent in the classic philosophy of Platonic and Aristotelian discourse which privileged sight above all the other senses for its modes of knowledge seeking and purveying truth, and from this, modes for symbolically investing moral, emotional and cognitive significance (Plato, 1941). The importance of these philosophical teachings remain noteworthy due to their continued resurgence through Classic and Modern periods, and are equally reflected in many Indo-European idioms for mental process deriving from vision - for example, 'seeing eye to eye', 'hmmm, I see', 'he was a visionary' etc. (Kambaskovic & Wolfe, 2013). With further roots in the photographic revelations of the enlightenment era and the coming of moving images, subsequent innovation and re-appropriation through modern and postmodern eras have resulted in the visualist ideology of 'image as truth' dominating the way we communicate on a social level, through avenues such as advertising, social media and journalism. As such, visual culture is not only engrained into social discourse, but enshrined - 'deified' as the primary reference to our shared reality. As Nicholas Mirzoeff put it, '[visual culture] is

not just a part of your everyday life, it *is* your everyday life' (Mirzoeff 1998, p.1).

In the audio-visual sphere, this ideological dominance culminates in the frequent assumption that the sound track is serving the image. Michel Chion (whose work demonstrates one of the most comprehensive formal analytical studies of the filmic audio-visual relationship) affirms this subservience saying 'although sound has modified the nature of the image, it has left untouched the image's centrality as that which focuses the attention [... sound] has not shaken the image from its pedestal' (Chion 1994, p.144).

Like-wise, the French filmmaker and writer René Clair stated at the coming of sound-film, 'film will always be a visual medium' (Clair 1951, p.43). It's possible that Clair is referring to the materiality of celluloid-film as being purely visual. Indeed, even analogue sound-on-film comes from an optical process and is inherently visible before it become audible (poetically exposing the complex duality of their material and perceptual relationship). However, his statement further asserts the dominance of vision and subservience of sound.

This is not to say that film theory significantly marginalises sound (see *Foregrounding Sound*, Hilmes 2008). While a decade or two ago this may have been the case, there is currently an increased interest towards the role sound has to play in our experiences of media, cinema and the societies that frame them. In previous years discourse has focussed mainly on the reception of morphological representations and codified signs (Barthes 1977, Chion 1990, Tagg 2012). Almost ubiquitously, much effort is given to trying to decipher patterns and models with which to pigeon-hole how these two, often fluctuating, elements combine to make a whole audio-visual experience. A flaw expressed by Milicevic (1995, p.1), is that unified theories or models do not and cannot accurately represent how these elements combine, as the personal, social and artistic variables are too great to give any meaningful congruence. This doesn't mean that analysis or model building holds no value, as it provides us with useful language. However, excessive

categorization can often serve only to limit our perception of phenomena into reductive patterns that ignore the multiplicity of the reception.

Recent attention has fallen towards reinvigorating Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1945) thoughts of film's phenomenological effects on the body-mind (Sobcheck 1992 & 2004); that is, the attempt to understand the notion of 'being'. Within film philosophy, phenomenology's perspective of experienced events and sensuality as a 'synthetic' approach is often seen as the antithesis to the semiotic, textual 'analysis' (Botz-Bornstein n.d.).

Rick Altman suggests we use multiple, transient micro 'events' that form the text (film) and macro event (viewing situation) to 'filter' our understanding of culture and norms, resulting in our personalised, received experience. What makes this model particularly interesting is the move away from thinking of film as a singularly bound text, and more in terms of it as a culmination of discrete events. Furthermore, he describes these events as existing within 'gravity-free space' (1992, p.3-4). While it's true that these events are bound to a teleological axis (plot line of the film or the material linear form), our perception and interaction with each micro-event is determined by the individual's wandering attention as well as the multiplicity of the macro event of reception (where, when, who, how etc.). The moment at which the body-mind reaches a meaning, draws a conclusion or asks a question is unstable, transient and not the same for each receiver. Subsequently, this is a focus of experienced processes and essences, moving away from previous, more rigid text based models to a looser, pluralised and phenomenological perspective.

Andy Birtwhistle notes how this departure from a textual 'linguistic turn' to a more experiential 'affective turn' provides us with significantly more gravitas with which to begin talking about film in terms of emotion and sensation (Birtwhistle 2010 p.6-7). Furthermore, the freedom to discuss film within this frame of sensation empowers us to discuss intent and practice via those sensorial motivations. This is far more in tune with the discourse and ideology of those practicing filmmaking within the industry. As discussed with Pat

Jackson<sup>2</sup>, “Cinema is not an intellectual experience, it’s a visceral one” (Jackson 2012) - advising us to remove the ego, self-interest and ‘knowing’ from the story to allow the ‘feel’ and emotion to dictate the choices made. Walter Murch supports this claim by positioning emotion above the story in his ‘rule of six’ hierarchy of editorial criteria (Murch 2001, p.18).

Ann Doane suggests that while vision is a mode that primarily deals with ‘knowing’, ‘the ineffable, intangible quality of sound... requires that it be placed in the side of the emotional or the intuitive’ (Doane 1985, p.55) - further noting the paradoxical duality of that distinction: ‘However, one cannot deny the remarkable powers of sensuality and mystery attributed to the image as well as the sound track or dialogue to guarantee intelligibility’ (Doane 1985, p.56). Doane’s comments remind us that the classic cinematic product is one steeped in various modes of representation and an awareness of these need to be acknowledged if we are to follow other more subversive modes.

The dramatic increase in the study and practice of sound and music in film, has led some to suggest that the idea of sound’s subservience to image is a redundant issue (Hanson 2007, p.30; Jordan 2007, p.1). This is further argued with the support of scientific studies asserting visual dominance in multi-sensory testing (Colavita 1974; Colavita and Weisberg 1979; Hecht and Reiner 2009 p.311), which imply that visual dominance is an inherently biological, natural state of being. However, this kind of logical positivism lacks the kind of balance and fluidity needed when discussing sound in cinema, a modality that functions primarily around the intangible quality of feeling instead of knowing as previously discussed by Doane. As such, visual dominance cannot simply be affirmed with empirical yet reductive testing that ignore the personal, social and semantic variables that make cinema sound the expressive and personal artistic mode that it is.

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<sup>2</sup> Pat Jackson is a sound editor who worked on *Apocalypse Now* (1979) as well as being the supervising sound editor on *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999) and *Jarhead* (2005). Jackson now teaches at California State University alongside supervisory roles in industry. This discussion took place while I studied at the IFS Köln in 2012.

Regardless of the breadth of scholarly studies on audiovisual psychology and arts academia that suggest that the audiovisual plane is balanced, we might be wise to focus now on how our modes of film production under a visually dominant ideology might be negatively impacting sound practitioners. Evidence for this situation in the UK industry is reflected in the recent dispute between the UK cinematic trade unions for workers (BECTU) and producers (PACT) over the widening disparity of pay between camera and sound. The possible decline of esteem toward sound mentioned by some members of the BECTU sound branch (Anon & Evans 2014), suggests that those who deem the audio-visual plane to be balanced, need to shout louder so that we don't restrict ourselves and our soundtracks on an industrial level.<sup>3</sup>

It's important to note, that although in some circles the term 'sound' might refer simply to the sound stem, or more accurately the effects stem<sup>4</sup> (a sub mix that includes atmospheres, Foley and sound effects (Hollyn 2009, p.186), when I talk about 'sound', I am in fact talking about all audial elements: dialogue, music, and effects; the 'soundtrack complete' or 'mise-en-bande'<sup>5</sup>. This all-capture use of the word sound is more easily justified later as I explain the reduced and solo nature of the postproduction process, which contrasts the usual segregation of the audio stems to a more holistic approach found within independent film production.

The subservience stated by both Chion and Clair, and felt by industrial workers, could be seen as a false construct; a remnant from a linguistic, analytical era of film studies and a social discourse. However, the long and complex developments of cinema's varied forms are nonetheless tied to that ideological (and subsequent pedagogical) era and have built a fundamentally hegemonic relationship of image controlling and determining sound practices.

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<sup>3</sup> While I don't intend to address this exact issue head-on, I do allude to it now (and again later) as an area that requires a great deal of care and attention in future.

<sup>4</sup> In reality, the sound stem is further split into sub mixes, and often the Foley stem is printed with the production audio (or dialogue), so the segregation here is not as salient as Hollyn suggests.

<sup>5</sup> Mise-en-bande (put in band): an analytical model proposed by Rick Altman et al for determining the interrelationships of sound, music and dialogue, parallel to that of mise-en-scene (put in scene) in film studies (Altman et al 2000, p.231).

If we are to explore the potential of sound's more emotive, sensorial side, as well as its ability to narrate independently within the sphere of narrative filmmaking, then we need to address how we approach sound on an industrial and procedural level. This involves looking to the development of sound cinema to understand what kind of obstacles and affordances the industrial institutionalisation of filmmaking has left in our path and look to ways to circumnavigate them.

## **4.2 The Development of Sound Cinema**

The silent era provides a shaky starting point when discussing the audio-visual hegemonic relationship. From a laymen perspective, the name suggests that audiences were sat in absolute silence watching images play out in void in front of them. However, this was certainly not the case as the act and event of exhibition was not just awash musicians (as is more commonly known) but 'soundmen' - ostensibly sound performers separate from musicians who would provide sound effects and deliver dialogue from beside or behind the screen. They lay the groundwork for many of the ideals of realist cinema sound by evoking a sense of acoustic perspective, sonic 'richness' and sensory completion (audio-visually). The silent era of cinema was in fact no more silent than a dancing girls' number at Music Hall, and while sound's role is often considered in these early years to be a gimmick to entice patrons into the theatre, it quickly became a tool by which to focus and inform the image (Lastra 2000, p.93).

It's important to note that during the earliest years of cinema there were a number of competing forms with regards to exactly what the cinematic display was. The dramatic narrative form that borrowed many of its aesthetics from the theatrical world (and is very much is the dominant form we know today) was one of many possibilities. Tom Gunning describes cinema pre-1910 as being one largely consisting of 'attractions'. Building on the established traditions of Phantasmagoria and Magic Lantern shows, the 'Cinema of Attractions' involved illusion and exposition above traditional narrative form. Its power was not in reproducing 'the movements of nature' or constructing a false reality, but merely in the act of exposition itself (Gunning 2000, p.64).

This ideology of the cinematic display as an act of exposition saw cinema as an experience to be enjoyed on an aesthetic and sensorial level, as opposed to the rendered dramaturgy and voyeurism found in classic narrative cinema. However, as Gunning notes, this polarisation is not a true representation of the cinematic form, as the act of exposition and exhibition became embedded in narrative film. As George Méliès put it: 'I use [... the narrative] merely as a pretext for the 'stage effects', the 'tricks', or for a nicely arranged tableau' (Méliès 1961, p.118). The idea of exposition in narrative is still present in modern cinema - in the car chase, the action sequence, or the sexualised objectification. Experiential, sensual attractions do indeed exist in classic narrative cinema; however, they remain deeply embedded beneath the rule of narrative.

While the *event* of cinema was an audio-visual experience, the distributed object was indeed silent: a celluloid film with no synchronised phonograph, nor an integrated sound-on-film strip - meaning, from the perspective of a film's production (shooting) and subsequent postproduction (editing) the film (the object) was silent. While filmmakers of the era may have had some intentions for the sound track (delivering cue sheets, prescribed compilations or sound directions), this did not necessarily mean that it would be shown in accordance with those intents. This was part of the social currency which helped cinema grow in its earliest years, as on numerous occasions the soundtrack (through the interpretations of the live performers) would be moulded to pander to the particular ethnicity or social class (and thus taste) of the audience, resulting in a myriad of different practices and performances of the 'same' film (Lastra 2000, pp.92-122). However, from the perspective of filmmaking, expression and meaning came principally in the form of visual display, or rather, its montage. As Sergei M. Eisenstein would note, 'Montage has been established by the Soviet film as the nerve of cinema' (Eisenstein 1949, p.3).

Eisenstein, who led the theorisation and implementation of montage theory, saw the combination of shots (cells of continuous moving image), as a dialectic collision of meanings to affect sensual impressions in the viewer through layering each sequential cell 'on-top' of each other (as opposed to

side by side). With conflict at the heart of its aesthetic, Eisenstein's montage theory performed dynamics via the spatial qualities of the shot and tension via the rhythm of its edits. Eisenstein saw montage as the ultimate sensorial departure from literary modes, which could maintain notions of expression and poeticism, the realistic and surreal (Eisenstein 1949, pp.2-5). It embodied the visual display that cinema of that era depended on and is largely accepted even now. The idea of montage in classical narrative cinema is often thought of now in a reductive form, as a tool with which to condense time. However, the core principle remains between every cut and edit, as the culmination of layered displays imprints on our sensorial and cognitive perception.

In light of this, the focus of many pioneering filmmakers during the silent era (such as Dziga Vertov and Fritz Lang) was to throw off the shackles of the theatrical and literary verbocentric narrative in favour of a newer cinematic lexis. This engendered experimentation in their aesthetics such the camera techniques demonstrated in Vertov's *A Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and the elaborate, expressionist production design of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1925).

Under this ideology, dialogue (as intertitles) was trimmed to almost a non-entity as visual expression and display was favoured for its poetic subjectivity. Given this heavy investment in the visual cinematic language, and the significant lack of control over the soundtrack, discourse and perception of cinema of this era focused notably on the image. A prime example is given by S. L. Rothapfel in 1910, who when advising cinema pianists on their performance technique, says:

The people pay to see the picture, not to hear the pianist, so therefore, play softly when occasion demands, and always remember, *the picture comes first*. (Rothapfel 1910, p.593)

Technological advancements with synchronisation technology - for example the sound-on-disc and sound-on-film techniques such as Vitaphone and Movietone (propelled by Warner Bros. and Fox respectively), alongside the innovations in sound intelligibility from the telephonic companies (such as

AT&T) - combined to drive synchronised sound into the cinematic arena. Largely the mass adoption of sound was accredited to audience preference. Fox Films (now Twentieth-Century Fox), used sync sound for industrial expansion in both production and exhibition. This came in an era where the American film industry was dominated by a few corporations, which had in place a vertical system of production, distribution and exhibition. Fox Films acquired the patent for the Tri-Ergon system from Germany and put them to use with the innovation of Movietone newsreels. These audio-visual displays of current affairs were heralded for their 'didactic value and wide appeal' (Gomery 2005, p.42) and led the company to significant commercial success, as well as expanding into sound synchronous feature films. Synchronous sound was an undeniable triumph and the major studios each went on to develop their own systems in an era of competing technological norms.

With the mass conversion to sound came a disruption to the status quo of the contemporary artistic filmmaking ideology. René Clair paraphrased the words of Jesse F. Lasky (the president of the American firm Famous Players):

The first successes of the sound and talking picture were so great that they guaranteed the new invention would conquer the world. For those who had shared our expectations, such news meant nothing else than the end of cinema. (Clair 1970, p 126)

Lasky's sentiment via Clair reflects many concerns of the time about the future of cinema. By the 'end of cinema' they are referring to the silent form, through montage and the diverse array of 'attractions' that the cinematic display afforded. With sound came a wave of dialogue and as such a significant aesthetic shift so as to make use of this new technology that the audience demanded. Before the introduction of sound, cinema consisted of a plethora of different forms. However, one would eventually dominate: the classic dramatic narrative.

The dramatic narrative, which was most commonly adapted from plays, borrowed so heavily from its stage counterpart that the need for much beyond the delivery of dialogue was seen as redundant. This was the era of the Talkies and as René Clair later critiqued:

Here, the image is reduced precisely to the role of the illustration of a phonograph record, and the sole aim of the whole show is to resemble as closely as possible the play of which it is the 'cinematic' reproduction. (Clair 1970, p.137)

Clair alludes to the sudden negation of many of the artistic and poetic developments in montage theory and film conceptualisation that he and others had worked fervently to maintain, expressing an annoyance at the new trajectory that the art form had taken. During this time, sound was afforded a weighty amount of control within production leading to the significant visual aesthetic reduction, as all the sound and music had to be recorded live on set and as such was permanent. The later developments in rerecording and post-sync technologies would eventually divorce sound and music from production to become postproduction methods, but during this era it provided a definite 'inflexibility' (Murch 2000, p.2) and the precise opposite of the hegemony that would later develop.

The Soviets (Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov) who laid the foundation of montage theorisation published their concerns of the coming of sound in their manifesto, *A Statement* (1928), calling for an exclusively contrapuntal use of sound and music in cinema. This was to 'neutralise' the realist power caused by coincidental sound and image, that Eisensteinian theory suggests hinders the poetic potential of montage objects, by reaffirming that object's natural reality (Weis & Belton 1985, pp.76-77). It was synchronous speech and the auspice of what would become 'realism' that presented a sincere threat to representational modes and montage ideology - not directly during sound's infancy, but in its second phase when 'an epoch of [naturalistic sounds] automatic utilization for 'highly cultured dramas' and other photographed performances of a theatrical sort [...] will destroy the culture of montage' (Eisenstein et al 1985, p.84). Pudovkin later wrote an extension of this statement in 1929 suggesting that asynchronous or contrapuntal sound doesn't neutralise the sound/image relationship, but exploits its nature via complex associative subtleties (Pudovkin, 1929).

Dziga Vertov, a contemporary of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, held a slightly more balanced idea about how sound should be adopted. Seeing an opportunity to support and develop the new technology and equally to subvert the norms and formulas that would then develop from this new era, as discussed in Lucy Fischer's (1985) essay on Vertov's film *Enthusiasm* (1931). For Vertov, naturalistic sound had its place in filmmaking as much as asynchronous sound. Pure asynchronicity denied the power of synchronisms to form an illusion of 'sensory completion' and providing natural, unnatural, augmented or other forms of Chion's synchresis (1994, p.58). The 'real' threat toward the classic silent cinematic form was in the overuse of dialogue, to supplement and negate the use of action or visual exposition through montage.

However, the talking picture soon developed far beyond simple reproductions of plays, leading to some of the most critically acclaimed theatrical narratives of cinematic history, such as Fritz Lang's *M* (1931), John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) and Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941). Each film contributed genre-defining characteristics to the cinematic narrative form, some of which did so via sound. While new aesthetics and stylistic modes certainly fragmented the 'pseudo-theatrical' talking spectacle seen at the introduction of sound, the dependence on dialogue for narrative development never completely left classical narrative form.

Chion holds the view that narrative cinema is predominantly a 'vococentric' or rather 'verbocentric' form (Chion 1994, p.5) highlighting the dependence of narrative comprehension on the dialogue of characters. As Jay Beck suggests this vococentricity has a further implication with respect to the interrelation of sound objects within the soundtrack, or 'mise-en-bande'. Beck notes that:

This overarching drive for narrative comprehension has created a tacit agreement between the audience and filmmakers that all narratively significant sound elements will be heard. This rule of sonic signification mapped itself onto the divisions of dialogue, effects and music, elevating dialogue to the top of the hierarchy

and shaping basic film sound-studies terminology. (Beck 2008, p.73)

The reliance on character dialogue for narrative development and comprehension creates the notion therefore that all sound elements are subservient to the image via their direct causal origins within the image. As such, our hypothesis of visual hegemony begins to resurface. Chion describes this concept as:

Each audio element enters into *simultaneous vertical relationship* with narrative elements contained in the image (characters, actions) and visual elements of texture and setting. These relationships are much more direct and salient than any relations the audio element could have with other sounds. (Chion 1994, p.40)

Therefore, if all sound elements are subservient to narrative via dialogue, and dialogue is intrinsically linked to the image via characters within the frame, then all sound is subservient to image via the narrative. Whereas, Jay Beck critiques Chion's position by saying that:

There is blind spot hidden by Chion's position: the fact that the film industry has created a bias approach to the production and postproduction process that perpetuates the idea of the dominance of image over sound. (Beck 2008, p.73)

Beck continues to note how the standardization of mixing during the Dolby era with dialogue at its objective centre 'ensured that the recording apparatus encapsulated and perpetuated the classical Hollywood divisions of labour' (Beck 2008, pp.75-77) and this technological determinism halted the ability of sound breaking out of its narratively bound cocoon. Chion's notion of causality equalling image subservience reflects once more this idea of 'image as truth' from Comolli's 'hegemony of the eye', and assumes it as the container of the narrative. Beck's position however, shows an awareness of this assumption and suggests that the industrial ideology of narrative intelligibility via dialogue is analogous to visual hegemony. Let us propose then a paradigm shift. The image is not the container of the narrative, with the sound added as Chion suggests. Rather, image and sound are two distinct modes of representation whose relationship shifts and intertwines to

form impressions of the narrative. Within this paradigm we might look for ways to balance the way these two modes are employed in narrative film.

If we look to Walter Murch's practices during the 1970s and following decades, we begin to see a way assert a sense of sound authorship throughout production and postproduction, and subsequently a way to break free of that cultural-industrial ideology. Murch's idea of the 'Sound Designer' (Weis, 1995) yields significant parallels that of François Trauffet's 'auteur' (1954), as a creative node that controls and determines the aesthetic and practical decisions of the film. While the auteur has often been aligned with the director as the stylistic control, this could be seen as a fallacy, as the root of the aesthetic and subsequent stylistic content comes primarily from the contributors that create or enact them. Murch's credit and indeed concept of 'Sound Designer', came from his work on Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), in which Murch was employed as both picture and sound editor - suggesting that this ultimate control over the sound was born from direct contact with the materials and shaping both simultaneously, thus creating a discourse between the two distinct modes (as opposed to image determining the use of sound - the hegemony). A notion thus arises that achieving balance in between these sensory modes might be found in their cohesive construction.

Another core aesthetic of narrative cinema that evolved with the coming of sound was the illusion of realism i.e. that what we saw, was a world existing within itself (a diegesis). For the early sound recordists, this formed a dilemma as far as the representation of perspective is concerned; how close to the sound source, is too close? Spatial literalism would result in unintelligibility, particularly on wide or medium shots and pure direct sound without the natural reflections of the environment would break the realist illusion. In the end, ultimate intelligibility won (under the auspice of vococentric narrative dependence), and the 'close' perspective became known as 'realistic' (Lastra 2000, pp.214-215).

Additionally, this world building via the illusion of reality built in itself a standardised form of montage in continuity editing, where the character's spatial and temporal positioning is maintained in order to ensure coherence of the action. 'For many years, particularly in the early years of sound film, that was the rule. You struggled to preserve continuity... it was seen as a failure of rigor or skill to violate it' (Murch 2001, p.17). The practice of continuity equally extends to the sound track, which through maintaining a sonic perspective aids in 'masking' the fragmentation of the filmic elements. Ann Doane suggests that this masking effect is the true ideology of the narrative film industry as the construct of film hides behind the twisted illusion of reality (Doane 1985 pp.54-62). Both Doane and Murch's ideas place the processes involved in this construction of filmic elements at the core of the discussion of finding balance between these representational modes.

So in light of all of the standardization over the past century in sound cinema, and to evoke the sentiment of Shinryi Suzuki's 'beginners mind', I desire to ask questions through my practice about how to adopt synchronisation, dialogue, realism and diegesis and indeed the fundamental processes of marrying sound and image. Before we continue our inquiry into contemporary modes of production, let us take short departure to consider the use of music in sound cinema, or rather, how to approach music in a more sonic fashion.

### **4.3 Sound Music Continuum**

In a seminar given at the University of Huddersfield, the celebrated sound recordist, filmmaker and contemporary musician/sound artist Chris Watson asked the rhetorical question, "Does anybody else think that there is not enough music in wildlife documentary?" (Chris Watson 2014). His statement, while heaped in sarcasm, poses a large question over how we use music and sound in film. While we are certainly aware of the emotive power of sound, there is a consistent trend in the automatic and persistent use of music for these emotive aims above sound. Maybe we can look to ways to approach our music that compliments or even favours sound somewhat.

A number of historic developments in music technology have allowed our perception of the possible divide between sound and music in popular culture to be significantly blurred. While in the academic and artistic sphere this blurring has been long established through the acousmatic and musique concrète traditions put in place by the Futurists movements during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The work of Luigi Russollo and later Pierre Schaeffer stand as the starting points of this work, reflecting on the industrialisation of the global landscape and the appropriation of the sonic textures and sound objects found within that environment with musical and artistic intent (Russollo 1913). Their efforts saw a philosophical departure from the view of music as a purely instrumental pursuit. They encouraged the use of contemporary developments in sound recording to expand the palette of timbres and sonic materials available to musicians.

In the popular music sphere, this appropriation of acousmatic sampled 'sounds objects', manipulated and augmented to musical effect has had exponential integration. Pink Floyd's *Money* (1973) with its use of cash registers and coins rhythmically arranged and integrated into its introduction and Lee 'Scratch' Perry's use of a baby's screams in *People Funny Boy* (1968) similarly cut and interspersed throughout the song display just two examples of a myriad of activity within popular music's foray into the use of sound beyond the instrumental. During the 1970s and 80s the innovation of synthesizers furthered the integration of sonic textures into popular music being adopted predominantly by dance music cultures, and subsequently denoting popular music's shift away from classical musical concepts of melody, harmony and counterpoint, towards one that favoured timbre, space and rhythm. These aesthetic developments acted in parallel to the modernist movements of the contemporary classical music, which also began to explore works that operated outside of standard tonalities and periodic rhythms, with Stravinsky's *the Rite of Spring* (1913) demonstrating an early example of this shift. Whether there is any direct link between trends in classical and popular music is unclear, but it demonstrates a broad cultural shift in our notions of music away from previous classical modes toward considering further aesthetic concerns. These aesthetic shifts have had even further affects since

the introduction of home computing and digital audio workstations (DAWs), resulting in a plethora of styles and musical cultures born from an appropriation of sound in a musical fashion. While they might lack the conceptual rigour that academic and the more abstracted art spheres would require of them to be 'true' to their radical roots, the appropriation of sonic aesthetic concerns have marked popular culture indefinitely.

Kevin Donnelly, in his book *Occult Aesthetics*, considers the unity that sound and music has achieved in the film soundtrack after the introduction of DAWs into the socio-technical realm. While sound's use is still 'overwhelmingly functional' the mixture of process and aesthetic has resulted in that fact that 'the distinct psychologies of sound and music have mixed' (Donnelly 2014, p.125). We could argue that this unity has always existed within the historical context of cinema and has been periodically amplified by technological innovation and appropriation. Consequently, within the dramatic cinematic aesthetic there are a number of examples where sound has been allowed to function in place of where we might usually use music. An early example lies within the transformation scene of Rouben Mamoullin's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), which abandoned a traditional music score to leave just the vocal strains of Fredric March's characterisation of Mr Hyde. This perhaps was a demonstration of the wonders of captured synchronous audio and without the support of music and sound effects feels bare, uncomfortable and overwhelmingly real given the fantastic nature of the event. Later, Louis and Bebe Barron's 'electronic tonalities' for Fred Wilcox's *The Forbidden Planet* (1956) consisted of a purely electronic soundtrack that supports the otherworldly and futuristic themes of the film. This built on the established electronic timbres brought into film music by the Theremin and further expanded the shift toward non-classical modes of sound production and aesthetics. In doing so it opened up a range of new uses and meaning of sound in film beyond the motif, toward timbre and texture as meaning makers.

More recent examples of the sonic shift toward timbre and texture reside in David Lynch and Alan Splet's *Eraserhead* (1977) in which, harsh, dissonant drones and sonic montage, infuse a sense dread and discomfort. Of particular

contemporary note is the Coen Brothers and sound designer Craig Berkey's *No Country for Old Men* (2007), which save for a few minimal tonal drones, is void of absolutely all conventional non-diegetic music similar to the transformation scene of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* - however this time leaving the atmospheres and sound tracks to provide a sense of morbid neutrality. The film, as a result of this, has a very sparse and empty feel, which reflects the narrative, and as such, the moments where the non-diegetic drones appear are even more jarring.

This reveals to us that our approach to film soundtracks does not have to be determined by classic literary concepts of music, utilising motif and conventional harmony to support characterisation and narrative development. Instead we are free to expand our palette to begin thinking about sound in musical form. The previously separated stems of music and sound no longer have to be segregated in our methods of production, meaning they might begin to create a dialogue of expression born from their mutual inception. However, to achieve this we must reflect on the way in which we produce film soundtracks and possibly revise our models to enable fluid intermodal discourse.

#### **4.4. Industry and Ideology of Production**

The use of Post-Marxist terminology throughout this paper is not by coincidence, particularly the focus on ideology - a mesh of combined concepts and ideals that an individual (or social group) subjugates themselves to by way of filtering their reality in accordance with said ideals; the Subject subjects themselves to a subject (Althusser 1969, p.180). Ideologies form a centralised part of the modern psyche, but rarely present themselves without coercion from bodies exterior to the individual, through what Althusser refers to as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) (pp.142-148). While Althusser explains the concept of ISAs in terms of the Church and religious indoctrination, the model stands equally strong for the cultural industries. The state may not necessarily refer directly to the nation state, but any institution or hierarchical structure that serves a controlling or dominating class, such as the culturally dominant production network, educational institute or distribution

sphere. The purpose of most forms of ideological programming is to assert the dominance of one class over another, often facilitated by dominant cultural modes via what Gramsci refers to as 'cultural hegemony' (Gramsci 1971). Culture is as much a part of capitalist industry as any other sphere and as Adorno critiques, is subject to the same pressures of conformity and institutionalisation in order to serve the production-reproduction (surplus value) cycle that capitalist society demands (Adorno 1944). These ideas give gravitas to the idea that an ideological and cultural bias towards vision could be propagated via institutional and cultural structures. In the film industry this comes primarily in the form of divisions of labour and the subsequent segregation of certain worker classes.

This discussion on the development of sound cinema has revolved primarily around Hollywood, which could be accused of being slightly short-sighted. However, Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson discuss Hollywood as a being a distinct 'mode of film practice... [That] consists of a set of widely held stylistic norms sustained by and sustaining an integral mode of film production' (1985a, p.xiv). With Bordwell further noting:

By virtue of its centrality within international film commerce, Hollywood cinema has crucially influenced most other national cinemas... As a narrational mode, classicism clearly corresponds to the idea of an 'ordinary film' in most cinema-consuming countries in the world. (Bordwell 1985b, p.166)

Bordwell's point suggests how a dominant class (such as Hollywood capital production) could impose its ideology toward modes of production on others via its cultural and industrial dominance (a distinctly hegemonic relationship). This is certainly true in the United Kingdom, where the common language and 'special' economic and political relationship has engendered a vast amount of cultural and industrial cross-pollination, especially evident in our cinema and TV imports and exports. While we retain a strong domestic product, is it fairly marginalised in comparison to the US import with distribution and exhibition (Loach 2012). On an industrial level, recent tax incentives and world-class production facilities have created a strong UK film and TV industry that continues to feed our content hungry media ecosystem - additionally looking

beyond the domestic to serve global exports of IP (intellectual property) and production material to predominantly US corporations and broadcasters (Creative Industries 2014). The influence of Hollywood industrial practices on domestic filmmaking culture is therefore more salient in UK than most other countries.

As mentioned by Jay Beck earlier, the divisions of labour within film production (as an ideological imprint of the Hollywood industrial model) put significant pressures on sound practitioners with respect to their interactions beyond simple causal, naturalist representations (such as Foley) and drive from ultimate intelligibility of the narrative. While the decentralisation of production away from the studio model of the golden era, towards what Amy McGill terms the indie era<sup>6</sup> created certain flexibilities with regards to the modes of production, this shift had a dramatic effect on the aesthetics and practices of sound practitioners (McGill 2008, pp.8-9). The work of Walter Murch, Ben Burt and Alan Splet are the most frequently referenced pioneers of this era who used the industrial freedoms to explore the boundaries of the contemporary technological and production obstacles, to push toward fresh 'sound as narration' aesthetics. As discussed earlier, Murch's approach as both a picture and sound editor allowed for cross medium discourse, resulting in a freedom to let the two interact, and subsequently, elevate sound above the construction of diegesis, towards independent narration and aesthetic exploration.

Although these trailblazers of the sound world had a dramatic effect on the way in which sound is integrated into the film production and postproduction process, we must remember that they represent just a few in vast sea of activity. While the work of Murch et al demonstrates the artistic and narrative value of sound, there is evidence to suggest that it is currently not so well understood in the UK industry, and that certain ideological concepts towards the 'proper' mode of production are proliferated through hegemonic

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<sup>6</sup> A break in the studio model whereby independent production companies distributed, financed and produced their own material without the control of the Majors, causing a deregulation on labour divisions. However, certain union enforced labour divisions still remain.

relationships, from 'dominant' production classes favouring visual-worker classes and subsequently negatively delineating sound-worker classes.

Modern sound practices are for the most part incredibly segregated from the rest of the production and postproduction workflows, which has created a perceptual void with respects to how those that are not directly involved with soundtrack understand it. As John Coffrey (and others) set out in *An Open Letter From Your Sound Department*:

Unlike the work of the majority of the people who are working for on-camera results, the mixer's efforts cannot be 'seen' on the set. Almost no one hears what the microphone picks up. Too few are sure just what we do. (Coffrey et al. n.d.)

On the issues within the postproduction sphere, one anonymous opinion piece from the BECTU Sound Values<sup>7</sup> social media page, reads:

Our status and profile has been eroded. Not many producers know what is involved in our work anyway, but given the extra distance between us and them, they know (and possibly care) even less than they used to. They simply want the cheapest deal they can get and more and more rely on facilities prompted by PPS's [Post Production Supervisors] to get this... The result of this is lower pay structures and less respect given to our professional skills. (Anon / Evans 2014)

This segregation results in many cases with sound being significantly marginalised with respect to the resources and time afforded to it. Consequently, this limits sound practitioners to execute the most basic elements of their practice and negates opportunities for them to interact with the project in a way that empowers them beyond the classic notions of diegetic narrative subservience. While it's difficult to gauge proof of the negative effect of this segregation on sound practitioners and the 'quality' of work produced, we might look to the recent scandal with the BBC's *Jamaica Inn*, in which an unclear oversight with the mix, broadcast or quality control resulted in totally unintelligible dialogue (Ellis-Peterson 2014).

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<sup>7</sup> Sound Values is an ongoing campaign from the union BECTU, campaigning for equality of pay and a further understanding of sound practices in the UK Film and TV industry.

The segregation is however, not only on an industrial level, but a technological level as well. Larry Sider<sup>8</sup> commented on this issue saying:

“When we started working with digital [in postproduction], sound had different equipment. Up until that point sound and picture on film were using the same equipment everybody used Pic Syncs or Steinbecks or Moviolas. The material was the same, sprocketed film and magnetic film. But then when you've got AVID [Media Composer] and ProTools, sound people had one platform and editing people had another. And that *really* divided them. So the two couldn't meet very easily”. (Sider 2014)

In recent years an effort has been made to enable further interactions between sound and picture platforms via the exchange of Edit Decision Lists (EDLs) and third party conform programs such as Titan and Virtual Katy, which recognise edit changes and adjust projects accordingly. This ability to read, write and recall media from the same server allows for a greater ease of back and forth, particularly with evolving edits. However a large price tag (c \$900) and the fact that exchanges are limited to region positions and basic metadata (like pan and volume) force track effects to be locked to their respective platforms. Furthermore, the destructive editing of files on the server can prove risky due to large-scale file identification issues (a change in file configuration results in a platform not being able to identify and recall its required data). These issues culminate in most practitioners resorting to the more stable exchange of OMF and AAF transfers<sup>9</sup>. However, these are snapshot transfers and do not allow for changes to edit to be automatically reciprocated between platforms over time. Any discourse between platforms then relies on a large file back and forth.

In light of these industrial and technological constraints, we must remember that filmmaking does not have to be a purely industrial enterprise with heavy

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<sup>8</sup> Larry Sider is a picture and sound editor who worked with the Quay Brothers among others throughout the 1980s and 1990s later becoming the Director of the School of Sound. Most notable for its platform for further discussion and exchange across academic and industrial spheres with the biannual SoS Symposium.

<sup>9</sup> I'm referring to mostly freelance practitioners. The larger facilities often utilise these processes for ease of conform from NLE to DAW, but rarely back again.

segregation between practitioners and platforms. In further discussion with Larry Sider on this issue:

“I think you have any kind of model that you want based on what kind of film you’re making. If you’re making a big budget, feature film then the business model for it says that different people do different things at different times and they’re rarely the same people. Farther down the scale you go to artist filmmakers you can make it anyway you want. You can work with people in different jobs, take your pick. There’s a long tradition in documentary that the director does sound recording. [Such as] Fred Wiseman and Nick Broomfield, because they wanted to have the crew smaller but they also wanted to have this contact with the material, with the subject, that they didn't get that by standing back just being a director... so I think it's just how you want to involve yourself”. (Sider 2012)

Sider’s comments reveal the notion that even though a dominant ideology toward a professional mode of production exists, that does not mean that as filmmakers we have to resort to it. And in the pursuit of an artistic endeavour, we might look past those dominant modes to other ways in which to make sound more integral to narration.

One particular approach within the independent filmmaking sphere, which has gained significant momentum of the past few decades, is guerrilla filmmaking (Jones & Jolliffe 2010). Characterised by its extreme low-to-no budgets and skeleton crews, guerrilla filmmaking bypasses the controls of industrialised modes by its lack of complex labour divisions. At its core is the simply the want to make films using the resources immediately available to the filmmakers. Notable pioneers of the practice who achieved commercial success via this mode include Oren Peli with his debut feature film *Paranormal Activity* (2007)<sup>10</sup> and Robert Rodriguez who remains an idol of guerrilla filmmaking with his film *El Mariachi* (1992) and subsequent book on the process *Rebel Without a Crew* (Rodriguez 1995).

Rodriguez epitomises the vanguard of this modern filmmaking ideology by refusing to conform to those dominant modes and in parallel to Murch and

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<sup>10</sup> Budget of \$15000 returned \$193,355,800 Worldwide (IMDB 2014).

others before him, bending structures and technologies to serve his purpose. Furthermore, Rodriguez remains one of few true directorial auteurs in Hollywood - writing, editing and composing his own films. He particularly makes use of the cross platform exchanges to control the way his soundtracks interact with the edit (Donnelly 2014, p.125), exploiting the wealth of technological advancements in recent decades to allow himself to become a node through which almost every aspect of the films aesthetics and form flows through.

The wealth of independent film festivals (Raindance.org 2014) and other platforms (such as online communities like Vimeo, and the international Kino movement<sup>11</sup>) with which to showcase, collaborate and develop these new modes of film production further legitimise them as a model for filmmaking. In the UK, the broadcaster Channel 4, which has its roots in representing the independent producer, and the BBC both represent major platforms for emerging talent (Jones 2012), who often originally make their mark with the guerrilla mode of production and receive critical acclaim through the independent film festivals. This leaves us asking significant questions about how we make films, how we fund them and how to showcase them that subvert the assumed 'proper' mode? Looking ahead, we find ourselves in an unusually powerful position of freedom and opportunity to go forward and push boundaries with respects to how we approach the production and exhibition of modern cinema.

The following sections look to discuss the practical element of this thesis. Having been framed by the previous discussions, they attempt to put in place a number of suggestions towards how to empower sound practices in narrative cinema.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Kino is a worldwide network of independent filmmakers who strive to create short films in a collaborative spirit. The network is made of numerous cells located around the globe'. (planetekino.com N.D.)

## 5. PRODUCING THE SHORT FILM *FADE*

### *Problems and Solutions*

#### 5.1 Intentions and False Beginnings

The primary goal of this MA by Research was to make a classic narrative film, but to do so in a way that empowered the soundtrack to become more involved in the development of, and representations within, the narrative. This was initially seen as counter approach to some of the creative limitations put on others and myself by particular workflow and labour constraints in the professional field. This resulted in the short film *Fade*.

*Fade* is a 15-minute short narrative film, which could be considered to be within the genre of the romantic-tragedy. Penny, a young artist, is faced with the reality of losing her vision (a metaphor for the research goals) while Seb, a scruffy and clumsy admirer, provides her with support as their relationship develops. Using a non-linear narrative, we move temporally between memories and witness snapshots of their love story, while the memories slowly converge into reality. The film takes a conceptual approach to synchronisation and diegesis to play poetically with the removal of sound from its causal roots within the image, via a developed approach referred to as *flux*.

Before the central methodology and direction was asserted there were a number of directions that the research took in its early stages. The following chapter discusses these approaches and how they eventually led to the film *Fade*.

An early direction was radical and centred around a manifesto (Appendix Fig. 1 – p.70). This attitude was flawed because it reached conclusions based on impressions and not research. The idea of a manifesto is one I stand by, and in time I may come to write a more considered statement. The success of filmic manifestoes from Surrealist, Futurist, Free Cinema, and Dogme95 movements have had a profound effect on the nature and aesthetics of cinema. As such they are proof of the power that radicalism in cultural

movements can provide. On reflection, some of the points made in that manifesto are ones that remain relevant to me, particularly those that deal with accessibility, subversion and possibility, which reflect my interests in pursuing methods for empowering sound rather than it being subordinate to vision. Dick Hebdige's writings on subcultures provide some relevant thoughts on how to achieve this goal, stating that subcultures appropriate the signs and paradigms of the dominant class and re-work them to express the thoughts and feelings of the subversive class (Hebdige 1993, pp.358-59). These thoughts on accessibility and subversion were certainly fresh in my mind throughout the process of the project, and the few scenes that take subtle aesthetic detours from standard forms show this.

Before reaching the looser more plural philosophy of film as experienced phenomenon (as discussed earlier), I was interested in a structuralist approach that sought to construct and evaluate specifically targeted models toward representational categories. This structuralism was to be realised through a four-act film called, *Skin, Muscle, Organ & Body*<sup>12</sup>. The preoccupation at this stage with a structuralist approach could possibly be seen as a symptom of coming from an analytical academic background that had to that point indoctrinated me to think of film as mostly structures of codified signs. That is not to say that film does not contain these structures, however, I feel that this perspective creates synthetic approach akin to painting by numbers, missing the 'affective' and visceral point. I maintain that intellectual exploration through a filmic medium is not necessarily a bad thing (*Fade* and this paper are in some ways guilty of that), with the proviso that the film is upfront about its intellectualism and retains a prevailing goal of visceral affection.

The structuralism of the film was linked to two quite reductive models of reception that attempted to further pigeonhole film into categories. The first model aimed at categorising modes of representations into mood, action and environment, and illustrates their persistent interrelationship (Appendix Fig. 2

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<sup>12</sup> The screenplay for the first act can be read in the appendix (Fig. 5 – p.72). It includes a brief synopsis of the act's aims and visual aesthetics.

– p.70). The second model was an attempt to expand Claudia Gorbman's thoughts on the three categories of diegetic space (diegetic, non-diegetic and meta-diegetic) (Gorbman 1976). It looked to demonstrate multiple diegeses centred around the dominant narration space (Appendix Fig. 3 – p.71). However, both presented the same problems that most models show, which is they simplified the subjective, sensual and unstable experience of watching a film into a reductive set of measures that did not represent the heterogeneity of the reception. With further work, the diegetic model could prove useful, if only to provide further language to the analytic field.

Eventually, *Skin, Muscle, Organ & Body* was put on hold because of logistical reasons. It required a devoted cast of five people and a number of specific, quite difficult locations (especially with health and safety concerns). All of this had to be achieved with no budget. While I tried for several months to get the film started - securing most of the locations - eventually it was the dependence on a number of core actors that caused me and my collaborator to follow a much simpler production centred around two characters.

Alongside this central piece, a more conceptual art piece *Кино из Глаз (A Cinema of Eyes)* (DVD Extra) was carried out in parallel with an international collaborator, Olga Molchanova. *Кино из Глаз (A Cinema of Eyes)* was officially produced as part of her studies at the IFS Köln where we had met in 2012. We took equal roles in conceptualising, shooting, editing and producing the short film's picture and sound. We had both been exploring audio-visual relationships and had similar ideas about empowering sound through structural forms within a more abstract cine-art context. The core concept was to remove almost all of the major signifying features from the image by focusing the frame purely on the eyes (an exception was made for the use of stylistic filters to aid in differentiating the micro narratives). By reducing the *mise-en-scene*, we aimed to empower the sound to perform almost all of the narrative drive through the *mise-en-bande*. This was achieved through 'realist' dramatic depth (exposition of action and environment mixed with acoustic perspective) facilitated through reduced, semantic and causal listening (Chion 1994, pp.25-28). The narratives were largely generic and therefore made

using widely understood signs. Causal relationships between the micro actions within the frame and these sound objects, create the illusion of action outside of the frame, along with many other complex representations of environment and the protagonist's physicality. This was done largely without dialogue. Consequently it looked to disprove Chion's denial of the strength of inter-relationships within the *mise-en-scène*. As such, I see the image as practically redundant, save a few gestural and minor contextual augmentations that it affords.

*Кино из Глаз (A Cinema of Eyes)* took the aesthetic of Herz Frank's *10 Minutes Older* (1978) by focussing on a single protagonist and viewing his reaction while the sound track exposes the details of the situation or narrative. While the concept could have proved stronger by using the exact same visual element in each micro-narrative, we felt that because the composition and *mise-en-scène* (or lack of) remained 'similar' in its aesthetic, the effect would sustain. Equally, by enabling the visual to change, we allowed the piece to take on its own macro narrative and thus be treated somewhere in between a conventional narrative and cinematic 'art'. This was very much a breeding ground for the ideas that would later surface in *Fade*, particularly those that deal with macro and meta narratives and the use of 'reduced images' to enable sound exposition. This idea of the 'reduced image' has a similar approach to Yasujiro Ozu's 'shot of nothing' (Crittenden 2013), in which a simplistic, reduced image provides a visual representation with no obvious meaning or purpose beyond its nothingness. Because of this, the audience might ascribe that shot with his or her own meaning, or in our case, provide a space to empower the sound to fulfil narrative denotation or connotation.

To return to the film *Fade*, having decided on a simpler narrative my collaborator and I looked to develop ideas for the production. After a short test shoot (DVD extra) to experiment with the visual aesthetic, which revealed the use of Bokeh as a central visual interest, the ideas for *Fade* began to surface as the rest of the thesis began to build. It was at this point that 'the beginner's mind' came forward, as we stripped away many of the conceptual 'themes' for a looser more malleable story as a basis for improvisation and

experimentation. What remained would centre on the reduction of visual stimulus to enable sound narration. The artist's loss of sight parallels this as a metaphor for the research aim. The following sections describe the collaborative implications of the project and the changes and conflicts that occurred as a result.

## **5.2. Collaboration**

Filmmaking is an inherently collaborative process. It requires the skills and patience of multiple people that often go through phases of creative cohesion, conflict, resolve and compromise. A successful production is one that brings these fluctuating egos, voices and skills together toward an artistic goal. Filmmaking unlike most other art forms (for example, photography, sculpture or painting) is one that is openly all about co-operation and collaboration, with very few auteurs that truly interact with and own all elements of the film aesthetic. Those that are 'full' auteurs are usually limited by their inability to master everything; this is certainly true of myself with respect to camera work and possibly picture editing. Robert Hargrove in *Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration* states that 'people are inspired to collaborate when they imagine a goal or complex problem that is deeply meaningful to them and they recognize that they can't accomplish it alone'. *Fade* was no different in this respect and three people became instrumental in its development: the main collaborator Tommy O'Connor and the two actors Poppy Olah and Scott Dyet.

Tommy and I had worked on a number of projects together before *Fade*, ranging from short films to TV pilots, 'Live at Abbey Road' style music programs and more recently, a feature film. Tommy previously worked for The Farm Group situated in Media City Salford as an editor for broadcast television. However, he had become disenchanted with the industrial, production line nature of the work and wanted to pursue his own filmmaking career as a freelancer, making music videos and short featurettes for private organisations. Besides being a skilled editor, he was a knowledgeable Director of Photography (DoP) and was ostensible a holistic, independent filmmaker.

Our skills exchange worked for the most part very well. Tommy had significantly more industrial and cinematographic knowledge than me. However, he had very little technical knowledge when it came to sound. In the beginning of our working relationship we had clear boundaries and we stuck to them. I approached Tommy about shooting *Skin, Muscle, Organ and Body* to which he agreed, with the proviso that he was allowed to take ultimate creative control of the image. However, after the failed attempts to get the film through pre-production I decided that I needed much more of his help than just being a DoP. He had helped enormously with the small victories in preproduction that we had up to that point (finding actors and suggesting locations). This would result in him initially taking most of the producer's responsibility and finalising a screenplay that was more achievable given our means.

As a result of our diminutive means, *Fade* was produced in a guerrilla filmmaking style which by its nature is the almost antithesis of industrial commercial filmmaking, in that it does not follow the usual industrial formalities of location permits, production insurance or even contractual engagements with cast or crew. It was made with no budget, which required props and costumes to be provided by the collaborators, and often consisted of a skeleton crew of just Tommy and myself. It was for the most part, an artistic endeavour that was void of any commercial implication. That is, it was not produced with the intention of being sold or distributed via industrial means. Internet and festival distribution is another matter and generally because the film is a short and of limited commercial appeal, it is not likely to generate a profit, if any.

Because of the lack of capital, the film relied on the free time of all involved, which proved difficult with busy work schedules. This meant that filming often took place one day at a time, and weeks apart, which is highly unusual. This fragmented the production dramatically and led to a number of continuity errors that would later resurface in the postproduction. However, it likewise created a very strong relationship between the cast and crew. While we had

worked for only a few days together, we had effectively known each other for months by the end of the production (primarily through discussion on social networking). As the ending scenes were shot near the end of the production, the two actors show a believable chemistry on screen, which might not have been present if we had shot over a condensed period.

Since the introduction of home video cameras to the market in the 1960s, independent and guerrilla filmmaking has gone through a number of technological and aesthetic shifts. The recent availability of video capable DSLR cameras has marked independent and guerrilla filmmaking with its aesthetic. The full-frame sensors found on most semi-professional video DSLRs is remarkably similar to that of 35mm film cameras, enabling a similar control on the depth of field, image quality and subsequently producing a 'film look', as opposed to the 'deep focus' of modern domestic camcorders. *Fade* made use of range of Canon DSLRs (5D mkII, mkIII, 60D and 550D) appropriating this visual aesthetic, particularly through the prevalent use of Bokeh (a blurred aesthetic caused by the lens when objects are out of focus). This fitted with the subject matter of the film whilst equally allowing 'reduced' images with which to allow the sound to operate in a narratively leading way.

Unlike our previous films together, our roles on *Fade* would take a very different dynamic. Previously, I had worked very much beneath Tommy, as is the standard practice on sets and in postproduction, where sound follows image in its hegemonic servitude. However, in *Fade* we were not so heavily segregated. While we maintained that he controlled camera and I controlled sound, we were theoretically both 'directing' the film. In the beginning I was very quiet in expressing my opinions, as it was often a lot easier to let him lead, since he was much more experienced with directing actors. Over time this changed quite dramatically and not so much by design. Around three quarters of the way into shooting, Tommy experienced a family emergency meaning that he was unable to contribute to the film for a significant period. Up to this moment, I had been taking on producer duties, such as finding locations and organising the shoot logistics. The effect of Tommy taking leave from the project meant that suddenly I became the director auteur, controlling

the performances, the shot composition (directing the camera operator) and the sound recording. This again led to some fragmentation in the footage as the directing style shifted. One of the outcomes of this directorial shift, which possibly stemmed from my ambivalence and lack of experience in the role, was the inclusion and development of accidental moments.

A significant distinction between our directing styles was in our use of structure on sets. Tommy took a very formal approach that followed the script for the most parts exactly. He expected the actors to take on much of the responsibility of character motivation themselves, while concentrating on setting up the shot on camera. I, however, was much more interested in the internal conflicts of characters and spent more time discussing and questioning with actors the underlying motivations of each scene. Whilst it dramatically slowed the procedure down, the shift to a looser, improvisational model helped with the subtle undertones of the film that would later emerge. The distinction between our two approaches is in some ways parallel to the distinction between sound and image made by Ann Doane earlier. Tommy as a primarily visual practitioner could be seen as someone who wanted the delivery of the core narrative elements in a clear and concise fashion, whereas I, as a sound practitioner was more inclined to the emotional undertones than the obvious narrative developments.

### **5.3. Production**

As discussed earlier, the screenplay to *Fade* was written by my collaborator Tommy O'Connor. This was done as a means to engender some ownership on his part as well as ensure the film was within our humble means. While the specifics of most of the dialogue, stage directions and visual aesthetic were his, the themes, broad narrative and goals of the screenplay were jointly written and a rough treatment was mind-mapped between us.

Writing short film is incredibly difficult because you're trying to deliver to the audience the sort of impact that they would expect from a feature film, but in a much smaller package. To us [the audience] we don't think that we're watching something different, it's just another screen experience. (Parker 2012)

Any narrative in a dramatic cinematic sense needs a dynamic narrative arc with tension and a resolve. In order to do this 'you need to have at least two clear plotlines and big enough question hanging over the narrative to sustain interest' (Parker 2012). For this reason we decided on three basic plotlines, which consisted of:

1. The love story between Penny and Seb as a 'generic' narrative archetype.
2. The loss of vision for Penny as an artist, which creates an emotional tension that runs throughout.
3. The meta-narrative of the night-time car journey to create some structural conflict and tension - eventually resolving to reveal the climax of plotline 1.

The screenplay that Tommy wrote, titled *Upon Deaf Eyes* (Appendix Fig.6 – p.76), was worked as draft with the intention that we would use it as blueprint to improvise and experiment with. This allowed us to go into the film's production knowing that certain elements might change or disappear. For example, in the original screenplay is a fourth sub-plotline that revolved around Seb being a musician - this was a vehicle designed to enable 'interesting' things for the music to do, such as inter-diegetic transitions. This element was dropped through the shooting process as the actor possessed little signs of rhythm or musical ability and it complicated the notion further.

As discussed by Larry Sider earlier, since the move to digital, sound and image postproduction has largely been performed on separate platforms with little integration between the two. In contrast to this all of the postproduction for *Fade* would be performed by one person acting as picture editor, sound editor and composer, in an attempt to emulate the analogue era of Sider and Murch's past, and subsequently laying the foundation to enable discourse between the modes while mediating those still segregated platforms. Within the usual production model, the film enters into a state of 'picture lock' before the sound and music can be finalised or in some cases, even begun. One reason this exchange is not so frequently used is due to the lack of backward compatibility sending OMFs from ProTools (or any other DAW) back to platforms like Final Cut Pro (or other NLEs). Only by using a third party plugin

(Automatic Duck) could I solve the lack of backwards OMF importing between these two platforms. This plugin was not without its bugs, with regions and files often not being transferred correctly. The resolve was to import stemmed and raw sound files directly into FCP for sketching and some minor manipulation. It was a seriously un-streamlined workflow and labour intensive for what should be a simple function. Regardless of the technical issues, by making use of these exchange protocols (bugs and all), I managed some discourse between sound and film, transcending the labour division and empowering narrative and aesthetic decisions to be determined by sound, thus breaking the hegemonic determinism.

After all of the scenes had been shot, I was ostensibly to become the ultimate auteur of the film's final form. Tommy was no longer a part of the production and I would begin working by myself. This idea of the auteur is concurrent with François Truffaut's notion of '*la politique des auteurs*' (Truffaut, 1954) by which all aesthetic and dramatic elements would be brought in line to my apparent political ideology of needing balance between sound and image. This approach did not come without its issues. Becoming too close to the project provided a number of obstacles throughout the process, blinding me to aesthetic choices that were too confusing or significantly disrupted the narrative in an undesirable way. Frequent showings to those around me from the academic, filmic and social world allowed me to gauge reactions and ask questions about possible solutions. This enabled a detached perspective that I lacked from time to time.

Having now shot the footage and developed a loose methodological framework for cross platform discourse in postproduction, I set about trying to resolve the philosophical conflicts discussed so far, construct the film *Fade* and the conceptualisation of the flux approach. The following sections discuss the aesthetic and further procedural decisions involved in the project.

## 6. POST-PRODUCTION

### *Decisions, Process and Aesthetics*

#### 6.1 Narrative Reshuffle

As the film's shooting progressed a few days after each shoot I would become reacquainted with the raw footage (dailies or rushes). This is standard practice for the editor and director as they watch the footage, noting the takes that worked and selecting elements with which to build the film. It is a process that largely favours the visual and dialogue elements and looks towards building the core of the narrative through these two direct modes.

While it seems contrary to my aim, I created an edit of the full film that followed the screenplay scene-by-scene and resulted in a wildly fluctuating and discontinuous tone. On reflection, I suggest this was due to the shifts in direction during production. If I had been making a truly conventional film this would have been a disaster, it would have required reshoots and even more time spent out capturing footage. However, for my needs it was perfect, as I had a wealth of different shots and performances and a lot of quite abstract, 'reduced' imagery, totalling somewhere in the region of 12 hours raw footage. Since having already created an edit of the whole film I was very familiar with practically all 12 hours of the dailies, and so I began to rethink what the structure and final themes of the narrative could become.

This would result in cutting away a large amount of the extraneous and contradictory scenes and trying to focus on the characters' relationship and emotional developments in a clean, quick and concise way. This basic form could then be interspersed with more abstract poetic sections that could both provide sensual pleasure and tension in their aesthetic whilst simultaneously providing loose hints to the wider narrative arcs. The centre of my criticism of the original edit was the lack of emotional dynamic; solving this problem was the stimulus for the new edit. Based on my existing impressions from the first edit I formulated a diagram (Appendix Fig. 4 – p.71) to express the core narrative events and their emotive motivations. This would become the

backbone of the new edit and around it I would aim to augment and even dramatically change the emotive content of scenes through the soundtrack.

## **6.2 Flux Aesthetic**

The core aesthetic approach I chose to implement is one I refer to as flux. One of the most significant hurdles in conceptualising my approach was to find a way to allow both the narrative intelligibility often employed from dialogue, characterisation and diegetic world building, while also creating moments and sequences that allowed sound's more sensorial, emotional and intangible plurality to function in a challenging and affecting way that would equally enhance the narrative. Flux as an approach is centred on subtle but varied levels of shifting synchronicity within audio-visual relationships. It allows the filmmaker to present sound objects with and without their obvious causal relationships. As such, it plays with the 'poetic' response that Chion ascribes to 'loose' synchronisation noting the post-dubbed dialogue in classic Italian cinema as the perfect example (Chion 1994, pp.64-65). Walter Murch also suggests that in the case of sound lacking obvious causality, it creates a conflict in the audience's perception which demands the receiver to look beyond the realistic relationships perhaps creating unique interpretations towards subtext or underlying complexities within the narrative (Murch, 2000).

Flux is not simply loose in Chion's sense, but a free, conscious aesthetic approach that enables unrestricted and poetic movement between all levels of synchronicity and causal locality; from tight and rigid through looser poetic forms leaning toward asynchronous parallel to asynchronous contrapuntal. In doing so it can appropriate multiple modes of affection and meaning based on the audio-visual stimulus presented. It enables the 'realist' diegesis to bend in on itself and expose cracks for the poetic and abstract sensual moments to emanate from.

While its most obvious uses in *Fade* are in the applications of dialogue, it is also employed in the music and sound effects. The focus on dialogue is because it is here that holds the most potential for exploration, using narrative cinema's dominant mode of vococentricism as a bedrock of common

understanding for subversion (in line with Hebdige's thoughts on subcultural style). At the core of flux, is its exploitation of Altman's view on 'gravity free' cinematic events, as the transient attention of the audience picks up on different events in the film. Flux looks to present subtle variations to exploit that transient nature. While one person might receive a moment of tight synchronisation, others might not and instead notice a looser or asynchronous relationship, affecting their perception and subsequent reading of the audio-visual stimulus. Fundamentally, I see it as the central way to allow sound to become balanced with the image as it fractures the notions of absolute visual locality as well as the exposing the construct of the filmic form (Doane's notion of masking). By doing this, flux encourages the audience to search for extended meanings as both modes provide fluctuating levels of signification and sensorial experience, in order to enhance the narrative with their personalised logical conclusions.

The following sections describe how this approach among others were utilised in *Fade* and provide some self-analysis as to what the motivations were to those choices. It is important to note, that this self-analysis is how I retrospectively interpreted the decisions made. Throughout the work I made some effort to not overthink decisions and to work intuitively, although I'd be lying if at times I wasn't searching to implement an idea given the politically charged and biased nature of my position in relation to the practice. Through discussion with peers and colleagues, I am aware the themes and ideas are not always received and inversely come across extremely strongly to an informed few - this I see as strength to the work. Plurality and subtlety are values I hold highly in filmmaking and I do not believe they need to be quantified or qualified directly, as it then begins to reduce those qualities into rigid forms and not the personal, introverted perspectives that they deserve to be. Instead, I see the creative work to be an analogue for this academic discussion - a proof of the politics and philosophies in practice that operate in the background of the production.

Subchapter titles appearing in italics such as *Destroy*, denote a discussion centred on particular a scene of the same name, which can be accessed via the scene menu of the DVD.

### **6.3 Realism & Foley**

It's important to note that while I aimed to approach the sound in way that treated the narrative in more sensory and experiential fashion through flux, this did not mean I would adopt it uniformly and abandon the use of synchronous dialogue or the 'realist' construction of the diegesis through Foley and atmosphere. Similar to the discussion above on the focus of flux with dialogue, the use of such techniques creates a bedrock of familiarity with the audience, as well as the basis for the more abstracted flux moments to contrast, creating a perceptual dynamic. The Foley work throughout the film is for the most part quite persistent. It was the very last element to be added, as by its nature (a synchronous mode of representation) it often requires a locked image to be performed to. More than anything, the use of Foley and atmosphere in a 'realist' sense, certainly employs the 'true ideology' of industry as mentioned by Ann Doane earlier, as it masks the fragmentation of the captured production sound. Regardless of this, the choice of particular timbres and editing decisions enabled contrasts and conflicts to be engendered.

#### **6.3.1 *Destroy, Together and Rebuild***

In the studio destruction scene, *Destroy*, all of the synchronous sound is not production sound but Foley, as it aimed to provide an intimate 'hyper-real'<sup>13</sup> proximity to Penny as she struggles with her inner conflict. This quality of sound was not present in the location audio, as it was shot on a scratch set built inside a working mill and as such was a loud, reverberant environment that felt undesirable given the emotionally heightened sense of the scene. One of the characteristics of this scene, which I think lends itself to its dramatic nature and highlights the characters physical and mental state, is the anti-climatic softness of the Foley while Penny destroys her work. I was

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<sup>13</sup> In the Holminson's sense of the word as technical augmented reality (1997, p. xvi) not Baudrillard's.

inclined to make each sweep of the table pronounced and fulfilling, but its delicate nature perhaps highlights Penny's fragility in this moment. This contrasts the surreal and slightly aggressive nature of the water sounds during *Together*. During the beginning of the scene *Destroy*, Penny enters the room in slow motion, and as such the Foley take on a loose and poetic form of synchronisation. This effect happens at a number of other moments throughout the film, in keeping with the flux approach. This loose synchronisation allows for both a sense of 'realism' through the representation of actions, but similarly provides a surreal effect by its loose interaction with the image.

During the final credit scene *Rebuild*, we return to Penny as she exposes a new phase in her story, coming to terms with her lack of sight and moving forward with her life. In a similar fashion to the scene *Destroy*, all the synchronous sound is Foley and provides closeness to the character that could not be found in the production sound. However, its tight synchronisation in contrast to earlier scenes of a similar setting (Penny's artistic subplot) create a convergence of the fluctuating aesthetics toward realism and hint towards concreting the narrative resolution. This scene also provides a noticed departure from the standard credit music, as the film generally uses music (in its classic sense) in a very minimal and sparing way, it made sense to continue this right through until the end.

### **6.3.2 *Mix and Touch***

While the sounds in these scenes do not strictly constitute Foley, they provide a prominent contrast to the 'realistic' use of sound within the frame seen throughout the film. These are the moments that utilise the flux approach most significantly with respect to non-dialogue or ambient elements.

In the case of *Mix*, the sound is presented in direct synchronisation, only to develop into a looser, asynchronous gesture, that could be read as reflecting the morphological micro-developments in the image, such as, the fractal dispersion of the paint in water. In combination with the ambient 'music', this effect looks to create a synesthetic sensorial pleasure through its audio-visual

fluctuations and possible relationships. While the main motivation for this scene is in its sensorial pleasure (reflecting the notion of the 'cinema of attractions' from Gunning), it also provides a foundation for later development toward a narrative exposition, in this case revealing Penny's artistic practice.

In contrast to this, the scene *Touch* provides a similar function but in reverse. Having already become accustomed to the signifiers of the 'music' and the light overlays, we are presented with an acousmatic detachment from any visual causality and further movements within the frame do not correlate with the sounds provided. This finally resolves into synchronisation with the opening of a paint tube. However, the same sound is further presented along with later images such as the mixing of paint. This creates conflict questions of what the function of this audio-visual source bonding is (Smalley 2007, p.12). While it's a quite a subtle differentiation between the sounds and they are both represented with fluctuating synchronicity, I suggest that the duality of its representation creates a subtle tension that reflects the notion of Penny's emotional conflict at the centre of her artistic struggle.

#### **6.4 Dialogue, Flux and Diegesis**

*Fade* as a whole makes frequent use of dialogue. However, a conscious effort was made to try and experiment with ways with which to employ it as discussed in an earlier chapter. The two most dominant forms amongst narrative cinema are the diegetic 'realist' synchronisation that follows the lip movements of the on-screen characters and the non-diegetic or sometimes meta-diegetic, voice over. As I discussed earlier, the use of the classic synchronous realist form was employed to create a sense of normality and the few scenes that adopt this approach require no further explanation. However, the vast majority of the dialogue in *Fade* attempts to present dialogue in a more poetic and evocative manner through flux and subtle nuances in diegetic locality. The following sections describe these intentions and processes.

##### **6.4.1 Remember, Spirit and Meaning**

During the introduction and subsequent car scenes, the dialogue heard over the radio could be seen as a being embedded within the diegesis as it comes

from the radio; Chion refers to this as 'on-the-air' (1994, p.76). I employed Walter Murch's concept of 'worldising' or playing back a recording into an environment to then recapture the acoustics and tonality that it produces. This hints at the fact that this dialogue is situated within the diegesis and subsequently being heard by characters (Jarret & Murch N.D.). The radio dialogue equally produces a sense of being outside of the film looking in as a form of meta-narration, essentially a double function; asking questions of the dialogues significance to the characters listening to it, and equally the implications of this dialogue to the broader notions of the film. The two people talking are myself and peer Stephen Harvey. The aim was to create a fictional projection of myself to discuss some of the philosophies that underpins the film, such as memory, spirituality and the search for meaning. By employing a fictional projection it would allow me to detach myself from the character and comment on the issues of the film, from within it, without being too concerned about the fact that it was 'me' talking.

#### **6.4.2 17:58**

The scene 17:58 is possibly one of the most successful and obvious uses of the flux approach. It was certainly one that received a lot of attempts to reach a state that would work. It was one of the scenes in the first edit that felt particularly jarring, as the emotional tone of pro-filmic elements (performance) did not fit the trajectory that the narrative arc needed. This would be solved with one of three unconventional ADR (Automatic Dialogue Replacement) sessions that I would undertake with the actors. Conventional ADR involves the performance of dialogue in synchronisation with a looping section of a scene displayed on a screen in the studio. The actors attempt to recreate their previously performed dialogue to be edited back into scene and mixed with the reconstructed elements (atmosphere and Foley). John Purcell in *Dialogue Editing for Motion Pictures*, creates an extremely negative view of ADR stating:

Everybody loves original production sound, so there's no point discussing the magic of the sound from the shoot, when the actors were hyped and in character. There's always the concern that

replacing the originals with studio recordings will kill the charm.  
(Purcell 2007, p.247)

Our approach completely disregarded the need for performed synchronisation and as such removed the mundane slaving to a looped image that creates this impression that Purcell asserts. We played out the scene as if we were being filmed and looked to engender the same atmosphere that the film set would have, calling “action”, “cut” and focusing on performance. Along the way we discussed motivations, nuances and changes to be incorporated into the dialogue with a view to effectively rebuild the scene around sound. These sound takes were then cut up and edited together to reach the desired narrative and emotional goals. This made notable use of the OMF exchange protocols to send edited and cleaned sound back and forth between ProTools and Final Cut. The visual edit took a number of directions. First starting with artificially slowed down footage, before resolving on the edited realist temporality. In this sense, the footage was edited to dialogue and not the other way round, as is convention in ADR practices. The eventual edit is highly influenced by a scene in Harold Pinter and Joseph Losey’s film *Accident* (1967), where the two lead characters Stephen and Anne interact without speaking, and yet voices are cut over the top of the scene producing an unnatural and prevailing sense of conflict and tension. While the cutting of dialogue is crude, its unpolished nature magnifies the tension exponentially.

In *Fade* the scene 17:58 aimed to create a similar uneasy tension (although not to the same degree) by adopting the flux approach. Initially, removing the synchronous causal relationship of the characters actions to the dialogue creates an ‘unnatural’ screen experience affecting heightened tension in the audience. The remaining actions are narratively arranged in line with the overall themes of the dialogue (their meeting), however conflicts between their body language and vocal tone reveal further conflict. The synchronisation space then flux back into direct causality and resolve the diegesis with the line “right then”. This movement highlights the internal dynamic conflict of the characters and looks to resolve the tension into a sense of ‘realisation’ and subsequent empathetic disappointment for the character Seb.

### **6.4.3 *You'll See***

The scene *You'll See* sought to experiment with the way we use the formal asynchronous voice over. It was the second unconventional ADR session we performed and was performed in the same manner as *17:58* without watching any footage and thus free from the confines of synchronisation and diegetic constraint. The dialogue was completely unscripted and is not present in the original screenplay. We discussed at length character motivations and emotive qualities, attempting to find a way for Penny to articulate her internal struggle to Seb, and to the audience. With each of us making suggestions, we ran through a number of improvised takes and afterwards we discussed how they could improve on their performances making further suggestions on what to develop. It was one of the most genuinely collaborative moments of the whole film as the actors and I offered different emotional perspectives, essentially writing the longest piece of dialogue in the film as a collaborative effort. Once again, the footage was cut to the dialogue after finding a suitable flow of imagery. The flux approach was employed here to fluctuate between asynchronous parallel and asynchronous contrapuntal. As we see the two play in the forest, we become aware of their presence again and we are left to question how what we see relates to the dialogue. The following shots allude to the notion that this conversation might be happening on a park bench as we see out of focus features of the two talking in the sunlight, and as the footage moves through more abstracted shots we are left to ask maybe if we are seeing things from Penny's perspective. The footage finally resolves on the holding of hands, an obvious sign of the nature of their relationship's romantic and supportive development.

### **6.4.4 *Together***

The scene *Together*, made use of the final ADR session. While we maintained the lack of synchronisation on performance, the result ends in quite a formal ADR way, creating loose synchronisation with the pro-filmic performance. The original sound had significant airplane noise and other discrepancies (like off axis sound) due to the quick nature of the shooting to ensure the actors weren't in wet clothes for too long. We watched the edited

footage and noted the lines to be performed under our boom rig. When the dialogue was reintroduced the film, an effort was made to make the synchronisation looser and less direct, adding to the dreamy and heartfelt resolve of the film. This is in contrast to the production sound that had been augmented with Foley, which precedes it. However, the final line of the film has become asynchronous via flux and the dark underexposure here allows the flux to be read in two ways depending on the level of attentiveness in the audience. If they perceive it to be synchronous then they will think it as heartfelt sharing of a moment between the two at the resolve of the film. If they perceive it to be asynchronous it takes on far more bittersweet connotations, suggesting it is Penny's internal monologue lamenting the future struggle she faces, and the loss of Seb from her vision.

### **6.5 Sound Beyond the Frame**

One of the major visual characteristics of *Fade* is its lack of wide establishing shots. This is a development of the ideas uncovered while making *Кино из Глаз (A Cinema of Eyes)*. By reducing the amount of visual stimulus we enable the sound to provide a sense of activity and environment beyond the frame. Furthermore, it focuses the narrative entirely on the characters and creates a sense of claustrophobia throughout the film, only to expand later on, after Seb has declared his intentions to help Penny. A significant amount of the atmospheric ambient sound works passively to create an environmental locality for the action and dialogue to be situated within. This provides a unity between cuts of the footage. As our spatial positioning within the scene moves around, our audio perspective remains constant and thus masks the dislocations of our perspective. It also creates a transitional fluidity, allowing sound between scenes to overlap. This effect can be seen throughout and supports the dream like nature of the film's non-linearity, with scenes effortlessly flowing into one another. However, there are a number of moments when the environmental layers contain more active points of punctual interest. Chion refers to these as Elements of Auditory Setting (E.A.S.) (Chion 1994, p.54). The following sections explain some approaches with regards to the ambient and atmospheric effects.

### **6.5.1 Smooth**

Of particular note is the transitional movement between the blurry, abstracted, 'out of the window' passing of fields to the interior of the train at the beginning of the scene *Smooth*. As we hear abstracted acousmatic low pulsing sound (an interior recording of a train in motion, resampled from 96kHz to 48kHz to play back an octave lower and expand the acoustic space four-fold<sup>14</sup>), we are left to wonder what we're experiencing and where we are. The addition of a train manager's station call over the PA provides a recognisable sign that hints at our location before later resolving into the scene. Other points of E.A.S include the station announcement in *17:58*, (where the scene name originates) and the dog barks in *Careful*. While these sound events are relatively banal in their real world implications, it is within that banality that their poetic license is held and looks to complement those emotional states within the narrative arc.

### **6.5.2 Remember, Spirit and Meaning**

Of similar interest is the use of car sounds throughout *Remember, Spirit and Meaning*. In a similar fashion to the ambient musical beds in *Mix, Touch, Destroy and Rebuild*, these car sounds provide a sonic signifier to affirm our return to this narrative space. The sounds were captured using close microphone placements situated next to the engine and exhaust, and within the wheel arch and car interior. This provided a number of possibilities with respect to the combination of those elements - allowing movement in and out of that sonic environment, as well as, hyper-real proximity and detail. For example, in *Memory* the mixing of these elements favoured those outside of the vehicle to transition later to the interior, mimicking our perspective shifting from sources exterior to the car (abstracted lights passing) towards the interior location and introduction to the character Penny.

### **6.5.3 Prepare**

In this scene the majority of the narrative elements are situated off-screen, with the character of the doctor's physicality never being revealed. Her

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<sup>14</sup> A technique I discovered working with Belgian sound editor Tom Hamm. I'm unsure if the spatial multiplication is true, but it seems legitimate from our experiments.

presence instead is provided entirely through off-screen dialogue and Foley. This allows us to be entirely focussed on Penny's reactions as she receives her medical evaluation and furthers the claustrophobic and focused nature of the film. Through the combination of image and sound we are asked to apply this news and relate it directly to the character's emotional and narrative development, subsequently looking to empathise with Penny.

## **6.6 Music**

My musical background before becoming a filmmaker revolved primarily around electronic dance music and hip-hop styles. Because of this, my approach to making music draws a number of parallels with that of a sound editor. I would often sample material from the real world and processes them either towards abstraction evoking the acousmatic or to increase intelligibility and aesthetic pleasure, later to be integrated rhythmically, texturally or spatially into the project (in line with the discussion earlier on the socio-musical shift towards this mode of musical aesthetics).

Particularly in the later years I developed significant interest in the culture of crate digging, which is central to the aesthetic of hip-hop styles in the 1990s. The intangibly material sound of vinyl sampling infused Hip-Hop music of that era with warm, soft sonorities, textures and riffs. They are poetically echoes from a revitalised past. This cultural 'remembrance' fits metaphorically with the non-linear memory based approach of the film. The practices and aesthetic involved in these music styles were the foundation for my approach with the music of *Fade*.

My initial approach was to engage with the music in a hip-hop style, but I found that the rhythms and riffs created too much activity and distracted from the central focuses of sound and dialogue. Instead, an approach that sought to provide unity between the sonic and musical worlds was adopted and further reflects the discussion around this unification of the sound music continuum in the previous sections.

The following sections describe my compositional processes and thoughts toward how this approach came to interact with the project.

### **6.6.1 Remember**

During the introduction I felt the need to ease the audience into the film, as such, I resorted to what could be described as a formal piece of music in comparison to the rest of the cues. Likewise, I wanted to introduce the notion of flux. The music was written before the edit, allowing me to find a musical pacing that I found engaging first and then delicately play with sync points found between the music and visual stimuli. I utilised samples of pentatonic wind chimes to process, layer and build slowly toward a developed chord progression. The chimes themselves bring with them multiple connotations for the audience to potentially interpret, which supported the visual aesthetic and meta-narration that would be built around it, such as spirituality, memory and light. The use of flux at this point looks to provide the audiences with a synesthetic and pleasurable sensory saturation, as the removed nature of the sound dips in and out of loose synchronous and asynchronous relationships with the movement of lights. As the cue progresses, the chimes retain their higher register, while the Rhodes drops an octave to make room for the voices. Since the music is not treated acoustically to sound like it is coming from the radio, we are left with questions about the locality of its origins.

### **6.6.2 Mix, Touch, Destroy and Rebuild**

In the scenes relating to Penny's artistic practice I wanted to create a sonic signifier to tie the scenes thematically together. This came in the form a granulated bed of sound, which was created by sampling Earl Bostic and his Orchestra's *Flamingo* (a 7 inch single printed in 1953). It was one of many records that I had dug out for possible use. The warm timbre of Bostic's saxophone and accompanying Rhodes Piano during their final cadence, rich with vibrato and with the crackle of the dusty, worn record meant that the sample provided ample sonic material for the granulation to interpret. I did so using the software program Cecilia.

The slowly contorting ambient sonic bed functions much less like conventional music (although arguably could be seen as a leitmotif, without the melodic motif) and more like an atmosphere recording (or wild track). Rather than giving a sense of external space, it looks inwardly at Penny's internal space as she remembers her artistic past and is reminded of warm and comfortable emotions. Being devoid of melodies and obvious rhythm, these beds lack the ability to interact with the image in tight synchronisation and in the case of *Mix*, *Touch* and *Rebuild*, the cue interact morphologically with the colour overlays and slow motion footage. The sustained and arrhythmic nature also helps in temporalizing the image, suspending it in a static state and accentuating the slow nature of the images (Chion 1994 p.14).

These effects create a sensory unity and furthering the use of a synesthetic melding of the audio-visual materials. The colour overlays were in fact added after the bed was made and prove a good example of sound influencing artistic visual decision-making. I searched for something that could merge the audio-visual interaction in a way that was not distracting and added to the 'dream state' visual aesthetic. Additionally, the simple nature of the sound ensures that it does not interfere with more abstracted sound effects that accompany it.

With regards to *Destroy*, however, this bed takes on a more dramatic development. Ensuring that the audience have already become accustomed to this sonic signifier by providing it twice already, I looked to distort the sound to once again reflect Penny's internal emotional state. The addition of a harmonically rich lower register and a scratching, distorted higher register looked to affect the audience's embodied presence. In line with David Sonnenschein's ideas of the physical effects of sound on the body, the lower frequencies interact with the lower torso, evoking an emotional susceptibility and the higher distorted sound interacts with the head and cognitive functions stimulating cerebral reflection (Sonnenschein 2001, pp.70-71). Parallel to these additional registers, the already 'known' granular sonic bed slowly modulates downwards, creating a sinking feeling and results in dissonances between the layers. These developments look to enhance the audience's

empathetic relationship with Penny as she exerts her frustration and sinks into anger and disappointment. Whilst simultaneously reflecting the development of that narrative subplot.

### **6.6.3 *You'll See and Spirit***

The remaining two pieces of music follow on from the aesthetic of those discussed above and function in very similar ways, looking to interact with the image on a textural and morphological level with the slow motion footage and passing lights respectively. They were also created using granulation of 1950s records, but are presented in a more conventional ways, with a greater emphasis on tonality and periodic rhythm. In the case of *You'll See* Ella Fitzgerald's *Manhattan* (1956) formed the basis for sampling, taking its grandiose string introduction and forming a similarly contorting bed to the cues mentioned earlier. These were augmented with a prebuilt sampler (Kontakt LA Scoring Strings) containing string harmonics that add a scratchy and subtly bittersweet feel to the string layers.

In the case of *Spirit*, the samples were chopped and performed similar to a traditional Hip-Hop aesthetic. This originally was a part of a much larger cue that included percussion and bass, but as discussed earlier, the funky rhythmic elements did little to enhance the feel of the scene, resulting in me removing the parts that felt contradictory or displaced. The nature of the remaining samples look to evoke a morphological sense of passing cars, mimicking a Doppler effect by its envelope and pitch modulations. A remaining layer in this scene is a filtered recording of a motorway, which by cutting all of the low frequencies obscures its presence (and equally makes room for the car recordings). By creating attenuated notches on an EQ, I searched for harmonics that could provide a tonality to the sound that matched the instrumental samples. This allowed the two layers to interact with each other harmonically and evoking the sound music continuum. Similar to previous cues, the loose morphological appropriation of visual themes search for a moment of sensory, synesthetic pleasure.

## 7. FINAL REFLECTION

### *Moving Forward*

On conclusion of this project, I feel that I've been able to explore a number of important areas that will inform my professional and academic work in the coming years.

The discussion of historical developments both illuminated and made heard a number of competing ideologies, which posed numerous conflicts and questions for my conceptual model to interact with. I feel this has allowed it to provide a number of examples of its practical and philosophical implications. I'm sure there is significantly more ground that this conceptualisation could cover and I look forward to discovering them in future practices.

Highlighting the problems of divisions of labour as structures that assert possibly discriminatory ideologies toward sound has certainly made me more aware of them in the professional world. I still think this is an area that needs more attention in the future and could possibly look at adopting a sociologically grounded study of these issues. What would be even more fundamental in the further study of these issues would be to ascertain if these ideologies do have any correlation to aesthetic and narrative limitations toward sound. While I feel that the freedoms afforded to me in this project have had a positive effect on the aesthetics and form of *Fade*, I am still left to question the application of such methods on an industrial level.

The approach as a centralised auteur may not always be feasible in the professional field, however, I will remain persistent in my aims to create further discourse between sound and image departments by looking to integrate myself as sound practitioner into the visual workflow and suggesting possible technical frameworks that could ease the transition of ideas between platforms. One particular solution could lie in utilising my current understanding of NLEs to try to operate as a sound editor and composer (in a loose sense) within those platforms as opposed to DAWs. This would emulate

the situation found in earlier analogue eras and might produce a tighter discourse between sound and image. While it might limit me by the scope of the technical processes available, that limitation might lead to more interesting developments with regards to aesthetics. Traversing between platforms had significant disadvantages, the most obvious one being the difficulty retaining conformity between projects. Ultimately this suggestion would be a step towards negating the need for exchange protocols and finding a unity within the workflow experienced in the analogue era.

The guerrilla mode of production has its restrictions with respect to the resources available and would provide a possibly unjustified limitation on a larger industrial scale. It did, however, provide a freedom that I found creatively liberating and it seems that this liberation is why guerrilla filmmaking is a growing method for new filmmakers. As a result of this I will be looking to undertake more work of this nature in the future in parallel to looking for further high profile exposure.

With regards to *Fade*, one of the most exciting and liberating processes that developed from the project was that of the unconventional ADR as a collaborative improvisational tool. Synthesis of new material above reproduction of old material certainly allowed the process to be removed from its visual determinism (the material hegemony). The implications of this process as well as the discourse between modes on the visual edit and narrative suggest an advocacy to expanding both further to empower sound to determine image as opposed to other way around more frequently. I'm not suggesting it be adopted uniformly as a matter of principle, but rather in balance.

The obvious next step is to explore these applications further with regards to a more stable production model. Finding a way to convince others of this approach to filmmaking is the next step in legitimising it beyond the academic and intellectual realm. Perhaps it now needs to filter back into the industrial sphere and towards resolving the stimulus that ignited it.

I feel that the use of my flux approach succeeded in its ambitions to create a balance between narrative intelligibility and sensorial moments of pleasure and tension, which supported this particular emotional and non-linear style of narrative. While I may not have moved away from narrative filmmaking being a predominantly vococentric form, I feel that the flux approach allowed for that vococentricism to break away from its obvious diegetic causality, enabling the audio-visual reading to hopefully culminate in number of interpretations that I may not have originally envisaged. I hope that future audiences find their experience of the film comfortably challenging and that this approach might soon develop throughout my own practices in future.

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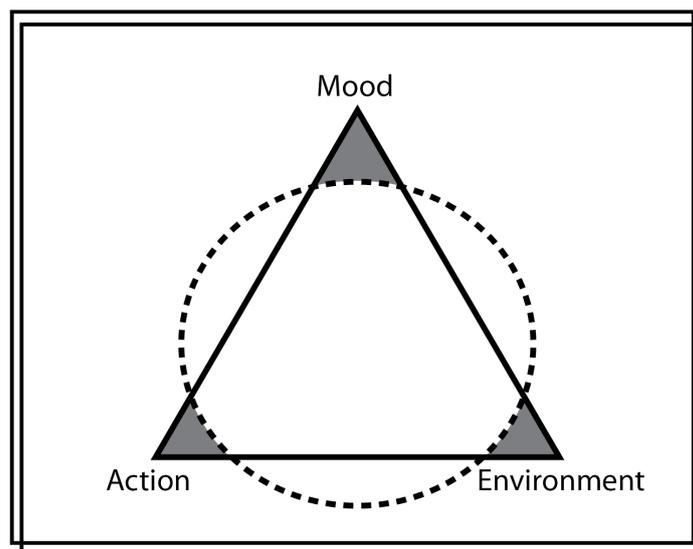
## 9. APPENDIX

**Figure 1: Draft Manifesto Jan 2012**

1. Postmodernism has bred a cynical and lazy culture of reference.
2. Imagination has been pushed away from originality and toward repeating clichés that go forward in time and creatively nowhere, creating circles of reference that fit contemporary trends and scenes.
3. Neo-classical film scores continue a musical elitist attitude, under the guise of a search for the ‘epic score’.
4. Universalism is an impossible goal, searching for it is fruitless.
5. The superficial level is the most important to be aware of, it demands only passive interaction.
6. Communication should be specific and use common language. Accessibility is the key to furthering the arts.
7. Understanding and shared knowledge is born from discussion and both personal and collective reflection.
8. Mass media is a mass offender. Be independent and subversive.
9. Possibility is more important than viability.

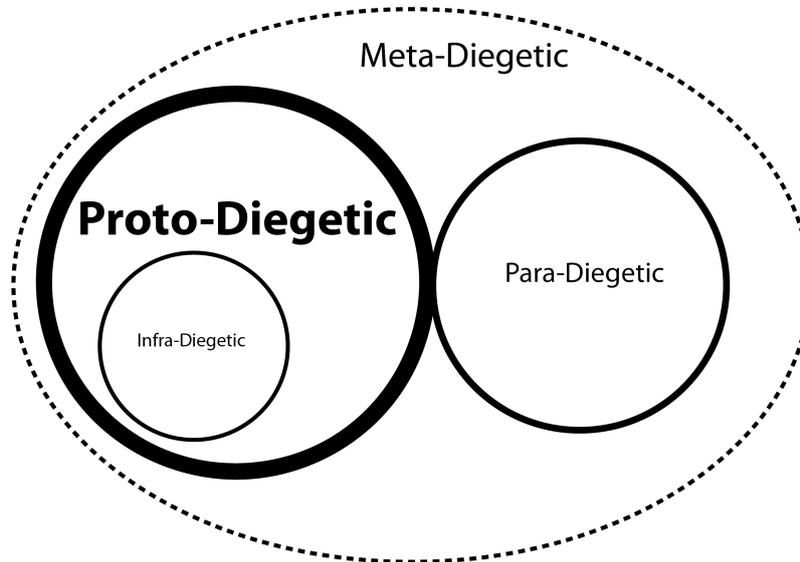
**Figure 2: Sound Signified**

Sound objects can only operate within the circle. Commonly, they demonstrate a dominant relationship to a mode, whilst maintaining minor relationships to the other two modes. Locations outside of the triangle demonstrate anempathetic relationships to the mode opposite.



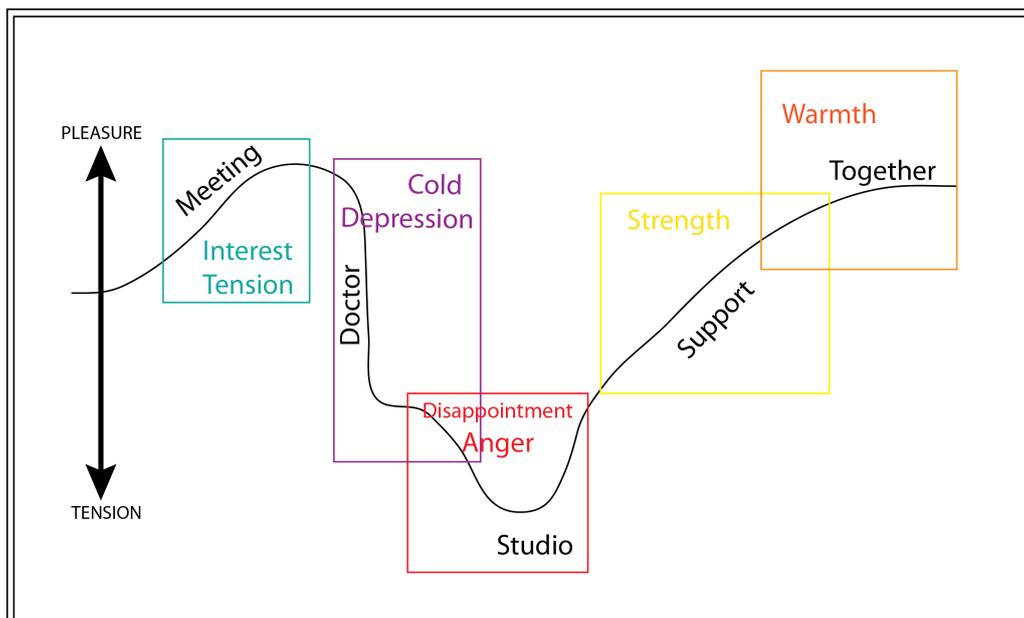
### Figure 3: Diegeses

Starting with the proto-diegesis (primary diegesis where the source dominant narration takes place) diegetic spaces are arranged in relation to the dominant narration.



### Figure 4: Emotive-Narrative Diagram for *Fade*

A simple diagram demonstrating the intensions for the narrative reshuffle of *Fade*, based on emotional fluctuation between tension and pleasure.



## Figure 5: Screenplay for *Skin, Muscle, Organ & Body: Act I*

**ACT I - EVIE: Environment/Skin**

**16:9**

**HD 1080p50**

**Desaturate Colour Filters**

*Skin*, is the first of four acts in a short film that centers around a family that is dealing with a traumatic experience, via a group therapy session. Each act focuses on one character's recollection of past events and is specifically created to enable an area of exploration within which the soundtrack can operate. *Skin* is created to enable an exploration in representations of environment. There will be little to no location sound on shoot. The dialogue operates in a meta-diegetic space, which shifts its point of diffusion throughout acts but always remains meta-diegetic. In *Skin* the point of diffusion is obvious and extra-diegetic, this is ease the audience into our approach.

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EXT. PARK MIDDAY SUMMER

A common in the middle of a city, an empty park with no children playing just the soft roar of cars and twinkle of bird song. Underneath a large tree EVIE is led on the grass watching something in the branches.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

So where are you?

There is a cat in the tree looking down at Evie.

**EVIE (V.O)**

In the park... there's a cat in the tree...

It looks like it wants to get down.

WIDE TRACKING SHOT

Evie stands up, brushes down her clothes and goes to climb the tree.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Do you recognize the cat?

CUT-IN ECU

Grabbing the tree, finding foot/hand holds, face grimace from effort.

**EVIE (V.O)**

No.

She pulls herself up onto the branch.

THE CAMERA IS DARKENED BY HER BODY.

CONT. EXT. CITY SCAPE ROOFTOP -DUSK

FROM DARKENED SHOT

EVIE has pulled herself onto a ledge and sat with feet dangling off an edge.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

How is the cat? Is it distressed?

**EVIE (V.O)**

It's gone.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Where is it?

**EVIE (V.O)**

I'm not in the park any more.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

So where are you now?

**EVIE (V.O)**

On top of the estate.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Why did you come here?

EVIE gets out a packet of king-size B&H cigarettes and a smoking tin. She takes one cigarette out, tears a piece off and lights the rest. She sprinkles the ripped off piece into a king-size Rizla inside the tin.

**EVIE (V.O)**

It's quite... and has nice views.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Do you like to be alone?

EVIE pulls a bag of weed out of her pocket and picks pieces into her joint.

**EVIE (V.O)**

I like the quiet... and I like this spot.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

What makes this place special?

**EVIE (V.O)**

Not a lot. Gav meets me here sometimes.

GAVIN walks in behind EVIE and she passes him the rest of her cigarette. He sits down beside her.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Is he your boyfriend?

EVIE finishes rolling her joint and lights it. Takes a few hurried drags and passes it.

**EVIE (V.O)**

Used to be. We're just friends now.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Do you love him?

EVIE pulls her knees up to her chest. She doesn't reply and there is an uncomfortable silence.

CROSS DISSOLVE

INT. CAR -NIGHT

GAVIN is driving. EVIE is sat knees to her chest still looking out of the passenger window.

We see a couple leave a hotel drunk and kiss out of the window, EVIE stares at them.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Does he love you?

**EVIE (V.O)**

Probably.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

What do you two do together?

**EVIE (V.O)**

Drive around. Talk. Plan his future.

They have driven to the coast.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Only his future?

**EVIE (V.O)**

He says I'm a part of it.

GAVIN turns to EVIE and leans in for a kiss.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

And do you want that?

EVIE pushes him away irritated, leaves the car and walks off.

EXT. BEACH -NIGHT

EVIE is walking along the sand dunes with GAVIN running up behind. She is shouting ferociously at him. He screams back, kicks the sand in anger and goes back to the car. We do not hear their words only muffled screams on the wind.

**EVIE (V.O)**

No

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

What do you want for the future?

**EVIE (V.O)**

To move out of the city. Be a graphic designer. I dunno, start over.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

And where would you go?

**EVIE (V.O)**

...Into the mountains.

EVIE lies down on top of a sand dune

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKES MIDDAY

EVIE is sunbathing on her back by a Lake nestled within a huge mountain range. LYNDA, MIKE and ANDREW play rounders in the background.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Because it's quiet and has good views?

**LYNDA (V.O)**

*(Interrupting)*

We used to holiday in North Wales didn't we sweetheart.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Lynda, this is her time to speak.

**LYNDA (V.O)**

Sorry love.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Carry on Evie.

**EVIE (V.O)**

Yeah I guess so. Drew likes it there.

EVIE sits up and looks over to the rest of her family playing.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

Tell me about Andrew.

INT. FLAT LIVING ROOM - EVENING

EVIE is lounged on a sofa drawing in her sketchpad. ANDREW is running around causing havoc.

**EVIE (V.O) (Pause)**

He... We fight a lot.

ANDREW jumps on EVIE and they start to fight, playfully. But EVIE is irritated.

**EVIE (V.O) (Cont.)**

But only messing like. I know he loves me.

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

How does it make you feel when you play fight?

**EVIE (V.O)**

I dunno. It's never that serious.

EVIE pins ANDREW and tickles him until he gives in. (EVIE starts to cry in the V.O)

**THERAPIST (V.O)**

OK, I think we'll stop there.

-END-

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## Figure 6: Screenplay *Upon Deaf Eyes*

### SCENE 1 INT. CAR. EVENING.

[DOP - Opening with Bokeh style shots and intro shots - radio, car items]

A car drives along a road, a girl; PENNY sits solemnly looking out of the window, her head lies back on the headrest.

She is emotionless as the car moves on. She looks to the streetlights.

[DOP - CU of face, Hands, OOW shots as she gazes out of the window]

### SCENE 2 EXT. BAR/PUB. EVENING

PENNY is stood against a wall outside a bar/pub.

She holds a cigarette that is untouched in her hand. She stands leant emotionless. She stares forwards looking at the road in front of her. She then lifts her hand up to look at it.

[DOP - Side on 3rds shot]

PENNY walks inside.

### SCENE 3 INT. BAR/PUB. EVENING.

PENNY wanders up to the bar in a busy-ish local area.

She stands and waits as a musician announces his name and begins to play.

PENNY looks around slightly, half interested, before looking back forward again.

The music has an almost grinding effect on her. Whilst enjoying it, it evokes emotions inside. PENNY stares and zones out.

Images of PENNY painting, brush stroking, pictures being painted etc. come to her mind.

Her eyes lay glassy as she remembers.

Somebody bangs into PENNY slightly and awakes her from her trash. The Room comes back to life.

She exits the pub/bar.

[DOP - End shot begin dolly right to left out of shot behind black object  
e.g. persons leg]

### SCENE 4 INT. CAR. EVENING

[DOP NOTE - beginning shot dolly left to right into car to reveal her  
(Corresponding with previous scene)]

PENNY Sat in the back seat of the car. Opens the window gently.

Looking out at the night lights and sky she runs her fingers across the top of the window rolled down.

Her fingers run along the Glass and water collects on her index finger.

She looks at her finger. Then goes to her side, there is a book. She takes the book in her hand and opens it on any page.

She then gently runs her finger along the glass once more. Collecting the water.

She then drops the water from her fingers onto the words typed in the book. The words become visibly dissolved and blurred.

**SCENE 5**  
**INT. TRAIN. DAY**

The train ride is in motion. PENNY sits reading a book.

She is struggling. Looking tired and stressed she rubs her eyes to try and see the blurry words upon the page.

Onto the train walks a young guy, SEB. He carries an instrument and a couple of bags. He is quite un-kept.

As SEB walks passed PENNY he knocks a drink bottle of hers over.

**SEB**

Oh sorry about that

**PENNY**

- It's okay don't worry.

SEB then proceeds to put his stuff down at the side row of seats to PENNY.

SEB places his bags down and pulls out a can of Fizzy drink.

PENNY sits gently stroking her own head. SEB pulls out a pad and pen and begins writing something.

SEB starts to hum a tune of some description out loud. Sometimes struggling. He starts to use his pen on the desk to play a beat gently.

PENNY tries to read once more, but the noise of the pen popping on the table send her into a memory flash.

*MEMORY FLASH*

PENNY sees a paintbrush in a clear glass, the brush swirls around in the glass changing the water colour, as it swirls the brush hits the glass.

The memory clearly upsets her. PENNY gets up and leaves.

**SCENE 6**  
**EXT. TRAIN STATION. DAY.**

By a fence, PENNY stands, staring forwards, the wind flows through her hair.

**SEB ( walking over to Penny )**

.. ermm, hey sorry to bother you just... you left this...

SEB hands over her book. PENNY smiles at him gently and politely .

**PENNY**  
Thanks

PENNY looks back away from him.

**SEB**  
Are you okay?

PENNY doesn't react.

**SEB ( cont. )**  
Is somebody picking you up here?  
Penny shakes her head.

**SEB ( Cont. )**  
Well would you like a lift anywhere?

**PENNY**  
I can manage by myself thanks.

**SEB**  
...Sorry, just... I've seen you on the train a couple of times and.... I'm Seb.

**PENNY**  
... I'm Penny

PENNY continues to ignore him in her own world.

**SEB ( cont. )**  
... Anyway enjoy the book... Bye

PENNY slowly looks the way he's walked away.

*[Editor note - backdrop sound of train getting louder and louder to cut?]*

**SCENE 7**  
**INT. CAR. EVENING.**

Back in the car the travelling continues. PENNY is sat dazed in the car. She takes some painkillers from her purse.

**PENNY**  
*(Leans forward)*  
Can you turn the radio off... it's just giving me a headache.

The radio goes quiet.

The car then pulls to a stop at a junction. She looks out of the window to see a Doctors/Hospital. Her memory again takes over as she stares with no emotion.

*[DOP - dolly from Mid into CU on Pennys window]*

*[EDITOR - Sound of Female Doctors Voice begins coming over the image  
Slightly muffled + hospital sounds]*

**SCENE 8**

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.**

PENNY sits staring straight forward. Behind PENNY a FEMALE DOCTOR is heard. PENNY holds the eye drops in her hand and looks at them.

**DOCTOR**

...I'd like you to come back in again for some more tests but its looking very likely at this stage that you have a serious case of Ocular Hypertension.  
Over time your eyes will get weaker and your vision will deteriorate quite badly, these drops will help for a while but -  
Penny...?  
Penny...?

SCENE 9

**EXT. TRAIN STATION BENCH. DAY**

PENNY is sat staring at her eye drops. SEB's voice is heard.

**SEB**

- Penny?

PENNY looks up from the eye drops for a moment to look to SEB.

[DOP - side shot MID]

**SEB ( Cont. )**

Are you okay?

**PENNY**

Could you give me a lift please?

**SEB**

Sure...

SCENE 10

**INT. PENNYS FLAT. DAY**

SEB is in the kitchen area making a cup of tea; PENNY is sat down looking at her eye drops.

SEB walks over and places her cup of tea on the table in front of her. She doesn't react she just stares at the drops.

As PENNY looks at the drops her MEMORY FLASHES commence once more, flashing images of bright colours.

Around the flat SEB wanders just talking about the flat itself, and its *presence of art materials*. PENNY gets up of the sofa and walks away.

SCENE 11

**INT. PENNYS FLAT/ART STUDIO. DAY.**

PENNY walks into a small studio space full of raw artistic drawings on canvas'.

She walks around the room slightly looking at her art. Before violently attacking all her paintings, ripping them up and destroying them as best she can. Erratically and out of control.

[DOP - make sure paintings themselves are not fully seen,  
ECU of colours, CU of Penny]

PENNY's emotions start taking over as her eyes begin to water, she breathes heavy and her energy sinks.

She then exits the studio and walks briskly to SEB. She holds him in a hug.

**PENNY**  
Don't go ...

PENNY holds onto him as her eyes water into his chest. SEB holds her back.

[ *DOP/EDITOR - cutaway between scenes* ]

SCENE 12  
**INT. PENNY'S FLAT. EVENING**

On the couch PENNY and SEB are sat; he is holding her, as she lies asleep on him. He looks to her softly, pulls her body up and slips out of her grasp. He lays her down and places a blanket over her.

SEB takes his coat and is about to put it on. He picks her eye drops up and places in the upright position. He notices the door into her studio. SEB looks to Penny and then walks over to the door.

SCENE 13  
**INT. PENNY'S STUDIO. EVENING.**

SEB pushes upon the door, slowly and walks in.

He looks at the mess around the room, and picks up a picture that she has painted and destroyed, he opens it up and places it back together in his hands. The painting is of a little girl stood in a forest.

SEB does this with two further paintings, one containing a little girl lay looking up at the night sky, and another of a little girl stood by an ocean looking into the horizon.

SEB stands and looks at the paintings.

SCENE 14.  
**INT. PENNY'S FLAT. NIGHT.**

SEB is now lying down with PENNY; he looks at her as she sleeps, pulling the hair away from her eyes and runs his fingers gently along her eye area.

SEB kisses PENNY's head and exits. Leaving her to lie alone.

[*EDITOR - fade to black*]

SCENE 15  
**INT. PENNY'S FLAT. MORNING.**

PENNY awakes in her flat.

[*DOP - shot from behind.*]

PENNY looks around slightly.

SEB begins singing/playing banjo/ukelele from behind PENNY, ' Good Morning song '

**SEB**

Good morning.

**PENNY**

Morning.

**SEB**

Come on now get up we've got to go somewhere

**PENNY**

Umm... Where are we going?

**SEB**

You'll see... come on!

SEB continues to sing a new song. Blending into the next scene.

*[EDITOR note - the dialogue and singing to come over following scene.]*

SCENE 16

**INT. CAR. DAY**

SEB drives PENNY.

*[EDITOR - cuts between slow motion versions of Penny being driven in daylight and the night time drive from Scene 1]*

SCENE 17

**EXT. FOREST. DAY**

The pair is stood in a forest, very similar to the painting in PENNYs flat that SEB found - she smiles. He lifts leaves and places them over her head.

**SEB**

Hold my hand...

PENNY takes hold of SEBs hand and the pair begins running, she screams a little.

*[DOP – Slow Motion]*

The pair plays in the forest

*[EDITOR - cutting between forest play shots and CU/ECU shots of PENNYs eyes in the car from scene 1.]*

*DOP - POV style shots of penny her eyes getting worse/ Bokeh.]*

SCENE 18

**INT. BED. NIGHT**

SEB lies talking to PENNY - she licks his nose and hides under the white bed sheets. He goes in under too and begins tickling her - she laughs.

*[EDITOR - cutting between eye shots and Bokeh Cutting back to slow motion of them under covers]*

*[DOP– Out of focus shots in POV]*

SCENE 19

**EXT. DARK SKY. NIGHT**

The pair is sat on a bench, looking to the night sky, like in the 2nd picture of PENNYs  
She looks up to see a blurry version of the sky that looks in its own way beautiful.

SCENE 20  
**EXT/INT/DAY/NIGHT**

A short collection of hazy memories interspersed between her eyes and the journey she is on.

SCENE 21  
**INT. PENNY'S FLAT. NIGHT**

Penny is lay with her head on SEBs shoulder, she looks tired and glassy eyed. She stares forwards.

*[DOP - POV shot where here eyes are really struggling  
CU shot of PENNY with only SEBs body in shot]*

**PENNY**

I'm tired...

**SEB**

Well get some sleep.

**PENNY**

Promise I'll see you when I wake up?

SEB doesn't reply. PENNY falls asleep.

*FADE TO BLACK*  
(Landscape shot between scenes)

SCENE 22  
**INT. PENNY'S FLAT. DAY**

PENNY awakes. She is alone. She walks around the flat, struggling with her sight, looking and calling for SEB. He is not there.

SCENE 23  
**INT. PENNY'S FLAT. EVENING.**

PENNY is sat down - the TV is on. SEB is still not there. She struggles over to a voicemail machine and presses play on the machine. There is only one message.

**DOCTOR (via answer message )**

Hello Penny, it's Dr. Henthorne here. We have the results back from your latest tests. Could possibly come down to the Hospital to see me on Wednesday evening about 6pm? It may be best if you get somebody to bring you down.

Okay we'll see you on Wednesday.

The answer phone beeps the message ends - Penny stands alone in her flat.

*[DOP - wide shot of empty apartment]*

SCENE 24  
**INT. CAR. EVENING**

We come back to the car journey PENNY was on at the start of the story. The clock shows it's 17.52. PENNY looks out of the window.

[EDITOR - Bokeh]

The car comes to a stop; the driver steps out and opens her door. PENNY steps out and looks around [POV style]

**PENNY**  
Where am I?

SEB walks into shot

**SEB**  
You'll see... Come on!

He takes her by the hand and walks her. He has taken her to the beach exactly the same as in the painting she drew previously.

He runs with her and runs into the Sea - fully clothed.

They mess around in the sea, holding each other as they do, after a while PENNY stops, looks out to sea.

We see her eyes are now fading fast.

**SEB**  
What's wrong?

PENNY holds her look to sea, before looking back to SEB. She holds him quite tight.

**PENNY**  
I'll miss the way you look.

-END-

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